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Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Gwasanaethau Democraidaidd



**MAE HWN YN GYFARFOD Y MAE GAN Y CYHOEDD HAWL EI FYNYCHU**

Date Not Specified

Annwyl Syr/Madam

**PWYLLGOR CRAFFU POBL**

Cynhelir cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Pobl yn Hybrid Meeting: Via MS Teams/Abraham Derby Room at the General Offices, Ebbw Vale (if you would like to attend this meeting live via Microsoft Teams please contact [committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov](mailto:committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov) on Dydd Mawrth, 6ed Medi, 2022 am 10.00 am.

Yn gywir

Michelle Morris  
Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr

**AGENDA**

**1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD**

Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o hysbysiad ymlaen llaw os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.

**2. YMDDIHEURIADAU**

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

3. **DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU**
- Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.
4. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU GWASANAETHAU  
CYMDEITHASOL** 5 - 12
- Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a gynhaliwyd ar 20 Ionawr 2022.
- (Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y Cofnodion er pwyntiau gywirdeb yn unig).
5. **DALEN WEITHREDU – GWASANAETHAU  
CYMDEITHASOL – 20 IONAWR 2022** 13 - 14
- Nodi'r Ddalen Weithredu..
6. **CYDBWYLLGOR CRAFFU DIOGELU** 15 - 24
- Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Cydbwyllgoir Diogelu a gynhaliwyd ar 21 Ionawr 2022.
- (Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y Cofnodion er pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).
7. **DALEN WEITHREDU – CYDBWYLLGOR CRAFFU  
ADDYG & DYSGU A GWASANAETHAU  
CYMDEITHASOL – 21 IONAWR 2022** 25 - 44
- Nodi'r Ddalen Weithredu.
8. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU ARBENNIG ADDYSG A  
DYSGU** 45 - 54
- Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod arbennig o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu a gynhaliwyd ar 26 Ionawr 2022.
- (Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y Cofnodion er pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).
9. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU ADDYSG A DYSGU** 55 - 62
- Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu a gynhaliwyd ar 1 Chwefror 2022.

(Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y Cofnodion er pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).

**10. PWYLLGOR CRAFFU ADDYSG A DYSGU 63 - 72**

Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu a gynhaliwyd ar 15 Mawrth 2022.

(Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y Cofnodion er pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).

**11. DALEN WEITHREDU - PWYLLGOR CRAFFU ADDYSG A DYSGU – 15 MAWRTH 2022 73 - 80**

Nodi'r Ddalen Weithredu.

**12. CANLYNIADAU AROLWG AMSER CYFARFODYDD 81 - 98**

**13. BLAENRAGLEN GWAITH 2022-23 ARFAETHEDIG Y PWYLLGOR CRAFFU 99 - 106**

Ystyried yr adroddiad.

**14. CRYNODEB ADRODDIAD HUNANARFARNU 2022 107 - 170**

Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.

**15. ADOLYGIAD POLISI TRAFNIDIAETH RHWNG Y CARTREF AC YSGOL AC ÔL-16 2023-2024 171 - 196**

Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.

**16. CYNNIG I YMCHWILIO A DATBLYGU ACHOS BUSNES AR GYFER DARPARIAETH BRESWYL I BLANT YM MLAENAU GWENT 197 - 202**

Ystyried adroddiad Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Interim Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol.

At: Cynghorwyr T. Smith (Cadeirydd)  
J. Morgan, J.P. (Is-gadeirydd)  
C. Bainton  
D. Bevan  
K. Chaplin  
G. A. Davies  
J. Holt

G. Thomas  
D. Wilkshire  
T. Baxter  
T. Pritchard  
Lewis R

Pob Aelod arall (er gwybodaeth)  
Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr  
Prif Swyddogion

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2022**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)**

Councillors: D. Bevan  
 G.A. Davies  
 G.L. Davies  
 P. Edwards  
 K. Hayden  
 W. Hodgins  
 J. Holt  
 M. Moore  
 G. Paulsen  
 T. Sharrem  
 T. Smith  
 B. Summers

**AND:** Corporate Director of Social Services  
 Head of Children’s Services  
 Head of Adult Services  
 Service Manager, Children’s Services  
 Communications & Policy Officer  
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>No. 1</b>	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
<b>No. 2</b>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p>	

	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier and K. Rowson.	
<b>No. 3</b>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in the meeting as some of his clients may also be service users of the Social Services Directorate.</p>	
<b>No. 4</b>	<p><b><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>It was noted that the Members briefing session with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board was scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2022.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<b>No. 5</b>	<p><b><u>ACTION SHEET - 18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2021</u></b></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><b><u>Item 7 - National Adoption Service Annual Report</u></b></p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding advertising comparisons with other areas, the Head of Children's Services said she was unaware of any comparison data but would look into this matter and inform Members in due course.</p> <p>A Member felt that the Authority should return to more traditional forms of advertising such as newspapers, roundabout ads and billboards to reach audiences who may not be aware of adoption services and may not use social media. The Head of Children's Services said analysis had been undertaken regarding the demographic of people interested in adoption and the data helped to focus adverts to those people most likely to adopt. Social media platforms were targeted as they were used by the majority of people potentially interested in adoption. She added that now that</p>	

	<p>Covid restrictions were easing this would enable them to be more present in communities and would provide a mix of both social media and community based advertising.</p> <p>The Chair felt that, along with social media advertising, there should also be a return to awareness raising in the community that had taken place pre-pandemic and local community hubs could be used for displaying advertising posters, etc.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding information on children in foster care going on to become adopted by their foster carers. The Head of Children’s Services said there was a small number of children who went on to become adopted by their foster carers. They were looking to develop this area and were piloting new guidance to recruit adopters who would also be assessed as foster carers so the child could be placed with them immediately, stay with them and be adopted by them.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 6</b></p>	<p><b><u>CORPORATE PARENTING PROGRESS REPORT 2021-22</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager, Children’s Services which was presented to inform Members of the progress made by Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) throughout 2021 to improve outcomes and services for our Children Looked After (CLA).</p> <p>The Service Manager, Children’s Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points in each key priority contained therein.</p> <p>A Member requested an update in relation to the recruitment of a psychologist. The Head of Children’s Services said there was a need for psychology input to support practitioners in relation to some very complex needs of children looked after. Through the ICF grant money they had been able to recruit a part time psychologist who offered consultations to foster carers in order to</p>	

	<p>manage complex behaviours and prevent placement breakdown.</p> <p>A Member enquired if the team engaged with the Education Directorate to improve the number of children looked after that had a statement of special educational needs. The Service Manager, Children’s Services said they work in partnership with the Education Directorate, the Children Looked After Educational Officer sits on the Corporate Parenting Board and children had mentors and advisors attached to them around the educational agenda so their individual needs were looked at, monitored and individual actions plans were put in place to look at how they could be supported around their educational progress.</p> <p>Councillor Hodgins left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding how many looked after children were still with their parents. The Head of Children’s Services said of the 194 children looked after, 42 were looked after by the Authority and placed with parents. She explained that these cases were reviewed regularly, and if the local Authority no longer needed to be the legal parents alongside the birth parents, cases were taken back to court to revoke care orders.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members acknowledged progress made throughout 2021 and feel confident that the Local Authority and its partners are doing well to improve outcomes for our looked after children as part of our corporate parenting responsibilities.</p>	
<p><b>No. 7</b></p>	<p><b><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2021/2022 (QUARTERS 1 AND 2)</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services which was presented to highlight key points from quarters 1 and 2 of the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022 (Appendix 1).</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Social Services introduced the report and the Head of Children’s Services highlighted the main points in relation to Children’s Services and the Head</p>	



of Adult Services highlighted the main points in relation to Adult Services.

**Adult Services**

A Member referred to the shortage of carers and enquired if there had been any improvement in recruitment. The Head of Adult Services said there were lots of initiatives and currently they were working very closely with external and internal providers to look at recruitment and retention. It was extremely challenging but services were still being maintained and operating as normal as possible within the pandemic.

With regard to qualifications for the posts, if an individual did not have the relevant qualifications the Directorate would work with them to obtain that qualification. This approach enabled people without the relevant qualifications to apply for the posts and be supported in achieving the required qualifications.

The Corporate Director of Social Services commented that prior to Christmas they had been able to use some funding for winter pressures to support some domiciliary care and residential care providers and this had helped with retention, but recruitment across Gwent was still minimal. He felt that the real living wage was a move in the right direction but estimated that a higher hourly payment would make it a more attractive proposition for people to work in that sector.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report be accepted as provided.

No. 8

**SOCIAL WORKER VACANCY RATES IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES, PAY AND INCENTIVES**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children's Services which was presented to provide information on the following:-

- The social work staffing pressures being experienced in children's social services;
- What is being done to manage these pressures;

- Comparisons of social work pay scales across Wales in particular Gwent;
- Additional incentives offered to Blaenau Gwent social workers.

The Head of Children's Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

In response to a Member's question regarding promoting health and social care as an area of work in schools and colleges, the Head of Children's Services informed Members that pre-pandemic they had visited schools and attended open days at universities to promote the benefits of working for Blaenau Gwent Social Care and would be doing this again when Covid restrictions allow. The Corporate Director of Social Services said they had been working with colleges across Gwent including University of South Wales to develop opportunities for placements within social care to try and attract students into the sector. They had been concentrating on domiciliary care and residential care as that was often a precursor to people developing an interest in working in social care.

With regard to the comparison of wages, the Head of Children's Services said this was kept under review but there was a concern that if one Authority raised their wage offer then other authorities may follow which could inadvertently lead to social workers moving from one Authority to another disrupting their relationship with the children and families they support. The Corporate Director of Social Services said this was a national issue and felt that a national solution was needed, and as the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) there was support for a national pay scale and they had also been pushing the Welsh Government for the introduction of bursaries for social workers, similar to that of nurses, to create parity between health and social care and to give some incentive to social workers to undertake the role.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members scrutinised the report on social worker vacancy rates in children's services, pay and incentives and contributed to the continuous assessment of the effectiveness of the directorate.

No. 9	<p><b><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 3<sup>RD</sup> MARCH, 2022</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee which presented the Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2022.</p> <p>The Chair advised Members that due to a Special Council meeting being held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2022, it was proposed that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee scheduled for the 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2022 be cancelled and the agenda items be considered in the next Committee cycle.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 be cancelled and the agenda items be considered in the next Committee cycle.</p>	
No. 10	<p><b><u>DEVELOPMENT OF A CAERPHILLY/BLAENAU GWENT COLLABORATION IN PROVIDING LEGAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN’S SOCIAL SERVICES</u></b></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children’s Services which was presented to provide information in support of a collaborative arrangement with Caerphilly County Borough Council providing legal services for Blaenau Gwent Children’s Social Services Department.</p> <p>The Head of Children’s Services spoke to the report, highlighted the main points contained therein and responded to Members questions. She informed Members</p>	

that a review of annual costs would be included as part of the SLA, but it was important to note that Blaenau Gwent would be responsible for costs incurred when commissioning counsel for more complex cases and other associated court costs.

With regard to capacity, the Head of Children's Services explained that the continuation of the strategy to reduce the numbers of children looked after should result in a reduction of the number of court applications required in the future. Caerphilly had been successful in recruiting and retaining their legal team and she felt confident that there would be sufficient capacity to support Blaenau Gwent Children's Services. She advised that if agreement for the collaboration was given Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council would enter into a minimum 5 year SLA with Caerphilly County Borough Council.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report which contained information relation to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee support the collaboration between Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly, for Caerphilly County Borough Council to provide legal services for Children's social services.

**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

**Action Sheet**

**Social Services Scrutiny Committee – 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
5	<b><u>Action Sheet – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021</u></b>  <b>South East Wales Adoption Service – marketing and advertising:</b> In relation to the £2,469 spent on advertising in Q1/Q2, which equates to £18.29 per adoption enquiry – A Member enquired if this spend was comparable across the Regions.	Tanya Evans	We do not have this comparable data from other regions at this time.

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**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE JOINT  
EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL  
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
(SAFEGUARDING)**

**SUBJECT: JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL  
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
(SAFEGUARDING) – 21<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY, 2022**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

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**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)**

Councillors D. Bevan  
M. Cook  
G.A. Davies  
M. Day  
L. Elias  
P. Edwards  
J. Hill  
J. Holt  
K. Hayden  
S. Healy  
W. Hodgins  
J.C. Morgan  
G. Paulsen  
K. Rowson  
T. Smith  
S. Thomas

**WITH:** Corporate Director of Social Services  
Corporate Director of Education  
Strategic Education Improvement Manager  
Service Manager  
Adults Service Manager  
Safeguarding in Education Manager  
Press and Publicity Officer  
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer

**AND: Education Co-opted Member  
Mr. T. Baxter**

ITEM	SUBJECT
No. 1	<p data-bbox="352 416 932 450"><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="352 501 1490 577">It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>
No. 2	<p data-bbox="352 633 576 667"><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="352 719 1054 752">Apologies for absence were received from</p> <p data-bbox="352 804 1034 1093"> Councillor T. Sharrem  Councillor D. Wilkshire  Councillor G.L. Davies  Councillor C. Meredith  Councillor B. Summers  Head of School Improvement &amp; Inclusion  Head of Children’s Services </p>
No. 3	<p data-bbox="352 1149 1318 1182"><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="352 1234 1430 1267">There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>
No. 4	<p data-bbox="352 1323 1386 1400"><b><u>JOINT EDUCATION &amp; LEARNING AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING)</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="352 1451 1490 1570">The Minutes of the Joint Education &amp; Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p data-bbox="352 1621 1490 1697">The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>



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No. 5

**ACTION SHEET – 14<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2021**

The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) held on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2021 was submitted and the following points were raised:-

Anti-Bullying Quality Mark

A Member was disappointed that only one school had the Anti-Bullying Quality Mark and asked the reason why only one school had received the Anti-Bullying Quality Mark.

The Corporate Director Education referred to the explanation provided and noted that only one school had received the Anti-Bullying Mark, however, there was a number of schools who addressed bullying via the Rights Respecting Schools agenda. It was added that this initiative encompassed a number of matters which included the wellbeing of pupils, counselling support services as well as bullying.

The Member requested that a briefing note be provided on schools which were taking part in the Rights Respecting Schools agenda and wider programmes in relation to wellbeing and counselling work.

The Committee AGREED that the Corporate Director Education provide a briefing note on the wider work being taken forward across all schools in relation to Rights Respecting Schools Assessments.

Operation Encompass

A Member welcomed that the relevant information had been made available to schools in relation to incidents of domestic abuse. However, the Member stated that it was also important that other incidents which occurred in and around the schools were also reported. There was a great deal of information shared on social media in terms of anti-social behaviour and gatherings and if these affected young people in schools the respective schools should be informed in order to support learners. The Member was concerned that there was very little information being given to schools by the Police on incidents other than domestic abuse.

	<p>The Corporate Director Education noted the concerns raised and advised that information was provided to schools by 8.00 a.m. to support affected learners.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing that the action sheet be noted.</p>
<p><b>No. 6</b></p>	<p><b><u>CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Social Services advised that the report outlined the concept of Contextual Safeguarding and the approach being taken across Gwent and Wales. The Corporate Director added that the report had been requested at a previous meeting and thereupon gave a detailed overview of the key points as detailed in the report.</p> <p><i>A Member referred to point 2.6 in the report – “as an example, overcrowding at home means the young person spends a lot of time out in public spaces. When in those places, the young person is experiencing robbery and violence. These violent incidents impact the behaviour of this young person, and many others in school. The inability of the school to respond effectively further normalises violence amongst peer groups at the school. These peer groups have more influence over the young person’s behaviour than their parents – and impacts the capacity of the parents to safeguard their child from the harm they experience in (and the pull of) public and peer spaces. We must not forget to consider online environments too. These might be related, for example gangs using social media to track or groom young people, but they will have an influence on children and young people. Every situation and context is different but whatever the issues and problems, contextual safeguarding aims to help provide an approach to help keep children and young people safe”. The Member felt that this paragraph had been poorly worded as schools were a safe haven for some children and young people as teachers are trained to identify problems and therefore felt that this paragraph did not reflect the good work of schools in these instances.</i></p>

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The Corporate Director Social Services advised that the wording was not a criticism of schools. The report was written based on the processes used in London Boroughs and larger cities. There are no examples in Wales and concurred that teachers are trained to look out for vulnerable learners. The Corporate Director stated that Wales would operate differently to schools in London who had tested this concept.

The Corporate Director Social Services agreed to look at the wording of the paragraph.

In response to a question raised in relation to the success of contextual safeguarding, it was advised that Bedfordshire University had tested the methods in London Boroughs which had proved to be very positive. However, the Corporate Director added that the issues in and around London would be more challenging than those in Blaenau Gwent, however the concept had supported children in these challenging environments positively and made them safe.

An Officer gave an example of how contextual safeguarding was embedded in processes in Blaenau Gwent and the positive work undertaken with Community Safety.

Further discussions ensued around the concept of contextual safeguarding and training to be undertaken. The Corporate Director Education added that if these methods were fully utilised in schools it would mean a great deal of additional training for teaching and Social Services. The Corporate Director felt that the work with colleagues in Community Safety placed Blaenau Gwent in a good position and the model could be adopted to fit Blaenau Gwent. It was felt that with it being a smaller Borough it would be less complex, although it would have a significant impact in terms of training across social services and education.

A Member welcomed the groups and clubs available for young people, however it was noted that there was nothing available for children who did not want to participate in youth groups or sporting clubs, therefore the Member felt that these children were being overlooked.

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The Corporate Director Social Services advised that the Youth Service provision supported children and young people that did not engage in youth groups or sports clubs. The Corporate Director Education added that the Youth Service had a presence on streets in and around town centres where the children and young people were gathering. The detached youth team was partly funded by Police to address the aforementioned issues and at present work was being undertaken to recruit additional resource and a restructure of working hours. The hours the team worked was largely evenings and weekends to improve their reach and support young people in the community.

In terms of the next steps for Blaenau Gwent, the Corporate Director Social Services advised that work would continue with Welsh Government and the Safeguarding Board and it was hoped that the Authority could recruit the much needed social workers.

The Chair welcomed this approach and suggested that dialogue be undertaken with the Assembly Member for Blaenau Gwent to gain his support.

The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).

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No. 7

**SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR  
SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION –  
1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2021**

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Service Manager, Children's Services and Strategic Education Improvement Manager.

It was informed that the report provided safeguarding performance information and analysis from Children's Social Services and Education from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2021 to the 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2021. The information enabled members to identify safeguarding trends and areas within the Authority that required further development to improve safeguarding practices in order to meet the safeguarding needs of children and young people within Blaenau Gwent.

The Service Manager outlined the referrals into Social Services and noted that there was an increase, however these were being monitored on a monthly basis and advised that similar issues had been observed in neighbouring authorities. The Officer further outlined the key points in relation to child protection.

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At this juncture the Chair invited questions from Members.

A Member asked if there were a high number of referrals received from the Police that had to be re-referred back to the Police as not a matter for Social Services.

It was reported that no referrals were returned back to the Police, if a referral did not meet the threshold for statutory social services support, there were a number of initiatives in BG around preventative services, mainly Families First, and a package of support would be offered to families from the lower tier support services, with parental consent. The Officer stated that there was work ongoing with Education and Families First support workers, looking at a model that had been put in place with social workers in schools, to evaluate if the model was working, which prevents unnecessary referrals coming into the IAA Service.

Corporate Director Education left the meeting at this juncture.

Councillor J. Holt left the meeting at this juncture.

A discussion ensued around social workers and it was advised that the turnover of Social Care staff in Blaenau Gwent was no different to that nationally or in neighbouring authorities. There was a large turnover of staff and in these instances it could be difficult for the family to build longstanding relationships. It was added that the Authority attempted to ensure that there was little disruption when social workers left the Authority and cases needed to be reallocated.

The Safeguarding in Education Manager gave an overview of the education information related to April 2021 to July 2021. It was stated that the findings reported were during the pandemic, therefore it was not possible to make comparisons as there had been disruption to schools. The Officer further outlined Numbers of restrictive physical interventions Numbers of bullying incidents reported which have led to exclusions Quality Assurance Meetings, Estyn Judgements, Operation Encompass, Compliance Reporting, elected home education. In relation to elected home learning, the Officer pointed out that there are appropriate processes in place to monitor elective home education with formal visits held to check on the suitability of education. However, whilst the number of EHE pupils overall had increased this was similar to the rest of Wales and it was felt that this was due to the pandemic. In conclusion, a further overview was provided in relation to DBS Escalations and VAWDASV.

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The Chair invited questions from Members at this point.

A Member asked that a briefing note be provided on the timeliness of information being provided for school's transfers inside Blaenau Gwent and for pupils coming from outside Blaenau Gwent.

The Committee AGREED that the Strategic Education Improvement Manager provide a briefing note in relation to the timeliness of information provided when pupils transfer between schools inside and outside Blaenau Gwent.

The Strategic Education Improvement Manager also agreed to speak to colleagues to ascertain how to facilitate the information from Police in relation to any anti-social behaviour incidents in school areas. The Committee AGREED that a briefing note be provided on processes which could be put in place.

A Member raised concerns around home education and felt that there should be more checks in place. The Member stated that due to the pandemic examination results had been based on teacher assessments and if young people are being taught at home they are not being assessed by teachers which would affect their results.

The Strategic Education Improvement Manager noted that elected home education was a national challenge, exacerbated by the pandemic, and noted the various arrangements that are in place to manage this and suggested that further feedback be received from the relevant officer around the wider concerns as an action point for the next meeting.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

The Corporate Director Social Services advised that from a safeguarding perspective the Authority had raised these concerns with Welsh Government for a number of years. In some instances, the child was unknown to the Authority as there was not a need to inform the local school. Therefore, in terms of safeguarding no one was monitoring the child. It was felt that there was a need for a formal register and more calls during the year to monitor children's welfare and the Board had recommended this to Welsh Government but there had been no progress on the request. The Corporate Director felt that there was a clear reluctance politically to make those children safe in their environment.

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A Member noted that both the Corporate Director Social Services and the former Corporate Director Education had pushed this issue with Welsh Government and asked if a reason was known as to why parents chose to home education their children. The Strategic Education Improvement Manager added that there had been an increase in home learning since the pandemic. The Member appreciated the concerns and felt that discussions should be undertaken with these families to address their concerns.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).

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**No. 8**

**ADULT SAFEGUARDING REPORT**  
**1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2021**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

The Adults Services Manager advised that the report provided Safeguarding Performance information related to Adult Services from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2021 to the 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2021. The report also identified Safeguarding areas within the Authority which required further development to improve safeguarding practice and procedures for Adult Services. The Officer referred Members to the performance data and provided an overview of the current position as detailed in the report.

A discussion ensued in relation to data presented for care homes and it was informed that care homes had been severely affected by the pandemic as the residents were most vulnerable. The visiting regime was managed by the individual care home and different ways were introduced allow loved ones to speak to relatives. There had been a great deal of work undertaken around care homes and reported all around the Country how they had been affected by the pandemic.

A Member referred to the alleged abuse data reported and asked if cameras could be placed in care homes to monitor these issues. The Officer advised that there was a great deal of legislation and governance around the installation of cameras. A number of homes had installed CCTV at the entrance, although there were reports of cameras being placed in rooms it was a complex issue to take forward. All matters of abuse or theft were fully investigated.

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	<p>Another Member asked if the safeguarding processes were in place in sheltered accommodation. The Corporate Director Social Services advised that not all sheltered accommodation was managed on a full time basis, therefore there was less protection on these complexes. If anyone was aware of issues within housing complexes it was important they are reported in order for the matter to be investigated as there were processes in place to be pursued by social workers who would visit the individual.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).</p>
<p><b>No. 9</b></p>	<p><b><u>SAFEGUARDING - VULNERABLE LEARNERS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Safeguarding in Education Manager and the Strategic Education Improvement Manager.</p> <p>The Strategic Education Improvement Manager spoke to the report which detailed strategies being used to safeguard vulnerable learners with Education colleagues and relevant officers in the Social Services Department. The Strategic Education Improvement Manager referred Members to the relevant performance data and highlighted key points as outlined in report.</p> <p>A discussion ensued around free school meal direct payments and it was asked if a briefing note could be presented on the uptake of free school meals across all schools to ascertain where parents who were entitled had not taken up the support. It was paramount that all parents are encouraged to access the support available.</p> <p>The Strategic Education Improvement Manager added that there was promotional work undertaken around free school meals and grants to help with school uniforms.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that a briefing note be prepared for consideration on Free School Meals take up.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).</p>



**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

**Action Sheet**

**Joint Education and Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee – 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action to be Taken</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
5	<b><u>Action Sheet – 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022</u></b>  Briefing note to be provided on schools undertaking the Right Respecting Schools award and wider programmes in relation to wellbeing and counselling work being undertaken.	Lynn Phillips	Information attached and circulated to Members via email on 12 <sup>th</sup> April 2022 (attachment 1).
7	<b><u>Safeguarding Performance Information for Social Services and Education</u></b>  Briefing note to be provided on the timeliness of schools receiving the information in relation to pupil school to school transfers within Blaenau Gwent and pupils moving into the borough.  Briefing note to be provided on how information is provided to schools, when there have been incidents, over the weekend, in relation to anti-social behaviour.  In relation to EHE pupils – information to be provided on how those pupils were assessed for their Summer results (teacher assessments).	Claire Gardner  Michelle Jones  Lisa Adams	Information attached and circulated to Members via email on 12 <sup>th</sup> April 2022 (attachment 2).  Information attached and circulated to Members via email on 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2022 (attachment 3).  Information attached and circulated to Members via email on 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2022 (attachment 4).
9	<b><u>Safeguarding – Vulnerable Learners</u></b> Information to be provided to show that pupils who are eligible for free school meals are taking up their entitlement.	Claire Gardner	Information attached and circulated to Members via email on 21 <sup>st</sup> April 2022 (attachment 5).

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## **Joint Education and Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee**

### **Action:**

**Briefing note to be provided on schools undertaking the Right Respecting Schools award and wider programmes in relation to wellbeing and counselling work being undertaken.**

### **Officer Response:**

**The Rights Respecting Schools Award puts children's rights at the heart of schools in the UK.**

The UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) works with schools to create safe and inspiring places to learn, where children are respected, their talents are nurtured and they are able to thrive. The Rights Respecting Schools Award embeds these values in daily school life and gives children the best chance to lead happy, healthy lives and to be responsible, active citizens.

The Award recognises a school's achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice within the school and beyond. The RRSA programme unifies a range of educational priorities in all UK jurisdictions; the global dimension, social and emotional aspects of learning, hence supports schools to embed children's human rights in their ethos and culture. It recognises achievement in putting the UN Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) at the heart of a school's practice to improve wellbeing and help all children and young people realise their potential.

The Award is based on principles of equity, dignity, non-discrimination and participation. Schools involved in the Award have reported a positive impact on relationships and wellbeing, leading to better learning and behaviour, improved academic standards and less bullying, community cohesion and sustainable development.

**There are four key areas of impact for children at a Rights Respecting school; wellbeing, participation, relationships and self-esteem.**

The difference that a Rights Respecting School makes goes beyond the school gates, making a positive impact on the whole community.

- Children are healthier and happier
- Children feel safe
- Children have better relationships
- Children become active and involved in school life and the wider world

Schools within Blaenau Gwent endeavour to align wellbeing priorities for the pupils, staff and community of their school to the articles (as mentioned below) to ensure the Rights Respecting principles are understood and implemented.

To date 5 (25%) schools have achieved the bronze and silver award, 2 (8%) schools are working towards it whilst a number have expressed an interest to work towards this post Covid. It is important to state that all schools interlink RRS and Values Based Education principles **regardless** of whether working towards the award or not. This helps develop using Rights and Values as a core theme where Rights and Rights Language is used throughout the curriculum.

For reference in 1989, governments across the world promised all children the same rights by adopting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention says what countries must do so that all children grow as healthy as possible, can learn at school, are protected, have their views listened to, and are treated fairly. The Articles are as follows:

#### **Article 1**

Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.

#### **Article 2**

The Convention applies to everyone: whatever their race, religion or abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.

#### **Article 3**

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.

#### **Article 4**

Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights.

#### **Article 5**

Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to direct and guide their children as they grow up, so that they can enjoy their rights properly.

#### **Article 6**

Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to make sure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

#### **Article 7**

Every child has the right to a legal name and nationality, as well as the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by their parents.

#### **Article 8**

Governments must respect every child's right to a name, a nationality and family ties.

#### **Article 9**

Children must not be separated from their parents unless it is in their best interests (for example, if a parent is hurting a child). Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.

#### **Article 10**

Governments must act quickly and sympathetically if a child or their parents want to live together in the same country. If a child's parents live apart in different countries, the child has the right to visit both of them.

#### **Article 11**

Governments must do everything they can to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally or being prevented from returning.

**Article 12**

Every child has the right to have a say in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.

**Article 13**

Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

**Article 14**

Every child has the right to think and believe what they want and to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Governments must respect the rights of parents to give their children information about this right.

**Article 15**

Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

**Article 16**

Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life.

**Article 17**

Every child has the right to reliable information from the media. This should be information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.

**Article 18**

Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by giving them the help they need, especially if the child's parents work.

**Article 19**

Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

**Article 20**

If a child cannot be looked after by their family, governments must make sure that they are looked after properly by people who respect the child's religion, culture and language.

**Article 21**

If a child is adopted, the first concern must be what is best for the child. All children must be protected and kept safe, whether they are adopted in the country where they were born or in another country.

**Article 22**

If a child is a refugee or is seeking refuge, governments must make sure that they have the same rights as any other child. Governments must help in trying to reunite child refugees with their parents.

**Article 23**

A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and independence, and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to provide support to disabled children.

**Article 24**

Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must work to provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

**Article 25**

If a child lives away from home (in care, hospital or in prison, for example) they have the right to a regular check of their treatment and the way they are cared for.

**Article 26**

Governments must provide extra money for the children of families in need.

**Article 27**

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical, social and mental needs. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.

**Article 28**

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free. Secondary education must be available for every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

**Article 29**

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

**Article 30**

Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, regardless of whether these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.

**Article 31**

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

**Article 32**

Governments must protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health or education.

**Article 33**

Governments must protect children from the use of illegal drugs.

**Article 34**

Governments must protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

**Article 35**

Governments must ensure that children are not abducted or sold.

**Article 36**

Governments must protect children from all other forms of bad treatment.

**Article 37**

No child shall be tortured or suffer other cruel treatment or punishment. A child should be arrested or put in prison only as a last resort and then for the shortest possible time. Children must not be in a prison with adults. Children who are locked up must be able to keep in contact with their family.

**Article 38**

Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Governments must not allow children under the age of 15 to take part in war or join the armed forces.

**Article 39**

Children neglected, abused, exploited, tortured or who are victims of war must receive special help to help them recover their health, dignity and self-respect.

**Article 40**

A child accused or guilty of breaking the law must be treated with dignity and respect. They have the right to help from a lawyer and a fair trial that takes account of their age or situation. The child's privacy must be respected at all times.

**Article 41**

If the laws of a particular country protect children better than the articles of the Convention, then those laws must stay in place.

**Article 42**

Governments should make the Convention known to children and adults. The Convention has 54 articles in total. Articles 43–54 are about how adults and governments work together to make sure that all children get all their rights.

**Action:**

**Briefing note to be provided on the timeliness of schools receiving the information in relation to pupil school to school transfers within Blaenau Gwent and pupils moving into the borough.**

**Officer Response:****In-Year Transfers (admission that is requested outside of the normal admission round)**

In-year transfer or admission refers to applications made in-year (during and not prior to the academic year commencing), and/or outside of the normal admission round. For example, pupils moving into the borough, wishing to change schools and so forth. All In-year transfers are dealt with in date order of receipt. Where there are a greater number of applications received than the number of places available, the Council will apply their oversubscription criteria (as per the School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education) in order to determine place allocation and/or refusal.

Applications are processed within 7-15 working days of receipt, confirmation of a place is proved by the Council, and confirmation of a start date is provided by the school. Where possible the start date provided by the school is within 10 days of place allocation being confirmed.

In the following circumstances pupil allocation will be managed differently to that of a standard transfer request:

- **Complex Admissions** – an admission is considered to be complex, if the needs of the pupil fall outside of the standard admission and hard to place procedures (detailed below). In this case a working group co-ordinated by the Admissions Officer, will be convened in order to address the complex nature of the placement, ensuring that all of the pupils needs can be addressed within an appropriate education setting.
- **Hard to place pupils**– applicants who are considered hard to place, fall into one or more of the categories presented below. The 14 categories cover circumstances and/or needs which would deem or contribute to a learner being considered as hard to place:
  - Children who were permanently excluded from their last maintained school placement and are able / ready to integrate to an alternative school;
  - Children returning from the criminal justice system (secure estate);
  - Child victims of serious crimes (child cruelty, kidnapping, sexual or violent crime, FGM);
  - Children who are CLA;
  - Children who have been out of education for longer than two months;
  - Children with below 50% attendance;



- Children with disabilities or medical conditions which have already impacted on their attendance or participation at school;
- Children of carers, Gypsies, Roma, Travellers, children whose parents offend, asylum seekers and refugees who have been in the UK less than two years and need a supported entry to school;
- Homeless children who have been placed in temporary housing;
- Children who are in a refuge due to domestic violence;
- Children of UK service personnel where a change of location ordered by the service leads to a need for a change of school and will have experienced multiple moves;
- Children who have received 10 day exclusions in the last twelve months; and/or,
- Children on the child protection register.

It may not be possible to process complex and hard to place admissions within the target timeframe outlined above. In such cases, the applicant would be informed of any increase to the processing timescales with regards to their application, and the process through which the application will be managed. The Additional Learning Needs Panel and/ or the Complex Admissions Working Group, would be responsible for managing applications as outlined above.

As part of the transfer allocation process, the Council contacts the child and/or young person's current school to obtain information in order to support their application, and to ensure a smooth transition to the recipient school (please refer to **Appendix 1**). This information is then shared with the recipient school in order to make sure that they are equipped to meet the pupils' educational, learning and any other identified needs upon transfer.

If the child and/or young person is in the care of the Local Authority, or in receipt of Social Services support, the Social Worker completes the application form and liaises with the admissions authority and school in order to inform the admissions process.

The admissions authority does not encourage transfers from one local school to another, due to the potential disruption that it causes to all parties. However, it does recognise that this process may be required in putting the needs of the child and/or young person first.

Appendix 1 – In-year Transfer Information Sheet



**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

**In-Year School Admission or  
Transfer Information Sheet**

1. Name: [Redacted]
2. DOB: [Redacted]
3. Gender: [Redacted]
4. Current School: [Redacted]
5. Reason for leaving: [Redacted]
6. School Requested (via transfer): [Redacted]
7. LAC/Previously LAC: [Redacted]
8. Attendance for current school year: [Redacted]
9. Exclusion Information (if applicable):  
[Redacted]
10. Details of any ALN current/ previous:  
[Redacted]
11. Statement Specific Details:  
[Redacted]
12. Details of any social services involvement:  
[Redacted]

## 13. Child Protection Information (if applicable)

## 14. Free School Meal entitlement:

## 15. Current Levels of Performance for the pupil/student;

Date of assessment	FPOI (Year 2)	The last National Literacy Standard aged score and reading age (Years 2-9)	The last National Numeracy Standard aged score (Years 2-9)	KS2 CSI (Year 6)	KS3 CSI (Year 9)	GCSE information
Other qualifications						
Intervention Programmes?						

- Youth Worker and/ or External Agency Involvement via School:
  
- Parental Engagement (details, dates and comments):
  
- Behaviour / General Comments

Compiled by:

Signed:

Date:

## **Briefing Note**

### **Action:**

**How information is provided to schools, when there have been incidents, over the weekend in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).**

### **Officer Response:**

#### **1. Approach to ASB management**

Within BG there is a close working relationship in place between partners and an established Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) multi agency group with representation from the Education Directorate that provides management and oversight to those individuals whose behaviour is escalating.

#### **2. Four Strike Anti-Social Behaviour Process**

The four strike process is used to tackle anti-social behaviour by identified individuals. The process aims to prevent the escalation of anti-social behaviour by putting in intervention and support methods at various stages. The process consists of four separate stages but is designed to be flexible to allow for each case to be professionally judged on the frequency and severity of the anti-social behaviour.

##### **Strike 1**

A referral is received regarding an individual's conduct in the community. A Strike 1 warning letter is issued to 1) the parent/carer of the young person, 2) the adult perpetrator.

The letter sets out the nature of the unacceptable behaviour and the future consequences for the individual if the behaviour was to continue.

The warning letters are primarily issued by the Police. The information is shared with Community Safety and is stored on an electronic case management database.

##### **Strike 2**

When a second referral is received for continued anti-social behaviour within six months of the Strike 1 letter, a Strike 2 letter will be sent.

The warning letters are primarily issued by the Police. The information is shared with Community Safety and is stored on an electronic case management database.

### Strike 3

When a third referral is received for continued anti-social behaviour within six months of the Strike 2 letter, a Strike 3 meeting is held under Section 115. The meetings are usually held on a monthly basis.

The Strike 3 meetings are multi agency and the core group usually comprises: Community Safety, Police, Youth Offending Service, Registered Social Landlords, Senior Education Welfare Officer, Youth Service, Children's Social Services and Families First.

The Community Safety team sends out an agenda to agencies prior to the meeting to ensure that they attend with up to date information. The group will consider a range of tools and powers that can be used to address the anti-social behaviour and prevent further escalation, including:

- Early Intervention Clinics – A meeting can be scheduled to take place in a formal setting (normally police station) to discuss the behaviour with 1) the young person and their parent/carer or 2) the adult perpetrator. Following this meeting, and with consent, referrals can then be made for the young person/family to support services and/or intervention services, or to adult support services.
- Joint visits – A home visit can be arranged to discuss the behaviour with 1) the young person and their parent/carer or 2) the adult perpetrator. Following this meeting, and with consent, referrals can then be made for the young person/family to support services and/or intervention service, or to adult support services.
  - Referral to Youth Offending Service projects, such as REACH, Engage and Change Happens (part of the Prevention Team)
  - Age range 8 -17 years old.
  - Access to a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service worker; Substance Misuse worker; Speech, Language Therapist; Education, Training and Employment worker; Youth worker, etc.
  - Must obtain consent from the child and family as it is a voluntary intervention.
  - Can provide intervention and support for up to 6 months.
  - Cover work around anger management; anti-social behaviour; shoplifting; victim empathy; peer pressure; restorative work, etc.
- Referral to Gwent Police NxtGen Project
  - Primary role is youth engagement to produce ethically informed citizens and offer inclusive and diversionary activities. These include Cadets, Junior Cadets and Heddlu Bach, etc.
  - Will work with young people who have been identified in general nuisance in the community, before they are in the system.
  - Offer accredited qualifications.
  - Will find out what the young people are interested in and offer relevant activities.
- Referral to Youth Service Projects

- Detached Youth Workers engage with young people in 'hotspot' anti-social behaviour areas identified.
  - Positive Futures work with young people aged 11+ who have been identified as being at risk of anti-social behaviour and offending behaviour in the community.
  - Provide 'one off' workshops to various activities and specialist support if required.
- Referral to Phoenix Domestic Abuse Service
    - Youth Respect Programme - Child/Adolescent to parent violence and abuse
    - Health Relationships Programme
- Referral to the Fire Intervention Service.
- Acceptable Behaviour Contract (voluntary 6-months contract)
    - A letter to attend a meeting to discuss and sign the contract is sent to the young person's parent/carer or adult perpetrator.
    - The Community Safety Team, Police, Youth Offending Service and Registered Social Landlord can be present at the meeting. When the contract is signed by a young person, YOS will attend and offer support.
    - The contract consists of a number of conditions based on the schedule of incidents.
    - The perpetrator is advised that if they do not sign the contract and continue to act in an anti-social manner, that further more punitive action will be considered.
- Acceptable Behaviour Contract Breaches
    - The breach process can be flexible and based on professional judgement of individual cases. Home visits, and further Early Intervention Clinics can be held to discuss the breaches with the young person prior to any enforcement action being taken. When the decision has been made to escalate the breach, a referral is made to Strike 4.

### **Strike Four**

The Strike four meeting is held under Section 115 to discuss the enforcement tools available to stop the anti-social behaviour on a case-by-case basis.

The core group comprises the Community Safety Team, Police, Youth Offending Service/Probation, Registered Social Landlord, Children's Social Services, Families First, Senior Education Welfare Officer, Youth Service and Adult Social Services. Legal Services can either be invited to the meeting or a file of evidence is sent to Legal Services for advice.

### **3.0 The Role of the Education Welfare Officer in disseminating the information to schools**

When the agenda is received, the Senior Education Welfare Officer contacts both the school and the EWO for relevant information to take to panel. That information is used as part of the discussion to see what intervention, if any, should be offered to the young person. If there are any actions for school, that information is shared as soon as

possible, but if there are no actions the minutes are shared with schools when available.

Due to confidentiality only the relevant sections of the minutes are shared with schools.

#### **4.0 Education ASB process**

Following analysis of the ASB cases during 2017/18 there was a notable link between exclusions and the children involved in ASB community. As a result, Education developed a 4 Strike Anti-Social Behaviour Process in schools

##### **Strike 1**

1st stage of ASB in school - school based action - refer to school behaviour policy, PSP guidance, PASS results, restorative practice, school counsellor. At this stage a 1st letter should be issued to parents

##### **Strike 2**

2nd stage of ASB in school - in addition to school actions below consider involving external agencies such as School Liaison Officer, Inspire, Families First, REACH, Young Carers, Changing Minds, Primary Mental Health, EPS, Positive Futures. At this stage a 2nd letter should be issued to parents. A parenting contract is also considered at this stage.

##### **Strike 3**

3rd stage of ASB in school - checks to be made with Community Safety - this could result in a referral to ASB case management group. A letter sent to parents informing them of a potential multi-agency approach taking place. A parenting order is also considered at this stage.

##### **Strike 4**

4th stage of ASB in schools - punitive i.e. managed move, breach of Parenting Order

**Action:**

**In relation to EHE pupils – information to be provided on how those pupils were assessed for their Summer results (teacher assessments).**

**Officer Response:**

The legislation regarding Elective Home Education (EHE) in Wales is as follows:

Full-time education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16, but school is not: under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, a child may be educated either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Parents who choose to educate their child at home are responsible for ensuring that the education provided is efficient, full-time and suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. They are not required to register or seek approval to educate their child at home. Nor are they required to follow the National Curriculum for Wales, provide a broad and balanced education, have a timetable or to formally assess progress.

Although LAs do not have a duty to monitor the quality of home education on a routine basis, local authorities have a duty, under section 436A of the Education Act 1996, to intervene if it appears that a child is not receiving a suitable education. Local authorities also have a duty, under section 175 of the Education Act 2002, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The Education Directorate has offered EHE baseline assessments to all KS2, KS3 and year 10 pupils (year 11 were not offered as they would not be in school for retesting) and only 5 parents/carers took up the offer. The outcome data is shown overleaf for information.



Age	Reading			Spelling			Comprehension		Maths	
	Raw Score out of 70	Standard Score	Age Equivalent	Raw Score out of 57	Standard Score	Age Equivalent	Raw Score out of 50	Standard Score	Raw Score out of 55	Standard Score
14.06	55	110	16-16.11	37	98	14-14.5	38	90 *	33	88
13.10	67	145	18+	47	135	18+	46	117	44	116
10.06	60	145	18+	39	121	15-15.11	44	137	33	106
13.10	42	91	9.8-9.11	28	84	10-10.3	26	85	27	77
13.10	64	145	18+	42	111	18+	46	117	40	106

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\* left a page out , so would probably have scored higher

**Key:**

Standardised Scores	-70	70 to 84	85-89	90-110	111 - 119	120 to 130	130
Standardised Deviations	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Range	well below	below average	low average	Average	High Average	above average	well above

**Action:**

**Information to be provided to show that pupils who are eligible for free school meals are taking up their entitlement.**

**Officer Response:**

**Free School Meals Direct Payment Implementation Overview**

The Education Transformation team assumed responsibility for providing all free school meal eligible pupils, with a direct payment of £19.50 per week throughout school closure periods as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first round of applications opened in April 2020 and approx. 1,200 applications were made, of these, 1,055 pupils were identified as eligible and began receiving the payments. The application round was initiated on a weekly basis throughout the closure periods, with application in the hundreds coming through on a weekly basis. By July 2020 there were 2,206 pupils claiming direct payments.

The schools re-opened in September 2020, however, payments continued for pupils who received a positive COVID-19 test result, along with those required to self-isolate and/or those affected by class closures. The lead officer liaised with schools, the Council's Benefits team and the Policy and Performance team, in order to streamline the process, and identify pupils who were eligible for a payment. Payments were also made for the October half-term and Christmas holiday period which required another round of applications to be opened.

For the October half-term 2020 2,223 payments were administered, and for the Christmas holiday period, 2,343 payments were made. Schools closed again during January 2021 so weekly application rounds continued for newly eligible pupils, new creditors were set up weekly, and by February half term 2,432 pupils were in receipt of a direct payment.

Self-isolation and Holiday payments have continued to the present day. The following timeline highlights the number of pupils receiving the payment at each payment period:

- Easter 2021 – 2,446
- June 2021 – 2,491
- Summer holiday period 2021 – 2,567
- October half-term 2021 – 2,408
- Christmas holiday period 2021 – 2,530
- February half-term 2022 – 2,584

This process has had a significant impact upon human resources within the Education Transformation team in particular. This has included, administration and management of application rounds, eligibility assessment, the set-up and administration of payments. In addition, a significant proportion of queries are received daily via telephone and email. For examples, changes to bank details, adding siblings to claims, queries in relation to payment, changes to residence and so forth.

Currently, the application round opens before each holiday period for newly eligible families. However, the team plan to increase the frequency of the application rounds, due to the level of enquires re: newly eligible pupils. A review is currently underway, which also considers the roll-out of universal free school meals, for which a project group has been established.

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**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO:** **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT:** **SPECIAL EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2022**

**REPORT OF:** **DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

**PRESENT:** COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: J. Holt  
 D. Bevan  
 M. Cook  
 M. Day  
 L. Elias  
 S. Healy  
 J. Hill  
 J.C. Morgan  
 J.P. Morgan  
 B. Summers  
 D. Wilkshire

**Co-opted Member**

T. Baxter

**AND:** Corporate Director of Education  
 Strategic Education Improvement Manager  
 Service Manager Inclusion  
 Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change  
 Press & Publicity Officer  
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	

<p><b>No. 2</b></p>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier, C. Meredith and T. Smith.</p> <p>Head of School Improvement &amp; Inclusion Service Manager Young People &amp; Partnerships</p>	
<p><b>No. 3</b></p>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p><b>No. 4</b></p>	<p><b><u>COVID UPDATE POSITION IN EDUCATION AND ACROSS THE SCHOOL ESTATE</u></b></p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair the Corporate Director of Education gave a verbal Covid update position in education and across the school estate.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education informed Members that currently there were 584 positive cases per 100,000 population, placing Blaenau Gwent fifth across Wales in relation to Covid cases. The level remains high but was down significantly compared to the end of the new year. The Gwent Incident Management team agreed that the schools alert level remains in the very high risk category. The number of cases among school children had increased up to 186 positive cases and 81 staff had been affected by Covid, that was 6.5% of the overall workforce within schools.</p> <p>Blaenau Gwent's position with the Welsh Government categorisation on a RAG status was currently Green as most schools had retained face to face learning. However, recently four schools had introduced elements of blended learning.</p> <p>The Welsh Government Education Minister had issued a letter to all schools outlining that from 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2022 there would be a national move to alert level 0. There would be a cautious phased and planned approach across schools moving forward. He advised that the Welsh Government had reduced the self-isolation period for positive cases to five days.</p>	

	<p>Schools were expected to continue to use the Schools Infection Control Framework in relation to local school implementation around positive cases.</p> <p>Qualification Wales had confirmed plans to hold examinations for both Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 learners in the summer term. There was an intention to adjust the examination grade boundaries to reflect that many learners had been subject to disrupted teaching and learning over the last two years and this had been broadly welcomed across the Education sector in Wales.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question, the Corporate Director of Education reassured the Member that with regard to the Welsh Government School Infection Control Framework a localised implementation was expected. The Local Authority was supporting schools where they had to take decisions around blended learning in relation to communication with parents and health and safety requirements.</p> <p>With regard to licenses and digitally disadvantaged learners, the Corporate Director said the transition of equipment from those learners that had left education and those learners entering statutory education was being managed and running relatively smoothly. The Service Manager Education Transformation &amp; Business Change confirmed the process was operating smoothly and they were undertaking regular reviews. Usage and demand for both the mi-fi units and devices had decreased considerably over the course of the autumn term as schools had sought to provide continuity of learning on site, but they were regularly monitoring the situation and working very closely with schools around implementation.</p>	
<p><b>No. 5</b></p>	<p><b><u>EDUCATION &amp; LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

<p><b>No. 6</b></p>	<p><b><u>ACTION SHEET – 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2021</u></b></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><b><u>Item 10 - Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2020/21</u></b></p> <p>The Service Manager, Education Transformation &amp; Business Change explained they were working with schools annually to review any capacity issues they had and adapt accordingly, looking at self-help schemes, developing action plans to reduce surplus places and also ensure that there were sufficient places for growth going forward.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 7</b></p>	<p><b><u>CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT OF EDUCATION SERVICES</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which presented the Corporate Director of Education's Spring and Summer Terms Report (2021).</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member felt that progress around the seven recommendations on the last Estyn report should have been included in this report. He raised concerns regarding performance data, the Welsh Government had suspended the publication of Key Stage 4 performance measures in 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years stating that qualification awards data would not be used to report on attainment, but that data was included in this report. The Corporate Director of Education explained that progress against the seven recommendations highlighted by Estyn had previously been shared with Members as part of the self-evaluation report. This could also be included within future Corporate Director's Report of Education Services. In relation to performance data the information presented in the report was not attributable to any school and would only</p>	



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be used for self-evaluation purposes and not for wider accountability issues. The Director explained that this information was via centre determined grades and was not comparable but did an assessment to move forward and provides a baseline of current performance.

In response to a Member's question regarding the Governing Body at the River Centre, the Director said that Members would be aware from the Improving Schools report that over the last 12 months the River Centre had formally become a school causing concern. As part of the Local Authority powers of intervention they had appointed additional LA Governors, including an LA Chair of Governors which had strengthened the Governing Body significantly. The Director felt assured that the current Governing Body were starting to take steps around admissions, placement of learners and consideration around school development planning to improve the setting for children and young people.

With regard to reporting progress on the new curriculum, the Director said that from September 2022 elements of the initial changes around the curriculum for Wales would be introduced and confirmed that updates around ALN reform, curriculum reform and qualifications reform would become a formal part of the reporting mechanisms moving forward into the new academic year.

The Chair commented that close working with the Social Services Directorate in relation to the new ALN bill should be expanded upon, such as social workers being accessible at schools. The Director said that between the Director of Social Services Annual report and this report they would be able to demonstrate cross directorate working that would be strengthened across both education and social care, particularly as they were dealing with the same children and young people in both community and school settings.

A Member welcomed closer working with the Social Services Directorate particularly around health and well-being as some children with issues such as behavioural problems, eating disorders and mental health issues had been waiting over 18 months for appointments with consultants. The Corporate Director of Education said the situation around collaboration with health services had been

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	<p>particularly difficult due to the pandemic. Many services had been under pressure and one of those service areas was CAMHSs, the Director gave assurances that they would continue to work closely with health colleagues to support children and young people. The work of the Youth Services counselling service also ensured that emotional well-being considerations were at the forefront of the work undertaken with children and young people, taking preventative approaches.</p> <p>A Member referred to page 54 – Risk Description EDDRR1 ‘Failure of schools in Blaenau Gwent to adapt and change accordingly to the requirements of the new curriculum and national agenda of the Welsh Government as laid out in the National reform agenda document "Education for Wales: Our national Mission” – and felt this paragraph should be reworded as many schools were working continuously on the new curriculum. The Director explained that this was the risk associated with schools failing to adapt but agreed to revise the wording of this paragraph to avoid and misunderstanding of terminology.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members scrutinised the information detailed within the Corporate Director of Education’s Spring/Summer terms 2021 report and contributed to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.</p>	Director of Education
No. 8	<p><b><u>EDUCATION DIRECTORATE – RECOVERY AND RENEWAL PLAN</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education, the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion and the Service Manager – Education Transformation and Business Change, which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the updated Recovery and Renewal Action Plan (Appendix 3), and the updated One Page Overview (Appendix 4), which address the Education Directorate’s identified priorities for recovery and renewal, as part of the corporate response to the COVID-19 situation.</p>	

	<p>The Service Manager – Education Transformation and Business Change spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Director of Education responded to questions raised:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The latest position regarding Estyn regulatory activity was that local authority inspections would continue but school based inspection activity would not start until after February half term.</li> <li>• With regard to local authority comparisons, due to the relaxation of performance measures they were unable to benchmark at this point in time and were not looking to currently provide performance information that would consider either family of schools or family of local authorities as that data was not readily available.</li> <li>• Currently absenteeism was approaching 6.5% of the workforce within schools but only a few Headteachers had been affected by Covid.</li> <li>• With regard to car parking at school sites, the Service Manager said there was a traffic management working group in place to look at key issues at individual school sites and schools were prioritised on the basis of risk and safety and were on a rota for the traffic enforcement process. They worked closely with individual schools and Highways to look at traffic management plans and mitigation measures for each of those schools.</li> </ul> <p>A Member referred to page 74 - School Accountability Services and commented that EAS Challenge Advisors in schools had now been replaced with School Improvement Partners. The Service Manager would ensure this was updated on future reports.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report, associated documentation and proposed course of action be accepted.</p>	<p>Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change</p>
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><b><u>YOUTH SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020 – 2021</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager, Young People and Partnerships which was</p>	

presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the work of the Youth Service.

The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member referred to paragraph 2.3 and enquired regarding progress on youth club developments in Brynmawr. The Director said restructuring was being undertaken with the Detached Youth Work team to ensure the right people were appointed with the right skill sets. The intention was to take the services to community settings that young people were more comfortable with and work with them on street corners etc., this would increase the reach of the service and would impact areas without youth clubs such as Brynmawr.

A Member commented that Youth Services provided a fantastic service that worked well and was needed in all towns throughout the borough. She felt that young people only wanted a safe place with shelter to gather and outreach workers did an excellent job interacting with young people on their level.

A Member raised concerns regarding the risk to future funding for the Youth Services. The Director of Education said work was currently being undertaken on securing future Shared Prosperity Funding. The Member commented that the Youth Services team were doing an excellent job and needed to be supported to secure future funding for the service, as it was important to do more for young people throughout the borough.

A Member referred to paragraph 6.1.1 youth homelessness. The Director of Education said the number of cases of young people dependent upon friends and family to facilitate accommodation had increased due to the pandemic, but was not identified as actual homelessness. It had become an increasing problem across the borough and they were monitoring the situation closely as it did impact upon life chances for young people. With regard to priority housing for them, the Director said that the Service Manager Young People & Partnerships did often refer young people to Housing colleagues.

<p>The Chair commented on the excellent work that had been undertaken by the Service Manager, Young People and Partnerships and her team regarding period poverty. The Director also acknowledged the work of the Service Manager, Education Transformation and Business Change who was leading on this strand of work outside of community settings and the work that was taking place directly within schools.</p> <p>With regard to school holiday activities, the Service Manager, Education Transformation and Business Change reminded Members of the School Holiday Enrichment programme (SHEP) initiative and said they worked closely with the Community Services Directorate and schools to identify settings that meet the criteria and have suitable staff resources and facilities to accommodate the provision for school holiday activities.</p> <p>A Member requested a breakdown of partners that the Authority worked with regarding Summer holiday activities. The Director of Education agreed to provide the information and informed Members that the Detached Youth Work team was partially funded by Gwent Police.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considered and accepted the report.</p>	<p>Director of Education</p>
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**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY, 2022**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HOLT (IN THE CHAIR)**

Councillors: D. Bevan  
 M. Cook  
 M. Day  
 L. Elias  
 S. Healy  
 J. Hill  
 C. Meredith  
 J.C. Morgan  
 J.P. Morgan  
 T. Smith  
 B. Summers

**AND:** Strategic Education Improvement Manager  
 Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change  
 Service Manager Young People & Partnerships  
 Press & Publicity Officer  
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
No. 1	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H. Trollope (Chair), G. Collier and D. Wilkshire.</p>	

	<p><b><u>Co-opted Member</u></b> T. Baxter</p> <p>Corporate Director of Education</p>	
<p><b>No. 3</b></p>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
	<p><b><u>COVID UPDATE POSITION IN EDUCATION AND ACROSS THE SCHOOL ESTATE</u></b></p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair the Service Manager Education Transformation &amp; Business Change gave a brief verbal Covid update position in relation to Education and the school estate.</p> <p>The Service Manager advised Members that the number of cases across the school estate within the last five days was 183, the total within the last 28 days was 697 cases.</p> <p>There was still a high proportion of cases throughout the school estate, and over the last two weeks 3 nurseries and 1 special needs class had been affected, however, there were no class closures at present. There were 54 staff cases across schools, of the 45 confirmed cases 7 were working from home and 1 self-isolating due to TTP advice. The overall absence across schools was 103 which included long and short term sickness absence and Covid absence, broken down this was 64 school based staff (excluding teachers) and 39 teachers. Currently there were no classes or schools that had moved to blended learning, however, that was a temperamental and changing situation.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding staff returning to work after isolation, the Service Manager confirmed that staff were returning as soon as they were clear and the reduction in the self-isolating timeframe had assisted with that. Supply cover had also been affected and they had worked with the Welsh Government and the EAS to look at supporting schools on a national level as well as localised support to gain supply cover as and when required.</p>	



	<p>A Member commented that pupils were preparing for examinations this year and enquired out of the number of staff that were on sick leave how many were not involved with revision classes. The Service Manager said she did not have that information to hand as currently they were collecting information on a local authority basis and working with individual schools where there was pressure. Currently all of the classes were able to be delivered as programmed but she would gather a more detailed breakdown on a school by school basis particularly with regards to secondary provisions and feedback to Members.</p> <p>A Member commented that the last two years had been challenging for schools and requested that the Service Manager forward a letter of appreciation to all Headteachers and staff, on behalf of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee, thanking them for doing an excellent job and working tirelessly during the pandemic to deliver education in Blaenau Gwent. The Service Manager said it had been a huge undertaking by staff and would draft correspondence on behalf of the scrutiny committee reinforcing the positive messages that had already been made around retaining provision during extremely challenging times throughout the last two academic sessions.</p> <p>All Members endorsed these comments and added that over the last two years the Education Directorate had done an excellent job in supporting schools through this challenging period.</p>	<p>Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change</p> <p>Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change</p>
<p><b>No. 4</b></p>	<p><b><u>21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS BAND B PROGRESS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and Service Manager – Education Transformation and Business Change which was presented to provide Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the 21st Century Schools Programme, along with the opportunity to scrutinise progress in line with the delivery of the Band B Programme.</p> <p>The Service Manager – Education Transformation and Business Change spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p>	

In relation to the development of the new 360 primary school to replace Glyncoed primary, a Member thanked all Departments on the creation of a pick-up and drop-off area off Allotment Road which would alleviate traffic congestion and improve access to the site.

A Member enquired regarding the car park extension at Six Bells school site. The Service Manager – Education Transformation and Business Change explained that a sustainable drainage application had been submitted retrospectively as legislation came into force after construction of the school had been initiated. An Ecology Management Plan was required and they were working with the Ecology team towards construction on site in line with the extension in the summer period.

A Member commented that £10m for remodelling and improving secondary schools would not go far and enquired regarding the rationale for the timescales moving forward with this work. The Service Manager explained they were looking at long term investment in secondary school remodelling, future bandings in the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools programme would look to incorporate remodelling. It was a long term vision for the Local Authority who would look to allocate funds on the basis of the needs of each school. The timeline had been constructed as some schools needed more in depth consideration of the options around remodelling projects. An outline budget had been allocated to each secondary school on the basis of condition, suitability and need, they then work with the school to produce a project brief which feeds into the business case development and the associated timelines.

The Service Manager added that they take a holistic approach with regard to minor works maintenance and planned works programme and the Welsh Government capital maintenance funding which had been allocated to support schools. They look to address the condition and suitability issues to the greatest degree possible by looking at some of the fundamental works associated with maintenance of school buildings which would then impact upon the transformational changes brought about by the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools programme.

The Member reiterated that £10m for remodelling secondary schools would not go far especially with the amount of work that was needed to improve schools built in the 1970's. Glanhwy school would be the oldest school in Blaenau Gwent after completion of the Band B programme and the Member enquired what Band Glanhwy would fall into. The Service Manager stated that the banding for Glanhwy school was not yet known but she would look to bring this forward via the prioritisation programme that was being discussed for Band C going forward.

Councillor R. Summers left the meeting at this juncture.

A Member referred to Rhos-y-Fedwen primary school and enquired regarding work being undertaken aimed at foundation phase. The Service Manager clarified the work was aligned to a larger scheme being undertaken to the external play area and was particularly relevant to foundation phase and had now been completed. She confirmed this work did fall outside of the programme as the programmed works focused on internal remodelling to improve the suitability of the teaching and learning environment and condition of the school.

With regard to the new Welsh medium school, a Member raised concerns regarding pupil numbers for the school. The Service Manager said that after a detailed consultation exercise had been undertaken and which was then followed by the Welsh Government school organisation code and associated statutory processes the school had been approved. She advised that pupil numbers at Bro Helyg primary were increasing and over the next few years could exceed capacity. There was a requirement upon the Local Authority to increase Welsh medium education provision with a commitment to achieving the vision of one million welsh speakers. The school was being developed as a seedling growth model to allow a period of time for the school to grow and they would look at modelling the pupil population accordingly. The impact upon schools had been captured throughout the consultation and post consultation period and was also covered within the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

Councillor M. Day left the meeting at this juncture.

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 5</b></p>	<p><b><u>BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION/SCHOOLS ICT STRATEGY AND PROJECT UPDATE</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and Service Manager – Education Transformation and Business Change which was presented to provide Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise progress in relation to Blaenau Gwent Education/Schools ICT Strategy, along with associated projects.</p> <p>The Service Manager Education Transformation &amp; Business Change spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding the Authority’s responsible officer for ICT, the Service Manager advised that the Chief Officer Commercial &amp; Customer had overall responsibility for the Transformation team who dealt with corporate ICT. Education colleagues worked closely with SRS around education ICT ensuring alignment between corporate and education aspects.</p> <p>A Member commented that this was a digital age and ICT was at the centre of learning and enquired regarding Welsh Government initiatives to ensure that every child was equipped for the future. The Service Manager said that the Hwb Ed Tech programme focused on provision of devices for schools during the pandemic and extensive funding had been available to support digitally disadvantage learners to ensure that if there was a move to blended learning, no learners would be disadvantaged. Welsh Government were keen for local authorities and schools to take over that project moving forward. They were currently building in the monitoring and management of digitally disadvantaged learners, in line with the Welsh Government digital learner journey into the ICT Strategy.</p> <p>The Service Manager Young People &amp; Partnerships joined the meeting at this juncture.</p>	

	<p>A Member enquired if the IT equipment that had been distributed during the pandemic for blended learning was going to be recalled. The Service Manager said that they were working with schools to revisit devices to look at whether or not they were suitable for continued use and look to undertake any necessary adaptations. Devices would only be brought back in to school for technical monitoring or in order to replenish licenses. If it was identified that a family still needed their device, then the school and the Local Authority would continue to support that.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 6</b></p>	<p><b><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 15<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2022</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee which presented the Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 be approved.</p>	

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**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2022**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HOLT (IN THE CHAIR)**

Councillors: D. Bevan  
 M. Cook  
 P. Edwards (substitute for L. Elias)  
 S. Healy  
 J. Hill  
 C. Meredith  
 J.C. Morgan  
 J.P. Morgan  
 T. Smith  
 B. Summers  
 D. Wilkshire  
 L. Winnett (substitute for H. Trollope)

**AND:** Corporate Director of Education  
 Strategic Education Improvement Manager  
 Service Manager Inclusion  
 Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change  
 Service Manager Young People & Partnerships  
 Pupil & Student Officer  
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

**ALSO: Representatives of EAS**  
 Ed Pryce, Assistant Director  
 Hayley Davies-Edwards, Principal Challenge Advisor

**Representative of Aneurin Leisure Trust**  
 Ceri Waters, Partnership, Funding & Contracts Manager

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
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<p><b>No. 1</b></p>	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
<p><b>No. 2</b></p>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H. Trollope (Chair), G. Collier and L. Elias.</p> <p><b><u>Co-opted Member</u></b> T. Baxter</p>	
<p><b>No. 3</b></p>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p><b>No. 4</b></p>	<p><b><u>SPECIAL EDUCATION &amp; LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Special Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2022 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p><b>No. 5</b></p>	<p><b><u>ACTION SHEET – 26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2022</u></b></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the special meeting of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2022 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 6</b></p>	<p><b><u>EDUCATION &amp; LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2022 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	



<p><b>No. 7</b></p>	<p><b><u>ACTION SHEET – 1<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY, 2022</u></b></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2022 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 8</b></p>	<p><b><u>EDUCATION DIRECTORATE RESPONSE TO COVID-19</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education, which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to review the Education Directorate’s response to the COVID-19 situation, particularly supporting the schools during the emergency response period.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education presented the report and gave an overview of the current position with regard to the Education Directorate’s response to Covid-19.</p> <p>A Member enquired if there were any proposals to reduce the school summer holiday period to catch up on pupil learning as this was being considered in England. He also raised concerns regarding the increased charges for Leisure services and the affect this would have on some children’s health and well-being. The Corporate Director of Education responded that there were no proposals to change the duration of the school summer holiday period. With regard to the proposed increase in charges for Leisure services, in particular swim prices, he confirmed that following negotiation with the Aneurin Leisure Trust the proposed increase in swim charges had been reduced and would be implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2022.</p> <p>A Member referred to page 78 of the report and commented that EAS Challenge Advisors had now been replaced with School Improvement Partners. He felt that the report needed information in relation to youngsters with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and in relation to academic progress enquired if level 1 qualifications had been withdrawn from the River Centre. The Corporate Director of Education responded that he would ensure that future reports would be updated with regard to the title of School Improvement Partners. With regard to youngsters</p>	

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with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties he confirmed that learners at the River Centre in year 11 would have the opportunity to access appropriate qualifications from level 1 up to GCSE's and would also be offered other alternative curriculum qualifications.

A Member referred to the recent temporary closure of the River Centre for health & safety reasons. The Corporate Director of Education confirmed the River Centre had been partially closed to years 9, 10 & 11 for a short period of time and explained that a major incident had occurred and support from both Gwent Police and the South Wales Fire Service had been requested. As a result, a safer schools package of support had been put in place which included a number of key partners and corporate support services to ensure that arrangements within the setting facilitated improved practices in the future.

The Member had been unaware of this issue and enquired regarding the process to keep Members informed of such incidents. The Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change explained that all Local Authority support services were notified when there was a school closure, and a communication was distributed to Ward Members on behalf of the school and the Education Directorate notifying them of the latest position. The Service Manager confirmed that a communication was issued but would ensure that the Corporate Communications team were aware of any issues regarding Member distribution.

A Member commented that a comprehensive report on the River Centre and schools causing concern should be presented to a future meeting of this Committee. The Director of Education agreed that as part of the Improving Schools report, a comprehensive update in relation to the River Centre could be provided.

In response to a Member's question regarding 'build back better', the Director of Education said that an example of this work related to ICT developments around connectivity work with the schools and also the devices that had been issued to vulnerable learners. He gave an example of 'build back better', in adverse weather conditions learners would still be able to continue to receive meaningful education.

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted as presented.</p>	
<p><b>No. 9</b></p>	<p><b><u>EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICES (EAS) BUSINESS PLAN 2022/25</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Managing Director EAS which was presented for Members to consider the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan 2022-2025, as part of the regional consultation process. Through this activity Members will ensure that the plan enables appropriate support for schools and settings in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>The Assistant Director EAS gave a presentation on the Business Plan covering a wide range of school improvement services to all schools. The plan supports the role the Local Authority have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.</p> <p>A Member enquired if all schools now participated in school to school working, professional learning and self-improvement. The Assistant Director EAS said there was strong school engagement data, which was shared with the Local Authority and concerns were raised if there was insufficient engagement by schools. A brief two slide PowerPoint presentation called ‘Stats and Stories’ specifically focusing on Blaenau Gwent levels of school engagement would be circulated to scrutiny Members to give a snapshot of school engagement as of Spring 2022.</p> <p>A Member referred to paragraph 5.1.5 and the uncertainty around regional grant funding, the Assistant Director EAS said there had been a commitment from the Welsh Government to move to a three year grant profile which showed positive intent from the Welsh Government and confirmed that for the first year they were unaware of any significant reductions.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding how the EAS was going to measure pupil progress moving forward, the Assistant Director EAS gave a detailed response and said</p>	

	<p>that dialogue was still being undertaken with schools regarding progression and assessment and would continue with local authorities and Headteachers to evolve that dialogue.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding what barriers and weaknesses the EAS may encounter to achieving the vision moving forward. The Assistant Director EAS said that a broad range of risks were highlighted in paragraph 5.2.1 and felt it was around recognising that they were part of a wider system, partnerships with schools, local authorities, Estyn and the Welsh Government was key and collectively, working with partners, to know when to intervene and not leaving that intervention too late.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members received the report for information and accepted the Business Plan.</p>	
<p><b>No. 10</b></p>	<p><b><u>INSPIRE 2 ACHIEVE AND WORK PERFORMANCE REPORT JANUARY – DECEMBER 2021</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Young People &amp; Partnerships, which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the local Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work projects funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). These projects are part of the Youth Service’s approach to reducing the numbers of young people becoming Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET).</p> <p>The Service Manager, Young People &amp; Partnerships presented the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented that it was an outstanding achievement that year on year the figures for NEET’s were low and felt it was important to secure long term funding to ensure that these projects continue in the future.</p> <p>With regard to funding, the Service Manager, Young People &amp; Partnerships advised Members that the regional programme would end in May 2023 and local delivery would</p>	

end in April 2023. She felt it was important to ensure that they were involved in discussions for any UK Government funding coming through the system, however, there were concerns that UK Government programmes were not looking at supporting employability programmes for young people below the age of 18. There was also a risk that the NEET's figures could increase if staff left the service as their contracts would not continue beyond May next year.

A Member commented that future prosperity of the County Borough was through education and jobs for young people and felt it should be a priority for the Council to seek long term funding to ensure these projects were carried forward.

The Corporate Director of Education commented that if the funding gap remained relating to Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work projects then, as part of the Council's budget setting process, consideration could be given to secure elements or provision for the projects moving forward.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members scrutinised the information detailed within the report and the report be accepted.

**No. 11** **WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS (WPLS)**  
**ANNUAL RETURN 2020/21**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Service Manager Young People & Partnerships which was presented to consider the report submitted to the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division (MALD) of Welsh Government with respect to the fourth year of the Sixth Assessment Framework for the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) return 2020/21.

The Service Manager Young People & Partnership presented the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member referred to paragraph 5.1 of the report and welcomed the increased spend on books but felt further increases were needed. The Service Manager Young People & Partnerships explained that a new five-year

	<p>agreement had been put in place in 2020, which did not measure library services specifically around spend on books. Currently, the Council and Leisure Trust were looking at and scrutinising the whole standards in library services to ensure that the whole library service was developing well and operating at a good level. This involves the potential for further increases in resources for books and other reading material.</p> <p>With regard to book donations from the public, the Partnership, Funding &amp; Contracts Manager ALT said they received substantial donations from the public, however, there was no measure within the standards regarding public donations and as such they were not included in the figures for the number of items required.</p> <p>A Member enquired if libraries were adequately staffed moving forward as they were now also community hubs. The Partnership, Funding &amp; Contracts Manager ALT said libraries were currently adequately staffed as visitor numbers had not yet returned to pre pandemic levels. As the community hubs expand and libraries take on more services then a review of staffing structures may be needed.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely Members scrutinised the information detailed within the report and the report be accepted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 12</b></p>	<p><b><u>BLAENAU GWENT ADMISSIONS POLICY FOR NURSERY AND STATUTORY EDUCATION 2023/24</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Education Transformation &amp; Business Change which was presented to outline the outcome of the annual consultation process, in line with the revised draft of the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2023/24.</p> <p>The Service Manager Education Transformation &amp; Business Change presented the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p>	

A Member referred to Appendix 1 paragraph 20 Home to School and Post 16 Transport – and raised concerns regarding a ward issue relating to an overflow of children for the forthcoming Year 7 intake to Abertillery Learning Community. The Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change said this issue specifically related to the Home to School and Post 16 Transport policy. The Service Manager advised that the admission number for Abertillery Learning Community was 150 and they had allocated ‘in time’ applications up to the admission number. There had been four ‘late’ applications and they were working with the Abertillery Learning Community to look to extend their capacity in order to accommodate those additional learners.

Following further discussion, the Service Manager reiterated that this issue specifically related to the Council's Home to School and Post 16 Transport policy, and although the Admissions policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2023/24 referenced the Home to School and Post 16 Transport policy it was for the Council, as an admissions authority, to implement the Admission Policy in line with Welsh Government's School Admissions and Admission Appeal codes.

Councillor Bob Summers left the meeting at this juncture.

A lengthy and detailed discussion ensued whereby Members expressed concern regarding the Home to School and Post 16 Transport policy, the Service Manager thereupon clarified points of concern raised by Members.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considered and accepted the policy document.

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**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

**Action Sheet**

**Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee – Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action to be Taken</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
9	<b><u>Education Achievement Service Business Plan 2022-2025</u></b>  Blaenau Gwent stats and stories to be shared with Members.	Lynn Phillips / EAS	Information circulated to Members on 16 <sup>th</sup> March 2022. Also attached for information.

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Please click to access | Cliciwch i gael mynediad:  
[Supporting Our Schools | Cefnogi Ein Hysgolion](#)

Please click to access | Cliciwch i gael mynediad:  
[Distance and Blended Learning | Dysgu o Bell a Dysgu Cyfunol](#)



# EAS

Education Achievement Service  
for South East Wales  
**Gwasanaeth Cyflawni Addysg**  
i Dde Ddwyrain Cymru

## Blaenau Gwent Stats and Stories

### Spring 2022

# School Improvement

**System Leadership:** 6 Headteachers in Blaenau Gwent are engaging in system leadership across the region as School Improvement Partners, compared to 4 the previous year

**Rapid School Improvement:** Sofrydd Primary School has secured rapid school improvement, working with Learning Network Schools in other LAs. Glyncoed Primary has also secured strong progress in distance and blended learning working with Langstone Primary.

**Case Studies:** 5 schools in Blaenau Gwent have contributed to school improvement case studies on turnaround leadership and the success of the Learning Network School provision: St Mary's RC Primary , Pen-y-Cwm Special School, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, Cwm Primary and Glanhwy Primary

**Headteachers:** Nearly all (24) Headteachers shared good practice in distance and blended learning as part of their own Celebrate, Share, Support, Refine (CSSR) process. Schools presented their practice at a regional conference: St Illtyd's and Tredegar presented on both community engagement and supporting pupil wellbeing.

**Wellbeing:** Whilst there have been limited face to face visits in schools in BGBC as a result of individual schools' risk assessments, virtual meetings between headteachers and school improvement partners, focusing on wellbeing have continued to take place for all schools.

**System Leadership:** 5 Schools in Blaenau Gwent are providing holistic support for leadership and teaching to other schools: Glanhwy Primary, St Illtyd's Primary, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, Tredegar School, Pen-y-Cwm Special School

# Leadership, Teaching and Learning

**System Leadership:** 5 schools lead professional learning, supporting teaching and leadership across the EAS (11% of schools across the region).

**Headteacher Qualification:** Over last 3 years, 9 of 59 candidates achieved were from Blaenau Gwent (442 across Wales). 3 of the 9 have secured headship.

**Senior Leadership:** Across the region, 199 (530 across Wales) senior leaders have accessed the senior leader programme, 19 (10%) were from Blaenau Gwent.

**Professional Enquiry:** Every cluster is engaged in the National Professional Enquiry project focusing on one of five themes 'Assessment and Progression', 'Re-imagining schooling', 'Inclusion,' 'Pedagogy and Learning', 'Leadership'. One school represents the LA in the national Evidence Informed Profession Project.

**PL Leads:** Every school and setting is funded to develop the professional learning lead role, supporting the realisation of the Curriculum for Wales.

**Coaching and Mentoring:** 19 leaders (19% of the regional total) have trained as National Facilitator Coaches to support the National Leadership Development Programmes in 2021/22.

**Middle Leadership:** Across the region 603 middle leaders (1400 across Wales) , have accessed the middle leader programme, with 104 (17%) from Blaenau Gwent.

**International Leadership:** 6 of 32 pilot schools have engaged in the International Agile Leadership pilot: St Joseph's RC Primary , Glyncoed Primary , Bro Helyg, Georgetown Primary, St Mary's RC Primary , Ysgol Gyfun Tredegar. A further 4 schools begin cohort 2 St Mary's Church In Wales Primary, Willowtown , Deighton and Blaen-y-Cwm.

# Curriculum for Wales

**Support for others: 6** Blaenau Gwent Schools provide professional learning support to other schools across the EAS region in a variety of curriculum areas as Learning Network Schools.

**Curriculum Design: 3** (of 43) practitioners engaged in the Curriculum Design Programme (Lucy Crehan), which supports developing approaches based on focus and coherence Ebbw Fawr, Glyncoed and Rhos Y Fedwen

**Planning:** Most schools are utilising the SDP guidance provided by the EAS to support them in realising CFW

**Assessment:** All clusters are engaged in the developing school and cluster-based approaches to progression and assessment, to support the development of their assessment strategy.

**Curriculum Design:** All clusters are represented in the Curriculum for Wales Teaching and Learning development group which is supporting them to network with other schools and share approaches to curriculum design and developing pedagogical approaches.

**Curriculum Design: 2** Secondary (or all-through schools) engaged in Secondary Design Network, supporting schools to share approaches to professional learning and curriculum design (Ebbw Fawr and Tredegar Comp).

# Health, Wellbeing and Equity

<p><b>Wellbeing:</b> All schools and settings receive funding for a Wellbeing Lead. 8 schools attend these regularly.</p>	<p><b>ACEs:</b> All schools engaged in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) awareness training and as a result are in a position to draft their tiered approach to Provision.</p>
<p><b>RADY:</b> 5 schools are part of Raising the Achievement of Disadvantaged Youngsters' professional learning programme. Ebbw Fawr welcomed a RADY Consultant to review their work and follow up visits are to be scheduled to evaluate impact.</p>	<p>A Listening to Learners session was held at Abertillery Learning Community. Learners from all secondary year groups participated and the feedback was very positive regarding Wellbeing Support available to them.</p>
<p><b>Grants:</b> All secondary sectors made effective use of the Recruit Recover Raise Standards (RRRS) Grant.</p>	<p>Tredegar Comprehensive, Cwm Primary School and St Joseph's RC Primary school are all Lead Wellbeing and Equity Schools. They support our work across the region.</p>
<p>All schools and settings have access to <b>SEAL</b> Community as the region funds their subscription costs. This will support leaders to shape their Health and Wellbeing Curriculum Offer.</p>	

# Governors

**Governor PL:** Of the 186 Blaenau Gwent Governors that completed a virtual training evaluation, 87% agreed (55% strongly) that the sessions were helpful and informative, and that the information was provided in a clear and precise manner.

**Governor PL:** Attendance at virtual professional learning opportunities, including the conference has overall been over 80% higher than physical training in previous years.

**SLA:** During the year, a total of 130 virtual meetings were supported, an (5.4 per school), well above the legal minimum of 3.

**Bespoke Support:** The EAS has provided bespoke support has been provided for the appointment of LA Additional Governors and LA nominated Chair of Governors.

**Governor PL:** Of the 27 Blaenau-Gwent Governors that attended the regional Virtual Governor Conference and completed an evaluation, 93% agreed (63% strongly) that the conference was informative and will help them in their role as a governor.

**Governor PL:** Of the Blaenau-Gwent Governors that attended, 83% said they would attend a Virtual Regional Conference again, with a further 17% saying they would 'maybe' attend again. None said they would not.

**Networking:** Over 50% of Blaenau-Gwent Secondary Chairs / Vice-Chairs of Governors regularly attend termly network meetings.

**SLA:** For the 25% of Blaenau-Gwent schools that at some point during the year had more than 3 vacancies, notifications were sent to the Chair of Governors, prior to the subsequent meeting.



# Agenda Item 12

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**  
Date of Meeting: **6<sup>th</sup> September 2022**  
Report Subject: **Timing of Meetings Survey Results**  
Portfolio Holder: **Executive Members People and Education & People and Social Services**  
Report Submitted by: **Elizabeth Thomas, Scrutiny and Democratic Officer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
		25.08.22			06.09.22			

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present to Members the results of the Timing of Meetings survey for the People Scrutiny Committee.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 As set out under Section 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, councils are required to review the times, frequency and length of meetings at least once in every term. The survey should be carried out no later than six months following elections.
- 2.2 When considering the timing of council meetings Members should consider the impact on the diversity of the membership of the council and the impact on the council's ability to make decisions which are informed by and reflect the diversity of people living in the council area. Decision making should be informed by people of all ages and backgrounds as decisions are then likely to be more balanced and have more focus on sustainable and long term solutions in keeping with the principles set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 2.3 The Measure states that it is important that councils do not simply continue to hold their meetings at the same time, in the way as they always have done. What may have been tradition or an arrangement which suited the previous cohort of councillors will not necessarily serve the interests of the current one.
- 2.4 Members should have regard to equality and diversity issues when considering the length, times, intervals and locations of meetings which are convenient to its members. Some Members may find attending, sometimes lengthy meetings, in the day is incompatible with their paid employment and certain times of day are challenging for people with caring responsibilities such as young children.

2.5 All scrutiny committee meetings will initially be offered on a hybrid basis and members and officers are to inform Democratic Services of their preference.

2.6 As part of the cycle of meetings the People Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to be held on a Tuesday with the timing of the meeting to be agreed as part of this report.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 From the results of the survey the preferred meeting start time for the People Scrutiny Committee was 9.30am for the Agenda Management Discussion meeting, with the formal meeting commencing at 10.00am.

3.2 However, the People Scrutiny Committee now has a young person representative on the committee and Members are to consider if meetings could be held at alternative times, i.e. one meeting at the preferred time of 9.30 /10.00am and the next meeting at 4.00pm to ensure that the young person is able to attend meetings alongside their educational needs.

#### **Option One**

To agree the preferred meeting time which is 9.30am Agenda Management Discussion and the formal meeting to commence at 10.00am.

#### **Option Two**

To agree to alternative meeting times, ie. 9.30am for 10.00am and 4.00pm for 4.30pm.

### 4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

This report is required as set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, and supports the principles set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

### 5. **Implications Against Each Option**

#### 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

#### 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

If a timing of meetings survey is not completed within six months of an election, the Council will not meet its statutory obligations as set out in the Local Governance (Wales) Measure 2011.

#### 5.3 ***Legal***

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to undertake a Timing of meetings survey at least once every term, following an election.

5.4 **Human Resources**

5.4.1 There are no direct implications in relation to staffing.

Staff work flexible working hours, therefore, any changes to timing of meetings would not impact on staff.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 A Timing of Meeting survey was undertaken with all Elected Members during June 2022. 5 (55%) out of 9 members of the People Scrutiny Committee responded to the survey and the results are shown below:

Meeting Start Time							
9.00 /9.30	9.30/ 10.00	1.30 /2.00	4.00 /4.30	After 5.00	Alternate	Rotate	Don't mind
1	3	1	1	2	0	1	0

Note: some responses highlighted more than one preferred time.

6.2 The preferred meeting start time was 9.30 for the Agenda Management Discussion meeting with the formal meeting commencing at 10.00am.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

By giving consideration to holding meeting at different times of the day would support equality and diversity issues, providing the opportunity for any members of the public to attend a democratic meeting which would take into consideration personal circumstances, i.e. working hours, childcare issues, similar to that of Elected Members.

6.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**

The intention of this survey is to consult with all Elected Members to seek their views.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

Having more flexible meeting times, may encourage more participation from young people and those who are working or have caring responsibilities.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

Being more flexible with the timing of meetings should prevent dis-engagement from Elected Members who may find attending some meetings at certain times of the day more difficult owing to caring or working responsibilities.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

All Elected Members have been consulted on the timing of meetings survey.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

All Council services are involved with the democratic functions of the Council. Flexible meetings times may also support officers in their work / life balance.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

All democratic meetings are offered on a 'hybrid' basis to both officers and Members and will, therefore, reduce the need to travel to meetings.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached for Members' information.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

The timing of meetings is considered annually at individual democratic committee meetings and monitored by the Head of Democratic Services.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment

## **Integrated Impact Screening Template**

The purpose of undertaking an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is to consider the impact of proposed strategies, policies, or service reviews and developments against the full range of our statutory obligations:

- Equality Act (2010)
- Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)
- Welsh Language Act

IAs are an important tool that can be used to improve equality and diversity; sustainable development and the use of the Welsh language by ensuring impacts are considered collectively and not in isolation.

IAs need to be completed as early as possible during any policy development or service review process. The IIA screening template has been designed to help you consider whether a policy, for example, has a positive or negative impact on specific groups of people. It also aims to help assess whether there are any negative impacts and whether their significance is low or high. If negative impacts with a high significance are identified, then a full Integrated Impact Assessment is required to identify how these impacts can be minimised by introducing any mitigating measures or options.

The IIA Screening Template consists of 2 parts:

- Part I: Screening exercise to identify positive or negative impacts
- Part II: Integrated Impact Assessment required – Guidance note

Finally, the outcome of your IIA Screening Exercise needs to be briefly noted in Section 6.9b of the Corporate Report template and attached as an appendix to your report. Similarly, if a full IIA is undertaken then the key findings need to be summarised in section 6.9b of the Corporate Report template, along with the outcome of the assessment, and the full IIA needs to be attached as an appendix to your report.

## **PART 1: SCREENING EXERCISE TO IDENTIFY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE IMPACTS**

**Description of Assessment** *(Briefly provide details of the policy development or service review being assessed and the option being presented)*

Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee

People Scrutiny Committee

Place Scrutiny Committee

Partnership Scrutiny Committee

Timing of Meetings Survey for all the above Scrutiny Committee meetings

**Responsible Directorate** *(Please specify)*

Corporate Services

**Responsible Officer** *(Please specify)*

Elizabeth Thomas

**Assessment Date** *(Please specify)*

24<sup>th</sup> August 2022

**Staff Involved in Assessment** *(Please specify)*

<p><b>Does this 'Option' have a <u>positive or a negative impact</u> on any of the following protected characteristics?</b></p> <p><i>Please complete as applicable</i></p>		<p><b>Please describe what the impact will be?</b></p>	<p><b>What is the significance of the impact?</b></p> <p><i>For example, a 'high' negative impact would have a significant disproportionate impact on a specific group</i></p>	<p><b>Negative impacts identified</b></p> <p><i>If 'low' please explain the reason for this significance rating.</i></p> <p><i>If 'high' please state 'Integrated Impact Assessment' required and refer to Part II</i></p>	
<p><b>Race</b> <i>(people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and different racial backgrounds)</i></p>	<p>Positive X</p> <p>Negative <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>→</p>	<p><u>Positive</u> All persons can participate in democratic meetings.</p> <p><u>Negative</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Low</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Low</p>	
<p><b>Disability</b> <i>(people with disabilities/ long term conditions)</i></p>	<p>Positive X</p> <p>Negative <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>→</p>	<p><u>Positive</u> As above</p> <p><u>Negative</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Low</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Low</p>	
<p><b>Sex</b> <i>(women and men, girls and boys and those who self-identify their gender)</i></p>	<p>Positive X</p> <p>Negative <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>→</p>	<p><u>Positive</u> As above</p> <p><u>Negative</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Low</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Low</p>	

Does this 'Option' have a <u>positive or a negative impact</u> on any of the following protected characteristics?  <i>Please complete as applicable</i>			Please describe what the impact will be?	What is the significance of the impact?  <i>For example, a 'high' negative impact would have a significant disproportionate impact on a specific group</i>	Negative impacts identified  <i>If 'low' please explain the reason for this significance rating.  If 'high' please state 'Integrated Impact Assessment' required and refer to Part II</i>
<b>Age</b> <i>(people of all ages)</i>	Positive <input type="checkbox"/>	Negative X	→  <u>Positive</u>  <u>Negative</u> The proposed time of scrutiny committee meetings could impact on a young person being able to take part in the meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low  <input type="checkbox"/> High X Low	Reasonable adjustment: The report gives options to ensure young people can attend meetings alongside their educational needs, in discussion with the Participation Team.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b> <i>(lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, other)</i>	Positive X	Negative <input type="checkbox"/>	→  <u>Positive</u> All persons can participate in democratic meetings.  <u>Negative</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low  <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low	



<b>Religion and Belief</b> <i>(people with different religions and beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>	Positive X                  Negative □	→	<u>Positive</u> As above  <u>Negative</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low  <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low	
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Does this 'Option' have a <u>positive or a negative impact</u> on any of the following protected characteristics?  <i>Please complete as applicable</i>			Please describe what the impact will be?	What is the significance of the impact?  <i>For example, a 'high' negative impact would have a significant disproportionate impact on a specific group</i>	Negative impacts identified  <i>If 'low' please explain the reason for this significance rating.  If 'high' please state 'Integrated Impact Assessment' required and refer to Part II</i>
<b>Gender</b> <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth)</i>	Positive X                  Negative <input type="checkbox"/>	→	<u>Positive</u> All persons can participate in democratic meetings.  <u>Negative</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low  <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low	
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b> <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	Positive X                  Negative <input type="checkbox"/>	→	<u>Positive</u> All persons can participate in democratic meetings.  <u>Negative</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low  <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low	
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b> <i>(women who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave)</i>	Positive X                  Negative <input type="checkbox"/>	→	<u>Positive</u> Democratic meetings can be attended in person or via MS Teams. Meetings are also recorded and uploaded to the	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low  <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low	

			BGCBC website to view following the meeting.  <u>Negative</u>		
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**Welsh Language**

The Welsh Language Act 1993 places a legal duty on public authorities to promote the use of the Welsh Language and to treat the Welsh and English languages equally. It offers the public the right to choose which language to use in their dealings with the Council. It recognises that Members of the public can express their views and needs better in their preferred language. It recognises that enabling the public to use their preferred language is a matter of good practice, not a concession. It sets out how the Council will implement that principle in the provision of bilingual services to the public in Wales, taking account of the developing linguistic nature of the County Borough.

<p><b>Does this 'Option' have a <u>positive or a negative impact</u> ?</b></p> <p><i>Please complete as applicable</i></p>		<p><b>Please describe what the impact will be?</b></p>	<p><b>What is the significance of the impact?</b></p> <p><i>For example, a 'high' negative impact would have a significant disproportionate impact on a specific group</i></p>	<p><b>Negative impacts identified</b></p> <p><i>If 'low' please explain the reason for this significance rating.</i></p> <p><i>If 'high' please state 'Integrated Impact Assessment' required and refer to Part II</i></p>	
<p><b>Welsh Language</b> <i>The Welsh Language Measure 2011 and the <a href="#">Welsh Language Standards</a> require the</i></p>	<p>Positive X      Negative <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>→</p>	<p><u>Positive</u> Simultaneous translation is available on request 3 days prior for all democratic meetings.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Low</p>	

<p><i>Council to have 'due regard' for any positive or negative impacts that proposal may have on opportunities to use the Welsh language.</i></p>			<p><u>Negative</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low</p>	
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**Socio-economic Duty (Strategic Decisions Only)**

The [Socio-economic Duty](#) provides a framework in order to ensure tackling inequality is at the forefront of decision making. The duty requires the Council, when making strategic decisions, to consider how decisions can help reduce inequality of outcomes.

The duty defines **socio-economic disadvantage** as “living in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others living in the same society”.

The duty generally defines **strategic decisions** as “decisions which effect how the Council fulfils its intended statutory purpose over a significant period of time and not routine day-to-day decisions”. Examples of strategic decisions includes those which are statutory; happen over a significant time; not routine; have strategic intent; strategies or the setting of strategic objectives; service delivery and improvement plans;

medium to long-term plans etc. **Please consider these additional vulnerable group and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:**

- *Single parents and vulnerable families*
- *People with low literacy/numeracy*
- *Pensioners*
- *Looked after children*
- *Homeless people*
- *Carers*
- *Armed Forces Community*
- *Students*
- *Single adult households*
- *People misusing substances*
- *People who have experienced the asylum system*
- *People of all ages leaving a care setting*
- *People living in the most deprived areas in Wales (WIMD)*
- *People involved in the criminal justice system*

<b>Does this 'Option' have a <u>positive or a negative impact</u> on any of the following themes?</b>		<b>Please describe what the impact will be?</b>	<b>What is the significance of the impact?</b>  <i>For example, a 'high' negative impact would have a significant disproportionate impact on a specific group</i>	<b>Negative impacts identified</b>  <i>If 'low' please explain the reason for this significance rating.</i>  <i>If 'high' please state 'Integrated Impact Assessment' required and refer to Part II</i>
<p><i>Please complete as applicable</i></p>				

<b>SED-Education</b> The capability to be knowledgeable	Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/>	→	<u>Positive</u>  <u>Negative</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low  <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low	
<b>Does this 'Option' have a <u>positive or a negative impact</u> on any of the following themes?</b>  <i>Please complete as applicable</i>			<b>Please describe what the impact will be?</b>	<b>What is the significance of the impact?</b>  <i>For example, a 'high' negative impact would have a significant disproportionate impact on a specific group</i>	<b>Negative impacts identified</b>  <i>If 'low' please explain the reason for this significance rating.</i>  <i>If 'high' please state 'Integrated Impact Assessment' required and refer to Part II</i>
<b>SED-Work</b> The capability to work in just and favourable conditions	Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/>	→	<u>Positive</u>  <u>Negative</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low  <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low	
<b>SED-Living Standards</b> The capability to enjoy a comfortable standard of living	Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/>	→	<u>Positive</u>  <u>Negative</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low  <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low	
<b>SED-Health</b> The capability to be healthy, physically, and mentally	Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/>	→	<u>Positive</u>  <u>Negative</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low  <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low	

<p><b>SED-Justice &amp; Security</b> The capability to avoid premature mortality</p>	<p>Positive <input type="checkbox"/>      Negative <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>→</p>	<p><u>Positive</u></p> <p><u>Negative</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Low</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Low</p>	
<p><b>Does this 'Option' have a <u>positive or a negative impact</u> on any of the following themes?</b></p> <p><i>Please complete as applicable</i></p>			<p><b>Please describe what the impact will be?</b></p>	<p><b>What is the significance of the impact?</b></p> <p><i>For example, a 'high' negative impact would have a significant disproportionate impact on a specific group</i></p>	<p><b>Negative impacts identified</b></p> <p><i>If 'low' please explain the reason for this significance rating.</i></p> <p><i>If 'high' please state 'Integrated Impact Assessment' required and refer to Part II</i></p>
<p><b>SED-Participation</b> The capability to participate in decision making and in communities, accessing services</p>	<p>Positive <input type="checkbox"/>      Negative <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>→</p>	<p><u>Positive</u></p> <p><u>Negative</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Low</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>High <input type="checkbox"/>Low</p>	

**Children’s Rights Approach - [The Right Way](#)**

The Children’s Rights Approach – The Right Way is a framework for working with children, grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It places the UNCRC at the core of planning and service delivery and integrates children’s rights into every aspect of decision-making, policy and practice. The Right Way focuses on three main them Participation, Provision and Protection.

<p><b>Does this ‘Option’ have a <u>positive or a negative impact on children &amp; people’s participation, provision or protection.</u></b></p> <p><i>Please complete as applicable</i></p>			<p><b>Please describe what the impact will be?</b></p>	<p><b>What is the significance of the impact?</b></p> <p><i>For example, a ‘high’ negative impact would have a significant disproportionate impact on a specific group</i></p>	<p><b>Negative impacts identified</b></p> <p><i>If ‘low’ please explain the reason for this significance rating.</i></p> <p><i>If ‘high’ please state ‘Integrated Impact Assessment’ required and refer to Part II</i></p>
<p><b>Participation</b> (child or young person as someone who actively contributes to society as a citizen)</p>	<p>Positive <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Negative <input type="checkbox"/></p>	→	<p><u>Positive</u></p> <p><u>Negative</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Low</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>High</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Low</p>	
<p><b>Provision</b> (the basic rights of children and young people to survive and develop)</p>	<p>Positive <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Negative <input type="checkbox"/></p>	→	<p><u>Positive</u></p> <p><u>Negative</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Low</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>High</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Low</p>	
<p><b>Protection</b> (children and young people are protected against exploitation, abuse or discrimination)</p>	<p>Positive <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Negative <input type="checkbox"/></p>	→	<p><u>Positive</u></p> <p><u>Negative</u></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/>High</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Low</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>High</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>Low</p>	



## **PART2: INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED – GUIDANCE NOTE**

Where any negative impacts of ‘high’ significance have been identified as part of the screening exercise then an IIA needs to be undertaken. The IIA consists of 7 sections and a series of questions to help further understand the impacts in more depth through a thorough examination of evidence and available research which will help you to identify how any detrimental impacts can be mitigated:

Section 1 – Protected Characteristics

Section 2 – Welsh Language

Section 3 – Socio-economic Duty (Strategic Decisions Only)

Section 4 - Children’s Rights Approach – The Right Way

Section 5 – Data

Section 6 – Consultation

Section 7 - Decision

You are only required to complete Section 1, 2, 3 or 4, if relevant, and it is appropriate to do so.

You must complete sections 5,6 & 7 as they are mandatory.

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# Agenda Item 13

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **6<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

Report Subject: **Proposed Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2022-23**

Portfolio Holder: **Executive Members People and Education & People and Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Democratic and Scrutiny Officer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
July 2022	25.08.22				06.09.22	Executive FWP – 14.09.22	Council FWP – 29.9.22	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
  - 1.1 To present the People Scrutiny Work Programme for 2022-23 (Appendix 1) and to seek approval from Committee.
2. **Scope and Background**
  - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
  - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's Corporate Plan, agreed by the Council in July 2020, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
  - 2.3 The Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programmes are also aligned to the Governance and Audit Committee, Executive Committee and Council Forward Work Programmes.
  - 2.4 The Work Programme is a fluid document and there is flexibility to allow for regular review between the Chair and the Committee.
  - 2.5 The Work Programmes have been discussed with Chairs and Vice-Chairs of individual committees, prior to presentation to the respective scrutiny committees for consideration and approval.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
  - 3.1 The work programmes have been endorsed by the relevant departments of the Council.
  - 3.2 **Option 1**  
To agree the Forward Work Programme for the People Scrutiny Committee.

**Option 2**

To suggest any amendments prior to agreeing the Forward Work Programme.

**People Scrutiny Committee  
DRAFT Forward Work Programme**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Scrutiny Topic</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Executive / Council</b>
<b>Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022</b>	Proposed Forward Work Programme 2022/23	<b>Approval</b> To agree the Forward Work Programme for 2022/23, recognising the fluidity of the document.	Chair	N/A
	Self-evaluation (SE)	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> To ensure that Members contribute to the development of the self-evaluation report.	Lynn Phillips	Executive – 14.09.22
	Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy <b>To be published by 1st October</b>	<b>Pre-Decision</b> To provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the draft Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2022/23, prior to Executive Committee approval and publication on 1/10/2021.	Lynn Phillips / Jo Watts	Executive – 14.09.22
	Proposal to explore and develop a Business case for Children’s residential provision in Blaenau Gwent	<b>Pre-Decision</b> To seek support to develop a business case to provide local authority children’s residential provision in Blaenau Gwent.	Tanya Evans	Executive – 14.09.22
<b>Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2022</b>	ALN Policies / Strategies Education Safeguarding Policy	<b>Pre-Decision</b> To consider policies prior to approval.	Lynn Phillips / Luisa Munro-Morris	Executive - 26.09.22
	Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/22	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> Members to receive the Director of Social Services Annual report 2021/22.	Tanya Evans	Council – 29.09.22

Dates	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council
<b>Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022</b>	Safeguarding Performance reporting	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> To provide members with Corporate, Children's and Adult Safeguarding Performance.	Lynn Phillips Tanya Evans	Executive - 26.10.22
	Improving Schools Programme	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> To provide Members with an update on any inspection report findings (when available) and progress within schools that are causing concern or subject to Council intervention.	Luisa Munro- Morris	Executive – 26.10.22

Dates	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council
<b>Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022</b>	Director of Social Services Quarter 1 and 2 update	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> Members to receive the quarterly update of the Director of Social Services Annual report.	Tanya Evans	Executive - 07.12.22
	Director of Education Quarter 1 and 2 update	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> Members to receive the quarterly update of the Director of Education Annual report.	Lynn Phillips	Executive – 07.12.22

Dates	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council
<b>Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023</b>	Improving Schools Programme	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> To provide Members with an update on any inspection report findings (when available) and progress within schools that are causing concern or subject to Council intervention.	Luisa Munroe-Morris	Executive – 01.03.23

Dates	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council
<b>Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023</b>	School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education <b>Statutory deadline for the policy to be published by 15<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>Pre-Decision</b> To consider the draft School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2023/24 prior to approval by the Executive Committee.	Lynn Phillips	Executive – 01.03.23
	Safeguarding Performance reporting	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> To provide members with Corporate, Children's and Adult Safeguarding Performance.	Lynn Phillips Tanya Evans	Executive – 01.03.23

Dates	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council
<b>Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023</b>	Education Directorate End of Year 2021 report	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> To provide Members with the first annual strategic overview report from the Corporate Director on progress made and key areas for future development.	Lynn Phillips	Executive – 19.04.23



<b>Member Briefing Sessions</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>
Quarterly	Directorate Briefings	<p>A closely focused directorate update session to provide information and detail on service areas in order to raise the interest and enthusiasm of members. This also provides a legitimate avenue to raise local issues outside of the scrutiny process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My Support Team update</li> <li>• Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy</li> </ul>	All
Monday 12 <sup>th</sup> September 2022 2.00pm – 3.30pm	Blaenau Gwent Approach to Poverty	Provide Elected Members with an overview of Blaenau Gwent's approach to tackle poverty.	Corporate Director Social Services
Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup> September 2022 2.00pm – 3.30pm	Fostering and Adoption	By the use of case studies this session will take Elected Members through a child's journey in foster care highlighting some of the common issues that occur while children are looked after. Some of the case studies will include children who move on to adoptive families.	<p>Head of Children's Services</p> <p>Service Manager, Children's Services</p> <p>Service Manager, SEW Adoption Service</p>
Online Course	Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	<p>This on-line learning module will provide an overview of the duties and legislation in place to tackle all forms of Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.</p> <p>The Module can be accessed by clicking on the link below or paste it into your browser (please note Internet Explorer is not compatible with the website):</p> <p><a href="https://learning.wales.nhs.uk/course/view.php?id=1410">https://learning.wales.nhs.uk/course/view.php?id=1410</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your username will be your personal reference number (available at the top of your payslip) pre-fixed with BGCBC e.g. BGCBC123456</li> <li>• Your initial password is Welcome1% (please note this is case sensitive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The enrolment key is Blaen15%</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Online course
	Safeguarding Online Course	This online course will provide a practical understanding of the importance of safeguarding children and adults and how	Online

		<p>to spots signs of abuse, harm or neglect. The Module can be accessed by clicking on the link below or paste it into your browser (please note Internet Explorer is not compatible with the website):</p> <p><a href="https://learning.wales.nhs.uk/mod/scorm/view.php?id=17510">https://learning.wales.nhs.uk/mod/scorm/view.php?id=17510</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your username will be your personal reference number (available at the top of your payslip) pre-fixed with BGCBC e.g. BGCBC123456</li> <li>• Your initial password is Welcome1% (please note this is case sensitive)</li> <li>• The enrolment key is Blaen15%</li> </ul>	
TBC	Flying Start Expansion	To provide members with information on the Flying Start expansion.	Ceri Bird
TBC	Safeguarding in Education	To provide members with an update on Safeguarding in Education.	Michelle Jones
TBC	Education Transformation	<p>Briefing session to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme Bands B progress and education project overview</li> <li>• Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2021/22</li> </ul>	Joanne Watts
TBC	Youth Service	<p>Briefing session to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Service Performance</li> <li>• Inspire to Achieve / Work</li> </ul>	Joanne Sims
TBC	Estyn Preparedness		Lynn Phillips
TBC	Working with the EAS		EAS Lynn Phillips
November 2022 - TBC	Post 16 Learner Outcomes	The session is to provide Members with an overview of the BG Learning Zone's post 16 attainment levels for both academic and vocational areas of learning.	Coleg Gwent Lynn Phillips
TBC	Assistive Technology	To provide information of Assistive Technology.	Alyson Hoskins
TBC	National Adoption Service	To provide an update on the National Adoption Service.	Tanya Evans
April 2023	Corporate Parenting Progress	To provide an update on Corporate Parenting.	Ceri Bird

# Agenda Item 14

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **6th September 2022**

Report Subject: **Summary Self-Evaluation Report 2022**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Sue Edmunds, Executive Member for People and Education**

Report Submitted by: **Lynn Phillips, Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
✓	11.08.22	25.08.22			06.09.22	14.09.22		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members of the People Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to scrutinise the findings of ongoing self-evaluation processes undertaken within the Education Directorate, across the Council and with key partners, particularly for the Summary Self-Evaluation Report (SER).

## 2. Scope and Background

2.1 Blaenau Gwent Education Services are committed to self-review and self-improvement and view these processes as being fundamental to securing ongoing improvement in educational outcomes and effectiveness of provision. The Education Directorate has adopted a standardised approach for self-evaluation (SE) that is now embedded into the day to day practice. This report looks at the emerging findings against the inspection framework for Local Government Education Services (LGES), which will inform assessment of progress against the key improvement priorities set out in business improvement plans. The revised Education Improvement Plan (EIP) priorities for 2022-25 are shown in **(Appendix 1)**.

2.2 The report provides the Education Directorate's Self-Evaluation Policy **(Appendix 2)**, which sets out the arrangements for effective self-evaluation. The findings from the Summary Self-Evaluation Report (SER) are reflected as actions for improvement in the Directorate's Business Plans at Directorate, Service and Team levels. Effective self-evaluation means that the Directorate remains focussed on improving the right areas of work. The LA has established a Headteacher Working Group (HWG) to support self-evaluation activity and 7 Headteachers are engaged. The feedback from the Headteachers is that the Summary SER is a 'fair and balanced' picture of overall performance across the LGES framework.

2.3 A comprehensive data set of school performance, coupled with evaluations of impact and effectiveness of Council based and partnership support feeds into the overall evaluation. It should be noted, however, that there has been a relaxation of reporting performance arrangements by Welsh Government.

Therefore, the Education Directorate is unable to report on school benchmarking/performance data and school categorisation has been suspended, therefore, any information presented in this report is to only be used for internal self-evaluation purposes. The report focusses on the Summary SER updates, particularly the way that corporately the Council, Education Directorate and partners are supporting our schools/learners across the school estate. Self-evaluation is an on-going process and the SER has been updated to reflect the KS4 and Post 16 results realised during the Summer Series 2021 through Centre Determined Grades (CDGs) the SER will also be amended to reflect KS4 & KS5 results from the summer series 2022.

- 2.4 A comprehensive self-evaluation process helps identify those areas where progress has been made and where further improvement is required. Emerging findings, via ongoing self-evaluation are captured every Autumn and Springtime as well as via corporate performance and finance reporting mechanisms. This report details the findings and these are shown in the Summary SER attached as (Appendix 3). The SER is structured in a way to be aligned to the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework as detailed below.
- 2.5 The three inspection areas of the LGES inspection framework are:
- Inspection Area 1 – Outcomes**
    - Standards and progress overall
    - Standards and progress of specific groups
    - Wellbeing and attitudes to learning
  - Inspection Area 2 – Education Services and Provision**
    - Support for school improvement
    - Support for vulnerable learners
    - Other education support services
  - Inspection Area 3 – Leadership and Management**
    - Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers
    - Self-evaluation and improvement planning
    - Professional learning
    - Safeguarding arrangements
    - Use of resources
- 2.6 It is the high-level points only, which are presented in the main body of this report shown under Section 6, which is provided to contribute to Members potential areas for discussion. Schools continue to respond well to the new ways of working e.g., Curriculum for Wales Reform, ALN Reform and post COVID response.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 This report has been discussed by Education DMT and CLT prior to submission to the People Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.2 **Option 1:** to accept the report as presented, whilst also acknowledging that effective self-evaluation is an on-going process.

- 3.3 **Option 2:** to scrutinise the information detailed within the report and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate suggestions and/or recommendations to the Executive Committee.

This report provides the Committee with important monitoring information, as well as opportunity to identify where progress has been made and where further improvement is required.

#### 4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

##### 4.1 **Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

One of the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan aims for every child to have the best start in life. Through effective self-evaluation and improvement planning processes, the Education Directorate seeks to ensure that provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people, so that their progress and performance improves.

#### 5. **Implications Against Each Option**

##### 5.1 **Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**

5.1.1 The Council allocates approximately £50.4 million (2022/23) to schools via the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) to provide high quality education and to improve pupil outcomes. The Council's total gross budgeted expenditure per pupil for 202/23 is £7,397 which is the highest in Wales and £624 above the Welsh average of £6,773.

5.1.2 For 2022/23 the funding delegated to schools was 85.2% which is above the all Wales average and ranked 1st when compared to the family of LAs. (Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools 2022/23) (**Appendix 4**).

5.1.3 The Council commissions the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to deliver the statutory functions of school improvement. The annual financial costs being circa £350,000 and a 0.4% decrease on the previous financial year. Schools categorisation profile has improved (although currently suspended) against a backdrop of decreasing financial contributions to the EAS: this therefore, effectively represents good value for money. The Education Directorate holds the EAS to account for the impact and effectiveness of their work in schools in Blaenau Gwent.

##### 5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

5.2.1 Risk can be associated with weak self-evaluation that fails to accurately identify those areas where good progress has been made and where further improvement is needed. Strong self-evaluation helps services target resources at greatest need and hence bring about improvement precisely where it is required.

5.2.2 Risk mitigating actions include:

- strong self-evaluation processes, which accurately identify those areas which need to improve the most;
- the routine monitoring of quantitative and qualitative information, regular quality assurance meetings between the Council and the EAS, as well as assurance meetings within the Education Directorate and across teams, school inspection findings; and,
- the progress schools make is also monitored on a termly basis. School safeguarding processes are also closely monitored.

5.2.3 Holistic support packages are devised via regular cross-service meetings between OD, Finance, Health and Safety, Education and School Governor Support Services.

### 5.3 **Legal**

This report provides information about end of Key Stage school performance underpinned by processes set out in the School Standards and Organisation Act Wales (2013) in supporting both strategic and operational activity to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

### 5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct HR/OD implications associated with this report, however, it is intended to establish a corporate/partnership project group for project management purposes to create collective ownership as well as distributed leadership for self-evaluation across the board. The group will also play a key role in being Estyn inspection ready.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

### 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

**(NB.** Some school performance information relates to 2019-20, however, the performance data pack (**Appendix 5**) provides evidence for self-evaluation purposes only from 2021).

#### 6.1.1 **Areas where good progress has been made:**

- The Education Directorate received Full Council approval (2020-2021) to establish a new leadership and management structure that includes additional capacity for school improvement;
- There have been strong appointments made to the Education Directorate's leadership team, including a Head of School Improvement and Inclusion and Service Managers for Education Transformation and Business Change, Young People and Partnerships as well as the Service Manager Inclusion on a secondment basis;
- The Corporate and Education Directorate's response to COVID-19 has been effective and this is discussed in the Estyn Thematic Review and this has been followed up in the Summer Letter (2021) commentary;
- School inspection and school categorisation profile has improved significantly with no primary schools in follow up and notable practice identified in a number of schools;

- There has been an incremental reduction in Schools Causing Concern from 6 schools in 2019 to only 2 schools in 2022. ALC has been removed from Estyn Significant Improvement category;
- GCSE L2 English, Maths and Capped 9 improved overall, albeit the results in 2020-21 were realised through Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) and not through external examinations;
- The 2021 Centre Determined Grades were positive and in line with the SDP targets set by the 4 secondary settings. There were improvements in approaching two thirds of the key measures. The results are shown in the Performance Data Pack as well as the Main SER for self-evaluation purposes;
- GCSE A\*/A and A\*-C grades improved in English and Maths;
- Planning arrangements for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Reform are well developed and a Phase 1 summary evaluation implementation document evidences the progress made across the school estate;
- The partnership with Schools, Coleg Gwent and Post 16 providers has strengthened through the establishment of the Post 16 Strategic Partnership Board. A-level A\*-C and A\*-E grades continue to be strong and were in line with the all-Wales means at 99.1%;
- Value-added progress in English and Maths, reading and numeracy for our 7 and 11 year olds improved in 2019-20. BG's schools are working towards the use of GL assessments across the board in 2022 to assess learner progress. This data will only be used to inform self-evaluation and not for accountability purposes;
- The Youth Service exceeded that of the all-Wales means for reach and accredited learning outcomes. The levels of NEETs at 1.5% are at their lowest levels i.e., 9 young people;
- Primary persistent absenteeism reduced to below that of the all-Wales means;
- The School Based Counselling Service provides good support and this is evidenced through the evaluation reports;
- Permanent exclusions reduced;
- Strong progress through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme with robust programme management arrangements in place. The Band B programme is well underway an investment of circa £26m into the school estate;
- Good progress against the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP), including WG approval of the BG 10 Year WESP and the new Welsh medium seedling school moving to project implementation stage;
- Headteacher induction and support programme very well received by aspiring and new Headteachers;
- Schools are strategically contributing to a full systems approach e.g., self-evaluation work as well as collaborative leadership arrangements and this will continue moving forward through the on-going work of the Headteacher Working Groups (covering Self-Evaluation/Curriculum/ALN Reforms).

- Effective ICT support provided particularly to digitally disadvantaged learners in order for them to engage in digital platforms including the coordination and distribution of technology. ICT Strategy nearing completion;
- The Education components of the corporate staff wellbeing survey results were good;
- Overall, the revenue financial position of the Education Directorate and schools has improved significantly with school balances at £4.3m in 2021-22; including redressing the budget deficit in one school that i.e., Abertillery Learning Community. The ALC Corporate Group monitors performance and financial sustainability of the setting. The LA has passed an 8.4% uplift to schools via the ISB in 2022-23; and,
- The Council and EAS are evidencing improving value for money returns i.e., improvement in standards overall with less resources.

#### 6.1.2 **Areas where further improvement is required:**

- Implement the Education Recovery and Renewal Plan. Higher levels of language acquisition and reading across the board, but particularly in our very young children in early years. This will be a real focus of the recovery programme from COVID as we 'build back better' in line with Curriculum for Wales Reform;
- Improve attainment of eFSM pupils and particularly our more-able pupils throughout education;
- Improve school attendance in both primary and secondary sectors;
- Improve progress between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, particularly in English, Maths and Science;
- Reviewing the Inclusion service and implementing the plans/provision for pupils with additional learning needs e.g., increasing Pen-y-Cwm Special School capacity and providing whole school strategic support for provision in line with the requirements of the ALN Reform Act. This includes a review of the Resource Bases across the schools;
- Reviewing the Inclusion Strategy and associated policies, particularly monitoring of relevant data, such as Behaviour Management and RPIs etc.
- Continuing the work with Schools Causing Concern (SCC), particularly the school currently in an Estyn category. BFS 'One Plan' monitoring;
- The River Centre is a School Causing Concern and is subject to Statutory Warning Notice (SWN) letter for improvement. This setting is likely to require further support following a recent inspection;
- Reduce school exclusions and support parents/carers who opt to Elective Home Educate (EHE), with increases linked to COVID;
- Staff and pupil wellbeing has been significantly impacted by the pandemic: issues relating to emotional health and wellbeing are on the rise, which will need to be fully supported by the Education Directorate, schools and wider community moving forward;



- Securing funding post Brexit for European Social Fund (ESF) programmes e.g., Inspire; and,
  - Pupil progress monitoring at a LA and school level for self-evaluation purposes is an area for development, therefore, the commissioning of GL assessment in conjunction with all schools is planned from September 2022.
- 6.1.3 The Education Directorate has established a corporate self-evaluation forum to work with services across the Council, for example, Children’s Services, Regeneration, Legal, Finance and Organisational Development to focus the work on improving pupil outcomes and supporting school leaders. The Council will also continue to develop a modernised relationship with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to support our school leaders to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing.
- 6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**  
The expected outcome for the public is that the Education Directorate’s self-evaluation activity contributes to improving educational standards and wellbeing of children and young people across the County Borough.
- 6.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**  
The Directorate’s self-evaluation processes are aligned with LGES and the regional policy for monitoring, supporting, evaluation and intervention in schools. The school categorisation process has been suspended by WG in academic year 2020-21.
- 6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**  
Analysis of individual school performance data is a key element in ensuring that schools are known well by the Council so that appropriate support and intervention can be directed towards areas of greatest need. The Welsh Government will determine when schools will be required to resume reporting on performance data.
- 6.5 **Preventative focus**  
Through effective self-evaluation processes, support and monitoring of school performance, early identification of emerging areas for improvement can be identified with consequent early intervention to secure improvement. The effectiveness of the Council’s monitoring, support, evaluation, and intervention programmes ensure that preventative action is taken early in order to minimise the escalation of concerns.
- 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**  
The Council collaborates with key strategic partners and neighbouring local authorities through the South East Wales Consortium for the provision of school improvement services from the Education Achievement Service (EAS) as well as a range of pupil support services for specific groups such as visually and hearing impaired learners.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

Effective monitoring, support, evaluation and intervention are fundamental to meeting the Council's wellbeing objectives.

6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

The Council is committed to ensuring that all new schools and college buildings, major refurbishment and extension projects meet Net Zero Carbon targets from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2022. Although the application of Net Zero Carbon is not required retrospectively, Welsh Government has confirmed that they will look to commit 100% funding where the application to existing schemes under development is possible.

6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

This report does not require an integrated impact assessment to be completed.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Monitoring of the emerging findings of self-evaluation is an important mechanism for ensuring that Members of the People Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Committee are sufficiently informed to enable them to make informed decisions regarding the quality of education provision and hence pupil outcomes and wellbeing. There are well-established processes in place to ensure that business plans are considerate of emerging findings for improvement.

**Background Documents / Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1a and 1b – EIP Business Plan Priorities
- Appendix 2 – Self-Evaluation Policy
- Appendix 3 - Summary SER
- Appendix 4 – Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools
- Appendix 5 - Performance and Data Pack

Appendix 1 – Business Planning 2022 Onwards

Priority Ref	Priority Title
<p>EDU.1</p> <p>Tier 2 Improvement and Inclusion Plan and EAS Business Plan</p>	<p><b>Improving educational standards and wellbeing for pupils, particularly at KS4.</b> This priority is in conjunction with delivering the BG priorities in the EAS business plan, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimising the impact and recovery from COVID-19 on learner development and progress;</li> <li>• Ensuring high quality leadership that secures good progress for all learners;</li> <li>• Improve wellbeing for learners at all stages of development, with a focus on attendance, exclusions and equity;</li> <li>• Secure strong progress in skills, particularly in English and Mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4. Reading skills are a focus across the board in 2022-23; and,</li> <li>• Support schools who are identified as causing concern through regional and local protocols to secure improvement.</li> </ul>
<p>EDU.2</p> <p>Tier 2 and Tier 1 Improvement and Inclusion Business Plans.</p>	<p><b>Securing quality Inclusion provision, particularly to support vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM,</b> through;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing Inclusion strategy/policies and practice;</li> <li>• Delivering ALN Reform;</li> <li>• Improving wellbeing for learners at all stages of development, with a focus on attendance, behaviour support, exclusions and equity; and,</li> <li>• Effective Monitoring, Evaluation and Review (MER) arrangements.</li> </ul>
<p>EDU.3</p> <p>Tier 2 Education Transformation and Business Change Business Plan.</p>	<p><b>Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century.</b> Priorities include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions and managing pupil places;</li> <li>• ICT Strategy and digitalisation;</li> <li>• Facilities management and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools agenda;</li> <li>• Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for schools;</li> <li>• Home to School and Post 16 Transport; and,</li> <li>• Emergency planning and recovery etc.</li> </ul>

<p>EDU.4</p> <p>Tier 2 Young People and Partnership Plan and Aneurin Leisure Trust Business Plans.</p>	<p><b>Delivering effective young people and partnership provision, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need, through;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality Youth Support Services;</li> <li>• Support for schools e.g. Inspire;</li> <li>• Effective Post 16 partnership arrangements; and,</li> <li>• Modernised leisure/recreation partnerships and provision.</li> </ul>
<p>EDU.5</p> <p>Crosscutting with EIP, Tier 2 and Tier 1 Business Plans.</p>	<p><b>Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers better educational outcomes and improved value for money, through robust;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Planning;</li> <li>• Financial management;</li> <li>• Risk management;</li> <li>• Workforce planning;</li> <li>• Performance management; and,</li> <li>• Self-evaluation.</li> </ul>

### Education Directorate Plan

- Improving educational standards and wellbeing for pupils, particularly at KS4
- Securing quality Inclusion provision, particularly to support vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM
- Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century
- Delivering effective young people and partnership provision, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need
- Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers better educational outcomes and improved value for money

### Improvement and Inclusion Plan – Tier 2

- Minimising the impact and recovery from COVID-19 on learner development and progress;
- Ensuring high quality leadership that secures good progress for all learners;
- Improve wellbeing for learners at all stages of development, with a focus on attendance, exclusions and equity;
- Secure strong progress in skills, particularly in English and Mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4. Reading skills are a focus across the board in 2022-23; and,
- Support schools who are identified as causing concern through regional and local protocols to secure improvement.
- Business Planning;
- Financial management;
- Risk management;
- Workforce planning;
- Performance management; and
- Self-evaluation.

### Improvement and Inclusion Plan – Tier 1

- Operational actions linked to the priorities at Tier 2

### Young People and Partnership Plan and Aneurin Leisure Trust – Tier 1

- Quality Youth Support Services;
- Support for schools e.g. Inspire;
- Effective Post 16 partnership arrangements; and
- Modernised leisure/recreation partnerships and provision
- Business Planning;
- Financial management;
- Risk management;
- Workforce planning;
- Performance management; and
- Self-evaluation.

### Education Transformation and Business Change – Tier 1

- Admissions and managing pupil places;
- ICT Strategy and digitalisation;
- Facilities management and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools agenda;
- Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for schools;
- Home to School and Post 16 Transport; and,
- Emergency planning and recovery etc.
- Business Planning;
- Financial management;
- Risk management;
- Workforce planning;
- Performance management; and
- Self-evaluation.

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**Blaenau Gwent County Council**

**EDUCATION DIRECTORATE**

**SELF EVALUATION POLICY**

**September 2020**

## **1. Introduction**

Blaenau Gwent Education Services are committed to self-review and self-improvement and view these processes as being fundamental to securing ongoing improvement in outcomes, quality and effectiveness.

The Education Directorate has adopted a standard approach for self-evaluation (SE) that is now embedded into the day to day practice. This has been reviewed to align with Estyn's new inspection framework for Local Government Education Services (LGES).

Self-evaluation activities are undertaken throughout the year and the self-evaluation report (SER) for LGES is updated in October and March of every academic year. Updates are aligned to data release dates from Welsh Government and other time points when data and information becomes available.

At the heart of self-evaluation process are four key questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- What do we need to do to improve further?
- How are we going to do it?

The established self-evaluation processes allows both the Council and the Education Directorate to take a critical reflective look at practice, performance and effectiveness. In this way, the Council is corporately able to ensure that its work remains focused on those areas that require improvement and is aligned to the provisions set out in the LGES framework and is aligned to our statutory obligations. The Education Directorate is committed to ensuring that all our children and young people and our educational establishments are well supported to achieve and make good progress in all learning settings across the school estate and partners e.g. Coleg Gwent and the Post 16 Learning Zone.

## **2. Who should be involved?**

All relevant stakeholders should be involved in evaluating the Council's Education Services to ensure its continued effectiveness. To achieve this, a range of approaches are used to ensure that any barriers to participation and engagement

are minimised and where possible removed. Moving forward, this will be verified on an annual basis with additional quality assurance processes undertaken to further secure the engagement of stakeholders in this key process. To support this process, a summary SER has been developed at the end of the self-evaluation cycle. The document will highlight the key areas of progress and areas for further improvement and can be used for elected members, schools and wider stakeholders.

The summary SER document is to be distributed to the key stakeholders to ensure that they understand the organisational context and are able to recognise their important contribution to facilitate further improvement. Going forward, this will be managed through core business activities that are aligned to business as usual activities, where officers will provide greater context e.g. breakfast meetings, member briefing sessions, open evenings, parents and other corporate road show events.

For consistency, the following grading question is used in order to assess the response to the question and is used to inform the judgement as to how well the Education Directorate takes account the view of stakeholders in its improvement planning and the services it offers.

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
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### 3. What should be involved?

Self-evaluation will involve:

- Asking deep and searching questions about outcomes and progress, quality of provision and effectiveness of leadership and management;
- Using a range of performance data to inform and guide reflections, including that of matched data to inform judgements about progress for specific groups of learners;
- Using other information such as the Corporate Improvement Plan and family benchmarking data relevant to the particular context;
- Using ongoing reflections and enquiry into practice;
- Considering the needs of children and young people (and the various groups) in context; and,
- Using evidence from a range of sources to inform and support self-evaluation, both qualitative and quantitative.

Officers and commissioned services use a FADE approach to support the collection of this information with individual FADE requirements being set out in a FADE Register. The FADE Register also acts as a deployment list for officers and stakeholders. Deployment of FADEs is kept under review by the Education Directorate's Management Team. The Corporate Director oversees the process and



the compilation of the final SER. To complement this policy a SE Toolkit has been devised comprising aides to support the SE processes.

The toolkit is updated on an annual basis in the summer term based upon the learning from the previous self-evaluation cycle.

#### 4. Why have self-evaluation processes?

- To provide an evidence base upon which to arrive at judgements about pupil outcomes and progress, quality of provision and the effectiveness of leadership and management of Education Services and its future improvement journey;
- To reflect on what has been done to consistently deepen understanding;
- To recognise and celebrate good practice, and where appropriate, use this to support others in line with the Vision for Education and our agreed approach to a school-led, school to school methodology;
- To ensure that stakeholders understand the context of the organisation and the contribution that they can make to further facilitate improvement; and
- To improve the performance, impact and effectiveness of Education Services and its constituent parts, including commissioned services to further enable officers and schools to make informed decisions for our children and young people.

The SE process is a cyclical one and the high level activities are summarised below, however, it should be noted that the COVID-19 response will have an impact on some aspects of self-evaluation work in 2020-21 academic year, such as suspending school categorisation:

<b>Date</b>	<b>What</b>
April to August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provisional Teacher Assessment analysis</li> <li>• Performance analysis (school LA vulnerable learners and ALN)</li> <li>• Categorisation review</li> <li>• Self-evaluation toolkit updated</li> <li>• FADES completed in line with the register for last academic year</li> <li>• Improvement tracker for year ahead developed</li> <li>• Emerging findings are reflected as actions in Directorate’s business plans</li> </ul>
September to March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All business plans completed on a quarterly basis.</li> <li>• Heads of Service challenge sessions via Wider Corporate Leadership Team (WCLT).</li> <li>• Categorisation confirmed.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning from current self-evaluation process to inform next process.</li> </ul>
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MER: Monitoring (gathering the evidence), Evaluation (arriving at judgments) and Review (making changes as a result) are fundamental components to the improvement process and hence self-evaluation (SE). Findings from SE underpin all business, service and team plans.

There are a range of approaches in place to support this which include:

- Regular reporting to Scrutiny and Executive Committee meetings and Full Council.
- Regular reporting to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).
- Termly Estyn monitoring meetings with the Local Authority Link Inspector (LALI) meetings.
- Regular reporting to Directorate Management Team (DMT) meetings.
- Individual – evaluation of the effectiveness and the performance of Heads of Service through peer challenge sessions and the quality assurance FADEs and the resultant business improvement plans.
- Departmental – through team meetings, processes to hold the EAS to account such as regular EAS/ other commissioned service quality assurance meetings, DMT, FADE approach, Directorate business plan
- Monitoring by specific officer groups e.g. School Admission Forum, Budget Forum, JCC, HT meetings etc.
- Headteachers – engagement with Headteachers occurs throughout the year and evaluated as part of the agreed approach to self-evaluation. This work is further supplemented by a two yearly questionnaire of the assessment of the quality of the services offered by education, which coupled with the level of buy back of SLA services offered to schools which are arranged on a 3 yearly basis provide an overview of the level of satisfaction. Engagement on the draft summary SER takes place at cluster level and is facilitated by Education DMT representatives in the latter part of the autumn term. This work is concluded with the final SER presented to Headteachers for final comment in the spring term.

## 5. Summary

The purpose of self-evaluation is to secure ongoing improvement across services, particularly to enhance wellbeing and progress in pupil outcomes. Self-evaluation is not done in isolation and will be influenced by stakeholders with a key interest and ability to support the implementation of any identified agreed action.

The provision of high quality and tailored education services, which both support and challenge learners is a complex process frequently requiring highly effective

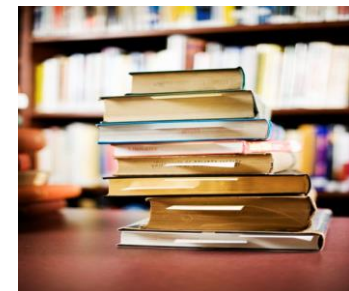
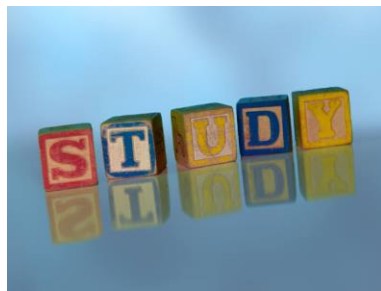
partnership and collaborative working and the involvement of stakeholders being a fundamental aspect to the Council's now mature approach to SE. The Self-Evaluation Policy is considerate of these complex arrangements and seeks to simplify and share the understanding, process and purpose of effective self-evaluation so that ongoing improvement is secured.

This policy is under review in September 2020 and features in the Council's Scrutiny/Executive forward work programmes. The implementation of this policy will be monitored via regular DMT meetings, through performance coaching sessions with relevant officers and by elected members via the forward work programme.

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# Education Directorate Self-Evaluation Summary Report Date: Summer 2022



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## Blaenau Gwent - Context

Blaenau Gwent has 25 schools and their status is detailed below:

- 2 are Maintained 3-16 Learning Communities,
- 1 Foundation Comprehensive,
- 1 Maintained Comprehensive,
- 1 x Maintained 3-18 Special School,
- 1 x Maintained 3-16 SEBD Special School; and,
- 19 Primaries (of which 4 are voluntary aided / faith schools)

There are currently circa 9,000+ pupils on roll across all Blaenau Gwent schools.

The organisation, End Child Poverty, released new data in October 2020 with findings showing that the highest rates of child poverty in Wales are in Pembrokeshire and Blaenau Gwent. Blaenau Gwent is one of the counties in Wales to have seen a rise in the proportion of children living in poverty. The impact of poverty on children is well documented, with children from low-income families more likely to experience worse physical and mental health; do less well in school; and have fewer opportunities in the future. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) captures the extent of deprivation as a proportion of residents living in each lower super output area (LSOA). The eight considerations of the WIMD are: income; employment; health; education, skills and training; geographical access to services; housing; physical environment; and community safety. Blaenau Gwent has the highest percentage of its LSOAs areas in the most deprived areas across Wales at 10%, for income (19.1%), education (27.7%), and community safety (23.4%).

The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals in Blaenau Gwent is over 30% during 2021-22 and the highest of all LAs in Wales by a significant margin. The proportions declined during 2016-19, but BG remained the 2nd highest in Wales for all LA schools and highest for secondary schools during 2018-19. Given the evidential relationship between pupil performance and deprivation (using eFSM as a proxy indicator), pupil outcomes in BG would be expected to be among the lowest in Wales. However, within Blaenau Gwent we have high ambitions for all of our learners and our socio-economic standing is a challenge that we are working to overcome to the benefit of all of our children and young people.

Overall, the 2019 WIMD figures and high eFSM eligibility reflect very high levels of deprivation within the authority. More recently, the COVID pandemic has also seen an increase in the levels of eFSM to circa 30%+, which is monitored closely. They also indicate the significant consideration required to improve educational outcomes to levels within other similar LAs and to consistently match the all-Wales averages. 2018-19 performance figures show that Blaenau Gwent has achieved parity, and indeed, out-performed some LAs in a number of measures confirming the progress being made within its schools. The 2020-21 KS4 and Post 16 KS5 provisional results have been included in the Summary SER via the performance data pack during the Autumn term to inform the on-going self-evaluation process, however, there is recognition the outcomes were awarded via the Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) and/or the awarding examination body's assessed grade.

## **Executive Summary:**

This Executive Summary is a high-level analysis of key strategic areas of progress, and importantly, aspects of work identified for improvement across the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework. There are clearly more details in the Main Self-Evaluation Report (SER), however, the Executive Summary provides a high-level synopsis to enable the Education Directorate, the Council and key partners to understand and focus on critical strands of work to continue to improve outcomes for children and young people across the County Borough.

The Summary SER has been developed using a collaborative approach across a number of service areas such as Social Services and Flying Start and also with a Headteacher Working Group (HWG). The Local Authority Self-Evaluation Headteacher Working Group has been established with seven Heads identified to support the development and review of the overall SER. A primary consideration is to corroborate self-evaluation findings from a BG schools' perspective. The feedback from the HWG during the Summer term 2022 is that the Summary SER is a fair and balanced view of overall performance.

The information detailed in this document regularly features in the self-evaluation reports presented to Scrutiny and Executive Committees. The Council will continue to work with partners across the Council, for example, Children's Services, Regeneration, Legal, Finance and Organisational Development to focus the work on improving pupil outcomes and supporting school leaders. The Council will also continue to work with partners, such as the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to support our school leaders to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing. There are changes that will be introduced to the reporting and accountability framework for academic year 2020 and onwards linked to the COVID-19 emergency response, particularly a relaxation in the requirements for School and Council performance reporting arrangements. Clearly, the Education Directorate will need to remain focussed on self-evaluation procedures, as outlined in the review of the SE Policy 2020, particularly an analysis of the provisional KS4 and Post 16 results during the autumn term 2022, where external examination processes are going to be re-introduced.

Blaenau Gwent's Education Services are committed to self-review and self-improvement and view these processes as being fundamental to securing ongoing improvement in outcomes, quality and effectiveness. The Education Directorate has adopted a standardised approach for self-evaluation (SE) that is now embedded into the day-to-day practice. This has been reviewed to align with Estyn's inspection framework for Local Government Education Services (LGES). This Summary SER looks at the emerging findings against the inspection framework for Local Government Education Services (LGES), which will inform evaluations of progress against the key improvement priorities set out in business and improvement plans.



## Key Strategic Areas of Progress

### **Areas where good progress has been made:**

- The Education Directorate received Full Council approval (2020-2021) to establish a new leadership and management structure that includes additional capacity for school improvement;
- There have been strong appointments made to the Education Directorate's leadership team, including a Head of School Improvement and Inclusion and Service Managers for Education Transformation and Business Change, Young People/Partnerships as well as the Service Manager Inclusion.
- The Corporate and Education Directorate's response to COVID-19 has been effective and this is discussed in the Estyn Thematic Review and this has been followed up in the Summer Letter (2021) commentary;
- School inspection and school categorisation profile has improved significantly with no primary schools in follow up and excellent practice identified in a number of schools;
- There has been an incremental reduction in Schools Causing Concern from 6 schools in 2019 to only 2 schools in 2022. ALC has been removed from Estyn Significant Improvement category;
- GCSE L2 English, Maths and Capped 9 improved overall, albeit the results in 2020-21 were realised through Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) and not through external examinations;
- The 2021 Centre Determined Grades were positive overall and in line with the SDP targets set by the 4 secondary settings. There were improvements in approaching two thirds of the key measures. The results are shown in the Performance Data Pack as well as the Main SER for self-evaluation purposes;
- GCSE A\*/A and A\*-C grades improved in English and Maths;
- Planning arrangements for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Reform are well developed and a Phase 1 summary evaluation implementation document evidences the progress made across the school estate;
- The partnership with Schools, Coleg Gwent and Post 16 providers has strengthened through the establishment of the Post 16 Strategic Partnership Board. A-level A\*-C and A\*-E grades continue to be strong and were in line with the all-Wales means at 99.1%;
- Value-added progress in English and Maths, reading and numeracy for our 7 and 11 year olds improved in 2019-20. BG's schools are working towards the use of GL assessments across the board in 2022 to assess learner progress. This data will only be used to inform SE and not for accountability purposes;
- The Youth Service exceeded that of the all-Wales means for reach and accredited learning outcomes. The levels of NEETs at 1.5% are at their lowest levels i.e. 9 young people;
- Primary persistent absenteeism reduced to below that of the all-Wales means;
- The School Based Counselling Service provides good support and this is evidenced through the evaluation reports;

- Permanent exclusions reduced;
- Strong progress through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme with robust programme management arrangements in place. The Band B programme is well underway an investment of circa £26m into the school estate;
- Good progress against the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP), including WG approval of the BG 10 Year WESP and the new Welsh medium seedling school moving to implementation stage;
- Headteacher induction and support programme very well received by aspiring and new Headteachers;
- Schools are strategically contributing in a full systems approach e.g. Self-Evaluation work as well as collaborative leadership arrangements and this will continue moving forward through the on-going work of the Headteacher Working Groups (covering SE/CfW/ALN Reforms).
- Effective ICT support provided particularly to digitally disadvantaged learners in order for them to engage in digital platforms including the coordination and distribution of technology. ICT Strategy nearing completion;
- The Education components of the corporate staff wellbeing survey results were good;
- Overall, the revenue financial position of the Education Directorate and schools has improved significantly with school balances at £4.3m in 2021-22; including, redressing the budget deficit in one school that i.e. Abertillery Learning Community. The ALC Corporate Group monitors performance and financial sustainability of the setting. The LA has passed an 8.4% uplift to schools via the ISB in 2022-23.; and,
- The Council and EAS are evidencing improving value for money returns i.e. improvement in standards overall with less resources.

### **Key Strategic Areas for Improvement**

#### **Areas where further improvement is required:**

- Implement the Education Recovery and Renewal Plan. Higher levels of language acquisition and reading across the board, but particularly in our very young children in early years. This will be a real focus of the recovery programme from COVID as we 'build back better' in line with Curriculum for Wales Reform;
- Improve attainment of eFSM pupils and particularly our more-able pupils throughout education;
- Improve school attendance in both primary and secondary sectors;
- Improve progress between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, particularly in English, Maths and Science;
- Reviewing the Inclusion service and implementing the plans/provision for pupils with additional learning needs e.g. increasing Pen-y-Cwm Special School capacity and providing whole school strategic support for provision in line with the requirements of the ALN Reform Act. This includes a review of the Resource Bases across the schools;
- Reviewing the Inclusion Strategy and associated policies, particularly monitoring of relevant data, such as Behaviour Management and RPIs etc.
- Continuing the work with Schools Causing Concern (SCC), particularly the school currently in an Estyn category. BFS 'One Plan' monitoring;

- The River Centre is now a School Causing Concern and is subject to Statutory Warning Notice (SWN) letter for improvement. This setting is likely to go into an Estyn category following a recent inspection;
- Reduce school exclusions and support parents/carers who opt to Elective Home Educate (EHE), increases linked to COVID; and,
- Staff and pupil wellbeing has been significantly impacted by the pandemic: issues relating to emotional health and wellbeing are on the rise, which will need to be fully supported by the Education Directorate, schools and wider community moving forward.
- Securing funding post Brexit for ESF programmes e.g. Inspire.
- Pupil progress monitoring at a LA and school level for self-evaluation purposes is an area for development, therefore, the commissioning of GL assessment in conjunction with all schools is planned from September 2022.

## **1.1 Standards and Progress Overall - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know**

### **Foundation Phase**

- Almost two-thirds of schools improved LLCE results in 2019, while a similar proportion of schools exceeded their targets in MD.

### **Key Stage 2**

- LA-level FP-KS2 value-added progress in:
  - NC maths was above the national figure;
  - Language was a little higher than expected in 2019; and
  - Progress in reading was seen in about two-thirds of mainstream schools (about half in 2019) and numeracy reasoning was better than expected in most schools.
- The majority of schools had similar or higher L4+ results compared to their 2019 targets.
- School categorisation and inspection outcomes have improved in recent years.

### **Key Stage 3**

- Two out of four schools improved L5+ English outcomes and three schools improved their L5+ oracy and writing results in 2019.
- L6+ outcomes improved for English 2017-19 and particularly for 2019.
- Three of the four schools improved L6+ outcomes in English and Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language during 2019 and three schools improved their reading and writing results.
- At LA-level literacy outcomes (oracy, reading & writing) all improved in 2019 with improvements made in MFL & PE.
- LA-level KS2-3 value-added progress in reading improved from the previous year.
- LA-level progress in numeracy reasoning was also better than expected and twice that for reading.
- Three of the four mainstream secondary schools maintained or improved progress for NC English.

#### Key Stage 4

- Capped 9 points score improved in 2019 and achieved the LA target.
- The proportion of learners gaining A\*/A grades improved in both English and Maths in 2019.
- The LA-level Welsh Bacc result was higher than expected in relation to the LA's eFSM entitlement.
- Higher than expected ranking in relation to eFSM except for numeracy and science. This was particularly so for the Skills Challenge Certificate result which ranked 7<sup>th</sup> out of the 22 Welsh LAs.
- The proportion of learners attaining A\*-C grades in Welsh 1<sup>st</sup> language increased in 2019 with an improving trend during the last 2 years. 17% of the Welsh-medium cohort attained A\*/A grades in Welsh 1<sup>st</sup> language.
- Abertillery LC improved outcomes in all but one performance indicator in 2019.
- The proportion of learners gaining A\*/A grades in Maths improved in every mainstream school in 2019 and in 3 out of 4 mainstream schools for English & capped 9 points scores.
- The 2021 Centre Determined Grades were positive overall and in line with the SDP targets set by the 4 secondary settings. The results are shown in the Main SER and data pack for self-evaluation purposes.

#### Post-16

- At A level and AS level, the proportions of learners attaining A\*-C and A\*-E grades were in line with the all-Wales means in 2020-21.
- For vocational courses, attainment rates in 2020 were similar to or higher than in the previous year except for L3.
- Entry level learners were 100% successful.

#### Youth Service

- In 2019/20, 18% (2054 individual young people) of 11-25 year olds voluntarily registered with the Youth Service, a 1% increase since the previous year (increase of 44 young people), placing 10<sup>th</sup> across Wales and above the Welsh national average (15%).
- Out of the 2054 individuals, 41% (847 young people) gained 851 nationally recognised accreditations. The number of young people gaining a qualification significantly increased this year (16% increase), the best performance across the SEWC region.
- In addition, the Youth Service recorded 7,298 anonymous contacts during 2018-19 through the 11-18 Counselling Service, C Card, detached youth work, outreach and out of school activities and events, 1,000 more than previous year.
- Current data indicates 1.5% of learners being NEET (9 learners). The all Wales figure has not yet been published.

### **1.1 Standards and Progress Overall - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it**

#### **Areas identified for Improvement and Action Required**

##### **Foundation Phase**

- BG and national averages at LO4+ and LO5+ fell for all performance indicators during the last 2 years with the fall being greater for BG in 2019, increasing the performance gap.

- LO6+ differences between BG and national means in 2019 were greatest for PSD.
- A majority of schools attained lower than target results in 2019 indicating unreliability within school target setting procedures.
- There is a need to develop value-added procedures for Reception Year to Y2 in order to determine the progress made by pupils within the Foundation Phase.

### **Key Stage 2**

- Welsh and Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language outcomes fell to a greater extent in 2019 with the latter having a declining trend during the last 2 years.
- L4+ writing outcomes fell more noticeably in 2019.
- Underperforming schools (for NC assessments) the same as in previous years and these continue to be of concern with regard to pupils' learning and standards achieved.
- FP-KS2 value-added progress in NC language moved below the national figure.
- A minority of schools had inconsistencies between NC and national test progress scores. This questions the accuracy and reliability of assessment procedures within these centres.

### **Key Stage 3**

- L5+ outcomes fell in 2019, particularly for maths, science, art, history and geography. All results were lower than the 2019 national means and particularly so for MFL and history. These falls reflect those observed within Wales as a whole. There is a consideration regarding assessment reliability at two of the four LA schools.
- A majority of schools had results below their 2019 targets at both L5+ & L6+. Results also indicate target setting as generally unreliable in schools at KS3 (as in previous years).
- LA-level KS2-3 value-added progress in NC English and maths fell considerably in 2019 and was well below the national figure in both subjects. Progress in NC maths was barely adequate and was unsatisfactory in NC English.
- A significant proportion of pupils regressed more than 10 SAS points in both reading and numeracy reasoning during 2016-19. A large number of these pupils were from one setting.
- Some schools had inconsistencies between NC and national test progress scores. This questions the accuracy and reliability of assessment procedures within these settings.

### **Key Stage 4**

- Results for the new National Measures and in relation to the LA's eFSM entitlement were all lower than the national means.
- The proportion of learners gaining L2+ and 5 A\*/A grades in 2019 was below the LA targets and fell by about 2%, well below the national mean.
- L2 maths & numeracy outcomes fell in 3 out of the 4 mainstream schools in 2019.
- Learner outcomes for Tredegar fell in over one-half of performance indicators in 2019.
- KS3-4 value-added progress:

- declined for both English and maths in nearly all schools during 2017-19 compared with previous years; and
- for maths was much weaker than for English in all mainstream schools.
- Too many pupils failed to progress (or even regressed) in English and particularly in maths in KS4 during 2017-19. On average, pupils at Abertillery and Brynmawr made no progress or regressed in maths during 2017-19.
- For WG modelled estimates, all residuals were negative except for the Welsh Bacc Skills Challenge result.
- Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language full-course results fell for all grade indicators in 2019 (as was the case nationally) and were lower than the all-Wales figures for higher grade levels.
- The proportion of pupils achieving no qualifications doubled to 2.4% in 2019 and was over twice as high as the all-Wales average.
- The River Centre Learning Community was issued with a Statutory Warning Notice in 2021. The Local Authority exercised its right to appoint an LA Chair of Governors November 2021. Early stage progress against the SWN is being made, however, secondary provision is of concern.
- Brynmawr Foundation School received an Estyn monitoring visit in the Autumn/Spring/Summer terms, it was identified that progress is being made in leadership and behaviour management, but there needs to be further progress with teaching, learning and standards.

### **Post 16**

- The proportion of learners attaining higher level grades (A\*/A) at both A and AS level has again increased in 2021, although is still below the Wales performance level so is an area for further improvement.
- There has been a small dip in vocational success rates in 2018-2020 and there is room for improvement at L2 courses, which is currently at 80% completion rate. Success rates across the board, however, remain relatively strong.
- Embed process initiated in 2019-20, where Coleg Gwent provides monthly updates on retention rates and specific learner withdrawals.

### **Risk Considerations**

- The risk of failure to continue to make progress on raising educational standards, particularly in the school that remains in an Estyn category (BFS), which features in the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) and risk mitigation is monitored by Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Elected Members via Scrutiny and the Executive Committees.

## **1.2 Standards and Progress of Specific Groups - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know**

### **Foundation Phase**

- All LO6+ gender differences were lower than the all-Wales means and particularly so for LLCE.
- Almost one-third of statemented pupils attained LO5+ in LLCE and MD. Both results were higher than the 2018 national means.

### **Key Stage 2**

- L4+gender differences were lower than the all-Wales means.
- Mean progress scores for boys & girls (as NC levels) were higher than expected during KS2. On average, boys had lower FP outcomes in 2015 but made similar NC progress to girls during KS2.
- Boys made greater progress in both reading and numeracy reasoning during 2015-19.

- Mean progress scores (as NC levels) for eFSM & non eFSM pupils were similar to or higher than expected.
- Over one-half of ethnic minority pupils attained L5 in both English and Maths. The mean NC levels were higher than for the whole Y6 cohort in 2019 and national test scores in both reading and numeracy reasoning were also higher.
- All but one LAC progressed at least 2 NC levels for language during KS2 and all but 2 did so in maths during 2019.
- The mean NC progress rates for LAC during 2015-19 were similar to those for the whole cohort in both subject areas.

### Key Stage 3

- L6+ gender differences were lower than the all-Wales means in each core subject, lower than the previous year for most non-core subjects and lower than the national means for about one-half of non-core subjects. L6+ English results also improved in 2019 with a consequent narrowing of the performance gap compared with national outcomes.
- On average, boys made greater progress in numeracy reasoning than girls during KS3 and so reversed the gender gap.
- eFSM and non-eFSM – 2019:
  - differences were lower than the national averages at both L5+ and L6+;
  - eFSM pupils made greater progress at reading and numeracy, narrowing the performance gap; and
  - Mean progress scores in reading and numeracy reasoning were better than expected.
- Statemented pupils made, on average, very good progress in reading & numeracy reasoning throughout 2016-19.
- All but 2 of the 16 ethnic minority pupils with matched NC results attained L5 or better in English and maths in 2019. Over two-thirds of EM pupils attained L6 or better in both subjects.
- 2 pupils reached L7 in English and 5 did so in Maths.
- The mean progress rates for LAC in reading and numeracy reasoning during 2016-19 were notably higher than the whole cohort.

### Key Stage 4

- KS3-4 progress for eFSM pupils during 2017-19 was similar to or better than that for non-eFSM pupils.
- MAT pupils made far more progress than the Y11 cohort as a whole in both English language / literacy and in maths / numeracy during 2017-19.
- The proportions of SEN pupils attaining A\*-C and A\*-G grades in English language and maths was relatively high, much improved compared to previous years and generally similar to those for non-SEN pupils.
- Ethnic minority pupils had similar outcomes and average progress rates to non-EM pupils in English language.
- In English language / literature and in maths / numeracy compared to the whole Y11 cohort:
  - Young offenders generally had higher outcomes;
  - LAC had similar outcomes; and
  - Low attenders had similar or higher outcomes.

## **1.2 Standards and Progress of Specific Groups - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it**

### **Areas identified for improvement and Required Action**

#### **Foundation Phase:**

- Boys' outcomes continue to be below those of girls in each main performance indicator. However, girls' higher level (LO6+) results have fallen more than for boys during the last 2 years.
- eFSM pupils had lower outcomes than non-eFSM pupils in nearly all performance indicators in 2019 and the differences generally increased during 2017-19.
- Except for LLCW (attributable to just one Welsh medium school in BG), LO6+ outcomes were lower than for Wales as a whole during the last 4 years.
- BG pupils on SA and SA+ had lower outcomes than those seen nationally (in 2018).

#### **Key Stage 2**

Boys' outcomes continue to be below those of girls in each main performance indicator. While L5+ gender gaps closed in 2019, this was due to girls' results falling more than for boys.

- eFSM pupils had lower outcomes than non-eFSM pupils in all performance indicators in 2019. The differences were higher than the national means for most indicators and increased during 2017-19.
- eFSM pupils made less progress than non-eFSM pupils during KS2.
- About 6% fewer BG pupils attained L5+ in English and about 7% fewer in maths compared to Wales in 2019.
- Only one BG pupil was recorded as attaining L6+ (in English) in 2019.
- About 4% fewer BG pupils attained SAS >115 in reading and about 7% fewer in numeracy reasoning compared to Wales in 2019.
- The proportions of pupils attaining L4 or better in language fell for all SEN groups in 2019. All outcomes were below the 2018 national means.
- SA and SA+ pupils had considerably lower reading scores than non-SEN pupils in 2015 and, on average, made much less progress during KS2.
- SA pupils had considerably lower numeracy reasoning scores than non-SEN pupils in 2015 and, on average, regressed in in this skill area during KS2.

#### **Key Stage 3**

- Boys' outcomes continue to be below those of girls in a majority of performance indicators. While L5+ & L6+ gender gaps closed in 2019, this was predominantly due to girls' results falling more than for boys.
- Boys' mean NC progress scores were lower than for the girls in both English & Maths.
- Boys made less NC progress than girls in both subjects during KS3 and so widened the gender gap.
- eFSM pupils had lower outcomes than non-eFSM pupils in all performance indicators in 2019 (but the differences were lower than the national means).
- eFSM pupils made less progress than non-eFSM pupils during KS3 and so widened the performance gap.



- L6+ outcomes in maths and particularly science fell during the last 3 years and decreased in line with that observed nationally.
- About 10% fewer BG pupils attained L6+ in English and in maths compared to Wales in 2019.
- About 7% fewer BG pupils attained L7+ in English and about 12% fewer in Maths compared to Wales in 2019.
- Except for statemented pupils, SEN results were lower than the 2018 national means.
- On average, SEN pupils made less NC progress than non-SEN pupils during KS3 and particularly so for SA+ pupils in maths.
- On average, SA and SA+ pupils made progress in reading and numeracy reasoning than non-SEN pupils during KS3.
- NC and national test scores of young offenders were much lower than mainstream averages. Progress rates were also lower than for mainstream pupils. A significant proportion of YOs failed to progress in either NC English or NC maths during KS3.
- Both NC and national test outcomes were, on average, lower for LAC than for other mainstream pupils.

#### **Key Stage 4**

- Boys' outcomes continue to be below those of girls in each main performance indicator. Where the performance gaps between boys and girls narrowed, it was usually due to a fall in girls' outcomes rather than an improvement in those for boys.
- The proportion of pupils attaining 5 A\*/A grades fell by about 2% in 2019 and was well below the national mean.
- KS3-4 progress rates for boys and girls in English language / literacy during 2017-19 were adequate while those for maths / numeracy were unsatisfactory. The progress in maths was a main contributing factor to low school and LA performance at GCSE.
- River Centre pupils had lower outcomes and average progress rates in English language / literature and in maths / numeracy compared to the whole Y11 cohort.
- Ethnic Minority pupils had lower outcomes and KS3-4 progression rates in maths / numeracy than in language. This suggest that support for language development is generally effective at KS4 but that EM pupils may find more difficulty in transposing their language skills within a mathematical context.

#### **Risk Considerations**

- The risk of failure to continue to make progress on raising educational standards in the school remaining in an Estyn category(BFS) features in the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) and risk mitigation is monitored by Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Elected Members via Scrutiny and the Executive Committees.

### **1.3 Well-being and Attitudes to Learning - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know**

- Standards of wellbeing and attitudes to learning are good in most primary and secondary schools. High proportions of both primary pupils and their parents expressed positive views about their children's wellbeing in schools.
- All pre-schools and schools participate in effective Healthy School programmes with exemplar work being recognised nationally and there are effective sport and physical activity programmes e.g. swimming programmes with high levels of achievement for learners in place. The proportions of CYP attending sports centres and enjoying PE in school on a weekly basis is higher than the national averages. An effective 11-18 counselling service is in place with very positive feedback from attendees, with an extended service for 18-25 year olds.

- BG is one of only a few Councils to have a fully compliant 3<sup>rd</sup> School Sport Survey to inform more targeted work. BG is participating in the Sport Wales School Sport Survey in 2022.
- Three out of four BG secondary schools exceeded the WG modelled figures for attendance in 2019.
- Relatively low rate of fixed-term exclusions compared with other LAs in Wales.
- Improving procedures for tracking Children Missing Education (CME).
- An improving picture of increased opportunities for *pupil voice* in BG schools and greater learner participation in decision-making. This is supported corporately across the LA through the Equalities team e.g. Grand School Council and Youth Forum.
- Accredited outcomes for registered young people with the Youth Services are strong and above the Welsh mean.
- Whole School Approach (WSA) to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing
  - A regional partnership group has been established whose main aim is to identify and share professional learning and support available to schools. This group includes representation from healthy schools, educational psychology, EAS and Schools in Reach. To support schools in meeting the well-being needs of both pupils and staff, several initiatives have been implemented by the LA including the following:
  - Self-assessment tool –the extension of the pilot and use of the tool, with \*\*\*\* schools having now completed the self-assessment exercise.

Additionally, the following well-being initiatives have been a focus, with the aim of meeting the needs of our most vulnerable learners, including:

- Emotionally Based School Avoidance;
- Circle of Security; and,
- ELSA and Trauma Informed Schools (TIS).
- ‘Guidance for schools on peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour’ has been developed by VAWSDASV – this was shared with all schools in January 2021.

### **1.3 Well-being and Attitudes to Learning - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it**

Attendance, Exclusions and Persistent Absenteeism:

Primary:

- To improve primary school attendance in BG from its current rate of 89.5% to 93.3%.
- To reduce primary unauthorised absence in BG from its current rate of 2.3% to 1.4% which was the pre-COVID all-Wales means.

- To work to reduce PA in the primary sector to below that of its 20/21 rate of 10.5%.

#### Secondary:

- To improve secondary school attendance from its current rate of 85.3% to 91.6%.
- To reduce unauthorised absence in the secondary sector in BG from its current rate of 4.4 % 1.7%, which was the pre-COVID all-Wales means.
- To reduce PA in the secondary sector in BG to well below its 20/21 rate of 25.8% to 5.0%
- To continue to reduce the numbers of pupils excluded in primary and secondary sectors.
- To continue to improve pupil behaviour in schools and staff response to pupil concerns.
- To further enhance pupil voice activities to inform self-evaluation planning activities.
- EWS to work with EPS to develop Emotionally Based School Avoidance processes in all schools and work with the established Gwent Whole Schools Approach (GWSA) to Wellbeing to develop their 'Spirals of Enquiry' work across the local authority as part of their work across the region. They will recruit 27 schools from across Gwent to run in 3 cohorts, each cohort consisting of 9 Spirals Teams ('Triads') and a link GWSA Team Psychologist. Each spirals team will consist of 3 members that will join the cohort meeting with GWSA Team Psychologists every half term. The purpose of these meetings will be for cohorts to check in and work on their spirals, as well as developing opportunities for learning to implement the WSA Framework.

#### **Risk Considerations**

- The risk is that disrupted learning and school attendance has an impact on pupil progression and learning, particularly in light of the COVID-19 emergency.

#### **2.1 Support for school improvement - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know**

- The LA has appointed both a Head of School Improvement and Inclusion post and Service Manager-Inclusion post in the new structure to add capacity in this area of work.
- The LA has improved and detailed knowledge of individual, class and school performance particularly in relation to value-added progress.
- Improved co-ordination of support to schools via good partnership working between the LA and EAS e.g. monthly partnership arrangements.
- Improved School Categorisation and School Inspection profile over the last 3 years, including only 2 schools now considered as SCC/TAS.
- Good outcomes / progress for identified vulnerable groups in recent years.
- The Council has appropriately used of statutory powers which are kept under review e.g. the River Centre.
- The process for the appointment of LA Governors is now well established and there is evidence of improved governance in a majority of schools. The levels of Governor vacancies are at their lowest levels circa less than 10 in Spring term 2022.

- Sofrydd has been removed from the SCC process December 2021.
- Brynmawr Foundation School received a monitoring visit from Estyn in the Autumn/Spring/Summer Terms, progress was identified with leadership and with pupil behaviour.
- Abertillery Learning Community had the Statutory Warning Notice removed in the Spring Term 2022.

## **2.1 Support for school improvement - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it**

- Partnership work between BG Inclusion Services and EAS School Improvement Partners to develop further.
- Support to improve early language acquisition and general skill development in the early years.
- Support to improve the effectiveness of learning & teaching of English / reading & maths / numeracy within KS3 & 4 with a particular focus on eFSM pupils and vulnerable groups.
- Support to improve the effectiveness and monitoring of PDG grant planning and implementation.
- Increasing the number / proportions of learners who achieve higher level outcomes at each key stage, but particularly in the Foundation Phase.
- Support for assessment and progress procedures within schools, using the GL assessment tools with a particular focus on formative (assessment for learning).
- Increasing opportunities for schools to share good practice e.g. Joint Headteachers' and HWG meetings.
- The risk is that the COVID-19 emergency response has impacted upon learner progression across the board, but particularly in KS4 and early year's skill development e.g. language acquisition.

### **Risk Considerations**

- The risk is that the COVID-19 emergency response has impacted upon learner progression across the board, but particularly in KS4 and early year's skill development e.g. language acquisition.

## **2.2 Support for Vulnerable Learners - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know**

Progress has been made through the comprehensive ALN provision, however the Inclusion review is on-going:

- A report to consider Pen-y-Cwm capacity was approved by the Executive Committee in the Spring 2021 and is being implemented to increase capacity to 175 places. This included short-term developments to the building to accommodate additional learners, which was completed in the Summer term.;
- Readiness for the implementation of the ALN reform to support learners is secure and evidenced in the Phase 1 implementation summary report;

- Reviews of school resource bases is underway;
- The Inclusion Service will be reviewed and is being reconfigured to meet the diversity of present need e.g. the Observation Classroom which is being researched – that will support early identification of need and support schools to support learners in mainstream education, therefore, avoidance of requiring specialist provision. This would facilitate a potential reduction to the Inclusion budget i.e. both specialist school placement and associated transport costs;
- Exclusions: Monitoring of pupil level exclusion data by DMT and Inclusion teams has improved, informing the quality of Officers' work and dialogue with individual schools. The establishment of the Safer Schools Partnership approach is beginning to support improved partnership work which will help reduce exclusions in the longer term. Work is currently focussed on two secondary settings in particular to reduce exclusions;
- ALN in Early Years: ALN Panel arrangements are effective in providing support for EY pupils with ALN. ALN capacity-building in EY is now provided through the permanently appointed EYALN Lead Officer.
- Resource Base provision has improved, particularly for pupils who experience Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Furthermore, a review of all bases is planned for September 2022 in association with the schools;
- Sound practice has been secured in Pen-y-Cwm Special School;
- Estyn judgements in school inspections for care support and guidance largely remain good or better.
- Whole School Approach (WSA) to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing; The Local Authority has effectively utilised funding from the Welsh Government to ensure that schools have been supported to introduce and embed a Whole School Approach (WSA) to Well-Being. There has been an increased focus on addressing the well-being needs of both learners and pupils, with a joint approach delivered by, amongst others, the Educational Psychology Service, Counselling Service and the Healthy Schools Coordinator. A further funding proposal to extend the LA's WSA to Wellbeing has been approved by WG and in 2022/23, the following will be an on-going priority for the LA:
  - Counselling; BG appropriately uses a mixture of data collection in terms of aggregate data, emotional wellbeing assessments and evaluation forms. Consultations and feedback is regularly sought with Counsellors and schools with information also gathered from other stakeholders and via Single Point of Access for Children's Emotional Wellbeing Panel. (SPACE Panel);
  - Trauma Informed Schools (TIS); There has been an increased number of both school-based and relevant LA-based staff who have undertaken Diploma level training in Trauma Informed Schools (TIS), utilising the Attendance Support and Community Schools element of the Local Authority Education Grant. A further cohort of thirteen will pursue the Diploma in Autumn term 2022. The aim is that all schools in the LA will, eventually, have at least one TIS qualified practitioner, who can support CYP with trauma-related/ACEs needs.
  - EPS Training; The EPS provide a range of Well-being related training opportunities including interventions such as Circle of Security (COSC), Emotion Coaching, Roots of Empathy and ELSA.
  - ELSA-Specifically regarding the ELSA programme, 92% of schools now have at least one ELSA. 100% of the ALNCos in these schools state that, where their ELSAs are operating, the programme is making a positive difference to practice and pupil outcomes. Supervision of ELSAs by EPs is rated highly with 100% of ALNCos stating that their ELSAs find it helpful. This is corroborated by mean evaluations from the ELSAs, with evaluations of their training completed by a new cohort of TAs were very favourable, demonstrating how the EPS has maintained high quality delivery of bespoke training to settings. 100% of ALNCos in schools that had taken advantage of the training offer and were able to confirm that they can evidence improved provision for learners with ALN, based on the training received.

- Practice to identify pupil progress using matched data (also for specific pupil groups) is now in its second year and is helping to identify where further improvement in provision is needed, for example:
  - in KS3 in particular and in identified schools;
  - in the progress rates between KS3 and KS4 in English and Maths; and,
  - to secure improved progress for all vulnerable groups, including eFSM and particularly during and between KS3 and KS4.

## **2.2 Support for Vulnerable Learners - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it**

- The quality and effectiveness of support to increase attainment of young pupils in the early years and at the end of the Foundation Phase (including eFSM pupils) needs to be reviewed, and this will be a key piece of work for the EY ALNLO to support schools with. The EYALNLO has established the statutory paperwork to ensure pre-school settings are aware of the impact of the ALN Reform and implementation. The permanent appointment was made in the Summer term 2022, ready to enter Phase 2 of implementation, with a focus on practical strategies to ensure the needs of learners in the EYs and FP are met.
- As part of Phase 2 of ALN Implementation, the LA has continued to support and monitor how well-prepared the school workforce is, to meet the statutory requirements of ALN reform. The LA's ALN Implementation Leads and Inclusive Practice Service have continued to work closely with EPS to review and monitor the quality of schools' Additional Learning Provision, to ensure quality-first teaching and inclusive practice and effective leadership and management of inclusion and ALN.
  - A report completed by the LA's outgoing ALN Implementation Lead (July 2022), highlights the pleasing progress that has been made by schools in meeting the statutory requirements of ALN Reform. The work of YGTCS has been very much led by each individual school's own requirements, and any support identified has reflected fully these bespoke needs as part of a co-constructed provision package working within Priority 2 of the Regional Implementation plan.
- As part of its work, YGTCS has undertaken evaluative discussions during the summer term with individual schools, to determine progress during the first year of the 'roll-over', the challenges faced and plans moving forward into 22-23. All schools once again engaged fully in open, honest and non-judgemental discussions with regards to their current position for ALN transformation. These professional dialogue sessions were held with the school's respective Headteacher (and/or SLT Lead where applicable) and ALNCO, together with YGTCS's Headteacher and ALNCO.

### **Moving forward, the key action points identified are as follows:**

- Address the highly variable time allocation for ALNCOs to fulfil their now statutory roles.
- Address the significant concerns with those learners in the early years setting through the work of the EYALNLO and schools.

- There is still some school level clarity required with regards to the IDPs for learners placed with LA maintained resource bases. Clarity is needed as to who is accountable for owning and maintaining the IDP in this case. Further clarity is also required with regards to the legislation with regards to IDPs and how the LA will support schools with this to avoid any resulting tribunal scenarios.
- Designate roles for an ALN Reform Lead and ALN Reform Champions to lead cluster work, support schools, monitor ALPs and quality assure school-based IDPs.

Revolving Door Approach: there needs to be effective support, particularly in the River Centre to support pupils presenting with difficult behaviour and those reluctant to attend school. Further systems approaches are needed to develop capacity within mainstream settings to enable pupils to remain in, and return back to their host schools, particularly for KS3 pupils. There are early signs of progress being made against the SWN letter in place for the school and a service agreement is under development between the River Centre and the Council to formalise the arrangements. The appointments of an interim Executive Headteacher and LA-appointment Chair of Governors/Governors will ensure improvements at the River Centre are delivered.

- ALN: The LA and EAS need to work more closely to support schools in improving analysis of pupils with SEN who perform below expected levels to ensure that all pupils show good progress in line with their ability from their individual baselines, particularly for those pupils in KS3 at SA and SA +level. Such analyses are to include the impact of targeted interventions. The LA and Headteachers' Working Party are currently exploring how to best track and measure the impact of interventions, especially as the LA starts to roll out the 'Literacy Junction' intervention programme. GL Assessment are to be commissioned to consider a range of packages to establish baselines and the Headteacher Working Party will develop consistency across the LA.
- EHE practice for those on the cusp of EHE to be more targeted. The Action Plan needs to be fully implemented. Since November 2021, further support is in place with the appointment of an EWO supporting EHE learners.
- CME: The local authority needs to continue to monitor CME practices and address any gaps as they arise and embed the agreed processes and ensure that regular reporting continues.
- Young People who offend: all children involved with YOS to have access to 25 hours of education. At KS3 and 4, teachers and schools need to improve levels of support for pupils in line with required improvements for mainstream pupils. Ensure the YOS fully implement their Literacy & Numeracy Strategy. Ensure that the recommendations made by ESTYN via their thematic report are fully implemented.
- EPS Service: are securing better blended working with Children's Services to explore how the EPS can work more effectively within Early Years settings. Work with colleagues in the wider Inclusion team and regionally to continue to provide support and challenge for schools in line with the ALNET Act. In particular, this will need to look at developing ALNCo roles to become more strategic, while also building the skills of the wider workforce to meet the needs of vulnerable learners. Work to develop more consistent practice within and between schools around behaviour management, in its widest sense, to include a re-focus on the high quality research undertaken by the EPS around SEBD, literacy and assessment and further attention to schools supporting the work of their ELSAs.
- EPS supporting ALNCos to build capacity for ALN. The EPS has maintained performance in providing high quality support and challenge to schools, with all but one setting confirming that this had improved their capacity to provide for vulnerable learners. The same number of

ALNCOs reported that the strategies and interventions provided by the EPS had led to improvements in provision, and subsequent outcomes, for vulnerable learners. 93% of the ALNCOs confirmed that the EPS had helped them to develop their skills and knowledge and, consequently, manage their roles more effectively. The termly ALNCO Forum, together with the Resource Base Leads' Professional Network meetings provide a platform for ALNCOs to share best practice and for information-sharing.

- EPS whole school training; there has been significant support for schools, with a particular focus on well-being, as described in earlier section.
- Pregnant School Girls and Young Mums: To ensure the LA we are made aware of these pupils in a timely basis, so that exclusions, attendance, support and any alternative provisions are monitored and reviewed on a monthly basis and in compliance with the new policy.
- Implement the Pen-y-Cwm capacity plans to meet the increasing demand for places.

### **Risk Considerations**

- The strategic risks relate to implementation of ALN Reform and improving the quality of provision at the River Centre. There is confirmation that there will be WG ALN funding in place for the next three years, to ensure LAs are in a position to support their schools in implementing the statutory requirements of the ALN Act and Code. River Centre progress/issues identified in other sections.

### **2.3 Support for Other Services - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know**

- The Council's 21st Century Schools investment objectives are clearly aligned to the Vision for Education in improving educational standards and this is evidenced in a positive WG facilitated Gateway Reviews. The Band B programme is on profile and progressing well, despite the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic e.g. Glyncoed new school development progressing.
- The Youth Service is good, taking account of its statutory duties and meeting them effectively, providing a wide range of universal and targeted opportunities for young people aged 11-25. NEET's levels are at their lowest levels i.e. 1.5% (9 young people). Effective participation structures are embedded across the Youth Service. The Independent 11-18 Counselling Service is highly effective. The service is line managed by the Youth Service, which allows a co-ordinated approach to wellbeing between all projects.
- The Council has an enhanced knowledge of school capacity linked to the effective annual monitoring processes that are in place; along with an on-going facilities review/management protocols and effective admissions processes. This is evidenced by the annual review and publication of the School Admissions Policy.
- The ET team has successfully implemented the new Capita One Online system in line with nursery and secondary admission rounds, with the reception round scheduled to commence in January 2022.



- Strong progress is being made in relation to surplus places reduction, with the Council seeing an overall reduction in both the primary and secondary sectors over the last 6 years; Surplus places in both the primary and secondary sector are projected to decrease further over the next 2 years, taking the primary percentage to 12% and secondary to 10% by the 2023/24 academic session, with the overall combined status falling from 15% in Jan 2021 to 11% in 2024.
- Blaenau Gwent's Post 16 provision is provided in partnership with Coleg Gwent at the Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone in Ebbw Vale. The Learning Zone's Self-Assessment Report (SAR) recognises that there is an effective partnership approach between the Council and Coleg Gwent, which is resulting in improvements to the participation rates of Post 16 learners, a broadening of the learning offer and increasing attainment levels for both academic and vocational learners. The 'A' Level A\*-E pass rate is 99.1% and is in line with the national average and the vocational learning success rate (retention/attainment) is over 80% against all levels. The ALIS tertiary benchmarking data places the Learning Zone in the top 8% of Post 16 learning institutions for added value across the UK.
- The Council have a highly effective system in place linked to forecasting and monitoring pupil place requirements; this is evidenced pupil projection accuracy, which was at 98% for primary and 99% for secondary at the start of the 2021 academic session and has been continually high over the last 4 academic years.
- The Council has good arrangements in place to support the co-ordination of early years, childcare and play to ensure sufficiency. Childcare is a rapidly developing sector in Blaenau Gwent and has grown from 142 registered places in 2002, to 1332 places currently. The sector continues to develop in response to emerging needs.
- The Welsh medium proposal is at implementation stage (September 2023) and progressing in line with the programme and profile.
- The Council has made strong progress in line with the development of the recently WG approved Welsh in Education 10-year Strategic Plan, with full support from the WEF. In addition, Education has been successful in securing £100,000 aligned to the development of immersion/latecomer provision for Welsh Medium learners. Education ICT strategic planning processes are strong, with the project team having successfully delivered the ICP and HWB EdTech projects to date. Good progress has been made in line with the development of the Education ICT Strategy, which is scheduled for implementation from September 2022.
- The Blaenau Gwent Period Equity project has been recognised as an example of best practice by both the UK Period Poverty Task Force and the WG Period Dignity Round Table. The project continues to have a positive impact throughout Blaenau Gwent, and has supply and demand issues throughout the Pandemic. In addition, FSM direct payments and the digitally disadvantaged learner projects have continued to have a positive impact upon Blaenau Gwent pupils and families.
- BG Youth Services provide effective information, support and learning opportunities for young people aged 11-25 and also supports young people through earlier transitions from 9 years old, based on a voluntary relationship between the young person and youth worker. In addition, the Youth Service co-ordinates the 11-18 Counselling Service (statutory), the extended 18-25 Counselling Service and the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF), which aims to reduce the numbers of young people who become NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) up to the age of 25 through a partnership approach. The partnership now includes a focus on Youth Homelessness and Wellbeing.

### **2.3 Support for Other Services - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it**

- The delivery of the WESP targets is dependent upon the Welsh medium seedling and immersion proposals. The new 10 year WESP has now been approved by WG in line with the January 2022 deadlines.
- The ET and Youth Services are very dependent upon external funding and sustainability is a key consideration. Therefore, continued monitoring of team capacity is required in order to assess capacity requirements and secure/ sustain the positive progression of service priorities. The ESF Inspire funding risk is escalated, but revenue funding in place until March 2023.
- There is a need to consider the management of home to school and college transport operations and/or how the Environment/Regeneration and Education Directorates develop procedures, and agreements that are able to more effectively address identified gaps in provision i.e. provider and transport shortages and secure resilience going forward.
- A review of online admissions has progressed in order to further improve parental engagement with the admissions process, and address the current ineffective online system. A business case is under development, in line with the use of Capita One's online module, which is the system used within current neighbouring and other Councils throughout Wales. This project required investment, which will be beneficial in the long-term and could enhance partnership working and data monitoring with other Council.
- There are risks associated with the revenue implications associated with the Youth Services Inspire initiative, which is currently funded through European (ESF) funding.
- Monitoring progress against the Childcare Sufficiency Audit (CSA).
- Responding to the COVID-19 emergency to ensure that learner progression is maintained in safe and blended learning settings. A significant proportion of staff time and resource continues to be focused on recovery and renewal, with the former continuing to create conflicting priorities within Education.
- Market forces and contractor supply issues continue to be a concern for capital schemes, in line with the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This is subject to continued monitoring.

#### **Risk Considerations**

- There are risks associated with the revenue implications associated with the Youth Services Inspire initiative, which is currently funded through European (ESF) funding.
- Responding to the COVID-19 emergency to ensure that learner progression is maintained in safe and blended learning settings.

### **3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know**

- The improving School Categorisation and School Inspection profile over the last 3 years demonstrates the increased effectiveness of leaders and managers in Local Government Education Services in Blaenau Gwent, especially reducing to only 2 schools remaining as SCC/TAS.

- The Council considers all evidence and implements its full use of SWN's and statutory powers, where required.
- The impact of good, effective leadership is demonstrated through programme progress for example, the Band B Programme. There is strong progress through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band A programme and approval of Band B programme for 2020 to 2026 period.
- National and regional leadership is being exercised well by senior officers e.g. regional Welsh medium POSP group.
- Appointment of a Corporate Director of Education post during the autumn term 2020. This has been followed with a review of the Education Directorate's structural requirements, including appointing an additional post for school improvement capacity.
- Service Managers for Education Transformation and Business Change and Young People and Partnerships are strong appointments.
- Education and the EAS know the BG schools well and take a graduated approach to supporting the schools.
- Executive and Scrutiny arrangements are effective and there is continuity in political leadership i.e. new Leader has a thorough understanding of the Education Portfolio.
- A new Workforce Strategy was endorsed by Council in July 2021. An Education Workforce Plan is in place for implementation.
- A Leadership Development Model was agreed at CLT February 2020. Proposals for a delivery model will be planned for early 2022.
- New Council Corporate Plan priorities reinforcing Education remains a priority as well as an operating model in place, which includes agile working arrangements for the workforce from September 2021 (excluding school based staff).

### **3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it**

- To continue to develop officer expertise through the Professional Learning offer.
- To further self-evaluation activity across key service areas located within Local Government Education Services, for example via the HWG and Scrutiny sub-group looking at wellbeing in schools.
- Work to align the self-assessment process of the Council, as part of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, with the self-evaluation process within the Education Directorate.
- To continue to develop Member understanding and effectiveness via the Member Development Programme.

#### **Risk Considerations**

- There are risks associated ALN Reform, however, the permanent appointment to the Service Manager-Inclusion role for the Education Directorate in 2022 is a key development.

### **3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know**

- The Self-Evaluation Policy (reviewed September 2022) and the SE Toolkit clearly sets out the ongoing cycle for self-evaluation processes and reporting. The FADE approach to writing evaluations is now embedded into routine practice. Processes are totally aligned with corporate

self-evaluation policy arrangements. The Education Directorate is confident in its SE processes and their ability to sustain continual improvement. The Council is appropriate in its action and use of full statutory powers, where applicable, to secure the improvement required e.g. River Centre.

- Partnership working between the Council and the EAS is strong and is subject to significant joint working and quality assurance. Impact evaluations reveal that the EAS and direct work of Challenge Advisers is having a positive impact on outcomes, provision and the quality of leadership. The School Categorisation and School Inspection profile has improved over the last 3 years effectively evidencing the effectiveness of our self-evaluation processes. Improvement has been secured in EFLC (out of SI), in Glyncoed/Sofrydd Primary Schools and in ALC (ESTYN monitoring visit Spring Term 2022). Progress in ALC will continue to be monitored through the ALC Corporate Group.
- The Post 16 Partnership Board established formally during 2020 and is working effectively (see Post 16 outcomes).

### **3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it**

- To continue to engage Members in meaningful self-evaluation activity, for example the People- Education Scrutiny will receive a SE Update report in September 2022.
- Review the Education Improvement Plan and Tier 2 business plan priorities to bring about the improvement required.
- To continue to ensure that regional SCC/TAS protocols deliver improvements in BFS and the River Centre.

### **Risk Considerations**

- The risk is that self-evaluation and improvement planning fails to deliver improved outcomes for learners.

### **3.3 Professional learning - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know**

- Senior Officers now hold Chair positions across a number of all Wales groups; this supports their ongoing professional development.
- Monthly 121 performance coaching sessions are embedded as routine practice.
- PDR underpinned by an effective 360 process is now also an embedded process. This also includes contributions from Headteachers for senior Officer's PDR i.e. the Corporate Director for Education and Head of School Improvement and Inclusion.
- New Headteacher and aspiring deputy induction learning offer is in place and led by an experienced Headteacher.
- 14 of BG's Headteachers are actively engaging with the LA, which has benefits for both the schools and the corporate work of the Council.
- 

### **3.3 Professional learning - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it**

- To engage in more formal evaluations of the impact and effectiveness of CPD for Directorate officers.

- To develop further cost neutral ways in which officers can continue to engage in professional development activity set against a backdrop of Council austerity measures.

### **Risk Considerations**

- The risk is that there is less resources to support professional learning and this impacts on the Directorate and schools.

### **3.4 Safeguarding - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know**

- The Safeguarding Matrix approach to capturing information supports the ongoing improvement in practice in this area.
- The close working arrangements between Education and Social Services have developed well, further supporting a coherence of approach regarding safeguarding in schools and settings. The Safeguarding Policy is regularly reviewed and understood by key stakeholders.
- Recent work to respond to community safety issues, counter potential terrorism and extremist behaviours has progressed well, for example, the Safer School Partnership, the Respect and Resilience Action Plan.
- The Operation Encompass work has progressed very well and supports schools in identifying learners who experience domestic violence.
- Quality assurance processes to test the robustness of safeguarding processes have been implemented and inform ongoing work in this area.
- The roll-out of MyConcern across schools is nearing completion, with all schools confirming their use of the system.
- There is an effective Safeguarding in Education Policy in place that is cognisant of the Prevent duties.
- The Quality Assurance protocol enables the Directorate to assure itself that safeguarding processes are appropriate.

### **3.4 Safeguarding - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it**

- Continue to develop policy and practice that is responsive to emerging school needs in a contextual safeguarding approach, this will include the establishment of the Safer Schools Partnership Board
- Review the safeguarding matrix to streamline data recording and place online to ensure 'live' updates and ensure that the matrix is considerate of the core safeguarding training as identified in the corporate WAO report as well as recording Prevent and VAWSDSV group 1 and group 2 training.

- Ensure that all school governors have a valid DBS check and providing greater flexibility in the training offer to increase the uptake of safeguarding training by school governors.
- Review the quality assurance process for 2022/23 to ensure that all areas of the LGES framework have appropriate 'dip sampling' activities in place so that the Council can assure itself that:
  - fewer children and young people are identified as missing,
  - the number of parents seeking to home educate their children is reduced; and,
  - that those children and young people accessing the provision e.g. YOS access their 25 hours' statutory entitlement to education.
- Ensure that data collection processes for RPI's and Rights Respect Equalities are routinely collated and evaluated to inform future work streams
- Utilise the data from the MyConcern software across all of BG's schools to inform developments in policy and practice.
- Following the review of self-evaluation arrangements for safeguarding for 20/21 academic year implement the new arrangements for performance reporting to Scrutiny/Executive Committees in the 2022 cycle.

### **Risk Considerations**

- There is a risk as a result of capacity considerations in SS that the Education Directorate cannot assure itself that adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place for children and young people in Blaenau Gwent. This is a workforce consideration at a national level.

### **3.5 Use of Resources - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know**

- The school's Individual Schools Budget (ISB) has been prioritised. Schools have been given an 8.4% uplift for 22/23. Capital has been secured to match fund the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme. Overall, schools have healthy balances circa £4.3m across the school estate.
- Effective Education budget monitoring in place, which has also generated revenue savings.
- Financial Efficiency Savings: devised, approved and budget agreed for 2020/21. No additional revenue savings are required for financial year 22/23.
- SENCom review is complete – BG contributed extensively to the review and support the findings.
- GEMS provide good value for money.
- Monitoring arrangements with the regional Education Achievement Service (EAS) provide good value for money.
- There is good engagement of Blaenau Gwent elected members in the governance arrangements of the EAS; thereby effectively holding the EAS to account e.g. termly Exec/CLT briefings.
- Use of resources i.e. Education staffing have been significantly streamlined to ensure greater value for money.
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Band B Programme has been approved and is in implementation phase.

- The Education Transformation, Youth Service and Inclusion Services provide improving value for money.
- Schools have worked strategically with the Directorate to establish a Premature Retirement Contribution budget for staff settlement/ exit strategies.
- Project team established led by the Service Manager - Education Transformation and Business Change to oversee the SLA renewal arrangements that has realised high-level of buy-back from BG's schools. schools have signed up to the 3 year SLA arrangement for support services with the Council up to 2025.

### **3.5 Use of Resources - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it**

- The corporate 'Bridging the Gap' programme continues to facilitate greater effectiveness and efficiencies, where available.
- Continue to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of staff professional learning on outcomes, wellbeing, provision and the quality of leadership of LGES e.g. FADEs.
- Schools balances in the secondary/primary sectors have increased, but needs to be kept under close review going forward; particularly timely support provided by the Council through the ALC Corporate Group.
- To escalate the risk level for Youth Service's funding position as ESF comes to an end in 2023. The Shared Prosperity Fund is being explored.
- There will need to be close monitoring and support for schools predicting surplus and deficit budgets, particularly for the two all-through schools.
- Forensic monitoring of revenue/capital budgets in line with the post COVID-19 cost pressures e.g. Home to School Transport cost pressures associated with increases in fuel costs.
- Review the monitoring of the out of county placement and home to school transport revenue budgets is required.
- Monitoring SLAs with schools from April 2022, which is circa £3m+ income to the Council.

### **Risk Considerations**

The revenue financial position of Education is likely to be impacted in the medium to long-term by the continued response to the COVID-19. However, the indicative BG settlement from the WG is a positive position with an uplift of 8.4% and this has been confirmed in the Spring term for financial year 2022-23. The ISB has been uplifted by 8.4% in 2022-23 financial year.

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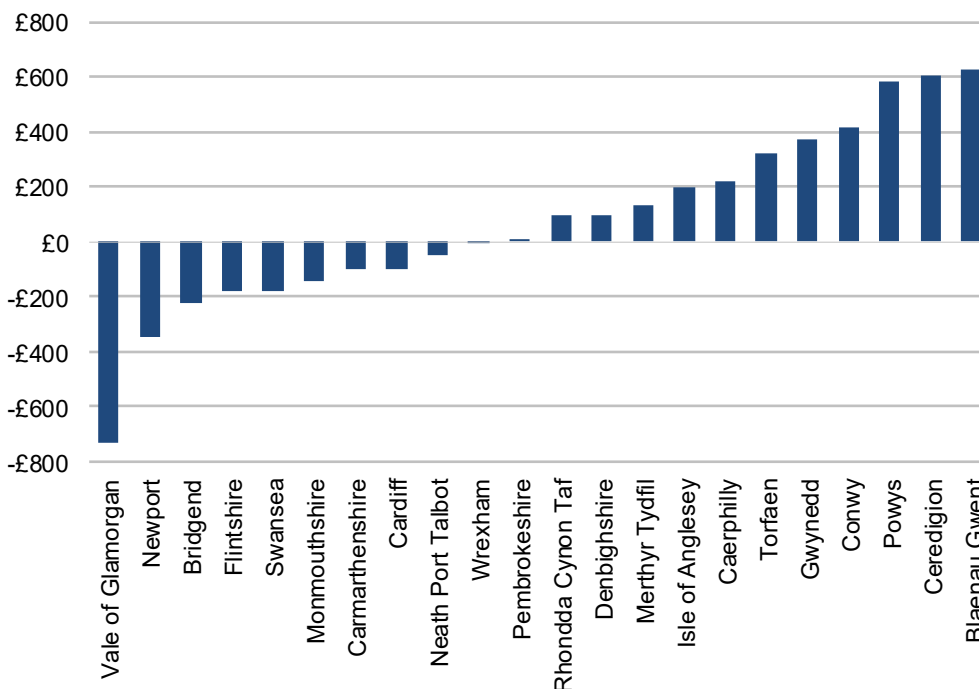
## Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools: 2022-23

7 July 2022  
SB 16/2022

### Key points

- Schools expenditure is budgeted to be £3,096 million, an increase of 6.3% over the previous year.
- Schools expenditure per pupil is budgeted to be £6,773, a year-on-year increase of 6.0% or £386.
- The budget per pupil can be broken down into £5,617 per pupil delegated to schools and £1,156 per pupil retained for centrally funded school services.
- The funding delegated to schools is budgeted to be £2,568 million. The amount of funding that local authorities delegate directly to schools ranges between 76% and 89% of overall schools budgeted expenditure.
- 82.9% of the total schools budgeted expenditure is delegated directly to schools, a decrease of 0.4 of a percentage point compared to the previous year.

**Chart 1: Schools budgeted expenditure per pupil: difference from the Wales average, 2022-23**



### About this release

This statistical bulletin analyses the resources that local authorities have budgeted to make available for education and school services in the financial year prior to March 2023.

It analyses overall school expenditure, delegated school expenditure and expenditure per pupil.

Details of individual school budgets can be found on the [StatsWales](https://stats.wales.gov.uk/) website.

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Net revenue expenditure is the amount of expenditure which is supported by council tax and general support from central government, net of specific grants, plus (or minus) any appropriations from (or to) financial reserves. Table 1 shows Newport has the largest percentage increase in education net revenue expenditure at 9.7% whilst Neath Port Talbot has the smallest increase of 3.2%.

**Table 1: Budgeted net revenue expenditure on education (a)**

	<i>£ thousand</i>			
			Change in	
	2021-22	2022-23	2022-23 over 2021-22	Percentage change
Isle of Anglesey	57,114	59,999	2,885	5.1
Gwynedd	101,770	106,167	4,398	4.3
Conwy	89,437	94,430	4,993	5.6
Denbighshire	91,652	98,038	6,386	7.0
Flintshire	124,408	130,178	5,770	4.6
Wrexham	109,399	114,687	5,288	4.8
Powys	105,646	110,018	4,372	4.1
Ceredigion	57,232	59,854	2,622	4.6
Pembrokeshire	99,092	102,587	3,495	3.5
Carmarthenshire	153,180	159,978	6,798	4.4
Swansea	189,396	202,293	12,897	6.8
Neath Port Talbot	116,987	120,717	3,731	3.2
Bridgend	125,938	131,124	5,186	4.1
Vale of Glamorgan	115,597	123,368	7,771	6.7
Cardiff	296,218	307,453	11,234	3.8
Rhondda Cynon Taf	214,453	228,191	13,739	6.4
Merthyr Tydfil	53,255	57,951	4,696	8.8
Caerphilly	158,150	169,243	11,093	7.0
Blaenau Gwent	55,979	60,383	4,404	7.9
Torfaen	83,300	87,484	4,183	5.0
Monmouthshire	63,824	66,538	2,714	4.3
Newport	136,115	149,307	13,192	9.7
<b>Wales</b>	<b>2,598,142</b>	<b>2,739,990</b>	<b>141,848</b>	<b>5.5</b>

Source: RA/Section 52 education budget statements

(a) The figures are on a 'net revenue' basis, i.e. excluding expenditure funded by specific government grants. The data includes all school and non-school expenditure.

Table 2 shows that Merthyr Tydfil has the largest increase in schools budgeted expenditure of 9.6%. Neath Port Talbot has the smallest increase at 3.6%.

**Table 2: Schools budgeted expenditure (a)**

	<i>£ thousand</i>			
	Schools budgeted expenditure			
	2021-22	2022-23	Change in 2022-23 over 2021-22	Percentage change
Isle of Anglesey	63,411	66,780	3,369	5.3
Gwynedd	112,460	118,185	5,725	5.1
Conwy	101,955	110,533	8,578	8.4
Denbighshire	101,720	107,549	5,829	5.7
Flintshire	139,847	148,171	8,324	6.0
Wrexham	119,587	125,759	6,172	5.2
Powys	117,194	121,697	4,504	3.8
Ceredigion	64,779	69,197	4,418	6.8
Pembrokeshire	109,984	114,946	4,962	4.5
Carmarthenshire	169,763	181,262	11,500	6.8
Swansea	212,859	225,912	13,053	6.1
Neath Port Talbot	130,496	135,163	4,667	3.6
Bridgend	143,915	151,228	7,313	5.1
Vale of Glamorgan	128,419	136,855	8,436	6.6
Cardiff	341,549	364,871	23,322	6.8
Rhondda Cynon Taf	244,785	264,434	19,649	8.0
Merthyr Tydfil	57,031	62,519	5,488	9.6
Caerphilly	173,262	185,218	11,956	6.9
Blaenau Gwent	60,993	65,479	4,487	7.4
Torfaen	90,822	95,412	4,590	5.1
Monmouthshire	71,321	74,294	2,973	4.2
Newport	156,959	170,688	13,730	8.7
<b>Wales</b>	<b>2,913,110</b>	<b>3,096,152</b>	<b>183,042</b>	<b>6.3</b>

Source: RA/Section 52 education budget statements

(a) Includes all expenditure on schools i.e. the delegated/devolved schools budget and all expenditure by the LEA on behalf of schools. Covers all elements of LEA spending that relate to school provision, i.e. school budget plus the LEA budget, including central administration of the LEA, less spending on home to college transport and further education and training for young persons and adults. The figures include the cost of educating pupils with statements of special educational needs who are educated out of county.

Table 3 shows delegated schools budgets increased by 5.7% compared with the previous year. Newport has the highest percentage increase at 9.0%. Home to school transport costs have an effect on how much an individual authority can delegate to schools so delegation rates with and without these costs are shown.

**Table 3: Delegated School Budget**

	<i>£ thousand</i>					
	Delegated schools budget (a)					Memorandum: Delegation rate excluding home to school transport
	2021-22	2022-23	Change in		Delegation	
			2022-23 over 2021-22	Percentage change	rate (b) 2022-23	
Isle of Anglesey	52,034	54,328	2,294	4.4	81.4%	
Gwynedd	92,918	96,978	4,060	4.4	82.1%	85.8%
Conwy	83,815	89,054	5,239	6.3	80.6%	84.6%
Denbighshire	85,519	90,887	5,368	6.3	84.5%	89.8%
Flintshire	119,525	123,746	4,221	3.5	83.5%	86.5%
Wrexham	100,575	105,127	4,551	4.5	83.6%	87.6%
Powys	90,006	92,794	2,787	3.1	76.2%	82.8%
Ceredigion	50,713	54,299	3,586	7.1	78.5%	84.0%
Pembrokeshire	91,021	93,415	2,394	2.6	81.3%	86.4%
Carmarthenshire	139,909	149,604	9,696	6.9	82.5%	87.9%
Swansea	177,656	189,449	11,793	6.6	83.9%	87.6%
Neath Port Talbot	106,454	109,071	2,618	2.5	80.7%	85.3%
Bridgend	121,963	126,429	4,466	3.7	83.6%	88.1%
Vale of Glamorgan	112,478	120,401	7,923	7.0	88.0%	90.9%
Cardiff	304,040	324,635	20,595	6.8	89.0%	91.0%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	200,989	213,676	12,687	6.3	80.8%	84.4%
Merthyr Tydfil	47,337	51,109	3,772	8.0	81.7%	85.3%
Caerphilly	137,989	146,770	8,781	6.4	79.2%	82.6%
Blaenau Gwent	52,102	55,769	3,667	7.0	85.2%	88.3%
Torfaen	75,332	79,535	4,203	5.6	83.4%	85.5%
Monmouthshire	57,033	59,615	2,582	4.5	80.2%	86.6%
Newport	129,221	140,914	11,692	9.0	82.6%	85.3%
<b>Wales</b>	<b>2,428,629</b>	<b>2,567,606</b>	<b>138,977</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>82.9%</b>	<b>86.8%</b>

Source: RA/Section 52 education budget statements

- (a) Figures are on a 'gross' basis, i.e. including funding from all sources. This is the amount of money the school receives through delegated funding from the LEA plus any specific government grants that have also been devolved to individual schools.
- (b) The delegation rate is calculated by dividing the amounts delegated to schools by the gross schools budgeted expenditure. Delegation rates will vary based on the services provided centrally by local authorities.

Cardiff has the highest delegation rate at 89.0%. Powys has the lowest delegation rate at 76.2% mainly due to high home to school transport costs which cannot be delegated.

**Chart 2: Delegation rates: percentage point difference from the Wales average, 2022-23**

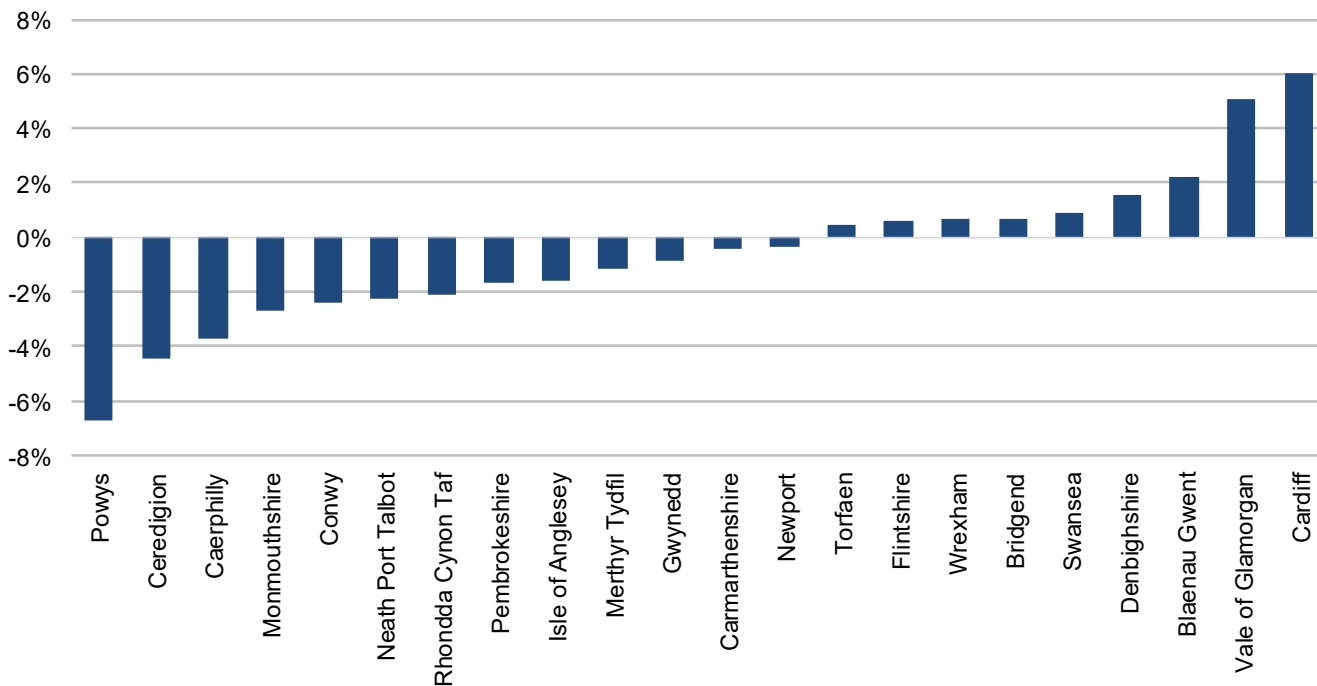
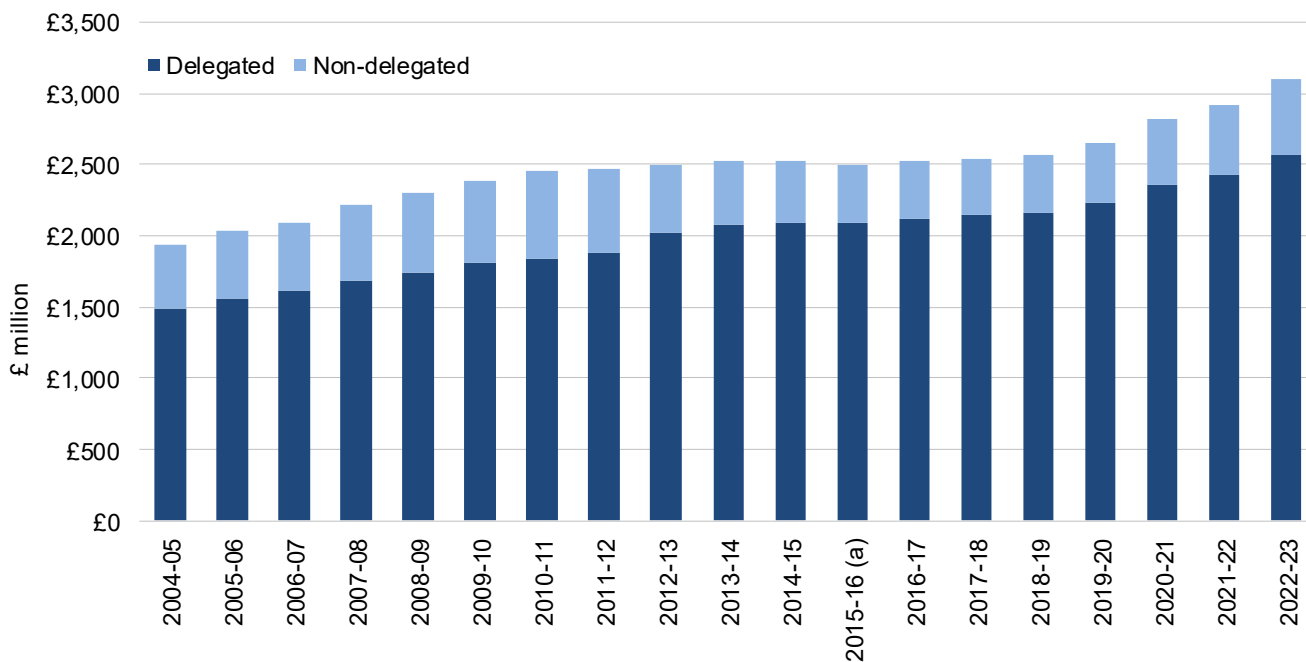


Chart 3 shows that schools budgeted expenditure is to increase by 6.3% in 2022-23.

**Chart 3: Breakdown of schools budgeted expenditure over time**



(a) The data is not wholly comparable with previous years due to the movement of Flying Start expenditure from Education to Social Services in 2015-16.

**Table 4: Centrally funded schools budgets, 2022-23 (a)**

	<i>£ per pupil</i>												Memo: Centrally funded schools budget (£ thousand)
	Schools budget					LEA budget							
	Special educational needs (b)	Inter authority recoupment	Staff	Other schools budget	Capital expenditure charged to revenue account	Special educational needs	School improvement	Access to education (excluding transport)	Home to school transport	Strategic management	Other LEA budget	Total centrally funded schools budget	
Isle of Anglesey	272	17	1	130	0	18	55	61	311	382	53	1,300	12,452
Gwynedd	191	23	4	177	84	107	79	75	308	232	0	1,281	21,207
Conwy	259	24	0	436	0	58	68	63	344	144	0	1,397	21,479
Denbighshire	197	-69	24	187	0	37	49	115	408	116	0	1,064	16,662
Flintshire	390	113	20	99	0	38	58	52	225	90	0	1,086	24,425
Wrexham	173	-22	35	369	0	11	23	40	313	141	29	1,111	20,633
Powys	286	-23	2	384	0	91	75	100	584	248	0	1,748	28,904
Ceredigion	342	-79	0	263	0	36	131	250	489	157	0	1,588	14,898
Pembrokeshire	119	153	0	210	0	57	120	60	405	146	0	1,270	21,531
Carmarthenshire	157	-10	3	182	0	108	106	46	408	166	0	1,166	31,658
Swansea	382	25	82	43	0	64	33	109	283	46	0	1,065	36,463
Neath Port Talbot	3	61	12	223	0	291	186	68	361	93	0	1,298	26,091
Bridgend	189	15	1	166	0	81	30	119	334	139	0	1,074	24,799
Vale of Glamorgan	212	-35	1	92	0	88	41	21	194	101	12	727	16,454
Cardiff	123	68	5	101	0	11	33	181	149	66	0	736	40,236
Rhondda Cynon Taf	164	51	6	488	0	70	15	126	296	101	0	1,318	50,757
Merthyr Tydfil	504	79	16	59	0	71	58	25	284	158	5	1,260	11,410
Caerphilly	319	81	30	345	0	82	72	65	284	174	0	1,451	38,448
Blaenau Gwent	279	-34	0	14	14	74	100	214	260	124	51	1,097	9,710
Torfaen	80	107	1	185	0	43	98	183	175	308	0	1,180	15,877
Monmouthshire	189	56	0	195	0	70	52	45	486	216	0	1,310	14,679
Newport	195	69	0	129	0	14	0	163	206	230	114	1,120	29,775
<b>Wales</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1,156</b>	<b>528,546</b>
Minimum	3	-79	0	14	0	11	0	21	149	46	0	727	
Maximum	504	153	82	488	84	291	186	250	584	382	114	1,748	

Source: RA/Section 52 education budget statements

(a) Includes all expenditure incurred by the LEA spent supporting schools. This is the total LEA expenditure outside of the delegated/devolved school budget.

(b) Figures include the cost of educating pupils with statements of special educational needs who are educated out of county. Expenditure on pupil referral units is included, however the pupil numbers are not included in the calculation of 'spend per pupil' as they are not available from the section 52 return. Please see glossary for definitions.

Table 5 shows the total schools budgeted expenditure per pupil. Blaenau Gwent has the highest spend per pupil at £7,397 whilst the Vale of Glamorgan has the lowest at £6,045. Rhondda Cynon Taf has the largest increase in spend per pupil over the previous year of 8.4%. Powys has the smallest increase of 3.2%.

**Table 5: Total schools budgeted expenditure per pupil, 2022-23**

	Delegated schools budget						Schools budgeted expenditure			
	Nursery	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Special	All sectors (a)	Centrally funded schools budget (a)			Percentage change
							2021-22	2022-23	2022-23	
Isle of Anglesey	.	5,242	.	5,798	19,992	5,673	1,300	6,694	6,973	4.2
Gwynedd	.	5,457	5,853	5,872	21,006	5,860	1,281	6,783	7,141	5.3
Conwy	.	4,999	.	6,111	22,667	5,792	1,397	6,643	7,190	8.2
Denbighshire	.	4,936	5,736	6,130	23,408	5,804	1,064	6,555	6,868	4.8
Flintshire	.	5,122	.	5,644	21,314	5,503	1,086	6,209	6,590	6.1
Wrexham	14,966	5,174	.	5,869	20,176	5,661	1,111	6,426	6,772	5.4
Powys	.	4,892	6,108	5,655	23,968	5,611	1,748	7,132	7,359	3.2
Ceredigion (b)	.	5,292	6,150	6,227	.	5,789	1,588	6,915	7,378	6.7
Pembrokeshire	.	4,933	5,367	5,907	25,985	5,510	1,270	6,525	6,780	3.9
Carmarthenshire	5,314	5,048	.	5,880	26,195	5,508	1,166	6,251	6,674	6.8
Swansea	.	5,001	.	5,931	24,704	5,532	1,065	6,274	6,597	5.2
Neath Port Talbot	.	5,188	5,173	5,119	22,569	5,425	1,298	6,427	6,723	4.6
Bridgend	.	4,693	.	5,612	26,904	5,475	1,074	6,227	6,549	5.2
Vale of Glamorgan	8,778	4,542	4,843	5,119	36,898	5,318	727	5,661	6,045	6.8
Cardiff	13,423	5,286	.	6,184	25,669	5,938	736	6,293	6,674	6.1
Rhondda Cynon Taf	.	4,975	5,549	5,713	21,044	5,549	1,318	6,334	6,867	8.4
Merthyr Tydfil	.	5,202	.	5,575	21,770	5,644	1,260	6,381	6,904	8.2
Caerphilly	.	5,083	6,078	5,699	27,879	5,540	1,451	6,517	6,992	7.3
Blaenau Gwent	.	5,725	6,097	6,062	26,006	6,300	1,097	6,980	7,397	6.0
Torfaen	.	5,244	.	6,358	29,355	5,911	1,180	6,653	7,091	6.6
Monmouthshire	.	4,942	.	5,824	.	5,320	1,310	6,355	6,630	4.3
Newport	11,310	4,878	.	5,379	26,448	5,303	1,120	6,007	6,423	6.9
<b>Wales</b>	<b>10,345</b>	<b>5,059</b>	<b>5,628</b>	<b>5,806</b>	<b>24,795</b>	<b>5,617</b>	<b>1,156</b>	<b>6,387</b>	<b>6,773</b>	<b>6.0</b>
Minimum	5,314	4,542	4,843	5,119	19,992	5,303	727	5,661	6,045	3.2
Maximum	14,966	5,725	6,150	6,358	36,898	6,300	1,748	7,132	7,397	8.4

Source: RA/Section 52 education budget statements

(a) The £ per pupil figures shown here are an average across all sectors.

(b) There are no special schools within Ceredigion or Monmouthshire, although the LAs have classes within mainstream education which cater for pupils with statements of special educational needs.

**Chart 4: Breakdown of schools budgeted expenditure, 2022-23 (£ million)**

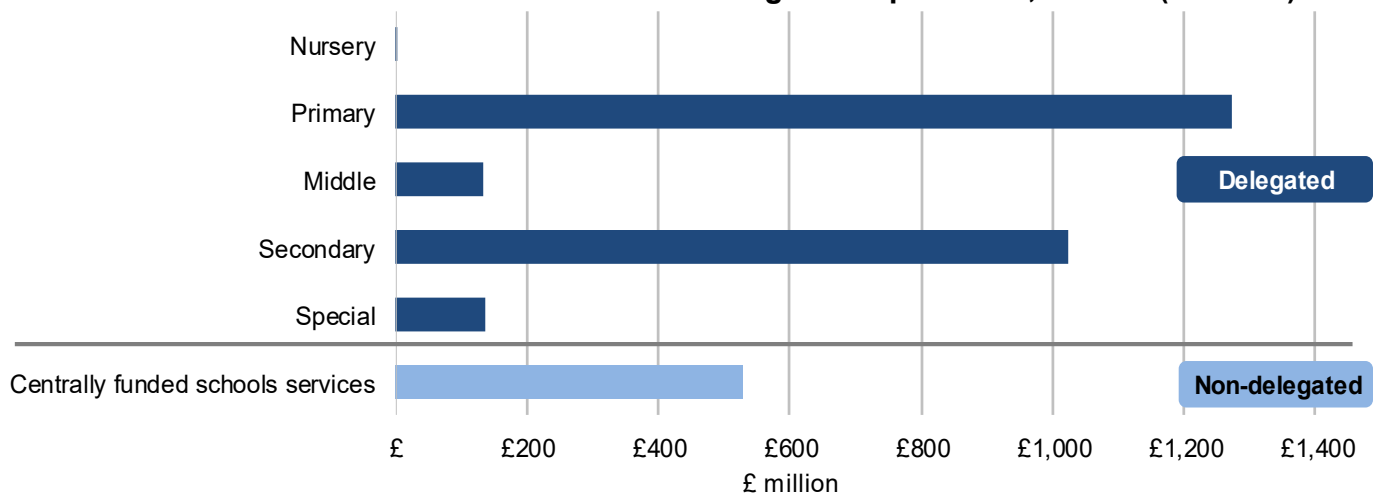
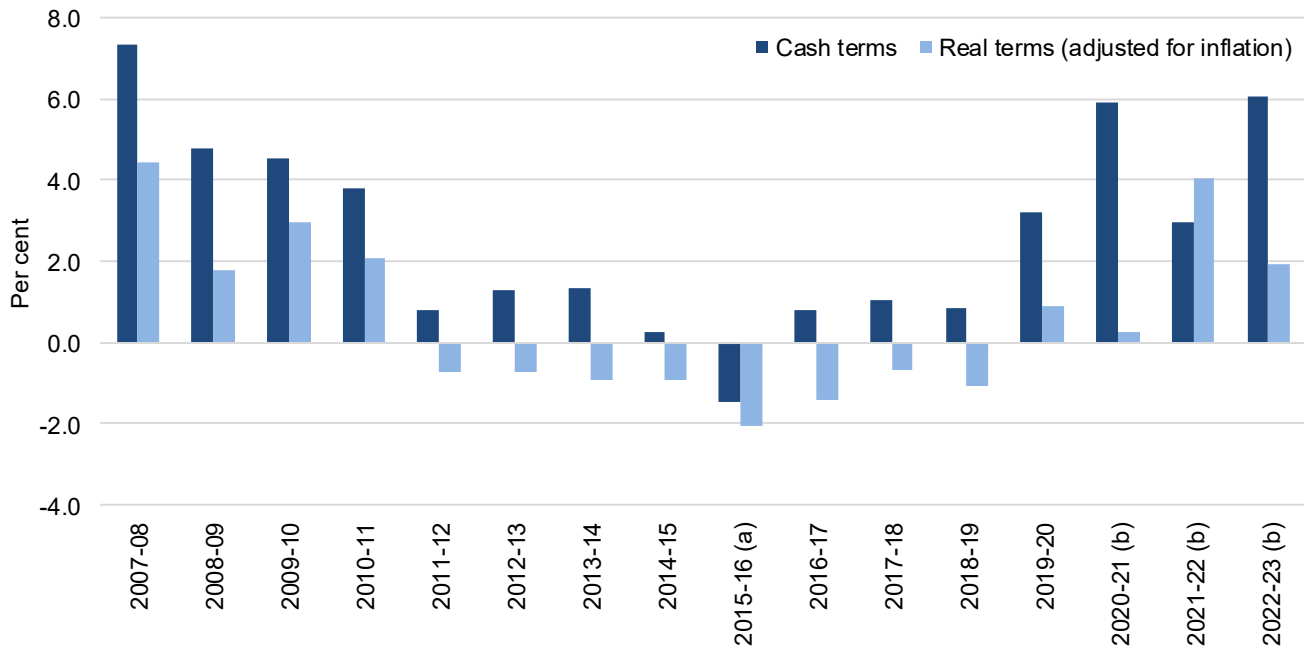


Chart 5 shows the percentage change over time in school budgets per pupil in cash and real terms. Over the past 10 years, school budgets per pupil have been increasing in cash terms in most years. There have been increases in real terms over the past four years.

**Chart 5: Percentage change in school budgets per pupil over time: cash and real terms (2020-21 prices)**



(a) The data is not wholly comparable with previous years due to the movement of Flying Start expenditure from Education to Social Services in 2015-16.  
 (b) The real terms data for 2020-21 onwards should be treated with caution due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Gross domestic product (GDP).

### Comparison with England

In January 2012 we published a [statistical article](#) explaining why the Wales data on school funding cannot be compared with England. This situation arose due to the rollout of Academies in England and the separate funding and data arrangements that followed. The [Chief Statistician published an update on this issue in March 2015](#).

In 2018, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) [published a paper comparing Wales and England school expenditure per pupil](#) having identified a new data source that enabled academies and maintained schools data in England to be combined and thus enabled a comparison of trends with Wales. Whilst there still may be some issues in the comparability of the data at a detailed level, we worked with the IFS researchers to consider their methods and believe it is the most robust comparison that currently exists of trends in recent years. It is important to note that the IFS analysis is on a different basis to our previous statistical publications and therefore cannot be directly compared.

The IFS report that school funding per pupil in England has fallen at a faster rate than in Wales over a number of years largely due to the growth in pupil numbers in England.

The latest UK comparisons have been included in section 4.2 of the [latest IFS publication on education spending in England](#).



## Glossary

### Data sources

The main sources of information about Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools are the Revenue Account (RA) and Section 52 (S52) returns from county councils.

The numbers of pupils used for the calculations are based on full-time equivalent pupil numbers in nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, as shown in S52 Part 1 returns, i.e. the pupil numbers on which Local Authorities (LAs) based their budgets.

The real terms data has been calculated using the [GDP deflators published by the Treasury](#).

### Background

#### Sources of funding

Local authority budgets for education services are funded mainly from shares of revenue support grant, council tax and redistributed non-domestic rates. In addition, funding is provided through specific grants provided by the Welsh Government, including grants for post-16 provision in schools. The grant for post-16 provision in schools forms part of core funding for schools and is part of a local authority's schools budget.

The provisions of the Education Act 2002 brought into force for financial year 2004-05 through the "LEA Budget, Schools Budget and Individual Schools Budget (Wales) Regulations 2003" require local authorities to allocate expenditure to 3 budgets. These are: **LEA budget** (covers central LA functions involved in Additional Learning Needs; school improvement; access to education; further education and training for young persons and adults and strategic management - as set out in Schedule 1 to the 2003 Regulations), **the schools budget** (covers expenditure directly aimed at supporting schools and comprises of expenditure on services for which the LA retains funding centrally, such as: Additional Learning Needs services, school meals and milk and the **Individual Schools Budget** or funding delegated/devolved to schools).

To focus comparisons, non-school expenditure such as further education and training for young persons and adults, youth service and home to college transport have been excluded throughout with the exception of table 1 which shows net revenue expenditure on total education i.e. all school and non-school expenditure.

The figure below shows the different strands of education expenditure within local authorities. For the purposes of this schools release, we focus on the first 3 strands and ignore any non-school expenditure (except in table 1 which shows the net revenue budget for total education).

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Delegated/devolved school budget (also called the individual school budget)} \\ + \\ \text{School budget (held by LEA)} \\ + \\ \text{LEA budget spent on schools (held by LEA)} \\ = \\ \textbf{Total school budget} \\ + \\ \text{LEA budget spent on non-school services} \\ = \\ \textbf{Total education budget} \end{array}$$

## **Flying Start expenditure**

For 2015-16 onwards, authorities were asked to report flying start consistently and class all related expenditure as Social Services rather than Education.

## **Key quality information**

Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political reference.

This section provides a summary of information on this output against six dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, Coherence, and Comparability.

### **Relevance**

The statistics are important and have a number of uses, for example: advice to Ministers; local government finance revenue settlement calculations; unitary authority comparisons and benchmarking; expenditure in Wales compared to other countries; informing the debate in the Senedd Cymru and beyond; assisting in research in public expenditure issues; economic analysis.

### **Accuracy**

The main sources of information about Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools are the Revenue Account (RA) and Section 52 (S52) returns from county councils. The returns relate to the financial year.

We collect 100% of returns from all twenty-two county councils. The collection is a 100% survey and as such no estimation of the figures is calculated, and hence there is no sampling error.

In tables where figures have been rounded to the nearest final digit there may be an apparent discrepancy between the sum of the constituent items and the total as shown.

Once we receive the data, it goes through further validation and verification checks, for example:

- spend per head by local authority;
- arithmetic consistency checks;
- cross checks with other relevant data collections;
- thorough tolerance checks;
- outturn comparison with budgets;
- cross checks with data from other government departments;
- verification that data outside of tolerances are correct.

The data that is collected adhere to recognised professional standards. Specifically, the finance data is required under legislation and also must adhere to CIPFA accounting procedures. However, further guidelines are also available on the interpretation of these standards to ensure consistency.

### **Timeliness and punctuality**

The data collection is carried out between April and June. The data is published in July, this allows time to collect, collate and validate the data.

All outputs adhere to the Code of Practice by pre-announcing the data of publication through the [upcoming calendar](#) web pages.

### **Accessibility and clarity**

The Welsh local government finance statistics are published in an accessible, orderly, pre-announced manner on the Welsh Government website at 9:30am on the day of publication. All releases are available to download for free.

More detailed data are also available at the same time on the StatsWales website and this can be manipulated online or downloaded into spreadsheets for use offline.

We aim to use Plain English in our outputs and all outputs adhere to the Welsh Government accessibility policy. Furthermore, all our headlines are published in Welsh and English.

We regularly peer review our outputs.

### **Comparability and coherence**

Adhering to the professional code (CIPFA's SeRCOP) has meant that changes over time have been minimal. Where there have been time series which are not comparable from the start of the time series to the end this will be shown clearly in the outputs. Where advance warning is known of future changes these will be pre-announced in accordance with Welsh Government arrangements.

The existence of a professional code and our adherence to it provides assurance that the data are consistent across domains, such as local authorities.

Data on school budgets are also available for [England](#) and [Scotland](#). The council tax system does not apply to Northern Ireland.

### **Impact of Covid-19**

The data collection period for this release ran from mid-February and had a deadline in April. Data was received up until June.

The previous year's budget figures may have been impacted by Covid-19 so this may have had an effect on year-on-year comparisons.

### **Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)**

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

## Further details

The document is available at: <https://gov.wales/local-authority-budgeted-expenditure-schools>

Further data is available on our [StatsWales website](#):

- Local Government      →Finance      →Revenue      →Education
- Local Government      →Finance      →Revenue      →Budgets
- Local Government      →Finance      →Revenue      →Delegated Schools Budgets

Individual school level data is also available from the [My Local School website](#).

Data on school budgets are also available for [England](#) and [Scotland](#).

## Open data

The data is also accessible directly via the StatsWales OData service. Links to data and metadata can be found below each view on the StatsWales website within the 'Open Data' tab.

## Next update

July 2023 - Statistical first release and StatsWales update for 2023-24.

## We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to [stats.finance@gov.wales](mailto:stats.finance@gov.wales)

## Open Government Licence

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Priority Area	PI	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	Target (when will we know we have recovered)?
Learner Wellbeing	Applications – Nursery	693	696	675	714	627	The applications for 22/23 do not currently include Faith Schools for Nursery and Reception applications and Brynmawr for Secondary.
	Applications – Primary	739	731	720	701	634	
	Applications – Secondary	677	679	642	696	515	
		<b>July 2019</b>	<b>July 2020</b>	<b>July 2021</b>	<b>April 2022</b>		
	Attendance – Primary	94.4	93.5	90.7	89.3		WG no longer report attendance data but collect weekly. In December, BG was 81.4%, which was in line with the WG average.
	Attendance Secondary	93.3	91.7	84.8	85.3		
		<b>Apr 19 – Mar 20</b>	<b>Apr 20 - Mar 21</b>	<b>Apr 21 - Jul 21</b>	<b>Sept 21 – Apr 22</b>		
	Exclusions Primary	108	25	17	62		Both Primary and Secondary exclusions are slightly higher than pre-Covid levels.
	Exclusions Secondary	459	135	183	551		
	Average Number of Primary exclusions per month (no. of months in brackets)	9.8	3.6	3.4	9 (7)		
Average Number of Secondary exclusions per month (no. of months in brackets)	41.7	19.3	36.6	79 (7)			
		<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	As of PLASC 2022 (All Pupils)		
Vulnerable Learners	Entitlement to FSM/Transitionally Protected (%)	21.1	24.6	30.4	31.3		FSM numbers higher than pre-Covid levels. This may take some time to show recovery due to entitlement being protected.
		<b>April 19 - March 20</b>	<b>April 20 - March 21</b>	<b>April - September 2021</b>	October-December 2021		
	Number of referrals to Social Services for children and young people of school age (3-16)	2382	2260	1702	1131		The average monthly referrals to social services are higher than pre-Covid levels.
	Average Number of referrals to Social Services for children and young people of school age (3-16) per month (no. of months in brackets)	198.5 (12)	188.3 (12)	283.7 (6)	377 (3)		
	Digital Disadvantage	0	1,359 pupils with devices	Under review	1,359 pupils with devices	1,359 pupils with devices	Need for blended learning is greatly reduced, meaning that schools have very few or no

			161 pupils with MiFi Dongles		161 pupils with MiFi Dongles	161 pupils with MiFi Dongles	requests for devices of MiFi dongles. Some devices have been collected from pupils but are still with schools.
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% of 16 year olds not in Employment, Education or Training in Blaenau Gwent - 2021																																																														
<b>NEETs</b>	<p><b>Blaenau Gwent - % of 16 year olds not in Employment, Education or Training</b></p> <table border="1"> <caption>Data for NEETs Line Graph</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>2010</td><td>8.8</td></tr> <tr><td>2011</td><td>6.8</td></tr> <tr><td>2012</td><td>4.2</td></tr> <tr><td>2013</td><td>4.6</td></tr> <tr><td>2014</td><td>3.5</td></tr> <tr><td>2015</td><td>2.5</td></tr> <tr><td>2016</td><td>2.6</td></tr> <tr><td>2017</td><td>1.6</td></tr> <tr><td>2018</td><td>2.0</td></tr> <tr><td>2019</td><td>1.6</td></tr> <tr><td>2020</td><td>1.6</td></tr> <tr><td>2021</td><td>1.5</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	%	2010	8.8	2011	6.8	2012	4.2	2013	4.6	2014	3.5	2015	2.5	2016	2.6	2017	1.6	2018	2.0	2019	1.6	2020	1.6	2021	1.5	<p>2010 to 2021 was a significant reduction in the numbers of young people becoming NEET in BG.</p> <p>The reduction was due to the work of the Youth Service’s strategic multi-agency Raising Aspirations Group, and implementation of the Early Identification Tool. The early identification of those at risk of becoming NEET allows for timely intervention, by means of additional support, which has been proven to reduce the risk of, and in many cases prevents, young people becoming NEET. Continuing work has seen numbers remain low and reach an unverified level of 1.5% (9 young people) for 2021. This equals Blaenau Gwent’s lowest level to date and is below the Welsh average of 1.7%.</p>																																		
Year	%																																																													
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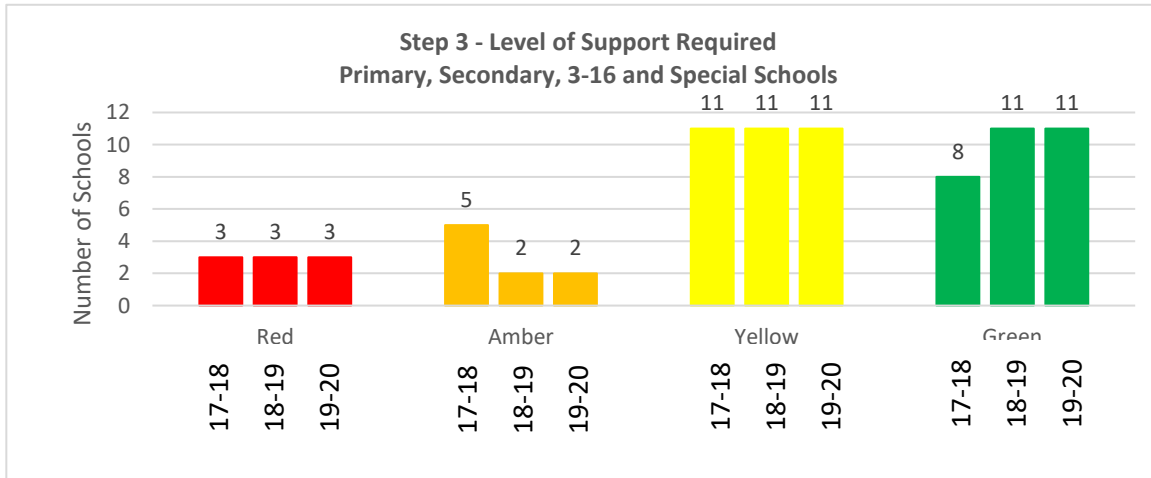
		<b>School 1</b>	0.9	0.9	0.4	0.9	1.1		
		<b>School 2</b>	0.5	0.4	-0.3	0.3	-0.2		
		<b>School 3</b>	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.8	1		
		<b>School 4</b>	0.4	-0.1	0.5	0.9	0.9		
		<b>LA</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>0.7</b>		
<b>KS4 GCSE Centre Determined Grades 2021</b>									
<b>KS4 GCSE Centre Determined Grades as provided by Schools</b>		<b>Capped 9</b>	<b>APS Literacy</b>	<b>APS Numeracy</b>	<b>L2 Inc E/W&amp;M (compared to 2019 results)</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>5 A* - As</b>	<b>Best Science</b>	<b>Skills Challenge</b>
	<b>School</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>All</b>
	<b>School 1</b>	373.5	41.5	39.5	55.9	98.2	19.8	36.2	40.1
	<b>School 2</b>	377.0	41.0	32.0	52.0	100.0	19.0	38.0	
	<b>School 3</b>	369.0	40.4	39.1	57.0	98.0	17.0	40.6	41.5
	<b>School 4</b>	335.9	32.6	35.1	41.9	87.8	12.1	32.7	35.6
									<p><b>School 1</b> - Performance improved in all indicators except for 5A*-As and Best of Science which saw a slight decline of -0.2 and -0.2 points accordingly.</p> <p><b>School 2</b> - Performance improved in all indicators except for Numeracy which saw a decline of -3.0 points.</p> <p><b>School 3</b> - Performance improved in all indicators except for Capped 9 and the Skills Challenge which saw declines of -7 points and -0.5 points accordingly.</p> <p><b>School 4</b> - Performance declined in all indicators when compared to the 19-20 Academic Year, except for Best Science which saw improved performance of +0.2 points.</p> <p>While there is no longer a requirement to report on the L2 Including English/Welsh &amp; Maths indicator, many schools calculate this as a legacy performance measure. Comparison with 2019 results in this indicator (no results were collected in 2020), demonstrate that there have been significant improvements in all schools – <b>Sch4</b> +8.9%, <b>Sch2</b> +15.9%, <b>Sch3</b> +5.1% and <b>Sch1</b> +4.7%.</p>

**School Categorisation 2017-2020**

**School Categorisation**

Step 3 – Level of Support Required		Numbers of Schools				Percentage of Schools			
		Red	Amber	Yellow	Green	Red	Amber	Yellow	Green
Primary	17-18	0	2	11	6	0%	11%	58%	32%
	18-19	0	2	8	9	0%	11%	42%	47%
	19-20	0	2	8	9	0%	11%	42%	47%
Secondary	17-18	1	0	0	1	50%	0%	0%	50%
	18-19	1	0	0	1	50%	0%	0%	50%
	19-20	1	0	0	1	50%	0%	0%	50%
Through Schools	17-18	1	1	0	0	50%	50%	0%	0%
	18-19	1	0	1	0	50%	0%	50%	0%
	19-20	1	0	1	0	50%	0%	50%	0%

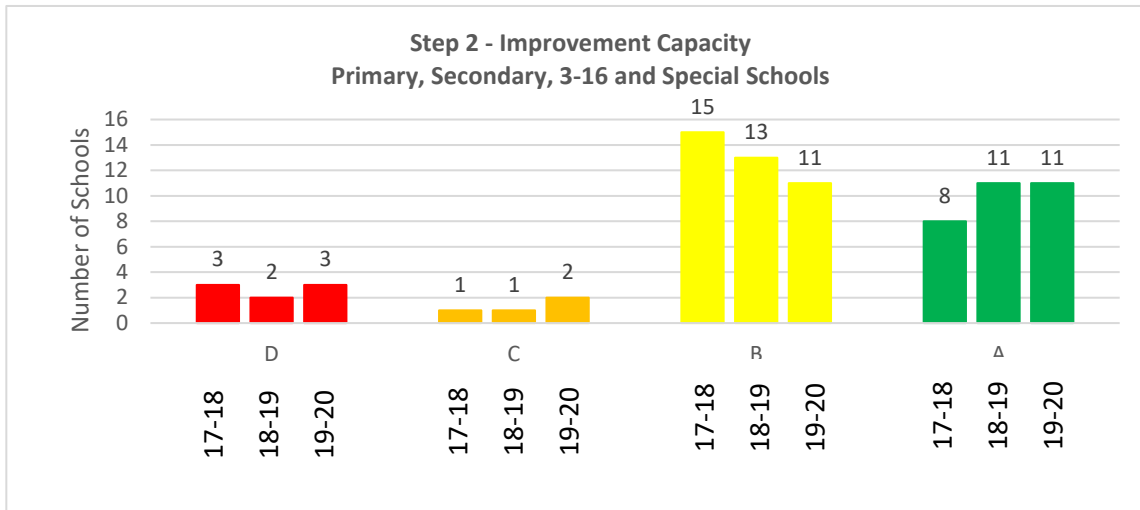
Step 2 – Capacity to Improve		Numbers of Schools				Percentage of Schools			
		D	C	B	A	D	C	B	A
Primary	17-18	0	1	12	6	0%	5%	63%	32%
	18-19	0	0	10	9	0%	0%	53%	47%
	19-20	0	2	8	9	0%	11%	42%	47%
Secondary	17-18	1	1	0	1	33%	33%	0%	33%
	18-19	0	1	0	1	0%	50%	0%	50%
	19-20	1	0	0	1	50%	0%	0%	50%
Through Schools	17-18	1	0	1	0	50%	0%	50%	0%
	18-19	1	0	1	0	50%	0%	50%	0%
	19-20	1	0	1	0	50%	0%	50%	0%



School Categorisation between 2017 and 2020, in relation to Step 3 – Level of Support Required, demonstrated an improvement in the number of schools identified as being Green (needing the least amount of support). The number of schools in the Red category remained that same, as did that of Yellow, however there was an improvement in the number of Amber schools.

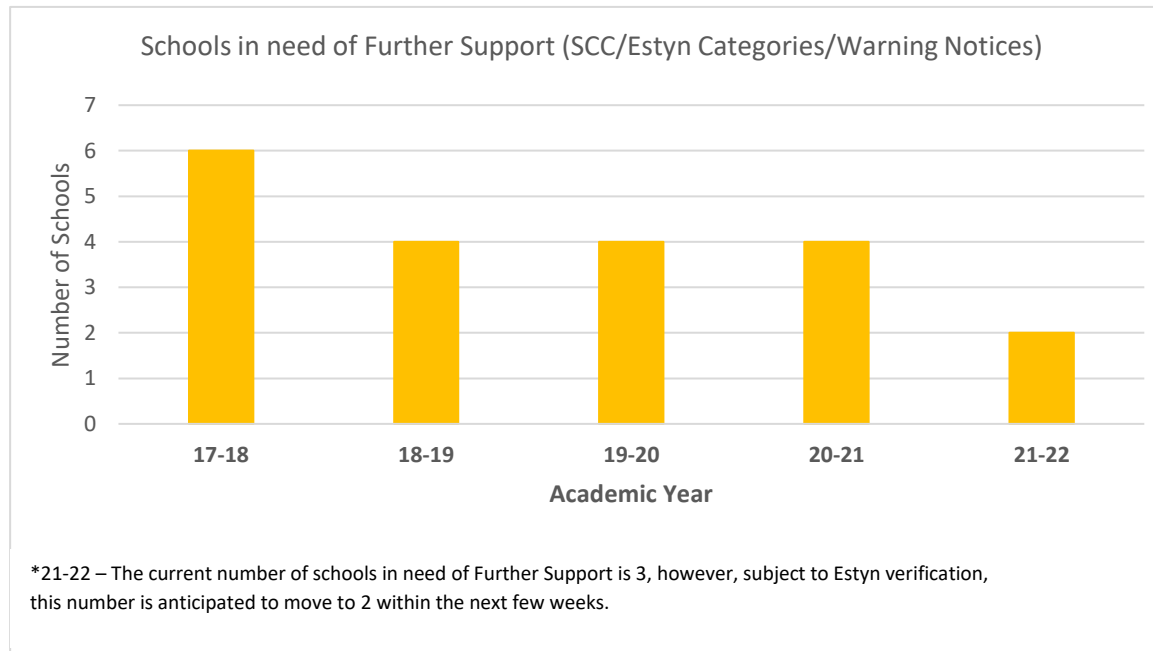
School Categorisation between 2017 and 2020, in relation to Step 2 – Capacity to Improve, demonstrated a similar level of improvement in the number of schools identified as being Category A (showing the greatest capacity to improve). The number of schools in Category D saw a minor fluctuation, as did that of Category C, however there was a reduction in the number of schools in Category B, some of which was due to improvement into Category A.





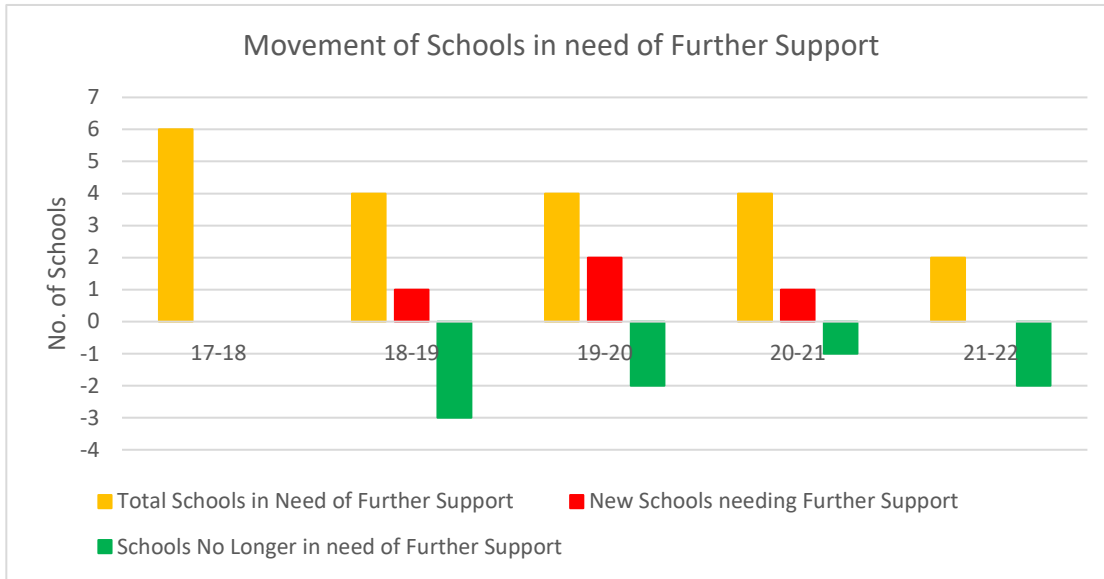
**Schools in need of further support – SCC/Estyn Categories/Warning Notices**

**Schools Causing Concern and in Estyn Categories**



School categorisation was suspended during 2019-20 with new draft school improvement guidance being issued by WG in March 21. The COVID pandemic limited opportunities to see provision first-hand, but this resumed, to a limited degree from summer term 21. In this period, 4 schools have made progress i.e. removed from SCC and/or Estyn category.

The number of Schools Causing Concern/in Estyn Categories/subject to LA Warning Notices has reduced from 6 to 2 between 17-18 and 21-22 (subject to anticipated Estyn verification).



While the overall number of schools in need of Further Support appears to have been relatively static, there has been much movement of schools in an out of the Schools Causing Concern and Statutory Warning Notice categories.

3 schools were identified as no longer being in need of support in 2018-19, 2 in 19-20 and a further 2 in 21-22, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the support that has been given to these schools when it was needed.

# Agenda Item 15

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **6<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

Report Subject: **Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy Review 2023 - 2024**

Portfolio Holder: **People & Education – Cllr Sue Edmunds**

Report Submitted by: **Corporate Director of Education – Lynn Phillips  
Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business Change – Joanne Watts**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
✓	18.08.22	25.08.22			06.09.22	14.09.22		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek the views of the People Scrutiny Committee, in relation to the review of Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy for the 2023/24 academic session. The Council is required to adopt and publish the policy document by October 1<sup>st</sup> 2022.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Councils have a duty to publish their home to school and post 16 transport policies in accordance with section 12(5) of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 (“the Measure”), and the Learner Travel Information (Wales) Regulations 2009 (the “Regulations”). The Council’s policy must be made available by the 1st October proceeding the academic year to which the policy relates. Under the Regulations and the Welsh Government’s Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014 (the “Guidance”) the information must be made available:

- a. on the Council’s website;
- b. to parents on request;
- c. public libraries; and,
- d. distributed to parents of pupils who are in the final year of school and may transfer to another school or educational establishment.

- 2.2 The current policy was published on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021, for implementation from September 2022 for the 2022/23 academic session. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is more generous in respect of home to school transport entitlement than the Welsh Government statutory limits. The Council also offers a non-statutory travel grant for Post 16 learners of £150.

- 2.3 In December 2020, Welsh Government communicated with councils throughout Wales, asking for them to participate in a review of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. The purpose of the review was to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose, following correspondence from

members of the public and engagement with stakeholders (including the Children's Commissioner, the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Future Generations Commissioner) in relation to the following:

- Concerns regarding child welfare relating to the 2 and 3-mile eligibility thresholds
- A lack of direct Transport for Post 16 learners
- The socio-economic impact of learners having to pay for their transport which was linked to the distance policy contained within the current Measure
- The consideration of travel to Faith schools
- Ensuring home to school transport provision meets the requirements of learners with Additional Learning Needs.
- Issues with travel to Welsh-medium schools for all ages within the Measure.

- 2.4 The initial review process concluded that a wider programme of work is required that encompasses: the consideration of a revision of the Measure alongside work to improve operator provision under the Measure and to consider better integration with related policies such as the needs of ALN pupils and the provision of further education establishments. Furthermore, changes to the measure will have significant cost pressures for local authorities which are currently unfunded. Therefore, no decisions or changes - regulatory or otherwise, have been made by Welsh Government to date. However, should any changes to the Measure be recommended or taken forward as a result of the review process, these will be subject to further scrutiny and detailed impact analysis before binding changes to the legislation can be made.
- 2.5 On this basis, the revised policy has been prepared in line with the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. Any changes, dependent on the associated timeframes, will be dealt with either via an addendum to the proposed policy, or as part of the annual policy review process.
- 2.6 The policy has been reviewed by the Education Transformation, Inclusion and Transport teams, along with Children's Services (please refer to **Appendix 1** for the revised draft document). The changes and additions are detailed in red within the appended policy document. A summary of the changes/additions is as follows:
- The date has been amended to reflect the academic year to which the policy applies (the academic year preceding the year within which the policy is published);
  - Section 3.0 'Who qualifies: The Main Criteria – has been updated to allow an element of LA discretion on distance limits up to a maximum of 100 metres in exceptional circumstances and when would be considered to be in the learner's best interests;
  - Section 4.0 'Additional Learning Needs' - has been updated in line with the latest ALN reform developments and learning from the current policy year; and,

- Section 8.14 'Temporary Medical Condition' has been updated to improve the processing of transport requests.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** The People Scrutiny Committee considers the Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2023/24 (**Appendix 1**) and recommends it to Executive Committee for approval.

3.2 **Option 2:** The People Scrutiny Committee considers the Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2023/24 (**Appendix 1**) and provides any comments or amendments prior recommending it to Executive Committee for approval.

### 4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 Education is a strategic priority for the Council and key to achieving the outcomes within the Council's Corporate Plan. Home to School Post 16 Transport Policy is an essential component of Education and seeks to ensuring equality of access to education settings throughout the borough. In addition, implementation of the policy will contribute to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

4.2 The revised policy is fully compliant with section 12(5) of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 ("the Measure"), and the Learner Travel Information (Wales) Regulations 2009 (the "Regulations").

4.3 The Welsh Government's Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014 (the "Guidance") requires that the Council's policy must be made available by the 1st October, the year proceeding the academic year to which the policy applies.

### 5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.0.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility to determine and publish the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022, for the 2023/24 academic session. Any changes made to the policy should take account of the following:

- Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 ("the Measure")
- Learner Travel Information (Wales) Regulations 2009 (the "Regulations")
- Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014 (the "Guidance")
- Welsh Government School Admissions and Admissions Appeal Code's (2013)
- Blaenau Gwent Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (2022-32)
- School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act (2013)

5.0.2 Therefore, if the policy does not progress within the programmed timeframe, the Council will not be compliant with section 12(5) of the

Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 (“the Measure”), and the Learner Travel Information (Wales) Regulations 2009 (the “Regulations”). In addition, the Council would fail to take account of recent developments relating to key areas of dependency on a local, regional and national basis, i.e. developments aligned to the Welsh Government Additional Learning Needs Act, Code and associated regulations, along with the Blaenau Gwent admission policy developments. The results of which may negatively impact upon both service users in terms of service and satisfaction and services in terms of operational issues and budgetary constraints.

## 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

5.1.1 The policy seeks to ensure that there is an appropriate framework to aid delivery of the services. The Home to School Transport budget out-turn position for 2021/22 was £2,135,000 against a budget of £2,110,000.

5.1.2 The Home to School Transport budget is approximately £2.2m for 2022/23, and the Post 16 budget is approximately £136,000 per annum. The Council recently received a number of requests from operators for an increase in the historical contractual rates as a result of the fuel crisis. Therefore, a report was submitted and agreed by the Corporate Leadership Team, to award a temporary uplift of 20% in contract prices to operators to offset the increased cost of fuel rises being experienced. The temporary uplift will be reviewed on a monthly basis in line with changes to fuel price and the additional cost will be funded from specific reserves. This was agreed to ensure continuity of the home to school transport service throughout these unprecedented times. The 20% temporary uplift currently being awarded to contractors as a result of the fuel crisis is currently forecast to cost £0.5m for the full financial year. Fuel prices are starting to reduce, and the uplift will be reviewed in line with reductions in fuel costs, so this pressure may reduce over the remainder of the financial year.

## 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 If the policy is not taken forward within the specified timeframe, there is a risk that the Council will not be compliant with their statutory duty in respect of home to school transport. Therefore, the policy has been reviewed and is being taken via the Council’s political processes within the required timeframe, to ensure that the publication date of 1.10.22 can be met.

## 5.3 ***Legal***

5.3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to comply with Welsh Government legislation in line with the administration and review of statutory home to school transport policy arrangements.

5.3.2 Following approval, the policy will be translated into Welsh to meet the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards from the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

## 5.4 ***Human Resources***

5.4.1 The policy document and associated procedures have been developed by the Education and Environment Directorates, in partnership with Social

Services. The Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business Change and Transport Officer monitor implementation of the policy and undertake annual reviews in order to inform future policy development.

5.4.2 Transport service operations are undertaken by a dedicated team who sit within Community Services - Highways and Development. The team work closely with Education who hold budgetary responsibility for the service and manage policy development and review processes, along with Social Services who review and determine transport arrangements for their clients and families, particularly Children Looked After (CLA) in consultation with the aforementioned directorates.

5.4.3 The Education Directorate Management Team along with Wider Corporate Leadership Team, have a key role to play in ensuring that the policy is effectively implemented and reviewed in accordance with relevant strategy, policy and regulatory frameworks.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

### 6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The Council currently operates home to school transport provision for both mainstream pupils, and pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) attending special schools and resource bases, via contracted providers. There are currently 31 providers contracted to deliver home school transport for 1,467 pupils, across 92 established routes. The provision of home to school transport changes on a weekly basis in line with demand and new applicants especially in respect of Additional Learning Needs pupils.

### 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The policy has been reviewed in order to ensure that there is service user clarity in relation to roles, responsibilities, expectations and awareness. The review process also takes account of key local, regional and national policy and legislative developments. It is therefore anticipated that the existing high levels of client and customer satisfaction will continue, along with improved operational delivery.

### 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The policy underwent extensive consultation throughout the summer period 2018, the outcome of which has aided the annual review process in subsequent years.

### 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The policy will cover home to school and post 16 transport provisions for the 2023/24 academic session. The document takes account of key policy and legislative requirements, and annual reviews will continue to be programmed for the foreseeable future taking on learning from previous years.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The policy will support the Council to carry out effective home to school and post 16 transport arrangements, whilst mitigating the risk of service and service user conflict, along with complaints and appeals relating to policy gaps and issues.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Key management and operational staff across the Council are involved in a detailed review of the document on an annual basis i.e. Education, Social Services and Procurement, along with Community Services - Highways and Development. The review process seeks to ensure compliance with Welsh Government legislation, and ensure that key local, regional, and national policy developments are accounted for, whilst also taking on board learning from the previous academic session.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The policy is cross-cutting in the sense that it impacts upon Education, Community Services - Highways and Development, Procurement and Children's Services; therefore, service area involvement is key to effective policy implementation.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

Home to school and post 16 transport will be considered in line with the readiness assessment process, in order to inform development and delivery of the BGCBC Decarbonisation Plan 2020 – 2030.

6.9. ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

A full EqlA was undertaken and presented in line with the statutory consultation in 2018. Subsequently, annual screening assessments are carried out, which determine that there is no adverse impact upon any of the protected characteristics, and a positive impact upon disability, with specialist and bespoke transport arrangements in place for learners whose needs warrant it. In addition, EqlA screening is undertaken on a case by case basis as required. The policy seeks to ensure equality of access to education for Blaenau Gwent learners. Please refer to **Appendix 2** for the completed impact assessment. The policy aims to secure equality of access based upon distance and need in respect of pupils and students with ALN. Therefore, the impact overall is neutral.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy is reviewed on an annual basis in line with lessons learned, key policy, strategy and legislative reviews/developments.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – Revised Policy 2023/24
- Appendix 2 – Socio-economic Duty Impact Assessment



# Home to School & Post 16 Transport Policy **2023/24**

Reviewed: **August 2022**  
Adopted:

Should you have any queries relating to this policy please contact:

Education Transformation Team  
Anvil Court  
Abertillery  
NP13 1DB

Email: [21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Telephone Number: 01495 355132 / 01495 355470

Should you have any queries relating to the provision of your child's transport or require support in making an application please contact:

Transport Team  
Civic Centre  
Ebbw Vale  
NP23 6XB

Email: [hometoschooltransport@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:hometoschooltransport@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Telephone Number: 01495 311556

Blaenau Gwent has introduced an on-line application system for parents to apply for Home to School or Post 16 transport for their child(ren). Please visit the link below via the webpage:

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/resident/schools-learning/school-transport/>

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## 1.0 Introduction

This policy document has been produced by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in compliance with the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure, 2008.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that relevant information around home-to-school and post 16 transport arrangements is available to parents/ carers, pupils and partners. The Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The Council has developed a code of practice, to support safe travel arrangements. The code of practice forms part of the application process and ensures that both learners and operators are aware of the expectations upon them, whilst accessing/ providing transport.

## 2.0 Background

The Council has a duty to provide transport in accordance with Learner Travel (Wales) Measure, 2008.

The distance by which entitlement to transport is calculated is defined as the walking distance of the shortest available route, that is deemed to be safe. Route designation is carried out in accordance with the risk assessment procedure as detailed in the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance (2014).

Under section 32 of the Education Act 2002 (which was amended by section 21 of the Measure), Councils have the power to change school session times, **if the change is considered necessary or expedient to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel, or to make travel arrangements more effective or efficient.**

## 3.0 Who Qualifies: The Main Criteria

Blaenau Gwent Council will provide free transport for children attending their nearest suitable school, where the distance from home to school is over the specified walking distance detailed below:

- more than 1.5 miles from home for children aged under 8 years but of statutory school age; and,
- more than 2 miles from home for children aged 8 years and over.

Distances are measured by using the Council's Digital Information Mapping System, to determine the shortest available safe walking route between the home address and the main gate of the school to be attended. **In exceptional circumstances, the Local Authority can provide discretion on approving transport in excess of the existing Home to School Transport distance limit criteria identified above, up to 100m. Transport will only be approved where there is already an existing provision with capacity in place.**

Parents are able to choose an English-medium, Welsh-medium or a denominational school for their child. The child will qualify for home to school transport to the

appropriate catchment area of the school. When the catchment area school is full and unable to admit a pupil, free transport will be provided to the next nearest available school that has room to take the child, as long as the home is 1.5 miles or more away from the school for pupils under the age of 8 years, or 2 miles for pupils aged 8 and over.

The provision of free school transport will be arranged to coincide with the start and end of the normal school day and shall be provided during the school term time. Home to School transport is not provided for breakfast clubs, after school clubs or summer schools.

Transport will be provided from pick-up points at approved bus stops on the nearest public transport route to the learner's home, where possible.

\*All awarded transport will be reviewed periodically in line with changes to circumstances relating to the pupil(s) transport requirements.

#### **4.0 Additional Learning Needs (ALN)**

The Council believes and promotes independence for all learners. This encourages independent living as well as health and well-being.

**In line with the ALNET, the LA will need to consider supplying transport for all pupils with ALN. The Council will provide transport assistance for pupils with ALN in line with the following eligibility criteria:**

- if the pupil qualifies on distance grounds;
- if transport is identified by the ALN team as being a requirement irrespective of distance, due to the nature of the pupil's medical need, additional learning need and/or disability; or,
- if it is determined by ALN team that there is no suitable education provision within the Borough which meets the needs of the pupil. In such circumstances, the Council would seek to source a suitable out of county placement.

\*The above arrangements will be subject to review in line with any changes to the pupil's circumstances which may affect their transport entitlement or requirement.

If parents choose a school other than the school named by the Council's ALN team, it is the parent/carers responsibility to secure transport arrangements for their child and cover the associated costs.

#### **4.1 Requests for Transport: ALN Provision**

Pupils requiring ALN transport who live more than 1.5 miles (for those under 8 years of age) or more than 2 miles (for those aged between 8-16 years of age) from their nearest agreed ALN provision, will automatically qualify for free home to school transport.

\*Please note - in instances where the school is a parental choice and not the provision determined by the ALN Panel, **no transport will be provided**.

The Council has established a process in order to assess the travel needs of children who may require ALN transport, as follows:

- All placements agreed by ALN Panel for pupils with ALN, need to be considered by the Transport team to ensure the eligibility criteria has been met.
- If it is identified that transport is required, the application form will be completed on line by parents, once confirmation of placement has been given and returned to the ALN team for approval and this will then be sent to the Home School Transport team to procure transport.
- Individual pupil risk assessment forms will only be completed if requested by a parent/carer, or if the pupil has needs that warrant completion of this form, e.g. profound and multiple learning difficulties. The ALN team will coordinate completion of the form this will then be discussed at the Joint Education / Home to School Transport meeting. The meeting will determine the pupil's transportation needs, along with the type of transport required.
- The Transport Team require 15 school days upon receipt of the Pupil Transport Request Form, in order to arrange transport. Where the transportation needs of the pupil requires the Council to tender and/or source specialist training, the timeline will be in excess of 15 days and determined on a case by case basis.

Where transport has been agreed, the Transport Officer will contact the parent and inform them of the arrangements. In cases where transport requests for ALN pupils is refused, parents/carers will receive notification from the ALN team, also indicating their right of appeal.

#### **4.2 Residential School Placements not in the County Borough**

Pupils with complex additional learning needs may require residential school placements. Residential placements are determined by the Social Services Complex Case Panel, with associated requirements considered on a case by case basis. When considering placement, the cost of transport will be taken into account.

Transport can be provided for residential placements as follows:

- Weekly or fortnightly boarding – transport for the pupil to return home weekly or fortnightly during term time.
- 38-week termly boarding – transport at the beginning and end of each half term and one additional return journey per half term.
- 51/52 week residential placements – one return journey per term.

## 5.0 Transportation of Children Looked After (CLA)

Children's Services will determine if it is considered appropriate for a child looked after (CLA) to attend a school other than the nearest suitable school to their residence, due to:

- the need to maintain continuity in education; and,
- or maintain contact with siblings and friends.

Transport for children who are looked after will be funded and coordinated by Children's Services with the exception of those cases, whereby placement is agreed by Education with a clear rationale, based on the educational needs of the pupil.

Requests for transport for CLA with ALN will be co-ordinated by the CLA Education Coordinator; however, where placement requests are agreed by the ALN Panel based on meeting the pupils needs, these requests will be funded by Education and administered by the Transport Officer in accordance with the Belongings Regulations. The **on-line** transport application will be **completed** by the CLA Education Coordinator along with some completed pro-forma, which will be submitted to the Transport Officer and copied to the ALN team, detailing the associated requirements.

In cases where children looked after reside and are educated outside of Blaenau Gwent; transport arrangements will be the responsibility of the Local Authority within which the pupil resides.

Transport is not routinely provided in circumstances where a child or children looked after are in respite accommodation. If it is possible for existing school transport to accommodate the pupil(s) to and from the respite provision without delay or deviation from the route, this can be considered, subject to regular review. Requests must be made to the Transport Officer in advance (where appropriate) and not drivers/escorts/operators directly.

## 6.0 How to Apply for Home to School Transport

Application forms for transport assistance can be obtained via the following one of two methods:

- You can apply online by accessing the Blaenau Gwent Website: [www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) and selecting "My Services" register, Schools and Learning and completing the Home to School or Post 16 transport application form.
- If you do not have internet access, then you can still apply by contacting the Councils Contact Centre on 01495 311556 who will complete an application form on your behalf over the telephone.

The Council aims to process all applications received within 10 school days, unless specialist provision is required which may exceed the 10 days' dependent on the pupil's need.

## 7.0 Discretionary Welsh- medium Nursery Transport

In line with the Council's desire to promote access to Welsh-medium education, provided that there is capacity within the current transport arrangements, the Council will offer free transport for nursery pupils who reside over 1.5 miles from their home address to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg.

This discretionary nursery provision may be withdrawn on the basis that it reduces availability of transport places for statutory aged learners.

## 8.0 Transport Considerations

### 8.1 Change of Address - Transport Arrangements

Pupils studying for their GCSE exams in years 10 or 11 who change address after the autumn half-term in year 10 will be entitled to free school transport - **usually a bus pass, the Council does not have a duty to provide a separate taxi**; providing that the new address is **over 2 miles walking distance** from their current school. Transport can also be provided on an existing contract. The entitlement to free transport is provided in this instance, if the pupil attended their catchment area school prior to the move. It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that the pupil is able to access the designated pickup and drop off points if using existing transport, and the pupil is able to access designated bus stops for season ticket holders.

### 8.2 Schools with Multiple Campuses/Sites

For multi-site/campus schools, if the campus nearest to the pupil's home is unable to offer a place and an alternative campus or site is offered which is over the distance criteria, then free home to school transport will be provided.

### 8.3 Permanently Excluded & Managed Move Pupils

If a secondary age pupil has been permanently excluded from school, the Council will provide a bus pass to support change of placement as agreed / necessary. If a primary age child has been permanently excluded from school, the Council will provide appropriate transport as agreed/ necessary. Transport and/or bus passes will only be provided for pupil's that enrol at an alternative mainstream setting within Blaenau Gwent.

Where a secondary aged pupil has moved schools as agreed via the managed move process, bus passes will be provided to enable the pupil to attend the newly agreed setting. If a primary age pupil has moved schools as agreed via the managed move process, the Council will provide appropriate transport as agreed/ necessary.

\*The above will not be applicable in instances whereby parents have elected for their child to change schools.



## **8.4 Before & After School Activities**

If a pupil attends breakfast club or after school activity/club, then it becomes the responsibility of the parent/carer to transport their children to and from activities outside of the normal the school day.

## **8.5 School Trips**

On occasions when school trips fall outside the normal school day, pupils in receipt of free home to school transport will need to be collected from the school as per the arrangements in 8.4 above.

## **8.6 Escorts**

All drivers of home to school transport provision and accompanying escorts are required to have enhanced Disclosure Barring Scheme (DBS) checks. The Council may provide more than one escort on transport should the need arise to do so. All arrangements will be reviewed on a regular basis.

The transport provider may change throughout the time a pupil receives Council transport – meaning that drivers and escorts may change; however, where possible, continuity of drivers and escorts will be provided by contracted providers of transport.

## **8.7 Travel Assistance Reimbursement**

Fuel expenses can be claimed in circumstances where appropriate transport cannot be provided, and the need of the pupil is such that the parent/carer may be required to transport their child. For pupils with ALN, this will be assessed via the ALN team in partnership with the Transport Officer and agreed in writing in advance of finalising arrangements.

## **8.8 Pupils on Exchange Visits**

The Council does not provide transport assistance to pupils on exchange visits.

## **8.9 Pupil Attendance**

In circumstances where a pupil is in receipt of free home to school transport and is not attending school regularly, the Council can withdraw the travel offer. This will be determined on a case by case basis. Parents/carers of those found to be in breach of the travel offer due to attendance issues; will resume responsibility for ensuring the travel arrangements of pupils to and from school. This process will be overseen by the Education Welfare Service.

At the end of each term, the transport team will provide the Education Welfare Service with a list of pupils that fall into the above category and attendance will be reviewed against the pupil's records. Where pupils are identified the following process will be followed:

- Contact made with parents to discuss transport issues
- Warning issued to parents of the intention to withdraw transport if no improvement
- Attendance reviewed at the end of the following half term.

- If there has been improvement transport continues but if not transport offer withdrawn

### **8.10 Preferred Schools/Parental Choice**

Parents/carers who choose a school other than the nearest suitable catchment school are responsible for getting their child to and from the school throughout the time that their child attends the school. This is also applicable for pupils with additional learning needs; please refer to section 4.3 for more information.

### **8.11 Pupils Under 16 years Attending Vocational Training Provision**

Blaenau Gwent Council does not provide transport for pupils of compulsory school age attending training provision.

### **8.12 Dual Residency**

Where parents have shared responsibility for a child and the child is permanently resident at more than one address, the Council will provide transport from both addresses, as long as they are both in the catchment area for the school concerned and are located over the required qualifying walking distance.

### **8.13 Rural Areas/Transport Links**

Where appropriate, the Council will use its discretion in determining whether or not a taxi link will need to be provided to an existing bus service for those pupils living in rural locations.

### **8.14 Temporary Medical Conditions**

The Council understands that in some circumstances the health of a mainstream pupil may restrict use of mainstream transport, due to a temporary medical condition. In these instances, individual assessments will be undertaken to determine associated transportation need and risk.

If an ALN pupil has a temporary medical condition, transport may be provided on request from either the ALN team or the Education Welfare team. Transport arrangements provided on medical grounds will be reviewed regularly.

Requests for long-term transport due to a medical condition must be made to the Council's **transport team** and accompanied by a letter from the pupil's consultant. The request must outline the pupil's medical condition and health risks encountered should they be required to walk to and from school.

The Council will not accept requests directly from GPs.

## 8.15 School Organisation Proposals

The Council will provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age, where the closure of a school results in a learner being transferred to another school. Learners already on the register of the closed school will be provided with free transport to the new catchment school or the nearest school, subject to meeting the policy's distance criteria - until the learner finishes education at that school. If the learner leaves this school, entitlement to this discretionary provision will end.

## 9.0 Post 16 Travel

### 9.1 Transport Entitlement

All students living in Blaenau Gwent will be provided with a discounted bus ticket or travel grant to the Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone, Ebbw Vale Campus as their designated Post 16 provider; or, the nearest institution where their course is available depending on the following criteria:

- students must be between the ages of 16 to 19 (under 19 prior to the 1st September of the commencement of their course) to qualify;
- students shall reside in the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent;
- students must reside 2 miles or over (nearest walking distance) from their nearest college campus; and, the students should attend a full time course which requires attendance of 16 or more hours per week or a minimum 4 days' attendance per week at the institution.

Students and pupils aged 19 or over at the commencement of the course are not eligible for travel assistance from the Council and in these circumstances, they are advised to contact their respective college for details of any available transport provision.

All transport for Post 16 pupils including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), is agreed on a case by case basis by the ALN team in consultation with the Transport Officer. The Council may provide transport up to a maximum of three years.

The criteria for Post 16 ALN transport is as follows:

- if the student qualifies on distance grounds;
- if transport is identified by the ALN team as being a requirement irrespective of distance, due to the nature of the student's additional learning need or,
- if it is determined by ALN team that there is no suitable college provision within the Borough which meets the needs of the ALN pupil. In such circumstances, the Council would seek to source a suitable out of county placement.

\*The above arrangements will be subject to review in line with any changes to the student(s) circumstances which may affect their transport entitlement or requirement.

## **9.2 Travel Grant**

The Council's present policy is to provide travel assistance to those who meet the criteria up to a maximum of £150 per academic session. This will be paid termly as follows: £50 autumn, £50 spring and £50 summer.

## **9.3 Welsh Medium/Faith Education**

Pupils who wish to undertake their Post 16 studies via the medium of Welsh or attend a Faith school are required to travel further distances for their education, with no direct public service bus routes. These students have the opportunity to utilise the existing contracted bus provision in lieu of the Travel Grant, if appropriate.

## **9.4 How to Apply**

Applications for transport assistance are available on Blaenau Gwent's website. Parents/Students can submit an application for transport assistance at any time, however, there is always an increase in demand prior to the start of an academic year and parents are advised to allow additional time. The Council sets a target to process all applications received within 10 school/college days, unless specialised provision is required.

Further information can be found on the following website [www.coleggwent.gov.uk](http://www.coleggwent.gov.uk) and <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/resident/schools-learning/school-transport/>

## **10.0 Procedures**

### **10.1 Safe Routes to School/Learner Travel Arrangements**

Safe Routes to school are assessed individually by the Transport Division in line with Welsh Government Learner Travel Measure (2014). A route is considered to be available if it is safe for a child/young person to walk alone or with an accompanying adult, where appropriate. It is recognised that occasions may arise when routes may become hazardous. In these circumstances, the Council reserves the right to provide free home to school transport for distances below the discretionary limits in the interests of the safety of the relevant learners. The Council will assess route safety through using clear Council criteria and a determination will be made on a risk assessment basis, where necessary.

### **10.2 Extreme Weather and COVID-19 Emergency Response**

Severe weather may impact on Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's ability to provide Home to School Transport safely. In such circumstances, the safety and wellbeing of the children and transport providers remains our key priority. Where severe weather results in the requirement to cancel transportation, the school will always notify parents at the earliest point to avoid unnecessary disruption.

Up to date weather information is posted on the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's website during periods of severe weather conditions.

If the Home to School Transport provision is cancelled, the Education Transformation team and Transport Officer will advise schools, as best they can, when transport services are likely to resume. During these periods, the school will aim to keep parents/carers informed of developments.

If transport is cancelled due to extreme weather, the following is applicable:

- where a route is cancelled and a parent/carer takes the decision to transport the child themselves, the parent/carer remains responsible for the return journey or any subsequent costs should a return journey not be possible;
- if a child is unable to attend school due to severe weather, the parent/carer remains responsible for their child; and,
- out of hours' emergency contact can be made with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council through the main contact centre – 01495 311556

In line with the COVID-19 Pandemic, any changes to the provision of home to school and post 16 transport will be communicated with schools, colleges and families of pupils/students accessing transport provision. Changes will be reflective of the latest Welsh Government Guidance.

### **10.3 Exclusions from Home to School Transport**

The Council has an approved travel behaviour code that covers all home to school transport provision. All parties will be required to sign the Blaenau Gwent Transport Behaviour Contract prior to approval of transport provision.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council reserves the right to refuse travel assistance where a child/young person's behaviour is such that, it is unacceptable in line with the travel code and/or presents a significant health and safety risk, or whereby excessive and purposeful damage to vehicles has been identified. In these instances, the Transport team will issue warning letters and parents will receive no more than four letters. The behaviour management process is as follows:

- **Stage 1** - Initially raising the concerns/issues
- **Stage 2** - Informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of transport removal
- **Stage 3** - Final warning indicating that transport will be removed.
- **Stage 4** - The school jointly with the Transport team will issue the final letter confirming the removal of transport, citing the reasons for the removal, the date of the proposed removal and the parental route of appeal.

If a pupil is refused/ excluded from transport due to behavioural issues, parents/carers then become responsible for their child's attendance at school and any transport required.

Any wilful damage that incurs cost to the transport provider for either repair or cleaning remains the responsibility of the parent/carer of the pupil concerned. Continued or repeat behaviour that result in wilful damage can result in exclusion from home to school transport.

Please note should a situation arise in during transportation, which constitutes a health and safety hazard, pupils can be removed from the vehicle with a police presence, and further transport provision withdrawn with immediate effect pending investigation.

#### **10.4 ALN Transport Issues & Exclusions**

The Transport team will monitor and review issues and incidents relating to ALN transport, and determine with relevant professionals i.e. the school and ALN team, any reasonable adjustments required to accommodate the pupil(s).

In cases whereby there are recurrent issues behavioural or other, which mean that:

- the planned transport arrangements no longer meet the needs of the pupil; and/or,
- there are healthy and safety risks to both the pupil and contractor

The Transport team will look to work with the school in first instance. Where there are behavioural issues which present health and safety concerns, letters will be issued parents informing them of the issues concerns and Council's intention regarding the management or removal of transport, and/or employing suitable alternative solutions. No more than four letters will be issued prior to the removal/refusal of transport. The behaviour management process is as follows:

- **Stage 1** - Initially raising the concerns/issues
- **Stage 2** - Informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of transport review/removal
- **Stage 3** - Final warning indicating that transport will be removed.
- **Stage 4** - Transport will be suspended and parents notified in writing, pending detailed assessment of the risks and transportation needs of the pupil. A Review Group will then be coordinated by the Transport Officer, with representation from relevant services and professionals, in order to determine a suitable solution.

If a pupil is refused or excluded from transport due to behavioural and/or other issues, parents/carers then become responsible for their child's home to school transport requirements, until a suitable solution has been found.

Any wilful damage that incurs cost to the transport provider for either repair or cleaning remains the responsibility of the parent/carer of the pupil concerned. Continued or repeat behaviour that result in wilful damage can result in exclusion from home to school transport.

#### **10.5 Safeguarding**

The safety of children and young people on home to school and/or post 16 transport is Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's first priority. In particular, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will ensure that:

- all providers are contracted for the provision and must ensure to comply with the terms and conditions set out within their contract

- should the Council identify any safeguarding concerns relating to a particular provider or associated member of staff, the process will be managed in accordance with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures;
- all drivers and escorts have been checked and cleared by the DBS;
- all drivers and escorts will have access to safeguarding training and **must** report any concerns that they may identify to the Transport team, the school and where appropriate, the Police and/ or Social Services without delay;
- all drivers and escorts carry a form of identity;
- lap and diagonal seat belts are provided on all contract vehicles;
- car seats/booster seats are provided in accordance with current Government legislation - this is the responsibility of the parent/carer;
- the Council will provide specialist equipment only when pre-agreed upon or as identified as part of a review;
- parents/carers of primary pupils are responsible for ensuring that there is a responsible adult to collect their child/children upon drop-off each day;
- parents/carers of pupils in receipt of ALN transport, are responsible for ensuring that there is a responsible adult within the home at pick-up and upon drop-off each day;
- drivers and escorts receive appropriate training and are familiar with safety and emergency equipment;
- drivers, escorts and operators are aware of their duties, particularly in emergency situations; and,
- wheelchair occupants must be correctly restrained. Wheelchairs will need to meet specific authorised crash test requirements (this specification can be confirmed directly by the user in conjunction with our Transport team).

## 10.6 Home to School/College Transport - Code of Good Practice

Across all of home to school transport provision and post 16 learning, the Council operates a **Code of Practice** for pupils, students, parents, schools and transport operators. The code of practice can be found on the link below;

[http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Resident/Schools\\_and\\_Learning/SchoolTransport\\_CodeofGoodPractice.pdf](http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Resident/Schools_and_Learning/SchoolTransport_CodeofGoodPractice.pdf)

## 10.7 Free Transport - Right to Withdraw

The Council reserve the right to withdraw awarded transport, if an error is made or where legislation has changed which affects the entitlement of a pupil or pupils using school transport. The Council will honour the transport provision for that pupil(s) for the remainder of the academic half-term, during which the awarding error was identified, or that legislation became effective.

All awarded transport is reviewed periodically.

## 10.8 Appeals Procedure

Where the one of the following circumstances apply:

- a child or young person is not eligible for travel assistance;

- a change in transport arrangements has been made and the parent/carer notified; and,
- transport has not been agreed.

Parents/carers may ask for the decision to be reconsidered whereby an appeals form will then be issued. Parents/carers may then highlight exceptional circumstances they wish to be considered in relation to their entitlement.

Appeals should be made in writing to the Education Transformation team, and wherever possible forwarded by recorded post to ensure delivery/tracking. All appeal related correspondence should be addressed to:

Education Transformation Manager  
Anvil Court  
Abertillery  
Blaenau Gwent  
NP13 1DB

Appeals will then be considered by the Appeals Panel, who look to determine the level of prejudice to the child should they not be granted transport. The prejudice will be considered in relation to the impact in terms of:

- distance
- disability; and/ or,
- medical considerations on the advice of a consultant.

Parents will have 10 working days to submit an appeal from the date that the refusal letter was issued. Their appeal will then be heard within 30 working days from the specific closing date indicated within the refusal letter.

### **10.9 Monitoring Procedure**

All vehicles will be made available for random checks by Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and/ or another appropriate body, when required. Any complaints received by the Council concerning services or vehicles will be investigated in line with the Council's complaints policy. In the event of the complaint being upheld, the necessary and appropriate steps will be taken in accordance with the contract or as a matter of urgency and will be reported in a timely manner to the Education Directorate's Management Team (DMT).

The Council will undertake random checks to contracts, to ensure that they are being operated in accordance with the Council's terms and conditions. As part of this monitoring exercise, the following checks will also be made:

- punctuality;
- adherence to route;
- size of vehicle;
- licences; and,
- staff DBS checks are in place.

All of the above are designed to ensure safe and stress free travel.



## 11.0 Glossary of Terms

<b>Additional Learning Needs (ALN)</b>	A pupil who has an identified additional learning need
<b>Catchment Area</b>	A marked out geographical area made up of the streets around a school.
<b>Catchment Area School</b>	A school within the catchment area
<b>Children Looked After</b>	Children who are in the care of, or 'accommodated by', a Local Authority.
<b>Child Protection</b>	Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.
<b>Designated Area</b>	A geographical area, which is usually made up of Parishes served by a voluntary aided school (see section 2.2 for Faith/voluntary aided schools).
<b>Nearest Suitable School</b>	For transport purposes, the nearest suitable school may not be the catchment area school.
<b>Officer Review</b>	The process of someone within the Council looking again at an application for transport assistance.
<b>Parent/Carer</b>	Anyone who is responsible for the care of a child. We use the same definition as stated in the Education Act 1996.
<b>Preferred School</b>	Parents have a right to say they prefer a school other than the catchment area school. This is known as 'a preferred school'. This school will remain a preferred school when parents apply for help with transport, throughout the pupil's attendance.
<b>Pupil</b>	A young person who is of compulsory school age, which is the term after the child's fifth birth day and before the last Friday in June in Year 11.
<b>Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children</b>	Protecting children from abuse and neglect, preventing impairment of their health or development and ensuring that they receive safe and effective care to enable them to have optimum life chances.
<b>Shortest Walking Distance</b>	The shortest safe walkable route between the main access to and from your private property, such as your front gate or the top of your drive and the nearest school gate.
<b>Special Transport Needs</b>	Some pupils may have special transport needs that come from a disability or an <b>additional learning</b> need.
<b>Statutory Walking Distance</b>	As set out in section 2, in accordance with the definition provided in the Education Act 1996.
<b>Student</b>	A young person who attends a sixth form or college beyond the statutory school age, which is the last Friday in June in Year 11.
<b>Suitable Walkable Route</b>	A route where a child can walk to and from school safe from traffic – with the parent or another 'responsible adult' if the parent decides this is needed. If a parent cannot do this, the Council is <b>not</b> responsible for escorting your child to school.

## 11.1 Blaenau Gwent Schools

Blaenau Gwent has the following schools and provision for pupils:

- **Community Maintained Schools** – schools managed by the head teacher and governors, in partnership with the Council. The Council arranges admissions.
- **Voluntary-aided Schools** – schools supported by the relevant Religious Board and the Council jointly. The governors will normally employ all staff and manage admissions. These schools are sometimes called ‘faith’ or ‘denominational’ schools.
- **Foundation Schools** – schools maintained by the Council but the governors are responsible for admissions. For transport assistance purposes, all pupils attending Foundation schools are treated in the same way as pupils attending community schools.
- **Resource Bases** – some mainstream schools have Resource Bases which are Council funded provisions that meet the additional learning needs of pupils whose needs cannot be met in mainstream classes. Resource Bases have a higher level of staffing providing more specialist support to meet pupil need. Pupils access mainstream classes where appropriate and placement into a Resource Base is determined by the Council’s ALN Panel
- **Special School** – a school which caters for pupils with additional learning needs whose needs cannot be appropriately met in a mainstream or Resource Base setting. Special schools receive pupils with a degree of disability and placement is agreed through the Council’s ALN Panel. The Council arranges admissions for all special schools.
- **Pupil Referral Units** - cater for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural Difficulties and provides short term, as well as longer term placements. The Council arranges admission through the Council’s ALN Panel.
- **All Through School 3-16 model** – where there are more than one campus or site associated with the school. The school is responsible for admissions for all site allocation.
- **Welsh Medium School** – caters for children who are being taught through the medium of Welsh as their first language.

For more information on Blaenau Gwent Schools, please refer to the Blaenau Gwent Starting Schools Booklet, which can be found on the Councils website, via School Admissions.

### Socio-economic Duty (Strategic Decisions Only)

Welsh Government's [Socio-economic Duty](#) provides a framework to ensure tackling inequality of outcome is at the forefront of decision making.

#### Please consider how your proposal could affect the following groups:

- Single parents and vulnerable families
- People with low literacy/numeracy
- Pensioners
- Looked after children
- Homeless people
- Carers
- Armed Forces Community
- Students
- Single adult households
- People who have experienced the asylum system
- People of all ages leaving a care setting
- People living in the most deprived areas in Wales (WIMD)
- People involved in the criminal justice system
- People misusing substances

Socio Economic Disadvantages	Will the proposal have a positive, negative, or neutral impact?	How could you mitigate the negative impacts outlined?	Please highlight any evidence that has been considered (quantitative or qualitative)
<b>Low Income / Income Poverty</b> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>	Neutral	N/A	
<b>Low and/or No Wealth</b> <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i>	Neutral	N/A	
<b>Material Deprivation</b> <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e., financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i>	Neutral	N/A	
<b>Area Deprivation</b> <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport) Impact on the environment?</i>	Neutral	N/A	
<b>Socio-economic Background</b> <i>(social class i.e., parents' education, employment and income)</i>	Neutral	N/A	

<p><b>Socio-economic Disadvantage</b>  <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>	<p><b>Neutral</b></p>	<p><b>N/A</b></p>	
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# Agenda Item 16

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **6<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

Report Subject: **Proposal to explore and develop a Business case for Children's residential provision in Blaenau Gwent**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Hayden Trollope, Executive Member People and Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Interim Corporate Director of Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	May 22	25.08.22			06.09.22	14.09.22		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek support to develop a business case to provide local authority children's residential provision in Blaenau Gwent in collaboration with a neighbouring Authority.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 In its Programme for Government, Welsh Ministers have made a commitment to *'eliminate private profit from the care of looked after children by the end of the Senedd term'*. This is a top priority commitment for this Government and one which requires a range of partners and expertise to deliver.
- 2.2 To implement this commitment a Programme Board has been established and is chaired by the Chief Social Care Officer for Wales, the All Wales Heads of Childrens Services are represented on this Board.
- 2.3 The Programme Board agrees that children and young people need services, care and support that enable them to grow and develop, flourish and thrive. Usually, this will mean they need to be close to their families and communities. This will be a key feature of the Programme, finding ways in which children and young people can more often be accommodated and cared for closer to home.
- 2.4 Too often children are placed out of county or out of country, at great expense, removing them further from their families and social networks. There is a strong commitment from Government to changing the shape of the placement market in Wales and to redefine how we care for children in Wales.

- 2.5 Blaenau Gwent is heavily dependent on private providers to meet the needs of our children who require residential care. In order to change this position, the Gwent Heads of Children's Services agreed some years ago that Newport and Caerphilly local authorities would increase their residential provision in order to accommodate the needs of the other 3 Gwent Authorities. The rationale for this was Newport and Caerphilly have long standing experience and expertise in providing quality residential care for children with complex needs. Despite those two authorities increasing their residential provision over recent years, their own Local Authority demand has increased resulting in minimal provision being offered to the other Gwent Authorities. Blaenau Gwent currently has one child placed in a residential home in Newport. The other 11 children in residential care are placed with private providers.
- 2.6 In light of the lack of available resource and in line with Welsh Governments commitment to '*eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after*' as a local authority we now have to think differently about how we provide residential care for our children.
- 2.7 To support us in our thinking Welsh Government has developed a new **Health and Social Care Integration and Rebalancing Capital Fund** that focuses on, amongst other things, supporting the rebalancing of the social care market.
- 2.8 This Capital Fund can be used to invest in local authority residential homes to ensure they are able to meet individuals more complex needs closer to home. The capital fund can be accessed via the Regional Partnership Board. The Regional Partnership Board has been asked to develop a 5-10 yr. strategic investment plan alongside the Area Plan which is due for publication by April 2023.
- 2.9 This capital fund will give the local authority the financial resource to purchase an appropriate property within Blaenau Gwent with the purpose of changing it to provide, safe, high-quality care for our children without the need to be removed from their local schools, social networks and above all provide much better opportunities for them to maintain quality time with their families.
- 2.10 As Blaenau Gwent Social Services department do not have the expertise or capacity to manage their own children's residential provision, we would need to explore our neighbouring authorities supporting us in this role and managing the provision on our behalf.
- 2.11 Blaenau Gwent has a strong collaborative history working with our neighbouring authorities
- 2.12 If any collaboration is agreed, it will take approximately 18 months – 2 yrs to make the bid for capital funding, identify and purchase the property in Blaenau Gwent and undertake alterations to ensure it complies with the

Care Inspectorate Wales Regulations to be registered as a children's home.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

#### 3.1 **Option 1**

The Scrutiny Committee recommend that the Executive Committee agree to the development of a business case to deliver local authority residential placements for children looked after; and to enter into a collaborative arrangement with a neighbouring authority for them to provide the management, staffing and oversight required to provide quality residential care for our children looked after. This will reduce our reliance on private childcare providers, provide care closer to home for our children looked after and remove the profit element included within the current charges made by private providers.

#### 3.2 **Option 2**

To not recommend to the Executive Committee to the development of a business case to create local authority residential placements for children looked after or agree to the collaborative arrangement but continue to use private residential providers with of Blaenau Gwent children having to be placed outside the borough.

### 4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

If option 1 is agreed, it will contribute to the following corporate priorities

- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities;
- To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm.

### 5. ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

5.1 During 2019/20 and 2020/21 the Council has incurred costs in excess of £2m per annum (£2.5M & £2M respectively) on residential placements for Children Looked After. Costs have been reducing as a result of lower numbers of children requiring residential provision however the local authority will always need to provide residential care for some children.

5.2 The average cost of a child being looked after in residential care over the past 2 years is outlined in Figure 1. The average costs of providing *local authority* residential care is very similar to the average costs that Blaenau Gwent pays for *private care*. However, what is different is the quality of care provided and the fact that that care will be provided closer to home which will improve outcomes for children.

**Figure 1**

	Average Private Cost Per week	Average Local Authority Cost Per week
2019/2020	£4,694	-
2020/2021	£4,199	£4,600

5.3 It is estimated that the running costs of the facility will include:-

- Staff costs – paid via an SLA to neighbouring authority for providing the day to day care, running and management oversight of the home which is required from the Care Inspectorate Wales.
- Premises costs – building maintenance, cleaning, insurance etc.
- Supplies & Services

5.4 Current assumptions are that the costs per child would be similar to current costs being incurred and therefore the revenue costs for running the children’s home can be met from the Council’s existing residential budget (the revenue costs of operating the children’s home replacing the costs of some out of county residential placements).

5.5 The current plan is to source a home in Blaenau Gwent that can accommodate 4 children.

5.6 We would initially look to place new children who require residential care in this new home alongside identifying which children currently in residential care we could move closer to home.

5.7 If option 1 is agreed this will not necessarily result in cost savings but it will result in more effective use of resources. Children will be living in Blaenau Gwent and the costs of facilitating family time and social work travelling time will undoubtedly be reduced.

5.8 The capital costs for the purchase and alteration to the home to ensure it meets regulations would be met by the capital grant available from the Health and Social Care Integration and Rebalancing Capital Fund. We are expecting to bid for £750K capital.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

### 6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The numbers of children in residential care have varied significantly over the years ranging from **6** children in 2013 to an all -time high of **18** in May 2019. The council agreed to the establishment of the My Support Team in June 2019. This team had the specific remit to work with children in residential care to move them onto foster care, plus, work with children



who are at risk of going into residential care. The work of this team alongside the child care team as seen a reduction of children in residential care reducing to **12** as at end of March 2022. However we will always need residential provision for a number of children with complex needs.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The impact of having Blaenau Gwent residential provision will improve outcomes for children looked after. This means more and better quality family time, maintaining their school placement and peer relationships.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The CIW undertook an inspection of local authority and private residential provision. The outcome was that local authority residential provision was much better quality than private with great stability of the workforce and improved outcomes for children. A child in a local authority home shared that this was the first time she had felt safe.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

Blaenau Gwent has never had its own children's residential provision so need to rely on the expertise of another local authority to provide the day to day care and management oversight at this time. However, over time we will gain this expertise by working with a neighbouring authority which could result in us taking over responsibility for the day to day running of the home in the longer term

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Preventing children from being placed outside of Blaenau Gwent who need care is a positive outcome in itself and will prevent the breakdown of important relationships

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Working with a neighbouring authority is a positive and necessary collaboration to ensure this plan is realised

6.6 ***Integration (across service areas)***

6.7 ***EqlA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

Looked after children often have many of the protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010. The proposal in this report will not have a negative impact on any of these groups but will certainly impact positively on many of them.

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***

If this report is approved an action will be added to our Child Looked after Reduction strategy which is reported in within the directorate business plans.

**Background Documents / Electronic Links**

N/A

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