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Blaenau Gwent

Our Ref./Ein Cyf.
Your Ref./Eich Cyf.
Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Gwasanaethau Democraidaidd

THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

Dydd Mawrth, 13 Medi 2022 Dydd Mawrth, 13 Medi 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

PWYLLGOR GWAITH

A meeting of the Pwyllgor Gwaith will be held in Ystafell y Weithrediaeth, Canolfan Ddinesig, Glynebwy on Dydd Mercher, 21ain Medi, 2022 at 11.30 am.

Yours faithfully

Damien McCann
Interim Chief Executive

AGENDA

Pages

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.

3. **DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU**
Derbyn Datganiadau Buddiant a Goddefebau..
4. **PWYLLGOR GWEITHREDIAETH** 5 - 10
Ystyried cyfarfod y cofnodion o'r Pwyllgor Gweithrediaeth a gynhaliwyd ar 13 Goffennaf 2002.
5. **CYNADLEDDAU, CYRSIAU, DIGWYDDIADAU A GWAHODDIADAU** 11 - 12
Ystyried cynadleddau, cyrsiau, digwyddiadau a gwahoddiadau.
6. **BLAENRAGLEN WAITH 2022-23 Y PWYLLGOR GWEITHREDIAETH** 13 - 30
Derbyn yr adroddiad.
7. **GRARNTIAU I SEFYDLIADAU** 31 - 34
Ystyried adroddiad y Prif Swyddog Adnoddau.
8. **ADOLYGIAD POLISI TRAFNIDIAETH RHWNG Y CARTREF A'R YSGOL AC ÔL-16 2023 - 2024** 35 - 60
Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.
9. **CYNNIG I YMCHWILIO A DATBLYGU ACHOS BUSNES DROS DDARPARIAETH PRESWYL I BLANT YM MLAENAU GWENT** 61 - 66
Ystyried adroddiad Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Interim Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol.
10. **ASESIAD DIGONOLRWYDD CHWARAE 2022-2025** 67 - 210
Ystyried adroddiad Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Interim Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol.
11. **ASESIAD DIGONOLRWYDD GOFAL PLANT 2022** 211 - 302
Ystyried adroddiad Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Gwasanaethau Plant.

EITEMAU MONITRO

PORTFFOLIO CORFFORAETHOL A PHERFFORMIAD

12. **MONITRO'R GYLLIDEB REFENIW - 2022/2023, RHAGOLWG ALL-DRO I 31 MAWRTH 2023 (FEL AR 30 MEHEFIN 2022)** 303 - 332

Ystyried adroddiad y Prif Swyddog Adnoddau.

13. **MONITRO'R GYLLIDEB GYFALAF, RHAGOLWG AR GYFER BLWYDDYN ARIANNOL 2022/23 (FEL AR 30 MEHEFIN 2022)** 333 - 350

Ystyried adroddiad y Prif Swyddog Adnoddau.

PORTFFOLIO POBL AC ADDYSG

14. **CRYNODEB O ADRODDIAD HUNANARFARNU 2022** 351 - 414

Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.

EITEM EITHRIEDIG

Derbyn ac ystyried yr adroddiad dilynol sydd ym marn y swyddog priodol yn eitem(au) eithriedig gan roi ystyriaeth i'r prawf budd cyhoeddus ac y dylai'r wasg a'r cyhoedd gael eu heithrio o'r cyfarfod (mae'r rheswm dros y penderfyniad am yr eithriad ar gael ar restr a gedwir gan y swyddog priodol).

PORTFFOLIO LLE AC AMGYLCHEDD

15. **TIR YN RASA** 415 - 428

Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Adfywio.

To: S. Thomas
Councillor H. Cunningham
Councillor S. Edmunds
J. C. Morgan
H. Trollope

All other Members (for information)
Interim Chief Executive
Chief Officers

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 13TH JULY, 2022

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: Leader/
Executive Member - Corporate Overview & Performance
Councillor S. Thomas

Deputy Leader/
Executive Member – Place & Environment
Councillor H. Cunningham

Executive Member – Place & Regeneration
Councillor J.C. Morgan

Executive Member – People & Education
Councillor S. Edmunds

Executive Member – People & Social Services
Councillor H. Trollope

WITH: Interim Chief Executive
Chief Officer Resources
Chief Officer Commercial
Head of Organisational Development
Head of Regeneration
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
Head of School Improvement, Inclusion and Education
Press Officer

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> An apology for absence was received from the Corporate Director Education.
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u> There were no declarations of interest or dispensations raised.
No. 4	<u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u> It was proposed and seconded that future meetings be held at 10.00 a.m. RESOLVED accordingly.
	<u>MINUTES</u>
No. 5	<u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u> Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 16 th March, 2022. RESOLVED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.

	<p><u>GENERAL MATTERS</u></p>
<p>No. 6.</p>	<p><u>CONFERENCES, COURSES, EVENTS AND INVITATIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the following:-</p> <p><u>The Installation of the next Archdeacon of the Gwent Valleys and Diocesan Director of Mission - Sunday 19th June 2022</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that Councillor D. Wilkshire, Deputy Presiding Member be approved to attend.</p> <p><u>Armed Forces Day 2022</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that Councillor D. Bevan, Armed Forces Champion be approved to attend.</p>
	<p><u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO</u></p>
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITY FOR A 'BRIDGING LOAN' TO SUPPORT WITH THE INCREASING COST OF USING A CAR FOR WORK PURPOSES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and an offer be made to employees who use their car for work purposes the opportunity of applying for a 'bridging' loan of £200 that was fully repayable. The situation would be reviewed in March 2023 or earlier should the cost of fuel reduce, the pay award has been implemented or there was any other change. The loan would be repayable via monthly instalments over 12 months. The 'bridging' loan was fully recoverable with immediate effect if an employee terminates their employment with the Authority.</p> <p>Discussions would continue in relation to the potential of a temporary review of mileage rates with the trade unions.</p>

	<p>The loan opportunity would be advertised through line managers and the Chief Executive Newsletter and would only be available to those who have claimed mileage over the last year and use their car for work purposes. The employee would be required to sign a declaration and commitment to repay the loan in the future (Option 1).</p>
	<p><u>PLACE AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO</u></p>
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (SPF)</u> <u>LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN AND REGIONAL INVESTMENT PLAN</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Regeneration and Development.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and agreed to proceed with the Regional Shared Prosperity Fund process (Option 1) as follows:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek agreement for Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCT) to act as Lead Local Authority for the UK SPF for the Cardiff Capital Region and for them to submit the CCR Investment Plan to the UK Government by the deadline of 1st August 2022. 2. Grant delegated authority for the Head of Regeneration and Development (in consultation with the Leader and Executive Member for Place and Regeneration, Chief Executive, Chief Officer Resources/Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer/ Head of Legal and Compliance) to take necessary actions to meet the submission deadlines and requirements. 3. A number of interventions be agreed to ensure that the 2022/23 funding was spent in a timely manner, including some at-risk recruitment. This would be at financial risk to the council in the first instance. Contracts could be further extended once confirmation of SPF funding was received. 4. It was agreed to use part of the 4% SPF (£1,120,000 over three years) administration/management fee to appoint a small project team to manage and administer the delivery of the SPF programme for BGCBC.

	<p><u>PEOPLE AND EDUCATION PORTFOLIO</u></p>
No. 9	<p><u>RIGHTS, VALUE, ETHICS (RVE) SYLLABUS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive Committee adopted the agreed syllabus for use in primary schools from September 2022 and for those all through/secondary schools implementing Curriculum for Wales from 2023 as set out in the report (Option 1).</p>
	<p><u>PLACE AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO</u></p>
No. 10	<p><u>SALE OF LAND, ASHVALE, TREDEGAR</u></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 report of the Head of Regeneration.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information which contained details relating to the business/financial affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted (Option 2).</p>

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Agenda Item 5

Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th September, 2022**

Report Subject: **Conferences, Courses, Events and Invitations**

Report Submitted by: **Democratic 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)
X	x	X				02/03/2022		

1. Purpose of the Report

To present a list of conferences, courses, events and invitations for consideration and determination by the Executive.

2. Scope of the Report

2.1 Gwent Police Cadets Pass Out Parade and Awards Ceremony 8th August, 2022

To approve the attendance of Councillor C. Smith, Presiding Member.

Leadership Programme for Councillors in Wales 2022/2023

14th–15th January, 2023 - Module 1

11th–12th February, 2023 - Module 2

4th-5th March, 2023 - Module 3

To approve the attendance of the following Members:-

Councillor T. Smith, Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee; and
Councillor S. Edmunds, Executive Member People & Education

3. Options for Consideration

3.1 To seek approval for attendance for the events outlined in the report.

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Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 31.08.22

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 02.09.22

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th September 2022**

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

Portfolio Holder: **All Portfolio Holders**

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	24.08.22			Sept 2022	14.09.22	29.09.22	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present the Executive Forward Work Programme for 2022-23 (Appendix 1) and to seek approval from Committee.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Executive Work Programme is a key aspect of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and supports the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the 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 All Scrutiny Committees and the Council Forward Work Programmes have been aligned to the Executive Forward Work Programme.
 - 2.4 As the document is fluid there is flexibility to allow for regular review between the Chair and the Committee.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 The Work Programmes have been endorsed by the relevant departments of the Council, and all Scrutiny Committees and the Council will agree their work programmes as part of the September 2022 cycle of meetings.
 - 3.2 **Option 1**
To agree the Forward Work Programme for Executive Committee for 2022/23.
 - Option 2**
To suggest any amendments prior to agreeing the Forward Work Programme.

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Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Executive Committee DRAFT Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Chair: Cllr Steve Thomas

Vice-Chair: Cllr Helen Cunningham

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Executive Meeting Date: Wednesday 13th July 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas: Friday 1st July 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Executive

Decision: 4 Items

Monitoring: 0

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
DECISION ITEMS				
Portfolio: Place and Regeneration				
Sale of Land, Ashvale, Tredegar	Approval	Lee Williams	N/A	N/A
UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund – draft Local Investment and Regional Investment Plans Process	Approval	Ellie Fry	N/A	N/A
Workforce Opportunity for a 'Bridging Loan'	Approval	Andrea Prosser	N/A	N/A
Portfolio: People and Education				
Rights, Values and Ethnic (RVE) Syllabus	Approval	Lynn Phillips	N/A	N/A

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Executive Meeting Date: Wednesday 14th September 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas: Tuesday 23rd August 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Executive

Decision: 4 items Monitoring: 3 items
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Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
DECISION ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Overview and Performance				
Forward Work Programme 2022/23	Decision To approve the Forward Work Programme for 2022/23, recognising the fluidity of the programme.	Chair	September	29.09.22
Grants to Organisations (if any)	Decision To agree the Grants to Organisations.	Rhian Daly	N/A	N/A
Portfolio: People and Education				
Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy To be published by 1st October	Decision To consider and approve the draft Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2023/24, prior to publication on 1/10/2022.	Lynn Phillips	People – 6.09.22	N/A
Portfolio: People and Social Services				
Play Sufficiency Assessment / Childcare Sufficiency Assessment	Decision The Executive to approve prior to submission to Welsh Government.	Tanya Evans / Ceri Bird	N/A	N/A
Proposal to explore and develop a Business case for Children’s residential provision in Blaenau Gwent	Decision To approve the development of a business case to provide local authority children’s residential provision in Blaenau Gwent.	Tanya Evans	People – 6.09.22	N/A

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
MONITORING ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Overview and Performance				
Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022/23	Budget Monitoring To provide members with an expenditure forecast at the end of quarter 1 across all portfolios for 2022/23.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview & Performance – 13.09.22	N/A
Forecast Capital Expenditure 2022/23	Budget Monitoring To provide details of each portfolio's forecast capital expenditure against allocation at the end of quarter 1	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview & Performance – 13.09.22	N/A
Portfolio: People and Education				
Self-evaluation (SE)	Performance Monitoring To ensure that Members contribute to the development of the self-evaluation report for Local Government Education Services.	Lynn Phillips	People – 6.09.22	N/A

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Executive Meeting Date: Wednesday 26th October 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas: Tuesday 4th October 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Executive

Decision: 4 Items Monitoring: 3 Items
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Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
DECISION ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Overview and Performance				
Grants to Organisations	Approval To agree the Grants to Organisations.	Rhian Daly	N/A	N/A
Portfolio: People and Education				
Partnership Agreement	Decision To approve the Local partnership agreement between the Local Authority and Schools.	Lynn Phillips	Partnership – 14.10.22	N/A
ALN Policies / Strategies Education Safeguarding Policy	Decision To approve the policies / strategies.	Lynn Phillips	People -19.9.22	N/A
Portfolio: Deputy Leader / Places and Environment				
Highways Capital Works Programme	Decision To undertake a review of the activity undertaken in the previous year 2021/22 and to consider the options for work for 2022/23.	Clive Rogers	Places – 20.09.22	N/A
MONITORING ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Overview and Performance				
Review of staff attendance 2021-22	Performance Monitoring To consider the annual review of staff sickness absence.	Andrea Prosser	Corporate Overview and Performance – 23.09.22	N/A

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
Portfolio: People and Education				
Improving Schools Programme	Performance Monitoring To provide Members with an update on any inspection report findings and progress within schools that are causing concern or subject to Council intervention.	Lynn Phillips	People – 18.10.22	N/A
Joint Portfolio: People and Social Services & People and Education				
Safeguarding Performance Information Social Services and Education	Performance Monitoring To provide members with Safeguarding Performance and Self-Evaluation information and to influence areas of focus.	Damien McCann/ Lynn Phillips	People – 18.10.22	N/A

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Executive Meeting Date: Wednesday 7th December 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas: Tuesday 15th November 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Executive

Decision: 5 Items Monitoring: 6 Items
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Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
DECISION ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance Services				
Grants to Organisations	Approval To agree the Grants to Organisations.	Rhian Daly	N/A	N/A
Welsh Language Promotion Strategy	Decision To approve the Strategy.	Sarah King / Emma Scherptong	Corporate Overview and Performance - 11.11.22	N/A
Workforce Strategy Review and year 2 action plan	Decision To agree the review and year 2 action plan.	Andrea Prosser	Corporate Overview and Performance - 11.11.22	N/A
Portfolio: Place and Regeneration				
Tredegar Place Making Plan	Decision To agree the proposals for placemaking in Tredegar.	Amy Taylor	Place Scrutiny Committee – 08.11.22	N/A
Portfolio: Place and Environment				
Public Protection and Environment Policy Review	Pre-Decision Members to consider the consultation and outcomes.	Dave Thompson	Place Scrutiny Committee – 08.11.22	N/A
MONITORING ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Overview and Performance				
Joint Finance and Performance report	Performance Monitoring Members to receive quarter 1 for consideration.	Gemma Wasley	Corporate Overview and	N/A

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
			Performance - 11.11.22	
Shared Resource Service (SRS)	Performance Monitoring	Bernadette Elias	Partnership – 22.11.22	
Portfolio: People and Social Services				
Director of Social Services Quarter 1 and 2 update	Performance Monitoring Members to receive the quarterly update of the Director of Social Services Annual report.	Tanya Evans	People - 29.11.22	N/A
Regional Partnership Board	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the decisions taken by the Regional Partnership Board	Tanya Evans	Partnership – 22.11.22	N/A
Portfolio: People and Education				
Director of Education Quarter 1 and 2 update	Performance Monitoring Members to receive the quarterly update of the Director of Education Annual report.	Lynn Phillips	People - 29.11.22	N/A
Aneurin Leisure Trust Performance and Monitoring	Performance Monitoring Members to consider the content of the six monthly ALT performance report and to discuss areas for future monitoring arrangements.	Lynn Phillips	Partnership – 22.11.22	N/A

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Executive Meeting Date: Wednesday 18th January 2023

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas: Tuesday 20th December 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Executive

Decision: 1 Item Monitoring: 5 Items

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
DECISION ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Overview and Performance				
Grants to Organisations (if any)	Approval To agree the Grants to Organisations.	Rhian Daly	N/A	N/A
MONITORING ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance				
Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022/23	Budget Monitoring To provide members with an expenditure forecast at the end of quarter 2 across all portfolios for 2022/23.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview and Performance - 16.12.22	N/A
Forecast Capital Expenditure 2022/23	Budget Monitoring To provide details of each portfolio's forecast capital expenditure against allocation at the end of quarter 2	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview and Performance - 16.12.22	N/A
Review of the Agile Working Policy	Performance Monitoring To consider progress of the Agile Working Policy.	Andrea Prosser	Corporate Overview and Performance - 16.12.22	N/A
Joint Portfolio: Place and Environment and Place and Regeneration				
Community Services and Regeneration Directorate Performance report	Performance Monitoring Members to monitor the performance of the Directorate.	Clive Rogers Ellie Fry Dave Thompson	Places Scrutiny Committee – 13.12.22	N/A
Portfolio: Deputy Leader / Place and Environment				

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
Waste and Recycling Performance 2021/22	Performance Monitoring Members to monitor the performance.	Matthew Stent	Places Scrutiny Committee – 13.12.22	N/A

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

SPECIAL Executive Meeting Date: TO BE CONFIRMED

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas:

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Executive

Decision: 1 Item

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
DECISION ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Overview and Performance				
Revenue Budget 2022/23	Decision Members to consider the proposed Revenue Budget for 2022/23.	Rhian Hayden	TBC	TBC

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Executive Meeting Date: Wednesday 1st March 2023

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas: Tuesday 7th February 2023

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Executive

Decision: 5 items Monitoring: 4 items
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Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
DECISION ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Overview and Performance				
Grants to Organisations	Approval To agree the Grants to Organisations.	Rhian Daly	N/A	N/A
Procurement Strategy	Decision To approve the strategy.	Bernadette Elias	Corporate Overview and Performance - 03.02.23	N/A
Portfolio: Place and Regeneration				
Brynmawr Placemaking Plan	Decision To approve the proposals for placemaking in Brynmawr.	Ellie Fry	Place Scrutiny Committee – 31.01.23	N/A
Portfolio: People and Education				
Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2022/23	Decision Members to approve the draft EAS Business Plan for 2022/23.	Lynn Phillips	Partnership – 07.02.23	N/A
School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education Statutory deadline for the policy to be published by 15th April	Pre-Decision To approve the School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2023/24.	Lynn Phillips	People - 28.02.23	N/A
MONITORING ITEMS				

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance				
Medium Term Financial Strategy / Bridging the Gap	Performance Monitoring To provide Members with an update on the MTFS / Bridging the Gap programme.	Rhian Hayden Bernadette Elias	Corporate and Performance – 03.02.23	N/A
Portfolio: People and Education				
Improving Schools Programme	Performance Monitoring 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	People – 17.01.23	
Joint Portfolio: People and Education & People and Social Services				
Safeguarding Performance Information Social Services and Education	Performance Monitoring To provide members with Safeguarding Performance and Self-Evaluation information and to influence areas of focus.	Damien McCann/ Lynn Phillips	People – 28.02.23	N/A
Portfolio: People and Social Services				
Regional Partnership Board	Performance Monitoring Members to be informed of the decisions taken by the Regional Partnership Board	Tanya Evans	Partnership – 07.02.23	N/A

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Executive Meeting Date: Wednesday 19th April 2023

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas: Friday 24th March 2023

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Executive

Decision: 3 items
Monitoring: 6 items

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
DECISION ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance				
Grants to Organisations	Approval To agree the Grants to Organisations.	Rhian Daly	N/A	N/A
Portfolio: Place and Environment				
Highways Maintenance Plan	Pre-Decision To consider the Highways Maintenance Plan.	Clive Rogers	Place – 14.03.23	N/A
Portfolio: Place and Regeneration				
Abertillery Placemaking Plan	Pre-Decision To endorse the proposals for placemaking in Abertillery.	Ellie Fry	Place – 14.03.23	N/A
MONITORING ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance				
Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022/23	Budget Monitoring To provide members with an expenditure forecast at the end of quarter 2 across all portfolios for 2022/23.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview and Performance - 17.03.23	N/A
Forecast Capital Expenditure 2022/23	Budget Monitoring To provide details of each portfolio's forecast capital expenditure against allocation at the end of quarter 3.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview and Performance - 17.03.23	N/A
Portfolio: Place and Regeneration				
Abertillery Placemaking Plan	Decision To approve the proposals for placemaking in Abertillery.	Amy Taylor	Place Scrutiny Committee – 14.3.23	N/A
Portfolio: Place and Environment				

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
Highways Maintenance Plan	Decision To approve the Highways Maintenance Plan.	Clive Rogers	Place Scrutiny Committee – 14.3.23	N/A
Portfolio: People and Education				
Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2019/20	Performance Monitoring Members to consider the Annual Assessment from Welsh Government which highlights Blaenau Gwent's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards.	Lynn Phillips	Partnership – 28.03.23	N/A
Education Directorate End of Year 2021 report	Performance Monitoring 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	People – 18.04.23	N/A

Executive Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Executive Meeting Date: Date for items to be confirmed / FWP 2023-24

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas:

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Executive

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
DECISION ITEMS				
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Overview and Performance				
Corporate Customer Experience and Access Strategy	Decision To approve the strategy.	Bernadette Elias	Corporate Overview and Performance - TBC	N/A
Community Services and Regeneration Directorate Performance report	Performance Monitoring Members to monitor the performance of the Directorate.	Clive Rogers Ellie Fry Dave Thompson	Place – 25.04.23	N/A
Blaina Placemaking Plan	Decision To endorse the proposals for placemaking in Blaina.	Ellie Fry	Place – 25.04.23	N/A

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

REPORT SUBJECT: GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS – 14th Sept 2022

REPORT AUTHOR: RHIAN HAYDEN

**LEAD OFFICER/
DEPARTMENT CHIEF OFFICER RESOURCES,
RESOURCES**

ABERTILLERY

Abertillery & Six Bells Ward – Councillor K. Chaplin

1.	Abertillery Bluebirds AFC	£100
2.	Abertillery Piranhas	£100
3.	Gelli Crug Community Garden Allotments	£100
4.	Abertillery Excelsiors AFC	£100
5.	Abertillery Excelsiors Junior AFC	£100
6.	Six Bells Tennis Club	£100
7.	Abertillery BG RFC	£100

Abertillery & Six Bells Ward – Councillor J. Holt

1.	Basketball Wales Under 16 (Retrospective Approval)*	£75
2.	1 st Abertillery Scout Group	£50
3.	Abertillery BG RFC	£100
4.	Abertillery Museum	£75
5.	Adam Street Allotments	£75
6.	Abertillery Piranhas	£100
7.	Six Bells Tennis Club	£150
8.	Abertillery Bluebirds FC	£100
9.	Old Tyleryan RFC	£75
10.	Six Bells Community Centre	£75
11.	Abertillery Excelsiors AFC	£100
12.	Abertillery Excelsiors Junior AFC	£100
13.	Friends of Six Bells Park	£100
14.	Ebenezer Baptist Church	£100

Llanhilleth Ward – Councillor H. Cunningham

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Ffion Cross (Retrospective Approval)* | £100 |
|----|---------------------------------------|------|

Llanhilleth Ward – Councillor L. Parsons

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|------|
| 1. | Abertillery Piranhas | £50 |
| 2. | JFR Llanhilleth | £200 |
| 3. | Abertillery Museum | £100 |

EBBW VALE

Beaufort Ward – Councillor C. Smith

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 1. | Beaufort RFC | £200 |
| 2. | Ebbw Vale Wheel Chair Sports Club | £200 |
| 3. | Beaufort Christmas Lights | £300 |
| 4. | Rassau & Beaufort Royal British Legion | £200 |

Beaufort Ward – Councillor G. Thomas

- | | | |
|-----|--|------|
| 1. | Beaufort Christmas Lights | £100 |
| 2. | Beaufort Hill Ponds & Woodlands Preservation Society | £100 |
| 3. | Raglan Terrace WOAP | £100 |
| 4. | Beaufort Male Choir | £100 |
| 5. | Beaufort Hill Primary School | £100 |
| 6. | Ebbw Vale Works Museum | £100 |
| 7. | Beaufort Hearts Calonnau Cendl | £100 |
| 8. | 2 nd Beaufort & Rassau Scout Group | £100 |
| 9. | Ffin Dance | £100 |
| 10. | Bethel Methodist Church | £100 |

Beaufort Ward – Councillor D. Woods

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 1. | Beaufort RFC | £100 |
| 2. | Rassau & Beaufort Royal British Legion | £100 |
| 3. | Beaufort Christmas Lights | £100 |

Cwm Ward – Councillors D. Bevan & G. Humphries

1.	Cwm Christmas Lighting Group	£200
2.	Cwm Livestock Society	£200
3.	Tirzah Baptist Church	£100
4.	Cwm Weightlifting Club	£200
5.	Waunlwyd & Victoria Events Committee	£200
6.	Waunlwyd OAP Association	£200
7.	Waunlwyd Youth & Community Centre	£200

Ebbw Vale Rassau Ward – Councillors G. Davies

1.	Special Movers (Retrospective Approval)*	£300
2.	Beaufort RFC	£100
3.	Ebbw Vale Wheel Chair Sports Club	£100
4.	Toppers School of Dance	£100
5.	Garnlydan Presbyterian Church	£100
6.	Garnlydan AFC	£100

Ebbw Vale North Ward – Councillor J. Morgan

1.	Tredegar Operatic Society	£200
2.	Ebbw Vale Operatic Society	£200
3.	Toppers School of Dance	£150

NANTYGLO & BLAINA

Blaina Ward – Councillor J.P. Morgan

1.	Blaenau Gwent Rhythm & Ukes	£50
2.	Zachary Tandy	£150

Blaina Ward – Councillor L. Winnett

1.	Blaenau Gwent Rhythm & Ukes	£50
2.	Zachary Tandy	£150

Nantyglo Ward – Councillor S. Behr

1.	Abertillery Piranhas	£200
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***Those marked Retrospective Approval were paid at the request of the councillor in advance of this meeting.**

CHIEF OFFICER RESOURCES

Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 31.08.22

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 02.09.22

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th 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	24.08.22			06.09.22	14.09.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval from the Executive 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 1st 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:
- on the Council’s website;
 - to parents on request;
 - public libraries; and,
 - 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 1st 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 This report will be considered by the People Scrutiny Committee on the 6th September 2022 and any feedback will be provided verbally to the Executive Committee

3.2 **Option 1:** The Executive Committee approve the Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2023/24 (**Appendix 1**).

3.3 **Option 2:** The Executive Committee considers the Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2023/24 (**Appendix 1**) and provides any recommendations for change.

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 1st 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

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

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 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 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

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

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)	A pupil who has an identified additional learning need
Catchment Area	A marked out geographical area made up of the streets around a school.
Catchment Area School	A school within the catchment area
Children Looked After	Children who are in the care of, or 'accommodated by', a Local Authority.
Child Protection	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.
Designated Area	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).
Nearest Suitable School	For transport purposes, the nearest suitable school may not be the catchment area school.
Officer Review	The process of someone within the Council looking again at an application for transport assistance.
Parent/Carer	Anyone who is responsible for the care of a child. We use the same definition as stated in the Education Act 1996.
Preferred School	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.
Pupil	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.
Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children	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.
Shortest Walking Distance	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.
Special Transport Needs	Some pupils may have special transport needs that come from a disability or an additional learning need.
Statutory Walking Distance	As set out in section 2, in accordance with the definition provided in the Education Act 1996.
Student	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.
Suitable Walkable Route	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 not 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)
Low Income / Income Poverty <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>	Neutral	N/A	
Low and/or No Wealth <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	
Material Deprivation <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	
Area Deprivation <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport) Impact on the environment?</i>	Neutral	N/A	
Socio-economic Background <i>(social class i.e., parents' education, employment and income)</i>	Neutral	N/A	

Socio-economic Disadvantage <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>	Neutral	N/A	
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Agenda Item 9

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 31.08.22

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 02.09.22

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th 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				06.09.22	14.09.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval 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**

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**

That the Executive Committee do not agree 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 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)***

Children looked after 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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Agenda Item 10

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 05.09.22

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 02.09.22

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th September 2022**

Report Subject: **Play Sufficiency Assessment 2022-2025**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Haydn Trollope - Executive Member for Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Ceri Bird – Service Manager, Children’s 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)
28.06.22	14.07.22					14.09.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To approve the Blaenau Gwent Play Sufficiency Assessment 2022 – 2025, the Executive Summary and the Action Plan prior to submission to Welsh Government.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Welsh Government places great value on play and its importance in the lives of children in our society. They believe that children have a fundamental right to be able to play, and that play is central to their enjoyment of life and contributes to their well-being. They also believe that play is essential for the growth in children’s cognitive; physical; social and emotional development.

- 2.1.1 Children’s right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Welsh Government formally adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2004 and is committed to making the principles of the UNCRC a reality for all children and young people. There are three articles which particularly relate to this duty:

- Article 31 (Leisure, play and culture): Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.
- Article 15 (Freedom of association): Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations.
- Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child): When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.

- 2.1.2 The Welsh Government also believes that high quality play opportunities for all children may contribute to mitigating the negative effects of poverty on children’s lives and help to build their resilience.

- 2.1.3 Play can also be a means of reducing inequalities between children living in families that can afford costly recreational provision and those that cannot so reducing poverty of experience for all children.
- 2.1.4 To achieve this the Welsh Government placed a statutory duty on Local Authorities under section 11 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, Play Opportunities for Children. The duty requires Local Authorities to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities for children in their areas every 5 years.
- 2.1.5 This report covers the Blaenau Gwent Play Sufficiency Assessment 2022 - 2025, the Executive Summary and the 3-year Action Plan.

2.2 **The Assessment Process**

The Local Authority has a dedicated Play Sufficiency Officer who is responsible for monitoring, reviewing, planning and drafting the Local Authority's Play Sufficiency Assessment; with a reporting process to the Early Years, Childcare and Play Manager and the Service Manager, Children's Services forming the 'Play Sufficiency Implementation Group'.

- 2.2.1 Desktop research, face-to-face meetings, focus groups, surveys, phone calls and emails ensured we offered a flexible, varied approach for lead officers and our partners in the collection of data. Colleagues were able to contribute to their areas of expertise and offer solutions to gaps in data.
- 2.2.2 The following outlines data used for each matter;

Matter A - Population: This section presents socio-economic and demographic data supplied by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council - Policy Officer, Research and Analysis and web based sources.

Matter B – Providing for diverse needs: Underpinned by the responses from our BIG play survey for children/young people and targeted focus groups.

Matter C – Space available for children to play: The following data assisted with the review including the LA's Annual inspection report of outdoor unstaffed fixed play provision, open space assessments, Local Development Plan, GIS mapping, local community knowledge, parks department, Play Sufficiency Officer and survey/focus group findings.

Matter D – Supervised provision: Information from DEWIS (FIS) from providers that have been identified as providing supervised play provision along with information on Early Years services, Parent and Toddler groups and After School Clubs that participate in our Quality Assurance scheme, the LA's Play and Youth Service and Leisure Trust.

Matter E – Charges for play provision: Information held by FIS and services offered by the Play team and LA. Welsh Governments AWPOG funding for Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing.

Matter F – Access to space/provision: Data and information held by colleagues from Traffic Management, Active Travel and Road Safety Team.

Matter G – Securing and developing the play workforce: Spreadsheet of qualifications of the sector are held by the LA's Childcare Business Development Officer, EYDCPP annual training programme.

Matter H – Community engagement and participation: Data held by the Local Authorities Play team, FIS and Blaenau Gwent's Engagement strategy.

Matter I – This section is based on key policy and strategic documents working with colleagues across different directorates including; Transport; Education, Partnerships, Planning, Early Years and Flying Start, Families First and Health & Safety.

2.2.3 Using guidance from Play Wales and Welsh Government, the Local Authority created a survey for children and young people. Questions were developed to gauge children's play experiences relating to; temporal – how children spend their 'free time', spatial – how space supports or constrains children's play and access to space and psychological – permission to play. In this year's survey there were also questions relating to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

2.3 **Assessment Findings**

2.3.1 Play survey:

Surveys were circulated to children and young people via partners, schools, local events, play sessions, afterschool clubs and an online version promoted on social media, 254 were returned.

To enrich data from the survey responses, focus groups were held with 6 school councils, 4 after-school clubs and 1 youth group. To ensure that minority groups of children had an opportunity to participate our focus groups ensured we had representation from children from Welsh language schools, children with disabilities, children looked after and gypsy/traveller children. 120 children participated in an activity-based workshops with a further 221 children, young people and parent/carers consulted during play sessions.

Survey findings:

- 90% of surveys were completed by children aged between 5 & 14yrs, with the average being 8 years.
- 15 children identified themselves as disabled with 60% of children satisfied with opportunities for playing and hanging out.
- 77% felt they had more than enough or plenty of time for playing or hanging out with friends
- 20% of children said they can play in all the places they would like to
- 95% said they always or usually felt safe when playing out, and it was considered that adults were supportive. The findings showed that 10-14yr olds were more likely to not feel safe.

- 96 children said they weren't allowed to play out on their own or with friends, with 43 between the ages of 8 & 15yrs
- Children were able to name lots of things that were good in their area, lots commented on playing in areas close to their homes, playing with friends who lived close by, leisure facilities, enjoying natural features like fields, woods and mountains too.

In terms of what was not so good about playing in their own area, comments tended to fall into themes; traffic, litter/cleanliness, local parks and play areas, older children (hanging about/bullying), nothing to do. The poor state of play areas and fixed play equipment continues to be one of the top themes of dis-satisfaction when consulting children, young people and their families. With 40% of children reflecting parks as 'what was bad in their area'.

2.3.2 Focus Groups:

To enrich data from the survey responses, focus groups were held with 6 school councils, 4 after-school clubs and 1 youth group. To ensure that minority groups of children had an opportunity to participate our focus groups ensured we had representation from children from Welsh language schools, children with disabilities, children looked after and gypsy/traveller children. 120 children participated in an activity-based workshop with a further 221 children, young people and parent/carers consulted during play sessions.

Focus group findings – what did children tell us?

- Why is play/hanging out important? Responses included: improving mental health, socialising, exercise, fun, being out in nature, our right to play, being happy, fresh air,
- Where/what they play when they are not in school? Children identified places they played including: parks, play areas, sports centres, woodland, streets, at home, relatives and friend's house, mountain, skate park, after school clubs, fields.
- What's good about them? Many gave examples of what they did; playing sports, cycling, playing games, skateboarding, tree climbing, fishing, running, jumping, climbing, walking, tag games, getting messy, lots of space, feel safe.
- What's bad about them? Bullies, older children, other adults, random people, dog poop, broken glass, litter, nothing to do.
- What are the barriers? Examples included; weather, traffic, other children, adults, access, park in disrepair. These were categorised into 3 main themes; temporal – how children spend their 'free time', spatial – how supports or constrains children's play and access to space, psychological – permission to play.
- What can we do to minimise the barriers? Participants identified what they could do themselves 'wear suitable clothing', 'carry a mobile phone', 'learn green cross code', 'go with friends'. 'walk away', 'tell an adult', 'call the police', 'pick up litter'.

2.3.3 What did Adults tell us?

When asked what was good or bad about the area for playing out there was a mix of responses with lots of parents noting the positives of living close to play areas or natural features like grassy areas/fields, lakes, woodlands etc and being close to areas that are good for playing.

Negatives included the poor maintenance of play areas and limited facilities for children of all ages to enjoy, dog mess, anti-social behaviour/vandalism and traffic.

When asked why they might travel outside of the area for play parents regularly noted the poor condition of our local play areas. Comments included;

'No decent clean parks in the area'

'The equipment in our local park needs updating'

'It's always overgrown with grass, litter and vandalism everywhere'

'Hardly anything for older children to play on, and the younger ones get bored'.

Throughout the pandemic when children couldn't leave their towns and travel was prohibited it emphasised how little we have in Blaenau Gwent. As children get older (into their teens) the lack of facilities like bike parks, bowling, tennis courts, assault courses, ninja warrior courses, woodland adventure play courses, laser tag, gaming/amusement arcades, splash parks, cinema and food complexes, limit opportunities for play and for hanging out. The lack of opportunities for children and young people are frequently a focus on social media.

2.4 Impact of Covid

2.4.1 It is widely recognised that children's play is vital to aide recovery following the pandemic, with increased awareness and recognition of the value and benefits of play. Welsh Government's commitment to help re-build confidence for children, young people and their families to integrate back into the community was delivered through Summer of Fun and Winter Wellbeing funding.

2.4.2 Surveys asked 2 specific questions exploring the impact of the pandemic on children's opportunities to play; *'Has Covid 19 affected how you usually play'* and if yes *'how'*.

16.5 % of replies stated that the coronavirus restrictions and lockdowns hadn't had an impact on how they usually played.

2.4.3 Recognising the impact on the wellbeing of children and young people the Local Authority Play team developed a new project during Covid, 'Wild Camps', building on the success of our Wild Tots groups.

2.4.4 The Play team supported Families First during the Summer of 2020 to offer some play sessions during the school summer holiday in local communities. Attendances reflected the reluctance of families feeling confident to use services at this time. The coronavirus and lockdown had intensified children and families' fears of being outdoors, of dirt and disease and of contact with other people. However reasonable that was at that time it had to be balanced against the risks to children's physical and mental health and well-being from being indoors and away from their friends for prolonged periods of time. By encouraging and supporting children to play in the natural environment and working with adults to explain the benefits of play for children's health and wellbeing, learning and resilience we are able to take a balanced approach and encourage participation as the pandemic moved on.

2.4.5 Our Wild Tots Parent and Toddler group saw a significant increase in registered families (400+) following the closure during the pandemic. The demand was so high that rather than turn families away the Local Authority offered an additional session to meet demand. Furthermore, sessions were offered free of charge to recognise the challenges many families had faced during the pandemic and the emphasis for opportunities to be outdoors based. Families expressed how their children had missed opportunities to play and to socialise with other children, for new parents who felt alone and isolated - the opportunity to play, to be outdoors, to meet others, to have a conversation about their new baby was greatly appreciated.

2.5 **The Action Plan**

Our 2022 Action Plan has been developed through discussions with stakeholders and partners considering;

- Is this a pressing need?
- Is it very likely that we can make a big difference addressing this action?
- Does the action address the play needs of a vulnerable group?
- Do we have capacity to work on this action?
- Can we start working on this straight away?

2.5.1 The Local Authority also considers;

- Are any of our partners working on this already that we could work with or support?
- What are the cost implications of this action?
- What are the benefits of this action?
- Do we have the skills and expertise locally to address the action?

2.5.2 The accountability of delivering the actions in the plan are not the responsibility of any one department and are very reliant on effective partnership working. Some aspects are also reliant on external sources of grant funding that are short term in nature and may impact on the sustainability of some of the actions.

2.5.3 Action Plan Summary

Actions reflect work to fill gaps in data for future assessments as well as actions to secure and develop sufficient play opportunities in Blaenau Gwent.

- Update population data as becomes accessible following Census 2021
- Undertake an audit of what provision is available across Blaenau Gwent for children with disabilities to include accessibility to parks and fixed play equipment to identify gaps and look at options for further development
- Identify local communities to pilot the launch of the Play Friendly Communities programme
- Deliver Summer of Fun 2022 programme of activities for 0-25yrs with partners
- Deliver workshops for Year 11 and community groups on childcare and play as careers.
- Deliver 'Understanding Play Sufficiency' workshop to all PSA lead officer/contacts
- Deliver Community Family Fun day to celebrate National Playday
- Contribute to discussions with the Regeneration to attract larger scale investment to provide opportunities for children and young people to play and hang out in their local communities.
- Reintroduce 'Play Friendly Schools'

The full action plan can be read in the attached document.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Option 1:

That Members note the Play Sufficiency Assessment report and associated documents and agree the key priorities/actions.

3.2 Option 2:

That Members suggest amendments / include other recommendations to the Assessment, prior to submission to Welsh Government.

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

4.1 Links to Council Priorities within the Corporate Plan - Social Services:

- 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 develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of the Covid pandemic

- 4.2 **Education:**
- To improve outcomes, progress and wellbeing, particularly for our most vulnerable children and young people.
 - Children learn through their play and develop cognitive skills, physical abilities, new vocabulary, social skills, literacy etc.
 - Unstructured free play not only offers benefits that protect against the harmful effects of stress, but play also gives children unlimited opportunities to discover their own interests and competencies. Play allows them to use their creativity while developing imagination, dexterity, and physical and emotional strength
- 4.3 **Links to priorities within the Gwent Wellbeing Plan:**
- 1.2 Health inequalities and well-being:** Play is so important to optimal child development that it has been recognised by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child. Wales is the first country to legislate for children’s play. Play is an important part of child development, as it builds confidence, creativity, communication, physical development and problem solving.
- 4.3.1 The impact of the pandemic and the restrictions is felt differently across different age groups and development stages, which means a range of interventions are needed to support the recovery of children and young people.
- 4.3.2 Play, sport and recreational activity is crucial to children’s healthy development and happiness. Play is a child’s first exercise and evidence demonstrates that it is one of the best ways for children to stay both physically and mentally healthy. However, a survey commissioned by Play England (2007) revealed how under threat opportunities for playing freely outdoors are. Among those polled, 71 percent of adults said they had played outside in the street or area close to their homes every day when they were children, whereas only 21 percent of children do so today, having an effect on children’s mental health, welfare and contributing to obesity rates. It was recognised that while some children will respond well to support in structured settings such as school or childcare, others will need more space and freedom, unstructured child led play, physical or creative activities to frame their recovery.
- 4.3.3 **1.3 – Community Cohesion:** Play brings communities together. It puts children and families at the heart making them safer and more attractive places to live. People socialise together, make friends and help regenerate their areas.
- 4.3.4 **1.4 – Environment:** The Play Sufficiency Duty fits into a much larger plan for the area which features largely around the environment and protecting and enhancing green space for all the community to enjoy.
- 2.3.5 **1.5 – Economy & Infrastructure:** The Play duty provides further opportunities for volunteers and promotes play and play work as a career.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

The Local Authority is allocated All Wales Play Opportunity Grant (revenue funding), now on an annual basis which allows us to fund Play staff and offer play opportunities in the community. Additionally, most years we are allocated capital funding and in recent years this funding has been allocated mainly to the Play Area improvement programme, with a smaller amount reserved for improvements to the Play facilities in Blaina ICC and Beaufort Road. Welsh Government has also allocated further play funding during 2021/22 to Local Authorities to enable the Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing programmes to be delivered as part of the Covid recovery strategy.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is a concern that capital allocations from Welsh Government may be reduced in coming years, which would impact on the progress of the Play Area Improvement programme. The Local Authority could consider whether it should use its own capital programme to continue with/accelerate this programme. Surveys undertaken as part of the PSA process, consistently demonstrate the high level of community dissatisfaction with the state of local play areas.

The Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing programmes have been extremely well received by families in Blaenau Gwent but current indications are that this funding won't be extended beyond this Summer holiday period. There is a concern that expectations have been raised about the provision of free activities that will be impossible to maintain in future years. The Early Years Childcare and Play team have established a task and finish group with a range of partners and this group will be retained to work on a co-ordinated approach to future delivery, aiming to deliver the broadest offer of low cost/no cost activities possible within the budget constraints of each partner agency.

5.3 ***Legal***

No considerations.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

No considerations.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Progress against actions within the PSA Action Plan are reported annually to the Early Years Development Childcare and Play Partnership, Departmental Management Team and Corporate Leadership team. An annual update is provided to Welsh Government.

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

To raise awareness of the importance of play for all children and to offer the broadest range of play opportunities possible.

- 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
Consultation work with children, young people, parents and a range of other stakeholders has been undertaken as part of the PSA process. Ongoing engagement is provided through direct delivery of play opportunities, with evaluations undertaken of those opportunities at regular intervals.
- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
This latest PSA process runs until 2025, when the next full assessment is undertaken.
- 6.5 ***Preventative focus***
As highlighted in section 4.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
Delivery of play opportunities in Blaenau Gwent has necessitated strong partnership working due to the size of the team and budget constraints. Excellent links have been forged with a range of departments and organisations, made stronger through the recent Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing programmes, with a collaborative approach taken to the provision of play.
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***
The Play Sufficiency duty and subsequent action plans brings together and works across several service areas.
- 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***
We aim to offer as many local community opportunities as possible to reduce the need for vehicle travel.
- 6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***
Not undertaken.
- 6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment***
Not undertaken.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 The Early Years, Childcare and Play team provide quarterly reports to the Early Years Development, Childcare and Play Partnership/SMT.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 - Play Sufficiency Assessment
- Appendix 2 – Play Sufficiency Action plan
- Appendix 3 - Play Sufficiency Executive Summary.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Form



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Name of Local Authority: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Name of responsible officer: Sharon Cargill

Job title: Play Sufficiency Officer

Date of completion: 1st June 2022

Please note that the Play Sufficiency Assessment must be received by the Welsh Government by 30 June 2022



Conducting the Assessment – Play Sufficiency Assessment

As well as establishing a baseline of provision, the Play Sufficiency Assessment will enable the following:

- Identification of gaps in information, provision, service delivery and policy implementation
- Support the establishment of evidence to give an indication of distance travelled in relation to play sufficiency
- Highlight potential ways of addressing issues relating to partnership working
- The input and involvement of all partners increasing levels of knowledge and understanding
- A monitoring system which will involve and improve communication between professionals
- The identification of good practice examples
- Increased levels of partnerships in assessing sufficient play opportunities
- The identification of actions for the Securing Play Sufficiency Action Plan which accompanies the Play Sufficiency Assessment

A template has been produced to support a corporate appraisal of the matters that need to be taken into account as set out in the Statutory Guidance. The indicators listed within each matter are provided as sample indicators which should be amended to meet local issues as appropriate.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment must demonstrate that the Local Authority has taken into account and assessed the matters set out in The Play Sufficiency Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2012 and Statutory Guidance.

As well as providing baseline information, the Assessment can include examples of current practice that the Local Authority wishes to highlight.

Local Authorities might consider structuring the Play Sufficiency Assessment in the following way and as a minimum address all the identified sections.

Principle Statement

This section should be used to articulate the Local Authority's acknowledgement of the value and importance of play in the lives of children.

The Local Authority continues to support Welsh Governments commitment to improve opportunities to provide children and young people with the time, space and permission to play. The Local Authority recognises and acknowledges that every child has the right to play, play is central to children's physical, mental, social, emotional health and well-being and is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The definition of play used for the purpose of the Play Sufficiency Duty is the one that had been developed by the play sector and is recognised internationally. This states

that:

‘Play encompasses children’s behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live’.¹

Following the recent coronavirus pandemic, we recognise that children and young people’s lack of or restricted play opportunities has had a detrimental impact, affecting their mental and physical health. Through play, children develop resilience and flexibility, contributing to physical and emotional well-being.

We have an amazing environment in Blaenau Gwent that is a valuable resource to support children’s play. The Local Authority values the importance of play for children, young people, their families and the benefits this brings to local communities. We advocate that every child should have the freedom to regularly play out, actively and independently, close to where they live. There are many barriers to enabling children’s play so to allow this to happen we all need to work together.

Our aim is for Blaenau Gwent to be a County where children and young people are increasingly seen outside enjoying the benefits of play. This requires parents, families and professionals to recognise that play is of great importance to children’s lives, and that we all have a role. The Play Sufficiency Duty ensures the Local Authority has mechanisms in place to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities to meet the needs of children, young people and their families.

¹ Wales a Play Friendly Country: Statutory Guidance July 2014

Context

This section should describe the methodology used to undertake and approve the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan and any consultation with partners on the Assessment/Action Plan. It should also list the key; partners that engaged with the process and identify any challenges in undertaking the Assessment. It should describe the mechanism that the Local Authority proposes to use to take forward the identified actions for the action plan.

The Local Authority has a strategic lead for play through the role of the Play Sufficiency Officer with responsibility for monitoring, reviewing, planning and drafting the Local Authorities Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan; with a reporting process to the Early Years, Childcare and Play Manager and the Services Manager, Children’s Services forming the ‘Play Sufficiency Implementation Group’.

A timeline was drafted to research, gather and review data and for the drafting of the Play Sufficiency Assessment. Desktop research, face-to-face meetings, consultation, focus groups, surveys, phone calls and emails ensured we offered a flexible, varied approach for lead officers and our partners in the collection of data. Colleagues were able to contribute in their areas of expertise and offer solutions to gaps in data.

Usually we start the assessment process a year before it needs to be submitted but with the pandemic, effects of the pandemic, limited capacity with SoF/WoW/play

projects there was a significant delay to starting.

Solutions were sought to ensure the deadline would continue to be met and to ensure this assessment continued to build on previous assessments while reflecting an accurate picture of Play Sufficiency in Blaenau Gwent.

The following outlines data used for each matter

Matter A - Population: This section presents socio-economic and demographic data supplied by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council - Policy Officer, Research and Analysis and web based sources.

Matter B – Providing for diverse needs: Underpinned by the responses from our BIG play survey for children/young people and targeted focus groups.

Matter C – Space available for children to play: The following data assisted with the review including the LA's Annual inspection report of outdoor unstaffed fixed play provision, open space assessments, Local Development Plan, GIS mapping, local community knowledge, parks department, Play Sufficiency Officer and survey/focus group findings.

Matter D – Supervised provision: Information from DEWIS (FIS) from providers that have been identified as providing supervised play provision along with information on Early Years, parent and toddler groups and after school clubs that participate in our Quality Assurance scheme, the LA's Play team and youth service and Leisure Trust.

Matter E – Charges for play provision: Information held by FIS and services offered by the Play team and LA. Welsh Governments AWPOG funding for Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing reports.

Matter F – Access to space/provision: Data and information held by colleagues from Traffic Management, Active Travel and Road Safety Team.

Matter G – Securing and developing the play workforce: Spreadsheet of qualifications of the sector are held by the LA's Childcare Business Development Officer, EYDCPP annual training programme.

Matter H – Community engagement and participation: Data held by the Local Authorities Playteam, FIS and Blaenau Gwent's Engagement strategy.

Matter I – Play within all relevant policy and information agendas: This section is based on key policy and strategic documents working with colleagues across different areas including; transport; education, partnerships, planning, Early Years and Flying Start, Families First and Health & Safety.

Actions following the Play Sufficiency Assessment are agreed; that are specific, realistic and achievable within budgets and officer/partner resources. The Play Sufficiency Action Plans are developed and reviewed each year to record progress and identify and set out actions that need to be taken the following year.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan is approved by the Early Years, Development, Childcare and Play Partnership (further information can be found in

'monitoring play sufficiency' section) and from the Departmental Management Team, Corporate Leadership Team and Scrutiny Committee prior to a consultation period with partners and lead officers and final report to Executive Committee.

Partnership working

This section should demonstrate to what extent the following (and others) were involved in the undertaking of the Assessment and the development of the action plan:

- Town and Community Councils
- Third sector organisations, particularly play associations and play providers
- The private sector if appropriate
- Community groups

The Local Authority has faced some challenges with engagement of some of our partners due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic resulting in limitations on their time and their own service priorities. It is recognised that there is a need to prioritise this as a key action to reinforce the importance of play and the Local Authorities statutory duty with colleagues and partners and a piece of work that will be moved forward through the Play Sufficiency Action plan.

Town and Community Councils: Our Town and Community Councils were invited to comment on the draft assessment and the agreed actions during the consultation stage prior to final approval and submission.

Community Groups: As a result of the demanding timescales and limited capacity we were unable to engage with community groups to the same degree that we have in the past. Further engagement with community groups will form part of our action plan for the next year. We have a number of community groups who work to support and promote children's play including 'friends of groups' who volunteer their time to develop play spaces and plan local community events for families.

Aneurin Leisure Trust: Aneurin Leisure is a community focused organisation, who are passionate about making a positive impact to people's lives by not only improving physical health and wellbeing, but also their mental and social wellbeing through their diverse range of services and facilities.

They fully understand their value as a strategic partner in communicating and supporting the Council and Sport Wales' Vision in everything they do; in using their local and growing regional and national understanding and networks to bring additional value into the area and by adding real value into the wider local authority outcomes - including where their contribution supports and adds value to wider economic and social objectives and initiatives.

Recreational play underpins Aneurin Leisure Trusts methodology across all practical sessions. Sessions are facilitated by coaches who deliver sports and games based on what the participant wants. They also deliver school based extra-curricular sessions, community outreach sessions and work in partnership with multiple organisations across all age groups to encourage participation via sport and play and improve physical and mental health.

Sparkle: Sparkle is a charity that supports children and young people with disabilities and/or developmental difficulties, and their families. The guiding principle for Sparkle is to ensure that children and young people with disabilities and/or developmental difficulties and their families are fully supported and able to participate in valued childhood experiences, with access to the same range of opportunities, life experiences, activities and community services as any other child and their family.

Sparkle works in partnership with Blaenau Gwent County Council and operates from Integrated Children's Centre. Sparkle supports children, and young people aged 5 to 18 with a disability or developmental difficulty, providing Play and Youth Clubs.

One of the key strategic intentions of Sparkle is to ensure that all children and young people who are being supported by the project will have access to a comprehensive and inclusive range of fun, educational and experiential learning opportunities in a safe environment, including the additional cultural and curriculum enhancing trips and community visits. Many of our children and young people have no opportunity to access specialist provision on a weekly basis and over school holidays when parents need the most support. The Play clubs provide a wide range of play activities in a safe and fun environment and the Youth club provides young people with the opportunity to gain basic skills and essential personal and social skills to support and increase their levels of independence.

Play club runs 3 times a week and has 24 children registered and youth provision once a week and has 8 young people registered. During school holidays additional sessions are provided. There are 9 children on a waiting list to access provisions in Blaenau Gwent and the charity are currently recruiting more staff to be able to address the demand.

Barnardos: During lockdowns, Barnardos delivered resources to children with disabilities and their families to encourage them to play at home, with an emphasis on sensory play. During school holidays, they provide a programme of family activities, including workshops, community activities and day trips. Groups are structured during term time – building independence, community safety, healthy relationships etc.

19/20 – Approx: 80 children / young people. Activities included play in the park sessions, cooking, music and day trips.

20/21 – Approx: 100 Children / young people. Activities included lots of virtual groups – cooking, crafts etc. Activity and Play kits were delivered to families to promote and encourage play. Face to face activities included animal encounters, mountain view ranch and cantref farm.

21/22 – Approx: 120 Children / young people. Activities included virtual cooking, craft and sensory play. Face to face included Dino Day, Science workshops, African drumming, bath bomb making, escape rooms, soft play.

To support the Play Sufficiency Assessment, Barnardos asked children and young people 'What's great about Blaenau Gwent?' – responses included - Lots of green space, parks, swimming, leisure centres, my home.

Representatives from many of our partners sit on the Early Years Development, Childcare and Play Partnership including Education, Health, Social Services, Flying

Start, Families First, Strategy & Policy, Early Years, Childcare & Play provider umbrella organisations who form the 'Play Sufficiency Monitoring group'.

Partnership working has been pivotal in assisting with disseminating and collecting information, offering advice, and guidance from their areas of expertise. This ensures the Local Authority can reflect on and considers approaches to maximise resources and minimise duplication.

Consultation and participation

This section should describe how the Local Authority has:

- Obtained the views of children with regards to the play opportunities they currently access, how they would like the community to better support them to play and what barriers stop them from playing
- Obtained the views on play provision from parents, families and other stakeholders
- Analysed the information and how it has been used to inform future plans

The Local Authority used the Child play satisfaction survey template circulated by Play Wales', this ensured that data was consistent with previous assessments to generate a more accurate view of the play needs of children and young people living in Blaenau Gwent over a period of time. Questions were developed to gauge children's play experiences relating to; temporal – how children spend their 'free time', spatial – how space supports or constrains children's play and access to space and psychological – permission to play. In this year's survey there were also question relating to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Surveys were circulated to children and young people via partners, schools, local events, play sessions, afterschool clubs and an online version promoted on social media. 254 children and young children participated in our Play survey findings:

- 90% of surveys were completed by children aged between 5 & 14yrs, with the average of 8 years.
- 15 children identified themselves as disabled with 60% of children satisfied with opportunities for playing and hanging out.
- 77% felt they had more than enough or plenty of time for playing or hanging out with friends
- 20% of children said they can play in all the places they would like to
- 95% said they always or usually felt safe when playing out, and it was considered that adults were supportive. The findings showed that 10-14yr olds were more likely to not feel safe.
- 96 children said they weren't allowed to play out on their own or with friends, with 43 between the ages of 8 & 15yrs
- Children were able to name lots of things that were good in their area, lots commented on playing in areas close to their homes, playing with friends who lived close by, leisure facilities, enjoying natural features like fields, woods and mountains too.

- *In terms of what was not so good about playing in their own area, comments tended to focus around; traffic, litter/cleanliness, the need for better equipment in play areas, older children (hanging about/bullying), nothing to do.*
- *The lack of investment and poor state of play areas continues to be one of the top themes of dis-satisfaction when consulting children, young people and their families.*

To enrich data from the survey responses, focus groups were held with 6 school councils, 4 after-school clubs and 1 youth group. To ensure that minority groups of children had an opportunity to participate our focus groups ensured we had representation from children from Welsh language schools, children with disabilities, children looked after and gypsy/traveller children. 120 children participated in an activity-based workshop with a further 221 children, young people and parent/carers consulted during play sessions.

Children and young people were asked... (please see photos below)

Why is play/hanging out important?

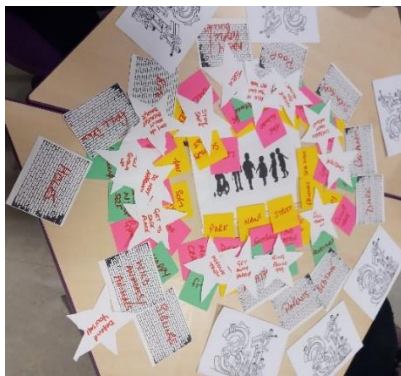
Where/what they play when they are not in school? - yellow

What's good about them? - green

What's bad about them? – pink/red

What are the barriers? - bricks

What can we do to minimise the barriers? and who is it? Children? Adults? – stars



Focus group findings:

1. *Why is play/hanging out important? Responses included: improving mental health, socialising, exercise, fun, being out in nature, our right to play, being happy, fresh air,*
2. *Where/what they play when they are not in school? Children identified places they played including: parks, play areas, sports centres, woodland, streets, at home, relatives and friend's house, mountain, skate park, after school clubs, fields.*
3. *What's good about them? Many gave examples of what they did; playing sports, cycling, playing games, skateboarding, tree climbing, fishing, running, jumping, climbing, walking, tag games, getting messy, lots of space, feel safe.*

4. *What's bad about them? Bullies, older children, other adults, random people, dog poop, broken glass, litter, nothing to do.*
5. *What are the barriers? These could be categorised into 3 main themes;
Temporal – how children spend their 'free time'
Spatial – how space supports or constrains children's play and access to space
Psychological – permission to play*
6. *What can we do to minimise the barriers?
Participants were able to identify what they could do themselves 'wear suitable clothing', 'carry a mobile phone', 'learn green cross code', 'go with friends'. 'walk away', 'tell an adult', 'call the police'.*

Play diaries, case studies and observations during play sessions have also given insight to the play interests and needs of children and young people.

Challenges were faced with our consultation for this assessment as it was impacted by the pandemic with limited access for face to face consultation in settings, schools and lack of public events. For some groups (Children's Grand Council, Young Carers) we were reliant on completion of the online surveys during the pandemic.

Data captured has been analysed and informs our ward 'play' profiles. Where limited data is available the Local Authority will concentrate engagement to ensure an accurate picture for play is established for each ward. The Local Authority and their partners will utilise the data to inform future development of services, ensuring gaps in play opportunities are prioritised.

Maximising resources

This section should provide an overview as to how partners currently use their existing budgets to support children's access to play opportunities. It should identify how budgets have been reprioritised as part of the 2022 Play Sufficiency Assessments and subsequent plans.

Please use this section to highlight what has changed since the 2019 Play Sufficiency Action Plan in terms of how resources are allocated.

Please also highlight how Welsh Government programmes have been used locally for the provision of play and how they have addressed priorities from your 2019 play sufficiency assessment:

The Play Sufficiency Officer continues to be primarily funded through the Childcare element of the Revenue Support Grant. The additional All Wales Play Opportunities Grants allocated from Welsh Government over the last few years has been gratefully received in Blaenau Gwent and has helped to address priorities from our 2019 Play Sufficiency Assessment and subsequent action plans.

- *The lack of investment and poor state of play areas continues to be one of the top themes of dis-satisfaction when consulting children, young people and their families. The AWPOG capital funding has supported the upgrading of fixed play equipment and enabled the Local Authority to enhance the aesthetics of aging playgrounds. This continues to be a significant piece of work requiring substantial funding as for many families the local play area is the ‘go to’ for children’s play.*
- *Play provision for children with disabilities*
- *2 ‘signalong’ training days to 30 play workers/volunteers.*
- *Funded 9 places on intro to playwork and L2APP playwork qualifications*
- *35 vulnerable children funded to attend play provision over the October half term 2020.*
- *Activity crafts/sports/games packs – October/Christmas 2020 and February/Easter 2021*
- *National Play Day 2020 – Playday packs*

The Playworks Holiday Project revenue funding 2020 & 2021 has enabled the Local Authority to support the gaps in play provision through the recruitment of playworkers. This service was previously commissioned but has enabled it to be bought ‘in house’ recognising the need to be responsive, promoting consistency and to develop play opportunities throughout the year to support the needs and interests of children and young people.


Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing 2021: *Accessibility, charges for activities, are often cited as barriers to play opportunities as well as ‘there is nothing to do’. The Local Authority have limited capacity/funding to meet gaps in provision.*

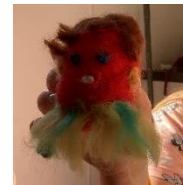
Welsh Government funded programmes have been most welcomed and have proved beneficial to families in Blaenau Gwent. The programmes have helped to raise awareness of the importance of play while enabling the Local Authority to provide a programme of free play (cultural, sports, arts) opportunities for children, young people and their families. The Local Authorities allocation for SoF was 91k and 125k for WoW engaging with over 12,000 children and young people across the 2 programmes.



Our Summer of Fun programme provided 34 different activities for children and young people across Blaenau Gwent. With our Winter of Wellbeing bringing together a programme of 60 activities.



	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Folly Farm trip Cinema trips Mini Movers sessions Little Legends Family swim Preschool gymnastic sessions Swim sessions Blaenauon heritage Railway Christmas Christmas pantomime Fireworks Display Pantomime / Musical Santa Train Cinema Animal Encounter Family cookery Yoga Trampolineing London trip Craft packs Activity Vouchers Go find it cards Winter Wonderland Trip Ysglïau Cŵc Brynmaer Sparkle - xmas & Feb half term places Muggles Afternoon of Magic Silent Disco Family Christmas Party Movie Nights Get Involved Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caeffilly Adventure Group Adventure Walk Youth Service - Paintballing First Aid Workshops (Street Doctors) Lifeguard Qualification West Midlands trip Coe Cae residential Eggsheads - youth shelter H4Arts - Delivery of craft sessions Aneurin Leisure Trust - sports centres Get to know your Gym 3g Turn up and play Playscheme Referrals Doorstep sport sessions - skateboarding academy Doorstep sport sessions - Efit dance Doorstep Sports sessions - Carl Beatty Cardiff City Football Kicks Doorstep Sports Club Gym memberships TREDEGAR Super Santa Day Super Family Day Christmas Fun Afternoon Neaf Wars Day Princesses Fuddge Adventure Activity Day Intro to paddle boarding Valentines Party Gaming Squad Day Fair ground BEAT technique - Cwm Youth Club Lloyd Roberts Graffiti workshops



Through Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing the Local Authority engaged with a range of colleagues and partners including:

Children's Services

- Early Years, Childcare and Play
- 14+ team
- Disability Team
- Families First
- Flying Start

Blaenau Gwent Youth Service

Aneurin Leisure Trust

Linc Cymru

Mudiad Meithrin

Menter Llaith

Barnardos

Local Activity providers

Funding has enabled partners to come together, to build stronger working partnerships and to forge new pathways for further working.

Foundation Phase Providers received funding from Winter of Wellbeing to provide opportunities for their children to participate in play, arts, sports and cultural activities.

Youth Service: *The Youth Service were able to increase its offer and provide additional activities and play opportunities to young people through additional funding from both Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing. Activities and opportunities included:*

- Open Air Cinema
- Trips to theme Parks

- *Comprehensive school holiday programme*
- *Increased opportunities to use local leisure facilities*
- *Music workshops*
- *Art & Crafts workshops*
- *Resources*

Flying Start: *The Flying Start programme sits within Children's Services, and fully compliments the Play agenda. Flying Starts delivery plans and services recognise the importance of play and contributes to the provision of rich play opportunities through each of the 4 core elements of the programme; Free high quality Childcare, Enhanced Health Visiting Service, Speech, Language and Communication.*

Flying Start recognises that early years play opportunities underpin children's learning and all aspects of child development so alongside all our accredited programmes we deliver interventions that actively promotes the value and purpose of play (Stay & Play/Language & Play). Flying Start settings provide key opportunities during each session for children to play, independently, alongside and with their peers. We have invested in training on suitable environments for all of our childcare practitioners and pride ourselves that our settings offer ideal safe spaces for children to play and interact with one another, no bright, bold colours, all natural resources with sensory elements and no plastic.

During each half term and throughout the summer holiday period, family fun sessions are delivered by the Flying Start team which offer play enriched opportunities, family focused activities using nature and outdoor spaces, that are targeted at early years and encouraging positive parent and child interaction through play. We also deliver ELKLAN classes in the swimming pool which allows little ones the opportunity to attend the pool and enjoy water play, we also run muddy monsters, mini movers, wild tots and buggy fit which all encourage parents to promote outdoor and sensory play opportunities. Family trips to the seaside and to the farm are also organised each year during the Spring and Summer period to offer families – (who may not have these opportunities due to living in poverty) positive play, fun on the beach and family focused experiences with their children. We also have community gardens for the last few years at Cefn Golau and this year a new one at Cwm Flying Start Hub to allow our parents and little ones to play and grow food and flowers together.

Beaufort Road – Children Looked After: *Improvements to play opportunities for Children Looked After at Beaufort road has been a key priority over the last 3 years. They have redesigned their outside play space, provide a growing area and a new area to cook produce grown.*

Families First: *The Families First programme also sits within Children's Services based in the Integrated Children's Centre. This provides co-location of teams and a close working relationship including integrated management systems. Families First are represented on the Early Years Development, Childcare and Play Partnership and this helps to ensure a sustained focus on play within Blaenau Gwent.*

The Young Carers element of Families First, provides support to children and young people who provide a caring role to parents, carers and siblings. This service provides

children and young people with free, recreational opportunities within the Borough and supports them to access play and leisure activities.

The disability element of the programme supports children and young people and their families who are affected by disability. Needs for disabled children in relation to play are identified at point of referral, the team have a breadth of knowledge and links to local services and providers of play and leisure opportunities for disabled children.

Early Years Transformation and Integration Programme: Blaenau Gwent are one of the pilot authorities to ensure every child has the best start in life through the Early Years Transformation and Integration Programme and aims to:

- Create an Early Years system to deliver services in a co-ordinated, integrated and timely way
- To support local partners to re-configure Early Years services focusing on planning, commissioning and identifying and addressing needs.
- Through this process to identify barriers to integration and ways to remove, reduce or rationalise them.

The programme offers support to families with young children aged 0-7years by reducing inequalities in early years' services offering families opportunities similar to Flying Start (without the childcare element) when required by the family. The pilot areas are Cwm, Brynmawr, Nantyglo and part of Blaina.

In the pilot we promote the importance of play. The Stay and Play Groups delivers key messages around the Health Child Wales Programme, but also ensures that activities provided are age appropriate and in line with current practice. Natural resources and sensory equipment are used during these sessions.

The importance of outdoor play and exploration has been promoted by facilitating walk and talk groups which build on the natural environment as a learning tool to promote play. The pilot has delivered several community engagement events such as Christmas and Easter events delivering creative activities using natural play resources.

Grants: Settings have had opportunity to apply for a number of capital grants including:

- 2019 small improvement grant to improve quality of childcare.
- 2020 and 2021 Childcare Covid response grants to help to reduce the spread of the coronavirus; creation and maintaining of groups 'bubble' and to increase the accessibility to outdoor spaces.

Settings were granted funding to develop and enhance outdoor spaces including groundworks (fencing, steps), the purchase of outdoor play equipment (mud kitchens, gazebos, climbing frames, outdoor hand wash sinks, sails for shade, fire pits, trikes, bikes, scooters, gardening, balance beams, storage, sand and water play) as well as equipment to aid settings to remain open while maintaining Health and Safety requirements throughout the pandemic with purchases including fog machines, steamers and hand sanitiser stations.

During the pandemic Welsh Government guidance advised that being outdoors was the safest environment for children. The Local Authority provided capital grants to childcare and play providers to develop their outdoor play spaces.

Child Development Fund:

Parent and Toddler groups: Part of the CDF money enabled us to offer some Parent and Toddler groups who were open following closures due to the coronavirus, the opportunity to be part of an upskilling scheme, that would see officers from the Local Authority support the key person or leader, with training, resources and funding to offer free spaces for families to attend. The training and resources were directly identified to enhance children's physical development, speech, language and communication skills, social interaction ability and very importantly supports self-esteem, self-belief and confidence. Early interventions are the best way to counteract negative outcomes and help to make the children's young and early experiences positive in order to give them the best chance of success in the future.

Outreach element of the Assisted Places Scheme: We were able to add an extra element of support that goes beyond the direct access to childcare provision and encouraged a family approach to the learning and development of parents own children. This element was named 'outreach' and we were able to empower parents to be proactive in their child's experience with learning and in turn give parents the confidence to know how to engage in play activities with their children and reap the benefits of seeing their children flourish. In order to do this, we created a network of people to co-ordinate the implementation and follow up support. This included weekly packs delivered to parents by their support worker who explained how to use the packs. The activities within the packs were specifically chosen to support learning and development and promote playful experiences. The first activity pack contained a book, this didn't have to be read by the parent, they could look at the pictures and talk about the animals, lift the flaps. This was accompanied by finger puppets of the animals that the parents and children could use, they could name the animals and make the sounds, this was aimed at developing speech, language and communication skills. Further packs contained, ingredients to make playdough and instructions, followed by ideas to extend use, treasure baskets etc.

Parents were supported by their support worker, a childcare practitioner who reiterated these things over the phone and encouraged them to join the closed group on facebook where the childcare practitioner demonstrated the use of the book, followed by the other activities weekly and parents were able to share their thoughts, feedback, questions and videos if they wished too. The childcare support worker liaised with both the support worker and Quality Improvement Officer on a weekly basis to track progress, provide further support and additional advice and guidance.

Wild Tots Blaenau Gwent: Introduced in 2016 as an outdoor based Parent & Toddler group, our Wild Tots Bedwellty group is led by a team of Wild Leaders (Play Volunteers) managed by the Local Authority. Through funding we were able to secure a Level 3 post to support these sessions going forward and enabled sessions to be offered free of charge to families. Wild Tots saw a significant increase in registered families (400+) following the closure during the pandemic and have now expanded to

another site in March 2022 (Festival Wild Tots). **Please see additional information in 'insights from the coronavirus page 16.

Children and Communities Legacy Project: Funding secured through CCG enabled the Play team to develop their play in crisis project – The Wild camps project was piloted as coronavirus restrictions reduced from April – September 2021 enabling us to deliver outdoor play provision for children where they had experienced significant changes to their lives during the recent pandemic; homelessness, domestic abuse and children in care. Wild Camps aims to support children in non-statutory services who are living in poverty, recognising that children have the least choice and ability to change what happens to them and this impacts their future life chances putting them at increased risk of becoming reliant on statutory services. 22 children were supported in the pilot with a further 27 following the roll out.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment and local Well-being Plans

This section should identify how the Play Sufficiency Assessments form part of the local needs assessment and to what extent the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan are integrated into the Well-being Plan and Public Service Board.

Lack of activities especially those for children and young people were one of the most popular comments received during the Well-being assessment. Information from the 2016, 2019 and current Play Sufficiency Assessment continue to support and validate these findings with Play Sufficiency actions supporting the 5 Well-being objectives.

1. *Blaenau Gwent wants everyone to have the best start in life*
2. *Blaenau Gwent wants safe and friendly communities*
3. *Blaenau Gwent wants to look after and protect its natural environment*
4. *Blaenau Gwent wants to forge new pathways to prosperity*
5. *Blaenau Gwent wants to encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places they live, learn, work and play*

We view the five Well-being objectives as being integrated, but play is intrinsically linked with:

- *Blaenau Gwent wants everyone to have the best start in life...*
- *Blaenau Gwent wants safe and friendly communities...*
- *Blaenau Gwent wants to encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places they live, learn, work and play...*

Blaenau Gwent's Public Services Board was dissolved in September 2021 making way for a Gwent Public Services Board to be established in October 2021. In November 2021, a new Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Partnership was established to act as the local delivery group of the Gwent PSB, overseeing the delivery of Blaenau Gwent's Well-being Plan up to May 2023.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment findings are considered as part of the development of a Gwent Well-being Assessment and Local Area Assessments (WBFG Act statutory

requirement). Play is captured in the Cultural chapter of the new Gwent Well-being Assessment which will be published within the next few weeks (May 2022).

The Gwent Well-being Assessment will underpin the development of a Gwent Well-being Plan which is to be published in May 2023.

Monitoring Play Sufficiency

This section should identify the lead director and lead member for children and young people's services. It should also describe the Play Monitoring Group or equivalent. Along with a list of members, please describe how the group has been facilitated and the benefits and challenges of the group.

Responsibility for Play and the Play Sufficiency Duty is placed within Social Services - Children's Services with Tanya Evans as the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services. Our Executive Member for Social Services is Councillor Haydn Trollope.

The Play Monitoring Group role is undertaken by the Early Years Development, Childcare and Play Partnership. The partnership consists of a range of stakeholders from across the Local Authority including Health, Education and Early Years as well as representation from Voluntary and Third sector organisations and National partners whom have an interest in the Early Years, Childcare and Play sector.

Membership is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the partnership has representation from organisations and Managers are represented to carry forward high-level actions and address any challenges.

Angela Lewis	Early Years Strategic Lead ABUHB
Ann Angell	Cylch Meithrin Cymru - Regional Manager SE Wales
Bethan McPherson	BGCBC - Team Lead Employment & Enterprise
Beverley Madden	BGCBC - Business Support
Bobbie-Jo Swift	BGCBC – Early Years Transformation Project Lead
Carol Brace	Wales NHS
Carol Pugh	DWP – Job centre Plus - Partnership Manager
Catrin Saunders	Cylch Meithrin Cymru
Ceri Bird	BGCBC – Service Manager, Children's Services
Claire Smith	BGCBC – Early Years, Childcare & Play Manager
Clare Gardner	BGCBC - 21st century Schools - Education Transformation Manager
Deb Jackson	Wales NHS – Head of Midwifery
Debra Whinney	
CHAIR EYDCPP	NDNA
Denise Cook	BGCBC - Business Support
Donna Hardman	Aneurin Leisure Trust – Libraries Officer
Eira Bowen	Cylth Meithrin Cymru
Elaine Gregory	Wales NHS - Midwifery Lead Blaenau Gwent
Elinor Stafford	PACEY Cymru – Regional Manager
Emma Jones	BGCBC - 21st Century Schools
Emma Scherptong	BGCBC – Partnerships Team Leader

<i>Eryl Powell</i>	<i>Public Health Wales</i>
<i>Hayley Lewis</i>	<i>Health Visitor, ABUHB</i>
<i>Hayley Rawlings</i>	<i>BGCBC - EYCP – Quality Improvement Officer</i>
<i>Holly Love</i>	<i>PACEY Cymru – Regional Co-ordinator</i>
<i>Jane Baker</i>	<i>Wales NHS - Oral Health</i>
<i>Judith James</i>	<i>BGCBC – Healthy & Sustainable Preschool Officer</i>
<i>Kara Kershaw</i>	<i>BGCBC - EYCP – Childcare Business Development Officer</i>
<i>Karen Bennett</i>	<i>Aneurin Leisure Trust – Adult Education</i>
<i>Kate James</i>	<i>BGCBC – Integrated Services Business Manager</i>
<i>Martine Redfern</i>	<i>BGCBC - Childcare Strategy Team Leader</i>
<i>Nia Parker</i>	<i>Cylth Meithrin Cymru - Deputy Manager SE Wales</i>
<i>Nicola Dawson</i>	<i>Families First - Acting Team Manager</i>
<i>Nichola Maggs</i>	<i>Head of Flying Start Health Visiting, ABUHB,</i>
<i>Rachel Barrett</i>	<i>BGCBC – Family Information Service</i>
<i>Rebecca Foster</i>	<i>BGCBC – Education Psychology</i>
<i>Rebecca Hall</i>	<i>Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs</i>
<i>Sandra Taylor</i>	<i>Coleg Gwent - Health & Social Care</i>
<i>Sara Thomas Gough</i>	<i>BGCBC - EYALNLO</i>
<i>Sharon Cargill</i>	<i>BGCBC – Play Sufficiency Officer</i>
<i>Sherelle Jago</i>	<i>BGCBC – Flying Start Manager</i>
<i>Vikki Curtis</i>	<i>BGCBC – Flying Start Advisory Teacher</i>

As a multi-skilled partnership, the group are able to support, develop, promote, and monitor the play sufficiency duty through sharing of information, offering advice, and guidance, with opportunities for partnership working and raising awareness of the child’s right to play within their own specific areas of work.

The EYDCPP meet quarterly with the Chair and EYCP Manager meeting to discuss agenda items/actions from the previous minutes before circulation to the group. Throughout the pandemic, meetings were moved virtually which promoted participation and engagement, there is also the opportunity for the partnership to be contacted via email. This has been really beneficial in the event of a cancelled meeting and enabled information to continue to be shared. The Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan are regular items on the agenda, with the Play Sufficiency Officer providing updates, and the Children’s Services Manager regularly updating the Social Services Senior Management Team with progress and addressing any challenges.

Insights from the Coronavirus

This section should discuss the impact the Coronavirus has had on the local authority’s ability to progress Play Sufficiency Actions.

The impact of the coronavirus affected officer capacity and resources to implement elements of our Play Sufficiency Actions.

Assessment process: *The Play Sufficiency Officer usually begins preparatory work at least a year before final submission. However, lack of capacity due to other service priorities (recommencement of services that had been on hold during the pandemic,*

bringing a previously commissioned service 'in house', co-ordination Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing 2021), the commencement of engagement to undertake research, gather, review and analyse data was significantly delayed. This was further affected by coronavirus restrictions limiting access to our customary routes to consult with children, young people and their families (clubs, groups, schools, events, play sessions). With service priorities, sickness and the long term effects of the pandemic capacity of colleagues and partners who support and assist with the assessment has also impacted the process. This has been further affected by changes of officers responsible for supporting the duty and as a consequence new officers may not have given the Play Sufficiency Assessment the same level of priority.

PSA Action plans: Two actions following our 2019 assessment and action plan required more development and were due to be carried over to 2020-2021. These actions were dependant on face to face engagement with children and local communities – Launch of Play Friendly Communities, developing Buy a Day of Play. With varying levels of lockdown these were difficult to achieve with any level of continuity and it was agreed they were best placed on hold until such time capacity and accessibility were eased and to support the Local Authority to sustain service priorities with the sector.

Our 2020-2021 action plan reflected the situation with coronavirus with actions focusing on meeting the needs of children during the pandemic. With funding secured from the Children and Communities Grant we were able to introduce and develop an action to recognise the impact of the Covid pandemic on children, young people and families and to aide their recovery which was eventually launched in April 2021.

Actions in 2021-2022 continued to focus on supporting children in the recovery of the pandemic. Actions were lower level to reflect capacity to co-ordinate and maximise Welsh Government funded programmes to promote children's play (Holiday Playworks and Summer of Fun) and other service priorities.

Despite all the planning, the unpredictable nature of the pandemic affected the ability to carry out some of our actions and a lot of service delivery:

The launch of our Wild Camps project was expected to commence in January 2021 with the creation of a new post and planning in place ready to go, with further lockdowns and requirements of 'bubbles' which weren't achievable due to the nature of the project resulted in a four-month delay rolling out in April 2021.

The planning of our Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing programme of activities also faced challenges with last minute cancellations due to further restrictions, shortage of staff due to illness and confusion for some providers on what they could/couldn't do within the guidelines. It was also felt that families needed to regain confidence following the pandemic in accessing and participating in activities.

Despite some impact restricting the progress of higher level actions, there have been some opportunities that wouldn't have been progressed/developed without additional funding from Welsh Government and the raised profile of play locally and nationally. This has contributed to more interest, increased awareness and recognition of the value and benefits of play and the role of the playwork workforce in supporting children in the recovery of the pandemic.

Recognising the impact on the wellbeing of children and young people the Local Authority Play team developed a new project 'Wild Camps' building on the success of our Wild Tots groups. The coronavirus and lockdown have intensified children and families' fears of being outdoors, of dirt and disease and of contact with other people. However reasonable this may be, it has to be balanced against the risks to children's physical and mental health and well-being from being indoors and away from their friends for prolonged periods of time. By encouraging and supporting children to play in the natural environment and working with adults to explain the benefits of play for children's health and wellbeing, learning and resilience we are able to take a balanced approach.

Our Wild Tots Parent and Toddler group which being outdoors was able to restart sooner than other provision. Wild Tots saw a significant increase in registered families (400+) following the closure during the pandemic. The demand was so high that rather than turn families away the Local Authority offered an additional session to meet demand. Furthermore, sessions were offered free of charge to recognise the challenges many families had faced during the pandemic and the emphasis for opportunities to be outdoors based. Families expressed how their children had missed opportunities to play and to socialise with other children, for new parents who felt alone and isolated - the opportunity to play, to be outdoors, to meet others, to have a conversation about their new baby was greatly appreciated. One parent came along with a 9month old asking 'what do I do?' the reply 'sit your child down (in the mud) and take 2 steps back!'



Criteria

This section contains the “matters that need to be taken into account” as set out under section 10 of the Statutory Guidance.

The Criteria column: sets out the data that needs to be available and the extent to which Local Authorities meet the stated criteria.

The RAG status column: provides a drop down box, whereby the Local Authority can show its assessment of whether that criterion is fully met; partially met; or not met. These have been given Red, Amber Green markers, which appear as words in the drop down boxes. *(In the “RAG status column” Double click on the word STATUS – this will bring up drop-down form fields options, use the arrow down key until the status required RED, AMBER or GREEN- is at the top then press ok)*

Red, Amber Green (RAG) status is a tool to communicate status quickly and effectively.

RAG status

Criteria fully met.	Fully met
Criteria partially met.	Partially met
Criteria not met.	Not met

The 2022 column enables the local authority to indicate the direction of travel with the insertion of arrows.

The Evidence to support strengths column: should be used to provide the reason for the chosen criteria status and how the evidence is held.

The Shortfall column: should be used to explain the areas in which the Local Authority does not fully meet the criteria.

The Identified Action for Action Plan column: should be used to show the Local Authority action planning priorities for that Matter.

The Comments section: asks some specific questions for each matter that should enable you to give a clear overview of how the Local Authority complies with the intention and implementation of this matter as set out fully in the Statutory Guidance. It also provides the opportunity to identify challenges and how they might be overcome.

Matter A: Population

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should provide an overview of population and demographic data used locally to plan for play provision. Information should also be included regarding:

- Ages of children
- First language Welsh speaking children
- Cultural factors (such as other language)
- Gypsy Traveller children
- Disabled children

What has changed in terms of population and demographic trends since Play Sufficiency Assessment 2019?

During the period 2018-2028 the overall population is projected to decrease by 0.7% and projected to continue to decrease over the next 25 years. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-08/subnational-population-projections-2018-based-280.pdf>

Population: *The 0-18 years’ population estimates have been collated at ward level (These reflect the current changes from 16 to 14 ward boundaries after the recent review of the Electoral Arrangements of the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent)*

Mid-year 2020 Population estimates – single year of age

Ward Name	All Ages	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Abertillery	848	34	43	53	39	56	36	48	41	48	52	43	47	44	41	54	45	38	50	36
Six Bells	459	23	23	20	21	22	25	24	31	20	32	28	27	24	27	22	25	18	24	23
Beaufort	846	51	44	34	43	40	49	39	46	49	52	65	49	48	47	51	45	23	35	36
Badminton	609	24	30	33	33	38	33	31	31	34	43	39	25	21	34	45	34	31	26	24
Blaina	995	53	59	48	50	52	60	53	60	52	50	56	52	57	47	56	53	50	43	44
Brynmawr	1,122	59	51	73	39	61	58	64	57	64	70	43	68	85	52	66	59	55	54	44
Cwm	739	34	41	44	26	30	37	35	31	41	45	41	52	44	46	39	38	38	40	37
Cwmtillery	1,030	51	49	61	38	48	53	60	65	54	66	85	52	55	49	61	52	45	42	44

Ebbw Vale North	958	47	57	60	55	51	48	44	58	40	54	49	48	49	48	45	47	48	48	62
Ebbw Vale South	948	46	43	39	52	52	47	47	53	43	52	41	55	43	40	61	48	70	64	52
Georgetown	804	40	40	44	42	49	40	52	53	40	35	42	51	34	39	44	45	44	30	40
Llanhilleth	911	41	44	48	48	47	52	56	50	42	55	58	74	52	38	41	49	45	35	36
Nantyglo	1,091	52	59	60	40	58	58	55	70	47	61	64	64	65	60	68	53	60	41	56
Rassau	619	31	24	25	36	25	39	32	30	32	30	44	30	45	38	29	38	28	38	25
Garnlydan																				
Sirhowy	1,087	58	63	51	54	61	55	68	62	56	59	72	46	53	50	61	54	52	63	49
Tredegar Central and West	1,209	67	63	60	64	72	58	62	56	77	60	61	70	67	78	63	48	62	73	48

Ward boundaries were restructured in late 2021 reducing from 16 to 14. The 0-18 population data for the Rassau ward to include Garnlydan is currently unable to be calculated and will be updated as census data reflects the boundary changes and becomes available.

Welsh Language: Blaenau Gwent has a low percentage of Welsh speakers, with only 7.8% of the population able to speak Welsh (Census, 2011), the area is the 2nd lowest out of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales. The Blaenau Gwent average is well under the national average of 19% although the Census 2011 shows that there are higher levels of Welsh language ability in those aged 0-15 (34% are able to speak Welsh). As well as having low levels of Welsh speakers, information suggests that those that do consider themselves to be able to speak Welsh still do not use the language on a regular basis. (Gwent Wellbeing Assessment 2022)

Cultural Factors: The 2011 Census data showed Blaenau Gwent’s Black and Ethnic Minority population to be just under 1900. This equates to 2.6% of the total population and well below the Welsh average 6.7%. In 2001, the percentage of people in Blaenau Gwent from minority ethnic groups was 1.8%, approximately 1300 people, which shows a notable increase from 2001 to 2011. Even so, Blaenau Gwent still has one of the lowest levels of people from minority ethnic groups in England and Wales. (Population estimates by local authority and ethnicity (gov.wales))

Gypsy Travellers: This has been difficult to ascertain in previous assessments but with a dedicated officer working on site with our Gypsy/Traveller families we are able to maintain a more accurate figure. Currently there are 37 children/young people aged between 0-18 years in Blaenau Gwent this fluctuates throughout the year with moves, relatives visiting etc

Disability: The Disability Index in Blaenau Gwent currently has 240 children/young people (161 children aged between – 0-17 and a further 70 Young People aged 18-24). The Local Authority recognises that there are different definitions of disability and thresholds to access services that may mean not all children are counted.

How has/will the Local Authority use its population data to plan for sufficient play opportunities locally?

A ward profile of population of 0-18 year olds has been collated to assist the Local Authority in identifying where play opportunities may be most needed. Data will be used to develop future consultation programmes ensuring we continue to increase our contact with children and young people and to promote engagement in future development of play provision. The information is available to all partners, organisations and stakeholders across Blaenau Gwent to minimise duplication, maximise resources and ensure play opportunities meet the greatest need.

Have there been challenges?


Most of the population data is currently drawn from the 2011 census and there has been limited updates for some data sets. This means that generally speaking population figures are estimates rather than actual.

How can these be overcome?

As population data is released following the 2021 Census a more accurate picture of population can be generated in Blaenau Gwent.

Comments

RAG Status for Matter A

Criteria fully met. 

Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs

The Play Sufficiency Assessment should present data about how the Local Authority and partners aim to offer play opportunities that are inclusive and encourage all children to play and meet together.

RAG Status:

Criteria fully met.	
Criteria partially met.	
Criteria not met.	

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
B1	The play requirements of children living in isolated rural areas are understood and provided for			<p><i>Very few areas are classified as rural in Blaenau Gwent; Bedwellty Pits, Trefil, Pochin and Cwm.</i></p> <p><i>The Playteam conducted focus groups via schools and invited children to complete play surveys during open access play sessions in preparation for this assessment.</i></p>		
B2	The play requirements of Welsh language speaking children are understood and provided for			<p><i>A focus group of 8 * 11-12year olds was held at Bro Helyg - the only Welsh language school in Blaenau Gwent.</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>A further 22 children and young people completed our BIG play survey, of these 2 children advised their preferred language of choice was Welsh.</i>		
B3	The play requirements of children from different cultural background are understood and provided for			<p><i>An informal discussion was had with Gypsy/traveller children during the consultation for this assessment.</i></p> <p><i>4.7% of surveyed children and young people indicated different cultural backgrounds.</i></p> <p><i>The LA's Quality Assurance programme for play provision evaluates, monitors and recognises play requirements to support children from different cultural backgrounds.</i></p>		
B4	The play requirements and support needs of disabled			<i>The Disability team, Barnardos and Sparkle work to support the play</i>	<i>Limited access to provision for</i>	<i>Undertake an audit of what provision is available across Blaenau Gwent for children</i>

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
	children are understood and provided for.			<p><i>requirements of disabled children in Blaenau Gwent.</i></p> <p><i>The Playteam conducted a small focus group with 4 children/young people at Sparkle ASC with a further 15 completing our BIG play survey.</i></p> <p><i>Increase in ASD training/awareness</i></p>	<p><i>children with more complex disabilities</i></p> <p><i>The consultation evidence suggests that there could be further development of play opportunities for disabled children/young people in Blaenau Gwent.</i></p>	<p><i>with disabilities to identify gaps and look at options for further development</i></p>
B5	Play projects and providers have access to a range of resources which support inclusion			<p><i>Resources purchased for the Playteam to support inclusion during play sessions.</i></p> <p><i>Larger resources purchased by the LA to lend to providers to support inclusion</i></p> <p><i>Capital grants 19/20 were available for After-school/Holiday Clubs to purchase resources to support inclusion and Cwtch grant in 2021.</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>The Integrated Children's Centre has a well-resourced light and sensory room which is available for individuals/families and groups.</i>		
B6	There is a well-known and agreed mechanism which is used to identify the need for separate provision for disabled children			<i>Disability Related Agencies/Services (SSD, Flying Start, Families First, Barnardos/Sparkle) across Blaenau Gwent meet and consult on a regular basis to share information in relating to play requirements and support needs of disabled children.</i>		
B7	Access audits for all play provision as described in the guidance are undertaken			<i>Registered provision complies with access requirements as part of the registration with CIW.</i>	<i>Not conducted due to time limitations</i>	<i>Conduct access audits for all play provision</i>
B8	Designated play space is provided and well maintained on gypsy traveller sites			<i>The designated play space consists of a small shipping container which is used to provide indoor activities for children and young people.</i>	<i>The shipping container is a multi-function space for all purposes. Limited space available for play.</i>	<i>Develop a designated play space for gypsy/traveller children.</i>

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p><i>Agencies use the space to provide short term projects.</i></p> <p><i>There are plans to expand the site and to incorporate a more suitable space for play.</i></p>		
B9	The requirements of young carers are understood and provided for			<p><i>Families First provide support to Young Carers through the delivery of play opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>Young Carers were consulted through the BIG play survey.</i></p>		
B10	The requirements of lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) children are understood and provided for			<p><i>Services delivered by the Local Authority including Youth & Play, works with an inclusive ethos encouraging LGBTQIA+ children and young people's participation through all their opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>Staff are trained to support and adapt activities where necessary.</i></p>	<p><i>Statistics on sexual orientation are not available with any level of accuracy.</i></p>	

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p><i>The youth service website – www.thebyg.com provides information and advice for LGB young people.</i></p> <p><i>Families First deliver weekly groups at Brynmawr, Tredegar and Abertillery comprehensive schools to support LGBTQIA+ children and young people. The team have plans to attend groups to ensure their views are reflected in this PSA.</i></p>		

Providing for Diverse Needs
How has data been used (or how will the data be used) to address the barriers that children with diverse needs face in accessing inclusive and accessible opportunities for playing?
The Local Authority has made significant progress in developing and supporting provision for children with disabilities, there is still further work to be done to undertake access audits of all play provision to give us a good understanding of what is available in Blaenau Gwent.

Have there been challenges?
The Local Authority has previously encouraged Gypsy/Travellers to access community based play spaces however through the consultation for this PSA there are cultural factors that hadn't been considered previously and need more consideration. The designated play space is currently unsuitable for the number of children on site and very limiting.

How can these be overcome?
There are plans to expand the Gypsy/Traveller site and to incorporate a more suitable space for children's play.

Comments:

As part of our consultation for this PSA, we also held a focus group for Children Looked After in February 2022, where a group were invited to join the Play team at the ICC. Due to being a smaller group than expected consultation was informal, with more generalised discussion about children’s play. Feedback from the children’s carer following their attendance was really encouraging.




‘Thanks very much. Thursday was interesting, made me think how I interact with the girls. A lot of our play is educational and social, they have had limited interaction. It’s nice to bring fun into play and I would like the opportunity to see their interaction with other children and adults. Covid has caused so many restrictions. Thanks again for Thursday’

A further focus group will be held with Children Looked After prior to final submission to Welsh Government.

Matter C: Space available for children to play: Open Spaces and Outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces

The Local Authority should recognise that all open spaces within their area are potentially important areas where children can play or pass through to reach other play areas or places where they go.

RAG Status

Criteria fully met.	
Criteria partially met.	
Criteria not met.	

Open Spaces

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
C1	The Local Authority has undertaken an Open Space Assessment (OSA) that maps areas that are used, or might be used for playing as listed in the Statutory Guidance			<i>Open space assessments are conducted and mapped for 'formal/informal play spaces – play areas, wheeled sports areas, playing fields etc.</i>		
C2	The Local Authority has undertaken an Accessible Greenspace Study that maps areas that are used for playing			<i>Green Space Assessment conducted as part of the Leisure Background Paper to support the Local Development Plan.</i>		
C3	The Local Authority undertakes access audits at all open spaces and implements proposals to improve access and safety			<i>Conducted on an annual basis and proposals for improvement are prioritised.</i>		
C4	The Local Authority has developed its own Open Space Standards in accordance with the advice and requirements of Planning Policy Wales			<i>The Local Authority is currently working towards 2.4 hectares per 1000 people, this is based on the results of the Open Space Assessment process and FIT standards.</i>		
C5	The Local Authority undertakes and actions play value assessments in public open space			<i>The Local Authority recognises the play value of open spaces and responds to feedback from local communities.</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
C6	Brownfield sites owned by the Local Authority are assessed for the potential for the site to be reclaimed to provide for children's play			<i>Children's play needs are identified as part of the assessment of any new development.</i>		

Outdoor Unstaffed Designated Play Spaces

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
C7	The Local Authority keeps an up to date record of all designated play space as described in the Statutory Guidance			<i>GIS records held of formal play space include wheeled sport areas, MUGA's, ball courts, informal play space, grassed sports pitches, parks, outdoor sports such as bowls, tennis courts.</i>		
C8	The Local Authority assesses play spaces for play value and potential to increase in play use as set out in the Statutory Guidance			<i>A basic play value is assessed as part of the Local Authorities annual inspections programme. The Local Authority recognises that children use informal play spaces for play and publish guidance to</i>	<i>While play value is assessed there are no means to improve due to limited budgets this has only been available through AWPOG funding allocations.</i>	

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>promote and support play opportunities.</i>		
C9	The Local Authority undertakes access audits at all designated play spaces and implements proposals to improve access and safety			<i>Access audits are conducted as part of the Annual Inspection Programme</i> <i>Improvements needed to improve access and safety are recorded and prioritised.</i>	<i>Limited due to available budget and capacity.</i>	
C10	The Local Authority has developed and agreed a new fixed play provision standard			<i>The Local Authority has its own policy standard to provide 1 static play area per 250 children, with a wheeled sports area and multi-use games area (MUGA) per ward area.</i>		
C11	The Local Authority undertakes and actions play space assessments in designated play spaces			<i>Annual inspections of designated children’s play spaces are conducted and improvements are programmed on a maintenance and safety basis.</i> <i>The Local Authority undertook a comprehensive Play area review in 2018</i>	<i>Assessments of each play space are beyond the LA’s current resources other than through annual safety inspections.</i> <i>There are factors that would affect assessments during a one-visit</i>	

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>which forms the basis for capital investment.</i>	<i>observation including weather, other interests etc so not considered a true reflection of use.</i>	
C12	The Local Authority has introduced smoke-free playgrounds. The local authority complies with The Smoke-free Premises and Vehicles (Wales) Regulations 2020 that requires playgrounds in Wales to be smoke-free.			<i>All playgrounds in Blaenau Gwent have been smoke-free zones since 2014.</i> <i>Playgrounds/school grounds and play provision all display signage to promote compliance.</i>		
C13	The Local Authority has removed 'no ball games' signs to encourage more children playing in the community				<i>Observations suggest there are 'no ball game signs' remaining in place that could potentially be removed.</i>	<i>Audit of 'no ball games' signs and consider removal where appropriate.</i>
C14	The Local Authority has erected signs, such as Play Priority Signs to encourage more children playing in the community			<i>This will be actioned through the 'Play Friendly Communities' programme</i>	<i>This was on hold from 2019 due to the pandemic</i>	<i>Identify local communities to pilot the launch of the Play Friendly Communities programme</i>
C15	The Local Authority includes a recognition of the importance			<i>Supported through the Local Development Plan and</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
	of playing fields to children’s play when any disposal decisions are made			<p><i>planning guidance. The FIT standard is considered when determining any disposal of green space.</i></p> <p><i>The Local Development Plan identifies all land across Blaenau Gwent and its permitted use.</i></p>		
C16	The Local Authority includes children and their families in any consultations regarding decisions to dispose of playing fields			<p><i>WG introduced a measure; ‘Playing Fields (Community Involvement in Disposal Decisions) (Wales) Measure 2010’ making it mandatory for Local Authorities to include local communities in playing field disposal decisions.</i></p> <p><i>The Local Authority meets this measure.</i></p>		
C17	The Local Authority refers to guidance around creating accessible play space when refurbishing or developing new playgrounds			<p><i>The Local Authority refers to ‘Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play in Wales – Beyond the Six Acre Standard (Wales) Fields in Trust’</i></p> <p><i>£277,000 has been invested into the refurbishment of</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p><i>playgrounds between 2019-2021 through AWPOG funding.</i></p> <p><i>Good practice examples and guidance shared.</i></p>		

Open Spaces

How has the Local Authority ensured collaboration between Open Space Assessments / Green Infrastructure Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments to improve spaces for play?

Blaenau Gwent’s Open Space Assessments reflect there are a variety of open spaces including outdoor sport pitches, formal and informal playing space and playing fields. The number of people with access to natural greenspace within 400m of their home has exceeded the 80% by 2021 with 87%. The Play Sufficiency Assessment recognises and works to promote play as a ‘function of space’.

Have there been challenges?

We currently do not map all areas that ‘are used or might be used for playing’ and this is an area for development.

How can these be overcome?

Findings of areas that are used for play from the BIG play survey will be shared with colleagues to promote collaboration between Open Space Assessments/green infrastructure strategies and the Play Sufficiency Assessment.

Comments:

Outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces

How has the local authority considered all issues of accessibility in play space development?

Meeting the play needs of all children through the provision of accessible outdoor play space continues to be a priority for the Local Authority.

Blaenau Gwent keeps a comprehensive and up-to-date list of all outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces. Playgrounds are inspected annually and assess play spaces for: accessibility, security of perimeters, inspecting of ancillary items, safety surfacing, operation and stability of equipment, and provide an estimated life expectancy of equipment. As part of the Annual Inspections, the overall location, layout and design of the site is assessed and any issues recorded. These may include nearby features (roads, water, electricity cables/pylons, electrical installations), desire lines running across the path of moving equipment, other clashes of movement in and around the playground or lack of segregation by age. Any compliance failures are noted, risk assessed and comment made as to whether any further action is required. The annual inspection reports of outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces present information on a ward level in line with statutory guidance.

The Local Authority undertook a thorough review of Static Play Provision in 2018, looking at several criteria;

- *Play Value*
- *Risk/Benefit Challenge Opportunities*
- *Catchment*
- *Social Safety & Casual Supervision*
- *Vulnerability to vandalism*
- *Development opportunities*
- *Access*

Each of the 74 Static Play Facilities in the borough were individually assessed and reviewed using the review methodology to allow a priority evaluation matrix to be established to provide a clear rationale for the use of any funding stream that became available.

Have there been challenges?

Maintenance/upkeep and staffing budgets for playgrounds have been significantly reduced year on year resulting in limited funding and capacity to maintain playgrounds and to respond to findings in the annual safety inspection reports. Currently medium risk assessed compliance failures are prioritised and low-very low are monitored. Many of our play areas have aging stock that is functional but does not offer much play value.

How can these be overcome?

It is recognised in Blaenau Gwent that providing for children's play is not just about playgrounds, play areas and playschemes. The Local Authority has traditionally provided fixed play areas for children, however recognise that there is now a greater trend towards more naturalistic play environments. Responses from the children's survey reinforce that play 'takes place whenever and wherever', the Play Sufficiency Duty recognises that children's ability to find time and space for play is affected by all Local Authority functions and therefore will continue to develop working relationships cross-departmentally.

In the event of further funding availability, the Local Authority will prioritise addressing some of the identified lower risk failures to promote longevity/aesthetics of existing equipment and consider more non-prescriptive equipment, which can be used flexibly to meets the needs of large numbers of children with different needs and abilities.

Comments

Matter D: Supervised provision

The Local Authority should aim to offer a range of supervised play provision.

RAG Status

Criteria fully met.	
Criteria partially met.	
Criteria not met.	

Playwork provision

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LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
D1	The Local Authority keeps an up to date record of all supervised play provision as described in the Statutory Guidance			<p><i>All information regarding supervised play provision is held by Family Information Service and available via email, telephone service, online as well as through DEWIS search facilities.</i></p> <p><i>The Family Information Service (FIS) holds details of all registered childcare/after school and holiday provision, which providers can now update online at any time.</i></p>	<p><i>FIS is reliant on services providing and updating their own information and it is recognised that not all providers (particularly unregistered services) use the facility.</i></p>	<p><i>To encourage more registered and unregistered provision to sign up to DEWIS</i></p>

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
D2	The Local Authority offers play provision which offers a rich play environment as described in the Statutory Guidance			<p><i>The Local Authority offers a range of play provision delivered by a team of playworkers and volunteers.</i></p> <p><i>Wild Tots – weekly outdoor based parent & toddler group</i></p> <p><i>Wild Camps – a weekly group for older children where they have experienced significant changes to their lives to access outdoor play opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>Open Access play provision during school holidays</i></p>	<p><i>These are limited due to the limited capacity of a small team and reliance on volunteers.</i></p>	<p><i>To sustain current delivery model for play provision and look at options to expand</i></p>
D3	The Local Authority ensures that partners offering playwork provision are supported to offer rich play environments as described in the Statutory Guidance			<p><i>The LA supports the private and voluntary sector with advice, guidance and training in relation to offering rich play environments.</i></p> <p><i>Grants available to develop outdoor play spaces.</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
D4	Staffed playwork provision that the Local Authority provides meets the regulatory requirements and National Minimum Standards			<i>Staffed Play provision that the Local Authority provides meets regulatory requirements and National Minimum Standards as good practice.</i>		
D5	Staffed play provision that the Local Authority funds meets the regulatory requirements and National Minimum Standards			<i>Staffed Play provision that the Local Authority funds meets regulatory requirements and National Minimum Standards as good practice.</i> <i>In the event of commissioning this is monitored though the Local Authorities commissioning criteria, evaluations and monitoring by the Play Sufficiency Officer.</i>		
D6	Staffed play provision that the Local Authority’s partners provide meets the regulatory requirements and National Minimum Standards			<i>The LA works closely with partners to ensure they meet the NMS - in addition unregistered provision is advised to meet NMS as good practice.</i> <i>The Play Sufficiency Officer monitors through the QA</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>programme and regular visits.</i>		
D7	Staffed play provision across the Local Authority works to a recognised quality assurance programme			<p><i>All registered settings have signed up to the Local Authorities Quality Assurance (QA) programme.</i></p> <p><i>All settings were supported virtually during the pandemic to ensure quality could be maintained.</i></p> <p><i>Unregistered provision is supported to register with CIW by both the LA and umbrella organisations and meet good practice and subsequently to undertake the LA's QA process.</i></p>	<p><i>Due to the restricted access to settings during the pandemic and limited capacity of the Play Sufficiency Officer the QA programme was temporarily paused.</i></p>	<p><i>Undertake QA with all registered settings</i></p>
D8	The Local Authority prioritises quality issues when engaging with/ commissioning the private sector to deliver recreational activities for children.			<p><i>This is a requirement and monitored through our Service Level Agreements with any commissioned services.</i></p> <p><i>The Play Sufficiency Officer promotes and monitors during routine visits</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
D9	The Local Authority provides council premises and space free of charge to organisations which provide free (at the point of access) play provision for children			<i>Open spaces are provided free of charge to play provision that has been commissioned/or is being delivered by the Local Authority.</i>	<i>Local Authority premises are limited in number and incur a charge for use. Where premises are available, free use is limited to programmes delivered by Local Authority services.</i>	

Structured recreational activities for children

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
D10	Local authority sport, physical activity, and active recreation plans are contributing to increasing free play and recreational activities			<i>The Playteam work closely with Aneurin Leisure Sports Development Team to maximise resources and minimise duplication.</i>		<i>To look at options to increase the working relationship/capacity between play and ALT sports development team.</i>
D11	The sports agenda contributes to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children			<i>The Aneurin Leisure Sports Development Team continue work to increase physical activity levels in line with Sports Wales vision for</i>		<i>Deliver Summer of Fun 2022 programme of activities for 0-25yrs with partners</i>

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>sport. Providing recreational activities for children and young people through leisure centre programmes and sports development programmes.</i>		
D12	The cultural and arts agenda, is contributing to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children			<p><i>Head4Arts is a community arts organisation which operates in the South East Wales Valleys region. They work across all art forms with people of all ages to provide high quality, inspirational arts experiences that introduce participants to new art forms and unlock their creative potential.</i></p> <p><i>The Arts, Culture and Events Strategic Business Unit manages arts activity and large scale arts events in venues operated by Aneurin Leisure in Blaenau Gwent.</i></p>		
D13	The Local Authority Youth Service provides for children’s			<i>The Youth Service understands the importance of play and provides a</i>	<i>Two thirds of the Youth Services workforce and</i>	

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
	opportunities for leisure and association			<p><i>varied range of opportunities for young people aged 11 – 25 to play and socialise. Open access provision includes youth clubs and centres, school holiday programmes, trips and the provision of detached staff within their own communities.</i></p> <p><i>Targeted provision includes projects/delivery to support homelessness, NEET, counselling, health and wellbeing linked to early identification and transition destinations for 16+.</i></p> <p><i>All activities are delivered by qualified staff and are developed in partnership with young people, taking their opinions on board through a series of consultations which help shape activity design.</i></p>	<p><i>provision is funded through external grants, and most of those grants are for targeted pieces of work rather than to extend open access.</i></p> <p><i>Over the past three years, the Youth Service have experienced a growing demand and need for all of their services including more open access provision, which is becoming more noticeable through the increasing numbers reported for youth related ASB.</i></p>	

Supervised play provision

Where the Local Authority has assessed settings as part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessments (CSAs), how have these settings been assessed in respect of the quality of play opportunities they provide and offer?

The Early Years, Childcare and Play Team (EYCP) are committed to ensure the quality of all Childcare and Play provisions are maintained throughout the Local Authority. The Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) and Flying Start Advisory Teacher (FSAT), along with the Flying Start Childcare Co-ordinator (FSCC) assess settings using a variety of tools including the established Environment Ratings Scales (ERS).

At the end of 2019 it was considered that the validity and reliability of ERS had been reduced, after discussions surrounding the appropriateness of the ERS a decision was made to collaboratively write a new Quality Improvement tool named 'Quality Matters' (QM) that would incorporate partner's assessments as well as our own at Local Authority.

The working group consisted of the Local Authorities Quality Improvement Officer (QIO), Flying Start Advisory Teacher (FSAT), Flying Start Childcare Co-ordinator (FSCC), Healthy and Sustainable Pre Schools Scheme (HSPS), Play Sufficiency Officer (PSO), Early Years Transformation Project Officer (EYTO), Early Years, Childcare and Play Manager and Flying Start Manager shared ideas and areas of expertise to feed into the development of a new QM for the sector.

Our new approach would cultivate a relationship of working with the childcare providers in a supporting and empowering capacity, inviting providers to self-evaluate, reflect and identify their own improvement plans, whilst receiving the expert guidance from (FSAT), (QIO) and (FSCC) along with the (HSPS) as a partner. The celebration of good practice will still be of paramount importance during the process. The QIO or FSAT, FSCC and HSPS will observe and assess the quality of what the children actually experience while Childcare providers are required to work with the assessors to self-identify, co-write actions plans, set review dates, share with their teams and celebrate good practice. Together they can embed the new quality guidance into their everyday practice.

The ERS assesses the various interactions not only between adults and children, but with the materials and activities in the Childcare environment that children can access freely. It also considers features such as space both indoors and outdoors and materials that support interactions. Additionally, the observers look at the opportunities for stimulation and learning experiences, protection of children's health and safety and building positive relationships. The new QM will not only assess; it will observe alongside providers as a critical friend; it will question why? What does the child get out of it? Why are we doing it this way? Then together we will look at and discuss new ways of working and planning.

When the new QM launches in 2022 the process will be similar. Currently the QA process involves an initial arranged visit to complete a baseline assessment, this will continue however initial visit will be to look over the document and establish a rag rating system. An Action Plan is developed in partnership with the setting, along with agreed timescales to work towards enhancing the areas that can be improved. When the setting feels that they are ready, within the given timescale, the QIO or FSAT will visit to perform a further assessment and observations, which will identify a new improved rating, moving towards the setting self-identified goals. This new rating will be the setting's overall quality rating with green being the optimal colour, identifying excellence, while an amber will show the areas that need lesser amendments and red would be an inadequate rating, requiring immediate improvements. Every setting is encouraged and supported to achieve a good quality rating striving to be green. The QIO and FSAT continue to work with in the collaborative ways described above with the settings to ensure that the quality is maintained or improved, visiting the settings sometimes adhoc to ensure that the good practice is embedded into their everyday practice.

The Safeguarding Quality Assessment tool previously developed will now form part of the QM and not appear as a separate document. Its purpose to ensure that National Minimum Standards are adhered to and good practice encouraged. The Safeguarding QA tool was introduced to ensure that safeguarding became a priority focus for all of our childcare and play settings. The Safeguarding QA tool looks at safe recruitment, logging and reporting concerns as well as encouraging staff to undertake specialised Safeguarding training to enhance their understanding and knowledge, which is over and above National Minimum Standards requirements

There is one full time QIO and their role is to take the lead in promoting and undertaking assessment and observation of quality in Blaenau Gwent's childcare and play settings. They are responsible for collaboratively creating and monitoring action plans that will promote continuous improvement, offering creative suggestions and solutions where required. There is a particular focus on promoting excellent safeguarding practice within the sector. Where a setting has been identified as needing a higher level of support the Childcare Strategy Team Leader will lead on the QA process. They work closely with members of the Early Years, Childcare and Play team and the Flying Start Advisory Teacher, identifying and promoting good practice models, identifying the training needs of the workforce and delivering some of that training. They support the collection of baseline and exit assessment data, and support and facilitate transition arrangements for children moving into school nursery settings. They ensure that the childcare and play sector are fully supported in providing a quality provision. It was identified that parent and toddler groups required advice, guidance, support and training this has become part of the QIO role and they will endeavour to raise the quality across Blaenau Gwent, paying particular attention to Physical development and Speech Language and Communication development, as these were identified concerns post pandemic.

How has provision that is not part of the CSA been assessed in respect of the quality of play opportunities they provide and offer?

The Local Authority works closely with providers providing advice, guidance and training to promote the importance of providing quality of play opportunities. The Play Sufficiency Officer works with all registered play providers to undertake the Local Authorities 'We Play' Quality Assurance

scheme on a bi-annual basis with an action plan agreed to improve quality. There is a strong commitment to ensure that children receive good play opportunities and that providers recognise the importance of play.

The Quality Improvement Officer also offers good practice guidance to non-registered provision including a Quality Assurance tool for Parent and Toddler/Cylch Ti a Fi groups.

Have there been challenges?

Many of our settings primarily offer a childcare service to parents which can impact upon the quality of some play opportunities for children. With the pandemic and limited (if any) access to settings the QA was temporarily paused as it was considered settings had other key priorities to focus on.

How can these be overcome?

The Local Authority will continue to signpost good practice models to promote quality play opportunities through the Quality Assurance process, social media, network meetings and training opportunities. The Playteam will continue to develop and offer quality play opportunities in the provision they offer sharing and promoting good practice.

Comments:

Matter E: Charges for play provision

The Local Authority should consider which play opportunities involve a charge and the extent to which the Local Authority takes these charges into account in assessing for sufficient play opportunities for children living in low income families as set out in the Statutory Guidance.

RAG status

Criteria fully met.	
Criteria partially met.	
Criteria not met.	

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
E1	The Local Authority keeps records of the number of children living in low income families			<p><i>The Local Authority maintains a number of records on children/young people living in low income families. The WIMD 2011 is a child index which provides information on income and outlines which LSOAs in Blaenau Gwent are the most deprived. Information is also available through the free school's meals data.</i></p> <p><i>Children aged 0-3 in low income households have been identified in relation to the Flying Start programme</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>and through the Childcare Offer.</i>		
E2	The Local Authority keeps records of the number of children living in areas of deprivation			<i>WIMD 2011 provides information on income and outlines which LSOAs in Blaenau Gwent are the most deprived.</i>		
E3	The Local Authority keeps records of the number of children living in rural areas			<i>Information is available through Educations PLASC data.</i>		
E4	The Local Authority keeps records of the number of disabled children and those with particular needs.			<i>Social Services records disabled children accessing services.</i>	<i>The data does not account for children without formal diagnosis.</i>	
E5	The Local Authority records the availability of no cost provision			<i>Cost is recorded with provider information captured through Family Information Service/DEWIS.</i>		
E6	The Local Authority records the provision of no cost / low cost premises used for play provision			<i>This is recorded through Family Information Service.</i> <i>The Local Authority works with partners to identify and promote low cost/no cost opportunities.</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
E7	The Local Authority records the provisions where grants or subsidies are available for play providers			<p><i>The Local Authority provides Start Up grants for newly registered After School and Holiday Clubs.</i></p> <p><i>The LA also offer Expansion, Sustainability and Innovation grants. Records are maintained in relation to allocation of spend.</i></p> <p><i>The Local Authority signposts funding sources to the sector and supports the development of funding applications.</i></p>		
E8	The Local Authority provides subsidised transport for children travelling to play opportunities			This has been provided through SoF and WoW programmes – Flying Start, Families First and Youth Service		

Charge for play provision

How is the Local Authority ensuring that children have access to no or low-cost provision?

The Local Authority recognises that a lot of play provision in Blaenau Gwent incurs a cost to families. The Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing programme 2021 has been most welcomed by families and well supported by providing opportunities for families that they may not usually be able to participate in.

- The Playworks Holiday Project funding has been used to secure 2 p/t play leader posts, which has enabled the Local Authority to bring play services back in house. This is more beneficial than out sourcing the service as the team can be reactive to support the gaps identified through the Play Sufficiency Assessment process. The team offer open access play sessions in various locations across Blaenau Gwent during all school holidays as well as developing term time provision.*
- Wild Tots is an outdoor-based Parent and Toddler group launched in the summer of 2017. The aim of the group is to encourage families with young children to access the outdoor environment and offer freely chosen play opportunities, we were fortunate to secure some funding in 2021 to be able to offer these sessions at no-cost to our families. The group is now led by the Local Authorities Play leaders (supported by our Play Volunteers) this ensures that sessions run regularly and consistently.*
- Open access plays sessions are delivered during February, Whitsun, Summer and October half terms to encourage children and young people to play out in their local communities with a team of playworkers supporting freely chosen activities with no cost to attending children.*
- National Play Day brings together a host of partners who provide activities free of charge for children and their families. With the pandemic a celebration has still be maintained by bringing partners together to distribute activity/craft/sports bags.*
- Flying Start deliver free family fun days to their families throughout the year offering a range of play activities and ideas for parents to take away with them.*
- Families First hold free events for young carers, and children with disabilities.*
- The Local Authority offers an assisted places scheme for families in need for children to attend childcare/play provision.*

Have there been challenges?

With large areas of economic deprivation in Blaenau Gwent, cost of activities is often mentioned as one of the biggest barriers and limits access to provision. We understand that even relatively small costs for low income families with several children can mean that opportunities are not available to these children. An additional pressure is the current Cost of living crisis which is also going to have a significant impact on families already living in deprivation and putting increasing pressure on families during school holidays and costs of activities for their children.

How can these be overcome?

The Local Authority will continue to provide and promote low/no cost provision to promote accessibility and to work with partners to minimise costs wherever possible. In the event of further funding initiatives to provide play opportunities the Local Authority will in the first instance consider families in greatest need. The Summer of Fun 2022 will enable the Local Authority to offer a range of free opportunities to families to support school holiday activities and opportunities.

Comments:

While the Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing programme 2021 has been most welcomed by families, there is a concern that this becomes an expectation and its longevity is short term. Through these programmes children may have experienced new opportunities that families are unable to sustain in the longer term due to cost.

Matter F: Access to space/provision

The Local Authority should consider all the factors that contribute to children’s access to play or moving around their community.

RAG Status

Criteria fully met.	
Criteria partially met.	
Criteria not met.	

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
F1	The Local Authority keeps an up to date record of the number of 20 mph zones/school safety zones in residential areas			<i>The Local Authorities’ Transport Officer holds information of 20mph zones and are working to Welsh Governments 20mph default speed limits for all residential areas in Blaenau Gwent by 2023.</i>		
F2	The Local Authority has an identified mechanism for assessing the impact of speed reduction and other road safety measures on the opportunity for children to play outside in their communities			<i>Mechanism continues to be in place which is community focused with the use of road traffic accident data to assess the impact of speed reduction and other road safety measures.</i>		
F3	The Local Authority has a plan(s) to reduce the negative effect of busy roads and			<i>As F1 above and are conducted through community engagement,</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
	junctions through the introduction of speed reduction measures and provision of safe crossing points/routes for pedestrians and cyclists			<i>observations, local knowledge and road traffic accident data under continual review and assessment.</i>		
F4	The Local Authority has a plan(s) to improve walking and cycle access to parks, outdoor play facilities and local leisure centres from residential areas				<i>Funding for such schemes is based on casualty reduction. Applications for funding must be based on sites having a history of personal injury collisions.</i>	
F5	There is potential for the Local Authority to take further action to reduce traffic speed and improve road safety to promote play opportunities			<i>The LA are working towards 20mph zones for all residential areas in Blaenau Gwent by 2023.</i>		
F6	The Local Authority uses road safety grants and/or other funding to support delivery of cycling training for children to national standards			<i>Level 1 and 2 National cycling standards continue to be delivered in schools. The road safety team also obtained additional funding in 2022 to be able to deliver Balanceability – a learn to ride a bike scheme, that has</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>been taken up by 16 schools in the borough. Children attending Nursery, Reception and Year 1 all received the training in 2021/2022 and it was well received by those taking part.</i>		<p><i>Carried from 2019 Meet ESAG to discuss potential of ‘Street Play’ road closures for local communities.</i></p>
F7	The Local Authority uses road safety grants and/or other funding to provide pedestrian safety training for children			<i>The Local Authority continued to provide child pedestrian training to schools throughout the pandemic, when able.</i>		
F8	The Local Authority has an accessible and well-known way of arranging temporary road closures, to support more children to play outside their homes			<i>Blaenau Gwent ESAG (Event Safety Advisory Group) is available to help people plan and organise successful, safe events for the public within Blaenau Gwent.</i>	<p><i>Information not easily found on corporate website.</i></p> <p><i>Lengthy process – 3 months for a small scale event.</i></p>	
F9	The Local Authority refers to <i>Manual for Streets</i> when considering new developments and changes to the highway network/urban realm			<i>Manual for Streets is consulted when considering new developments and changes to the highway network</i>	<i>Manual for Streets only applies to streets and not the wider higher classified road network</i>	

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
F10	The Local Authority works to nationally recognised good practice guidelines when developing walking and cycling facilities			<p><i>Development of Active Travel routes is undertaken by reference to Welsh Government design guidance.</i></p> <p><i>Active Travel Network Maps are developed in order to inform the location of and extent of both existing and proposed routes and this exercise has recently been completed following extensive public consultation.</i></p> <p><i>The authority will also shortly commission an audit of barriers on active travel routes to assess accessibility along them.</i></p>		
F11	The Local Authority uses child pedestrian road accident casualty data to inform the location and design of interventions which help children get around independently in their communities.			<p><i>The LA monitors road traffic accident casualty data to inform requirements for interventions.</i></p>	<p><i>Any interventions would be for all road users and not one specific user group</i></p>	

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
F12	The Local Authority considers children’s needs to access play opportunities when making decisions about public transport planning and expenditure			<i>The LA prioritises access to key sites which include some play and leisure opportunities.</i>	<i>Limited influence on services as commercial in nature.</i>	
F13	The requirements of disabled children are understood and provided for within traffic and transport initiatives			<i>This is met through the Disability Act.</i> <i>The LA’s highways infrastructure provide traffic calming measures; disabled parking, drop kerbs, home to school transport taking into consideration sensory and disability requirements.</i>		

Information, publicity and events:
For children and families to take part in play opportunities, recreational activities and events it is necessary for them to know what is available in their area.

F14	The Local Authority has a clearly identified section on its website which gives information about play opportunities as described in the Statutory Guidance (play			<i>There is a dedicated page for play on the website</i> <i>Information on play provision, clubs, accessibility, opening times,</i>	<i>This isn’t used to provide information for the general public on play opportunities.</i>	<i>Audit play page and update bi-monthly</i>
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	areas, play provision, clubs and their accessibility)			<i>fees is available through DEWIS and Family Information Service</i>		<p><i>Development of a dedicated page on FIS website to raise awareness of ‘play’ opportunities across the Local Authority.</i></p>
F15	The Local Authority provides information on access to play opportunities and contact for support if required			<p><i>Family Information Service provides and disseminates information through the website, social media and search facilities. FIS is available for enquiries and support via telephone, email, social media and outreach events.</i></p> <p><i>The Family Information Service will shortly have has its own stand- alone website to establish a bilingual Family Information Service Website, there will be a dedicated section for play.</i></p>		
F16	The Local Authority supports and publicises events which encourage play opportunities and events for children and families			<p><i>Family Information Service and the Corporate Communication team promote play opportunities and events to families through the corporate website, social media channels and shares with local community groups.</i></p>		
F17	The Local Authority publicises information which contributes			<p><i>Family Information Service widely publicises through</i></p>		

	to positive community attitudes to play			<i>social media and LA partnerships, which includes invitations for feedback from the community to promote positive attitudes towards play.</i>		
F18	The Local Authority publicises information and support for parents to help them encourage their children to play			<i>Family Information Service uses social media and the corporate website to publicise information and support for parents/carers to encourage their children to play and access play activities.</i>		
F19	The Local Authority widely uses on-site signposting to safeguard and promote play			<i>Family Information Service signposts various subjects on the topic of Play and offers advice, support and guidance.</i>		<i>Update/promote the 'play all day' booklet</i>
F20	The Local Authority engages with the media to encourage the positive portrayal of children playing in the local area			<i>The Corporate Communications Team promote play opportunities and engages local media in key events.</i>		

Access to space/provision

How has the Local Authority ensured collaboration to ensure children can move around their communities to increase access to opportunities for playing?

The Local Authority encourages walking and cycling schemes within its Healthy schools and Active Travel Plan. In addition, schools also engage with child pedestrian training, Level 1 and 2 National cycling standards and also the more recently with the introduction of Balanceability – a learn to ride a bike scheme, that was taken up by 16 schools in the borough.

Have there been challenges?

With regards to permitting temporary road closures for children’s play, applications tend to be more targeted at larger scale events – Queens Jubilee. Very few (if any) have been made for the purpose of play potentially due to the lack of knowledge that the opportunity is there and the process and information as to how to go about requesting a temporary road closure is difficult to find and a lengthy process. There is nothing easily available on the corporate website to advise local communities of the process.

Rural access via public rights of way (e.g. footpaths across fields and woodlands) are currently not adequately resourced by the Council which has not employed a rights of way officer for the last 5 years. Our statutory plan (Rights of Way Improvement Plan) which should set out our approach expired in 2017 and numerous duties pertaining to the recording and management of this area are not being discharged. As a result, it’s important to appreciate that this is strained and these facilities are not encapsulated by responses from Highways or DLO.

How can these be overcome?

Further work with the EASG (Event Advisory Safety Group) through the PSA action plan will look at how ‘street play’ type schemes can be developed/offered to local communities. However, the Local Authority recognises that 87% of the population live within 400m of a green space (LDP 2020-21 annual monitoring report)

Comments

Information, publicity, events

How has the Local Authority positively used information to support access to play provision?

The Family Information Service provides free, confidential and impartial information and guidance on a range of services available to children, young people and their families. They offer information in relation to Play provision, Childcare, play spaces, health issues, career choices, benefits, sports and recreational activities. Information is provided via a telephone helpline, online search facility on the Family Information Service pages of the corporate website, via email, and through the use of social media sites.

Information/focus papers are circulated to support and promote access to play.

Have there been challenges?

Getting childcare and play providers to update information on DEWIS has been particularly difficult throughout the pandemic.

How can these be overcome?

The Early Years, Childcare and Play team will continue to encourage providers to update information on DEWIS through regular contact, and at network evenings.

Comments:

Matter G: Securing and developing the play workforce

The Local Authority should provide information on the organisational structure of the policy area which manages the play agenda and the play workforce.

RAG status

Criteria fully met.	
Criteria partially met.	
Criteria not met.	

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
Note – These criteria are specifically about Playwork: Playwork is a highly skilled profession that enriches and enhances play. It takes place where adults support children’s play but it is not driven by prescribed education or care outcomes. This includes both open access and out of school childcare settings						
G1	The Local Authority keeps up to date information regarding the playwork workforce across the Local Authority (this should include the number of playworkers, playwork management structure, qualification levels, training opportunities and volunteers)			<i>The Local Authorities Childcare Business Development Officer maintains and updates information of the playwork workforce through an annual workforce audit.</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
G2	The Local Authority supports all of the workforce to achieve the qualification level required by the Welsh Government's National Minimum Standards			<p><i>The Childcare Business Development Officer brings together the EYDCPP annual training programme and signposts to qualifications providers.</i></p> <p><i>Training providers are invited to network meetings and opportunities to gain qualifications are regularly promoted to the sector.</i></p> <p><i>The LA has funded intro to playwork and L2APP for 9 learners through Adult Learning Wales</i></p>		
G3	The Local Authority has a staff development budget ring fenced for play, including playwork			<p><i>Play and playwork CPD opportunities are offered through the EYDCPP annual training programme</i></p>		
G4	There is a comprehensive range of Continuing Professional Development			<p><i>This is offered through the EYDCPP annual training programme, signposting to</i></p>		

	(CPD) opportunities available for playworkers in the area			<p><i>opportunities from voluntary sector groups.</i></p> <p><i>Areas of development from the Quality Improvement schemes inform the annual training programme to meet the needs of the sector.</i></p>		
G5	Training is available for volunteers and parents to develop their knowledge on skills in playwork			<p><i>Volunteers and parents are able to access play/playwork training through the LA's Play Sufficiency Officer and Play Volunteers are able to access the EYDCPP annual training programme.</i></p>		
G6	The Local Authority includes playwork within its Workforce Development strategies			<p><i>Playwork is provided through the EYDCPP annual training programme which sits within the Social Care Workforce Development Strategy.</i></p>		<p><i>Deliver workshops for Year 11 and community groups on childcare and play as careers.</i></p>
G7	The Local Authority supports partners to deliver appropriate training to community groups, parents and volunteers			<p><i>The Local Authority works with a range of partners including NDNA Cymru, Pacey Cymru, Coleg Gwent, Clybiau Plant, Kids Club Cymru</i></p>		

				<i>to offer and deliver appropriate training.</i>		
Note – these criteria are about the Play workforce: This encompasses anyone employed whose role has an impact on children playing – those who may either directly facilitate their play, design for playing, or those with the power to give permission for children to play, or not.						
G8	The Local Authority has undertaken a comprehensive training needs analysis for the play workforce as defined in the toolkit glossary and above				<i>Many Officers within the Local Authority do not recognise themselves as being part of the play workforce</i>	<i>Deliver ‘Understanding Play Sufficiency’ training to all PSA contacts</i>
G9	The Local Authority takes action to expand the variety of learning and development opportunities that are offered to staff			<i>The EYCP Quality Improvement Officer monitors the needs of the sector which informs the EYDCP annual training programme.</i>		
G10	There is a comprehensive range of CPD opportunities for a range of professionals who work with children			<i>The EYDCP annual training programme offers a wide range of both mandatory and CPD courses to all staff/volunteers and professionals working with children.</i>		
G11	Training awareness sessions are available for professionals and decision makers whose work impacts on children’s opportunities to play			<i>The Local Authority signposts relevant training to professionals and decision makers.</i>		

Securing and developing the play workforce

How has the Local Authority met the requirement to undertake or secure the managerial and delivery functions necessary to achieve sufficient play opportunities?

The Play Sufficiency Officer came into post in October 2014 with responsibility for the strategic development of play in Blaenau Gwent to ensure children can safely and freely access a broad range of environment and play opportunities within their community. To recognise the importance of play and the statutory duty, the Local Authority secured the role through their Revenue Support Grant and amended the post from an annual contract to a permanent position in 2022.

The Play Sufficiency Officer continues to bring together the Play Sufficiency Assessment and monitor the Play Sufficiency Action Plans, with support from the Early Years, Childcare and Play Manager, and Children's Services Manager (PSA Implementation group). The Play Sufficiency Officer also acts as the Local Authorities key point of contact with external National bodies such as Welsh Government and Play Wales concerning play policy matters as well as locally for play providers. The role has also aided the Local Authority to develop partnerships with partners and stakeholders, both internally and externally to represent the interests of children and young people.

Two of our long term Community Play Volunteers have now secured employment with the Local Authority as part of the play team and another has been successful in gaining a position with a local play provider.

How has the Local Authority ensured it understands and provides for the workforce development needs of the play workforce (as defined in Wales: A Play Friendly Country and above)?

An annual workforce development survey is conducted by the Local Authorities Childcare Business Development Officer to ascertain qualification levels and training needs for the sector. The information collated informs the EYDCPP annual training programme for qualifications and professional development.

How has the Local Authority ensured it understands and provides the playwork workforce (as defined in Wales: A Play Friendly Country and above)?

Please see below

Have there been challenges?

Many Officers/partners do not identify themselves as being part of the play workforce although recognise that some of their work impacts on play. Therefore, it is difficult to collate training requirements for this group as play training is as a consequence not a priority. In addition, as a small Local Authority capacity of some officers is a real issue as often very small teams or individuals with responsibility for their own area of

work and 'play' isn't a priority. There were plans in place to put on a conference for stakeholders however this was postponed due to the pandemic.

Four after-school clubs in Blaenau Gwent have closed since 2020, there are a number of reasons; sustainability concerns through lack of service users, sustainability following the pandemic and staff recruitment. We have found that some providers have changed required qualification criteria for applicants to include TA's which further reduces the recognition of playwork as a recognised profession and dilutes the playwork workforce.

How can these be overcome?

This will be conducted over a series of networking/training events; firstly, the Local Authorities Play Sufficiency Officer will work with Play Wales to roll out 'Understanding Play Sufficiency' training to raise awareness of the playwork workforce which will also assist with the development and implementation of further Play Sufficiency Assessments/Action plans. Following this the Local Authority will undertake an exercise with the group to look at the wider playwork workforces training needs.

The EYCP team attended Welsh Governments workshop in February 2022 to discuss recruitment and retention of the early years, childcare and play sector, there are plans to engage with schools and other groups to promote playwork as a career in 2022/23.

Comments

This will also encourage engagement for the many roles that support the Local Authorities statutory duty for children's play.

Matter H: Community engagement and participation.

The Local Authority should consult widely with children, their families and other stakeholders on their views on play provision. It should also promote wide community engagement in providing play friendly communities.

RAG Status

Criteria fully met.	
Criteria partially met.	
Criteria not met.	

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
H1	The Local Authority promotes initiatives to engage relevant groups in enhancing play opportunities for children in its area.			<p><i>The Local Authority has developed 'Play Friendly Communities' award programme for Local Communities.</i></p> <p><i>Roll out of Wild Tots Parent & Toddler group to Ebbw Vale</i></p>	<i>Delay with roll out due to the pandemic</i>	<p><i>Action in Matter C</i></p> <p><i>Deliver Community Family Fun day to celebrate National Playday</i></p>
H2	The Local Authority promotes community engagement in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making space available and suitable for play - organising play events - positive attitudes towards children and play 			<i>Organisation of play opportunities and events are encouraged from local communities with support from the Play Sufficiency Officer and Playteam.</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
	- training on the importance of play.			<p><i>The LA deliver play training for local community groups.</i></p> <p><i>Signposting to relevant guidance and information</i></p>		

Community engagement and participation.

How has the Local Authority effectively used existing mechanisms for children’s participation and family consultation processes with regards to play?

Blaenau Gwent’s Engagement Strategy is a web-based engagement and consultation database system that allows Blaenau Gwent partners to publicise their consultation and engagement activities. The Local Authority is committed in making Blaenau Gwent a place where all its citizens are treated as valued members of the community, whose voices are heard and needs considered across the range of policy making areas. The strategy sets out a clear vision that enables professionals to gain a more coherent, consistent methodology to engagement, leading to better outcomes for our residents and communities in which they live.

The Youth Forum is attended by young people aged 11-25 and usually meets once per month. The forum is led by the young people who look at issues and priorities that affect children and young people living in the Borough. The forum work closely with the Local Authority and senior decision makers to influence change on matters that affect them.

The Grand Children’s Council enables pupils of primary school age to have their say on issues that affect them. Each Blaenau Gwent Primary School has elected two representatives from their school councils to sit on the Grand Council, which meet once every school term – during the pandemic these were held online.

Have there been challenges?

The pandemic affected the opportunity for the Youth forum and Children’s Grand Council to meet face to face which led to meetings being held virtually and less frequently. This limited access to the forum for consulting for the Play Sufficiency Assessment – young people were invited to participate in our BIG play survey.

How can these be overcome?

This was a short-term challenge which will resolve following the pandemic.

Matter I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas

The Local Authority should examine all its policy agendas for their potential impact on children’s opportunities to play and embed targets and action to enhance children’s play opportunities within all such policies and strategies.

RAG Status

Criteria fully met.	
Criteria partially met.	
Criteria not met.	

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LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
I1	There is a named person on the Local Public Service Board who champions children’s play and ensures that the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan contribute to and are incorporated within the Well-being Plan			<i>The new Champion for Best Start in Life is Robert Holcome who is Chief Finance Officer at ABUHB who ensures the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan contribute to and are incorporated within the Well-being Plan</i>		
I2	The Well-Being Plan recognises the importance of play and contributes to the provision of rich play opportunities			<i>The Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan 2018-2023 recognises the importance of play and rich play opportunities across our well-being objectives.</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p><i>The Gwent Well-being Plan will do the same and response analysis work is currently underway - play will be considered as part of it. The 3 main themes identified by the Gwent PSB are Climate Change; Health Inequalities; and Community Cohesion and play falls under some of these areas – further consultation will be conducted locally over spring/summer 2022.</i></p>		

Education and schools

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
13	Schools ensure that children are provided with a rich play environment for breaks during the school day			<p><i>The Local Authorities ‘Play Friendly Schools’ award programme supports schools to provide a rich play environment with support and guidance from the Play Sufficiency Officer.</i></p> <p><i>To date Willottown have completed their bronze award.</i></p> <p><i>Age appropriate play spaces developed within all 21st century schools.</i></p>	<i>Due to the pandemic access to schools has been limited</i>	<i>Refresh and reintroduce ‘Play Friendly Schools’</i>
14	Schools provide play opportunities during out of teaching hours			<p><i>Schools in Blaenau Gwent offer a variety of clubs at the end of the school day; ranging from extra-curricular activities to out of hours’ childcare and play provision. These vary across each school, dependant on the facilities available and partners involved. Schools make their own decisions regarding the clubs they offer and the external partners they choose to work with.</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>Schools work with wider partners to offer a range of activities outside of the school day.</i>		<i>Revisit feasibility studies for schools looking to develop after-school play provision.</i>
15	Schools provide access to school grounds for playing out of school times			<p><i>One school in Blaenau Gwent support an After School Club and provide access to school grounds for children during operational hours.</i></p> <p><i>SHEP delivery during school holidays widens usage of schools grounds outside of normal operational hours.</i></p> <p><i>The Playteam access school grounds during school holidays to offer open access play provision.</i></p>		
16	Schools encourage children to walk and cycle to school			<p><i>The Local Authorities Road Safety Team promotes safer routes to schools and provides information for children and their families.</i></p> <p><i>Level 1 and 2 National cycling standards continue to be delivered in schools.</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>The Local Authority continue to provide child pedestrian training to schools.</i>		
17	The Local Authority offers guidance to ensure schools understand and ensure that regular outdoor play is not curtailed			<p><i>The LA signposts relevant guidance to schools.</i></p> <p><i>21st century schools promote the design of outdoor spaces to ensure play is not curtailed.</i></p> <p><i>Play Friendly Schools promotes the importance of outdoor play and works with schools to minimise curtailment of children’s play</i></p>		

Town and Country Planning

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
18	The Local Development Plan recognises and addresses the outdoor play needs of children of various age groups and abilities			<p><i>The LDP was adopted in 2012 and reviewed in 2016 and continues to be the current plan.</i></p> <p><i>A replacement LDP is currently being prepared and as part of this process the Play Sufficiency Officer</i></p>		<i>Develop links with planning to ensure children’s play needs are considered in all housing developments.</i>

				<i>and PSA 2022 will contribute to ensure the LDP recognises and addresses the outdoor play needs of children of various age groups and abilities.</i>		
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Traffic and Transport

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
19	The local Transport Plan recognises the importance of local streets, roads and walking and cycling route in offering play opportunities for children of different ages and abilities			<i>The Local Authority are currently looking to produce an updated Local Transport Plan, however local streets, roads and walking and cycling routes are recognised as offering play opportunities for children of different ages and abilities. The Plan supports the enhancement and increase of such provisions and their role in creating safe areas for children.</i>		
110	The local Transport Plan identifies ways of assessing			<i>The LTP aims to improve access for all both in terms</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
	and addressing the needs of all groups including those which are often marginalised.			<i>of accessing facilities and services and in provision for children and groups which are often marginalised.</i>		

Early Years Plans

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
111	Early Years and Flying Start plans and services recognise the importance of play and contribute to the provision of rich play opportunities for younger children			<i><u>Flying Start</u> Flying Start continue to provide intervention that actively promotes the value and purpose of play (Stay & Play/Language & Play). Flying Start settings provide key opportunities during each session for children to play, independently, alongside and with their peers. We have invested in training on suitable environments for all of our childcare practitioners and pride ourselves that our settings offer ideal safe spaces for children to play</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p><i>and interact with one another.</i></p> <p><i>Continue to deliver ‘Elklan - let’s talk with your baby’ programmes - which aims to promote positive adult-child interaction from the earliest possible stage, to support early attachment and communication skills and provide a communication-rich environment through interactive, fun activities within Flying Start hubs, community venues or natural environments across Blaenau Gwent. The programme will continue to be offered in each hub area to children aged 0-12 months and is facilitative in providing the first steps towards encouraging parents/carers to adopt a play-based approach to their child’s communication and language development.</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p><i>Facilitate Play and Development groups for parents with children aged 0-3. These groups feed into the new Speech, Language and Communication Pathway's that have recently been developed by Flying Start, enabling families to access communication-rich play environments where interaction and social opportunities are maximised. Family take up of the provision will be reviewed half-termly and amendments made to reflect need, including embedding further provision where required across the county borough.</i></p> <p><i>Maximise the work of the Dads Support Service working alongside the NSPCC to support their developing 'Look, Say, Sing, Play' initiative and the</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p><i>piloting of resources given to parents to reinforce the programme aims and objectives.</i></p> <p><i>Provide a schedule of non-term time play and family events and activities that encourage families to participate in play, outdoor activities and trips (which can include supported visits to parks and play spaces).</i></p> <p><u><i>Integrated Children’s Centre</i></u> <i>The Integrated Children’s Centre recognises the importance of play and contributes to the provision of rich play opportunities for younger children offering access to the light and sensory room, provides space for children with disabilities to attend after school and holiday provision, offers a commissioned childcare and play service, offers play</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p><i>sessions during school holidays, family support including opportunities for play and deliver community events such as the annual Christmas grotto.</i></p> <p><u>Registered Childcare</u> <i>Registered childcare settings such as childminders also recognise the importance of play and contribute to the rich play opportunities for younger children. The LA, Local and National partners offer additional support and/or training.</i></p> <p><u>Early Years Transformation and Integration Programme</u> <i>Blaenau Gwent are one of the pilot authorities to ensure every child has the best start in life through the Early Years Transformation and Integration Programme and aims to;</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Create an Early Years system to deliver services in a co-ordinated, integrated and timely way</i> • <i>To support local partners to re-configure Early Years services focusing on planning, commissioning and identifying and addressing needs.</i> • <i>Through this process to identify barriers to integration and ways to remove, reduce or rationalise them.</i> <p><i>The programme offers support to families with young children aged 0-7years by reducing inequalities in early years' services offering families opportunities similar to Flying Start (without the childcare element) when required by the family and recognises the importance and benefits of play and promotes play through family initiatives. The</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>programme is currently offered in Cwm, Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Blaina.</i>		

Family policy and initiatives

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
I12	Family support initiatives provide up to date information and support for parents to enable them to support their children to play			<p><i>Families First deliver the Family links ‘playful parenting’ programme course which highlights the importance of play and of building attachment through play. It focuses on understanding child development, the brain, attachment and how play supports healthy development and explores the value and benefits of different types of play.</i></p> <p><i>Child led play is covered in the ‘Nurture Programme’.</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p><i>Families First also deliver 'Early Bird'. The programme covers: Why parents may see certain behaviours and how they can support children's behavioural/emotional needs.</i></p> <p><i>Understanding Autism, Understanding and supporting sensory differences, communication, supporting and developing interaction and socialisation.</i></p>		
113	<p>The local implementation of the Families First programme recognises the importance of play and contributes to the provision of rich play opportunities</p>			<p><i>Families First assess each family through using the JAFF model.</i></p> <p><i>Families First support a number of children with additional needs, the children are offered additional support in the play setting in the form of 1-2-1 or shared support.</i></p> <p><i>Where play is identified as a need for family engagement in order to improve child-</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p><i>parental relationships then Families First sign post the family to provision.</i></p> <p><i>Young Carers access weekly support groups which provides them with the opportunity for respite from their caring roles, with activities to develop their independence and caring roles such as cooking and first aid.</i></p>		
114	Plans to reduce the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences recognises the importance of play and contributes to the provision of rich play opportunities			<p><i>Local Authority staff are able to attend training on the effects of ACES and importance of early intervention.</i></p> <p><i>Play is recognised in the Local Authority as the child’s natural language, and it works to support children to have the time, space and permission to play.</i></p> <p><i>Wild Camps is a new project delivered by the</i></p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>Playteam to support children who are at risk of Adverse Childhood Experiences.</i>		

Inter-generational policy and initiatives

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
115	There are a range of play based approaches to inter-generational activity			<p><i>Providers from across the Local Authority provide activities that bring older and younger people together including visits to nursing homes, volunteering opportunities, PACEY Cymru have developed a toolkit for supporting childminders to engage with nursing homes.</i></p> <p><i>Open Access play sessions are family focused encouraging intergenerational activity between children and other adults.</i></p>		<i>Work with local schools and colleges to develop a Youth</i>

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
116	There is a creative approach to inter-generational activity which encourages better interaction between children of different ages			<p><i>Launch of our Wild Camps project in 2021 encourages children of different ages to engage and participate in activities that develop positive relationships with children of different ages.</i></p> <p><i>Our Wild Tots Parent & Toddler group welcomes older children during school holidays.</i></p> <p><i>H4arts encourages children of different ages through various environmental and arts based projects.</i></p>		<i>Play volunteer scheme for children 14yrs +</i>

Health and Safety	
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LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
117	The Health and Safety policies explicitly recognise the value of children being able to experience risk and challenge			<i>Policies in place for organised play sessions the Local Authority deliver clearly state that children will be encouraged to</i>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<i>develop their own sense of risk, whereby risk is managed rather than eliminated.</i>		
118	The Health and Safety policies and procedures incorporate the risk-benefit approach to health and safety assessments as recommended by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)			<i>The Local Authorities risk-benefit approach training continues to be rolled out on an annual basis for all Early Years, Childcare and Play providers in Blaenau Gwent.</i>		
119	The Local Authority offers the provision of insurance through the Local Authority scheme to all third sector play providers and community councils			<i>No change in position from previous PSA's</i>		

Play within relevant policy and implementation agendas

Please use this section to highlight successes of collaboration across policy areas to improve play opportunities.

Play contributes across many different strategic priorities relating to children’s education, development and well-being and community cohesion. The Local Authority recognise that every aspect of children’s lives is influenced by their need and desire to play, and that play opportunities can help to mitigate the negative effects of poverty on children’s lives, and Adverse Childhood Experiences ensuring every child has the ‘Best start in life’.

Play is just as important during a crisis such as the coronavirus pandemic; children have been hard hit with stay-at-home orders and the closure of schools, childcare, playgrounds and some other outdoor spaces, and loss of opportunities for learning, socialising and being physically separated from friends, families and their usual routines. These have brought new situations which have been challenging for many children and

families. Our Wild Camps project works across Children’s Services enabling us to deliver outdoor play provision for children and young people where they have experienced significant changes to their lives during the recent pandemic and are receiving support services.

Our ethos is to follow the needs and interests of the children, wherever practical and possible we offer and support activities to suit.

- *Arts and Crafts using the natural environment.*
- *Den building, bug hunts, campfires, treasure hunts, wood whittling, mud painting*
- *Free Play - time to explore the environment around them*
- *Activities - cooking on the campfire*

To promote the natural environment, sessions are delivered outdoors – this enables children and young people to have the time, space and permission to run, climb, shout, express themselves and enjoy the wild nature of being outdoors, while being supported by knowledgeable and experienced Playworkers.

Have there been challenges?

Challenges continue to be faced around raising awareness of how the play agenda contributes to Local Authority plans and policies.

There are a large number of new housing developments across Blaenau Gwent however space for children’s play is limited if considered at all.

How can these be overcome?

The Local Authority will continue to examine all its policy agendas for their potential impact on children’s opportunities to play and to continue to develop play as a cross cutting theme. and ensure that services work together to ensure the value of play is recognised and included in plans.

There are many factors and time scales which effect policy changes and these will need to be implemented on a gradual basis as strategies/plans are renewed.

Comments:

Conclusion

This section should identify the key priorities for the Local Authorities in accordance with the regulations and described in the Statutory Guidance.

Our 2022 Play Sufficiency assessment continues to demonstrate the progress and achievements that have been made since 2019, despite the challenges faced with the pandemic. It continues to show the Local Authority’s commitment to play while identifying areas for development.

Matter A: Population **Green**

The main data source for population is still the census 2011 with most of the data being drawn from Stats Wales as availability proved a challenge. Blaenau Gwent has managed to gather population data at ward level for children 0-18 which will be refreshed upon release of data following the census 2021.

Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs **7 green and 2 amber**

Matter C: Space available for children to play **15 green and 2 amber**

Blaenau Gwent has a large number of open spaces and designated play areas. However, it is evident through the Play Sufficiency process and Local Authority review that static play areas are in desperate need of significant investment. There is much evidence to show that there is a high level of dissatisfaction with fixed play areas in Blaenau Gwent. Adults and children commented on litter, broken equipment, traffic and vandalism as barriers to accessing play areas. The poor state of the play areas is something that the Local Authority has recognised in its review of play areas conducted in 2018. The Local Authority have been fortunate to have received AWPOG funding for the last few years which has helped to undertake refurbishment and replacement of some areas items of fixed play equipment.

There is a need to:

- While AWPOG capital funding is not guaranteed the Local Authority needs to consider more non-prescriptive equipment, which can be used flexibly to meets the needs of large numbers of children with different needs and abilities.
- Promote the use of open and green spaces for play, which can offer children sometimes better opportunities to play creatively.
- Pilot the Play Friendly Communities programme to identify local open and green spaces that can be used to promote creative, active and adventurous play.
- Develop initiatives to raise awareness of children's play

Matter D: Supervised Provision **13 green**

Supervised play provision in Blaenau Gwent can be categorised as follows:

- Play provision (After School/Holiday Clubs/Open Access provision)
- Youth activities (Streetgames/clubs)
- Recreational activities (sports/arts/cultural/uniformed groups)

There are 6 staffed CIW registered play settings in Blaenau Gwent providing After School Club and Holiday Clubs (the majority of provision is delivered as wrap around by childcare providers). There is a strong commitment to ensure that children receive rich play opportunities, however this is often met with the challenge of offering a childcare service to parents and expected outcomes rather than freely chosen play opportunities for children.

There is a need to;

- Seek ways to develop community led open access play provisions.
- Review further opportunities to increase play and recreational activities for children and young people.

Matter E: Charges for play provision 8 green

Support is offered to children with additional needs who have been referred through the Additional Needs Panel, assisted places are also offered to children from workless households that meet the criteria. No cost provisions are offered across the Local Authority by means of open access play sessions, community events, sessions support by Flying Start and Families First programmes and some activities organised by Aneurin Leisure Trust. Welsh Governments Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing 2021 has helped the LA to respond to feedback received from children, young people and parents, that there is a need for more no/low cost activity.

Matter F: Access to space/provision and information, publicity and events 19 green and 1 amber

Play is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development, not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live. The Local Authority and partners recognise that play is essential to the health and well-being of children. In the past children's play has been considered facility-based provision whereas it is now being accepted as an environmental issue, i.e. creating the type of environment where children are able to get out and play with their friends. Creating a more child-friendly environment has the potential to create many more opportunities for play than facility provision could do alone. However, facility-based provision is valued by children and adults, providing a service to working parents (breakfast/after school/holiday clubs) and dedicated space for play (static play areas/playing fields).

Family Information Service (FIS) social media and online search facility, as well as email, and telephone options currently provides information on play provision, activities and events but this is not complete and relies on Officers, individual clubs and organisations providing information about specific services, events and activities.

There is a need to:

- Regularly update 'play' designated section on the corporate website.
- Share case studies of community led initiatives in supporting children's play.
- Provide Family Information Service (FIS) with information linking to the full range of play opportunities for children and families.
- Promote positive attitudes to play when engaging with local communities and the media.
- Improve the way that we engage with the public and use the Family Information Service and Press Office to communicate effectively.

Matter G: Securing and developing the play workforce 10 green and 1 amber

The Local Authority is fortunate to have a Play Sufficiency Officer and Business Development Officer who support the sector and develop the Play and playwork workforce. There are a number of key staff in specific service areas (e.g. Education, Social Services, Leisure, Youth Service, Environment, Regeneration, Planning) whose work contributes to children’s play.

There is a need to:

- *Commission/offer training awareness sessions about play for professionals and key decision makers*
- *Consider a joint approach with other Local Authorities to provide training and support to the play workforce.*

Matter H: Community engagement and participation **2 green**

The Local Authority has a strong commitment in making Blaenau Gwent a place where all citizens are treated as valued members of the community, whose voices are heard and needs considered across the range of policy making areas. The cost of interacting with individual communities can be extremely high, the Local Authority need to continue to work with partners to ensure a robust mechanism is implemented to minimise duplication and maximise outcomes. The Local Authority recognise that Children’s participation is most effective when the issues for consideration have a direct relevance to them within their communities and they can see their input has made a difference.

There is a need to:

- *Develop links with partners to ensure play is a regular theme for engagement*
- *Continue to work with partners to ensure a robust mechanism is implemented to minimise duplication and maximise outcomes.*

Matter I: Play within relevant policy and implementation agendas **17 green, 1 amber and 1 red**

Play is embedded in Local Authority policy and implementation agendas for Health and Well-being, Child Poverty, Early Years/Childcare initiatives and intergenerational initiatives. The Local Authority will continue to examine all of its policy agendas for their potential impact on children’s opportunities to play and assess what targets and actions are required to enhance children’s play opportunities. Additionally, in Education, many schools have developed interesting and stimulating play environments. Schools encourage children to cycle to school where it is practical for them to do so and play is actively promoted during morning, afternoon and lunchtime breaks supported and promoted via the Early Years, Childcare and Play Teams ‘Play Friendly Schools’ award programme. This needs to be continued to be rolled out to schools across Blaenau Gwent following the pandemic.

The 2022 Play Sufficiency Assessment recognises that weaker areas may not necessarily be down to poor policy or practice but down to lack of information at the time of gathering data and researching as well as limitations on officer capacity. However, it has been evident throughout the assessment process that not all directorates understand their role in supporting children’s play which limits further development of children’s play and positive change and a key priority moving forward.

Way forward

This section should briefly introduce the Action Plan which sets out what steps need to be taken to improve the opportunities for children to play within the Local Authority area, including what mechanism and criteria were used to agree and prioritise actions. It should also describe the actions the Local Authority will take with regards to change in infrastructure, partnership working or mechanisms to ensure that it is well placed to deliver on the duty to secure sufficient play opportunities

The Local Authority and its' partners, continue their commitment to further develop children's play facilities and play spaces, extending the range of open access play provision and ensuring that opportunities continue to support and promote the play needs and interests of children across Blaenau Gwent. The Local Authorities' Action Plan has been developed to maintain the strengths and address the shortcomings identified in the assessment. We have also considered the actions delayed in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, where we feel these continue to be relevant and a priority these actions have been added.

The Action Plan has been developed through discussions with stakeholders and partners considering;

- *Is this a pressing need?*
- *Is it very likely that we can make a big difference addressing this action?*
- *Does the action address the play needs of a vulnerable group?*
- *Do we have capacity to work on this action?*
- *Can we start working on this straight away?*

The Local Authority also considers;

- *Are any of our partners working on this already that we could work with or support?*
- *What are the cost implications of this action?*
- *What are the benefits of this action?*
- *Do we have the skills and expertise locally to address the action?*

The accountability of delivering the actions in the plan are not the responsibility of any one department and are very reliant on effective partnership working. Some aspects are also reliant on external sources of grant funding that are short term in nature and may impact on the sustainability of some of the actions.

Progress of the action plan is conducted quarterly by the Play Sufficiency Officer reporting to the Early Years, Childcare & Play Manager, Early Years Development, Childcare and Play Partnership and Corporate Management Team via the Children's Services Manager.

Signed:

Date:



Actions to be taken to address the issues / shortcomings recorded in the Play Sufficiency Assessment

Proposed actions for the period of 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023

(Funding source: funding from Local Authority own budgets and to be included in the Single Integrated Plan).

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Matter	Priorities	Targets	Links to other Matters	Resources, including costs	Funding source (new or existing funding streams)
Statutory Guidance-policy framework					
Matter A: Population	<i>Population</i>	<i>Update population data as becomes accessible following Census 2021</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
Matter B: Providing for diverse needs	<i>B4 – The play requirements and support needs of disabled children</i>	<i>Undertake an audit of what provision is available across Blaenau Gwent for children with disabilities to</i>	<i>Matter C, D, E, F</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

	<i>are understood and provided for.</i>	<i>identify gaps and look at options for further development</i>			
	<i>B7 - Access audits for all play provision as described in the guidance are undertaken.</i>	<i>Conduct access audits for all play provision</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
	<i>B8 - Designated play space is provided and well maintained on gypsy traveller sites</i>	<i>Develop a designated play space for gypsy/traveller children.</i>	<i>Matter C & F</i>	<i>TBC</i>	<i>NEW</i>
Matter C: Space available for children to play	<i>Matter C: Space available for children to play</i>	<i>Research gaps in data, evaluate ward 'play' profiles</i>	<i>Matter A, D, E, F, H</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
	<i>C13 - The Local Authority has removed 'no ball games' signs to encourage more children playing in the community</i>	<i>Audit of 'no ball games' signs and consider removal where appropriate.</i>	<i>Matter F & H</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

	<i>C14 - The Local Authority has erected signs, such as Play Priority Signs to encourage more children playing in the community</i>	<i>Identify local communities to pilot the launch of the Play Friendly Communities programme</i>	<i>Matter F & H</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
Matter D: Supervised provision	<i>D1 - The Local Authority keeps an up to date record of all supervised play provision as described in the Statutory Guidance</i>	<i>To encourage more registered and unregistered provision to sign up to DEWIS</i>	<i>Matter C</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
	<i>D2 - The Local Authority offers play provision which offers a rich play environment as described in the Statutory Guidance</i>	<i>To sustain current delivery model for play provision and look at options to expand</i>	<i>Matter B, C, D, E, F, H</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing Playwork Holiday</i>
	<i>D7 - Staffed play provision across the Local</i>	<i>Reinstate QA programme with all registered settings</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

	<i>Authority works to a recognised quality assurance programme.</i>				
	<i>D10 - Local Authority sport, physical activity, and active recreation plans are contributing to increasing free play and recreational activities.</i>	<i>To look at options to increase the working relationship/capacity between play and ALT sports development team.</i>	<i>Matter B, C, E, F</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
		<i>Deliver Summer of Fun 2022 programme of activities for 0-25yrs with partners</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing Summer of Fun</i>
<i>Matter E: Charges for play provision</i>					
<i>Matter F: Access to space/provision</i>	<i>F8 - The Local Authority has an accessible and well-known way of arranging temporary road closures, to support more children to play</i>	<i>Carried from 2019 Meet ESAG to discuss potential of 'Street Play' road closures for local communities</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

	<i>outside their homes</i>				
	<i>F14 - The Local Authority has a clearly identified section on its website which gives information about play opportunities as described in the Statutory Guidance (play areas, play provision, clubs and their accessibility)</i>	<i>Audit play page and update bi-monthly</i>			
	<i>F15 - The Local Authority provides information on access to play opportunities and contact for support if required.</i>	<i>Development of a dedicated page to raise awareness of 'play' opportunities across the Local Authority.</i>			
	<i>F19 - The Local Authority widely uses on-site</i>	<i>Update/promote the 'play all day' booklet</i>			

	<i>signposting to safeguard and promote play</i>				
Matter G: Securing and developing the workforce	<i>G6 - The Local Authority includes playwork within its Workforce Development strategies</i>	<i>Deliver workshops for Year 11 and community groups on childcare and play as careers.</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
	<i>G8 - The Local Authority has undertaken a comprehensive training needs analysis for the play workforce as defined in the toolkit glossary and above</i>	<i>Deliver 'Understanding Play Sufficiency' training to all PSA contacts</i>	<i>Links with G11</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
Matter H: Community engagement and participation	<i>Matter H</i>	<i>Deliver Community Family Fun day to celebrate National Playday</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing Summer of Fun</i>
Matter I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas	<i>Matter I</i>	<i>Contribute to discussions with the Regeneration to attract larger scale investment to</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

		<i>provide opportunities for children and young people to play and hang out in their local communities.</i>			
	<i>13 - Schools ensure that children are provided with a rich play environment for breaks during the school day</i>	<i>Refresh and reintroduce 'Play Friendly Schools'</i>	<i>Links with 17</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
	<i>15 - Schools provide access to school grounds for playing out of school times.</i>	<i>Revisit feasibility studies for schools looking to develop after-school play provision.</i>			
	<i>Matter 18 - The Local Development Plan recognises and addresses the outdoor play needs of children of various age</i>	<i>Develop links with planners to ensure children's play needs are considered in all housing developments.</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

	<i>groups and abilities</i>				
	<i>I16 - There is a creative approach to inter-generational activity which encourages better interaction between children of different ages</i>	<i>Work with local schools and colleges to develop a Youth Play volunteer scheme for children 14yrs +</i>	<i>Links with Matter G</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

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Play Sufficiency Action Plan 2022



Actions to be taken to address the issues / shortcomings recorded in the Play Sufficiency Assessment

Proposed actions for the period of 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023

(Funding source: funding from Local Authority own budgets and to be included in the Single Integrated Plan).

Matter	Priorities	Targets	Links to other Matters	Resources, including costs	Funding source (new or existing funding streams)
Statutory Guidance-policy framework					
Matter A: Population	<i>Population</i>	<i>Update population data as becomes accessible following Census 2021</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
Matter B: Providing for diverse needs	<i>B4 – The play requirements and support needs of disabled children are understood and provided for.</i>	<i>Undertake an audit of what provision is available across Blaenau Gwent for children with disabilities to identify gaps and</i>	<i>Matter C, D, E, F</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

		<i>look at options for further development</i>			
	<i>B7 - Access audits for all play provision as described in the guidance are undertaken.</i>	<i>Conduct access audits for all play provision</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
	<i>B8 - Designated play space is provided and well maintained on gypsy traveller sites</i>	<i>Develop a designated play space for gypsy/traveller children.</i>	<i>Matter C & F</i>	<i>TBC</i>	<i>NEW</i>
<i>Matter C: Space available for children to play</i>	<i>Matter C: Space available for children to play</i>	<i>Research gaps in data, evaluate ward 'play' profiles</i>	<i>Matter A, D, E, F, H</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
	<i>C13 - The Local Authority has removed 'no ball games' signs to encourage more children playing in the community</i>	<i>Audit of 'no ball games' signs and consider removal where appropriate.</i>	<i>Matter F & H</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
	<i>C14 - The Local Authority has</i>	<i>Identify local communities to pilot</i>	<i>Matter F & H</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

	<i>erected signs, such as Play Priority Signs to encourage more children playing in the community</i>	<i>the launch of the Play Friendly Communities programme</i>			
Matter D: Supervised provision	<i>D1 - The Local Authority keeps an up to date record of all supervised play provision as described in the Statutory Guidance</i>	<i>To encourage more registered and unregistered provision to sign up to DEWIS</i>	<i>Matter C</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
	<i>D2 - The Local Authority offers play provision which offers a rich play environment as described in the Statutory Guidance</i>	<i>To sustain current delivery model for play provision and look at options to expand</i>	<i>Matter B, C, D, E, F, H</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing Playwork Holiday</i>
	<i>D7 - Staffed play provision across the Local Authority works to a recognised</i>	<i>Reinstate QA programme with all registered settings</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

	<i>quality assurance programme.</i>				
	<i>D10 - Local Authority sport, physical activity, and active recreation plans are contributing to increasing free play and recreational activities.</i>	<i>To look at options to increase the working relationship/capacity between play and ALT sports development team.</i>	<i>Matter B, C, E, F</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
		<i>Deliver Summer of Fun 2022 programme of activities for 0-25yrs with partners</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing Summer of Fun</i>
Matter E: Charges for play provision					
Matter F: Access to space/provision	<i>F8 - The Local Authority has an accessible and well-known way of arranging temporary road closures, to support more children to play outside their homes</i>	<i>Carried from 2019 Meet ESAG to discuss potential of 'Street Play' road closures for local communities</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

	<p><i>F14 - The Local Authority has a clearly identified section on its website which gives information about play opportunities as described in the Statutory Guidance (play areas, play provision, clubs and their accessibility)</i></p>	<p><i>Audit play page and update bi-monthly</i></p>			
	<p><i>F15 - The Local Authority provides information on access to play opportunities and contact for support if required.</i></p>	<p><i>Development of a dedicated page to raise awareness of 'play' opportunities across the Local Authority.</i></p>			
	<p><i>F19 - The Local Authority widely uses on-site signposting to</i></p>	<p><i>Update/promote the 'play all day' booklet</i></p>			

	<i>safeguard and promote play</i>				
Matter G: Securing and developing the workforce	<i>G6 - The Local Authority includes playwork within its Workforce Development strategies</i>	<i>Deliver workshops for Year 11 and community groups on childcare and play as careers.</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
	<i>G8 - The Local Authority has undertaken a comprehensive training needs analysis for the play workforce as defined in the toolkit glossary and above</i>	<i>Deliver 'Understanding Play Sufficiency' workshop to all PSA lead officer/contacts</i>	<i>Links with G11</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
Matter H: Community engagement and participation	<i>Matter H</i>	<i>Deliver Community Family Fun day to celebrate National Playday</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing Summer of Fun</i>
Matter I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas	<i>Matter I</i>	<i>Contribute to discussions with the Regeneration to attract larger scale investment to provide</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

		<i>opportunities for children and young people to play and hang out in their local communities.</i>			
	<i>13 - Schools ensure that children are provided with a rich play environment for breaks during the school day</i>	<i>Refresh and reintroduce 'Play Friendly Schools'</i>	<i>Links with 17</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
	<i>15 - Schools provide access to school grounds for playing out of school times.</i>	<i>Revisit feasibility studies for schools looking to develop after-school play provision.</i>			
	<i>Matter 18 - The Local Development Plan recognises and addresses the outdoor play needs of children of various age groups and abilities</i>	<i>Develop links with planners to ensure children's play needs are considered in all housing developments.</i>		<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>

	<i>I16 - There is a creative approach to inter-generational activity which encourages better interaction between children of different ages</i>	<i>Work with local schools and colleges to develop a Youth Play volunteer scheme for children 14yrs +</i>	<i>Links with Matter G</i>	<i>Officer time</i>	<i>Existing</i>
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Play Sufficiency Executive Summary 2022

June 2022



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government

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Background

The Welsh Government is the first Government in the World to legislate for children's play – they acknowledge that children have a right to be able to play and therefore they are committed to improving opportunities for all children and young people to play in safety. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council also acknowledges and supports this right.

To demonstrate their commitment, in November 2012 the Welsh Government placed a duty on all Local Authorities to assess the level of play opportunities in their area and produce an accompanying action plan to improve play opportunities available. Blaenau Gwent's Play Sufficiency Assessment and action plan was initially completed in March 2013, with a second assessment process completed in 2016 and third in 2019. This Executive Summary provides an overview of the 2022 assessment.

The definition of play used for the purpose of the Play Sufficiency Duty is the one that had been developed by the play sector and is recognised internationally. This states that:

'Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live'.¹

The Local Authority recognises and acknowledges that every child has the right to play, with an aim to encourage and support communities to create and develop environments where children and young people have the opportunities to play where adults recognise and support the importance of play. Play is central to children's physical, mental, social, emotional health and well-being and is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Following the recent coronavirus pandemic, we recognise that children and young people's lack of or restricted play opportunities has had a detrimental impact, affecting their mental and physical health. Through play, children develop resilience and flexibility, contributing to physical and emotional well-being. For children themselves playing is one of the most important aspects of their lives. Children and young people need and are entitled to quality places and time for play.

We have an amazing environment in Blaenau Gwent that is a valuable resource to support children's play. The Local Authority values the importance of play for children, young people, their families and the benefits this brings to local communities. We advocate that every child should have the freedom to regularly play out, actively and independently, close to where they live. There are many barriers to enabling children's play so to allow this to happen we all need to work together.

Our aim is for Blaenau Gwent to be a County where children and young people are increasingly seen outside enjoying the benefits of play. This requires parents, families and professionals to recognise that play is of great importance to children's lives, and that we all have a role. The Play Sufficiency Duty ensures the Local Authority has mechanisms in place to assess and secure sufficient play opportunities to meet the needs of children, young people and their families. This requires parents, families and professionals to recognise that play is of great importance to children's lives, and that we all have a role.

The assessment process identifies key stakeholders and works with those stakeholders to consider 101 criteria across 9 matter areas to provide an overview of how play is viewed, planned for and delivered in the area.

Matter A – Population

Matter B – Providing for diverse needs

Matter C – Space available for children to play

Matter D – Supervised provision

Matter E – Charges for play provision

Matter F – Access to space/provision

Matter G – Securing and developing the play workforce

Matter H – Community engagement and participation

Matter I – Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas

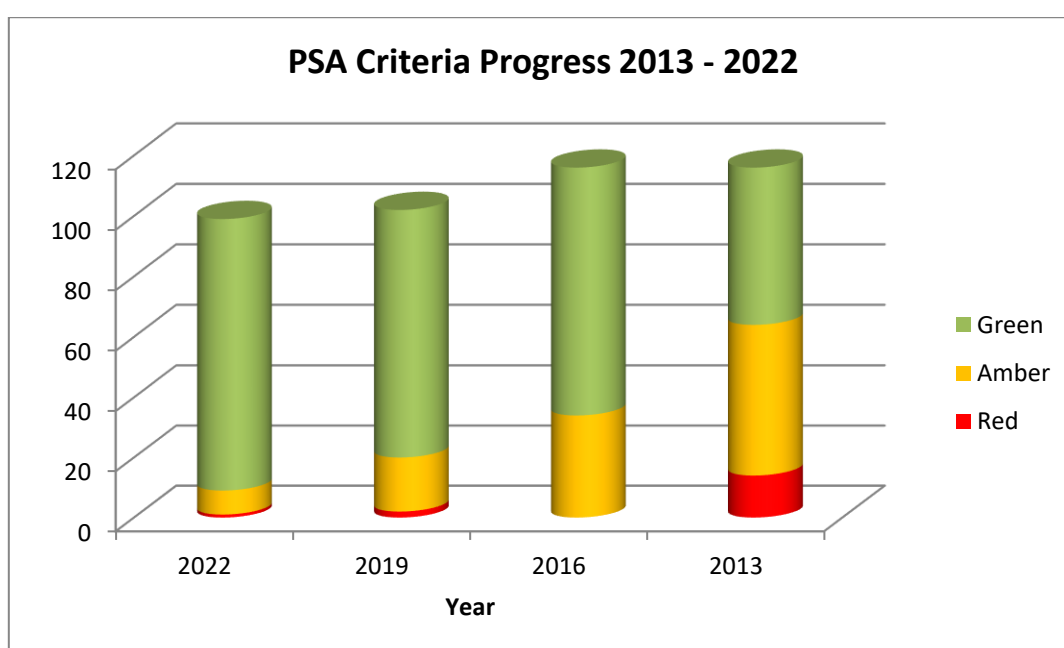


¹ *Wales a Play Friendly Country: Statutory Guidance July 2014*

How far have we come?

As part of the assessment process the Local Authority has to consider a large number of criteria relating to play and indicate whether they would assess the current position in Blaenau Gwent as red, amber or green (RAG status) in relation to each. A green RAG rating means that the criteria is met, an amber rating demonstrates progress has been made whilst a red rating indicates a criterion that we have been unable to progress.

The chart below illustrates the progress made over the last 4 assessments, with the largest proportion of criteria continuing to be RAG rated green in 2022.



NB: 2013 & 2016 – 112 criteria, 2019 - 102 criteria and 2022 – 101 criteria

While the majority of criteria having been given a green rag status, the Local Authority recognises that these need to be maintained and there is still room for development and improvement.

Progress of Action Plans 2016 – 2022

The Local Authority produces annual action plans, the following table shows how many actions were identified in each year and the progress of those;

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Number of actions	16	10	13	12	21	26
Fully met	11	10	9	9	13	17
Progressed	4	0	4	2	7	9
On hold/delayed	1	0	0	1	1	0

Some notable successes have included;

- To improve access, safety and play value of play areas across Blaenau Gwent.
- Working with Town and Community Councils to fund 'Buy a day for play' sessions – to date 6 sessions delivered.
- To celebrate the playwork workforce – awards ceremony held in July 2019.
- Recruitment of Community Play Volunteers to support holiday provision.
- 4 Play Volunteers completing their Level 3 playwork in August 2019.
- 2 Play Volunteers gaining Level 2 Playwork in August 2019.
- Piloting of 'stay and play' sessions for AN children/young people
- Development of service for Children with disabilities through Sparkle
- Play Friendly Communities – 3 engaged with programme, unfortunately delayed due to the pandemic.
- Development of open access play provision during school holidays.
- Pilot Wild Camps project for children in crisis (2021)
- Sustain Wild Camps project
- Launch of 2nd Wild Tots group in Ebbw Vale
- Sustain and continue to deliver Wild Tots Bedwellty
- Recruitment of 2 level 3 Play leaders (1 in Jan 2021 and the other Jan 2022)
- Support children during the pandemic
- Delivered a programme of activities for 0-25 year olds through Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing 2021 engaging with over 12000 children and young people.



**Gaeaf llawn Lles
Winter of Wellbeing**



What did we do?

The Local Authority has a dedicated Play Sufficiency Officer who is responsible for monitoring, reviewing, planning and drafting the Local Authorities Play Sufficiency Assessment; with a reporting process to the Early Years, Childcare and Play Manager and the Services Manager, Children's Services forming 'Play Sufficiency Implementation Group'.

Desktop research, face-to-face meetings, focus groups, surveys, phone calls and emails ensured we offered a flexible, varied approach for lead officers and our partners in the collection of data. Colleagues were able to contribute in their areas of expertise and offer solutions to gaps in data. The following outlines data used for each matter;

Matter A - Population: This section presents socio-economic and demographic data supplied by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council - Policy Officer, Research and Analysis and web based sources.

Matter B – Providing for diverse needs: Underpinned by the responses from our BIG play survey for children/young people and targeted focus groups.

Matter C – Space available for children to play: The following data assisted with the review including the LA's Annual inspection report of outdoor unstaffed fixed play provision, open space assessments, Local Development Plan, GIS mapping, local community knowledge, parks department, Play Sufficiency Officer and survey/focus group findings.

Matter D – Supervised provision: Information from DEWIS (FIS) from providers that have been identified as providing supervised play provision along with information on Early Years, parent and toddler groups and after school clubs that participate in our Quality Assurance scheme, the LA's play and youth service and leisure trust.

Matter E – Charges for play provision: Information held by FIS and services offered by the Playteam and LA. Welsh Governments AWPOG funding for Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing.

Matter F – Access to space/provision: Data and information held by colleagues from Traffic Management, Active Travel and Road Safety Team.

Matter G – Securing and developing the play workforce: Spreadsheet of qualifications of the sector are held by the LA's Childcare Business Development Officer, EYDCPP annual training programme.

Matter H – Community engagement and participation: Data held by the Local Authorities Playteam, FIS and Blaenau Gwent's Engagement strategy.

Matter I – This section is based on key policy and strategic documents working with colleagues across different areas including; transport; education, partnerships, planning, Early Years and Flying Start, Families First and Health & Safety.

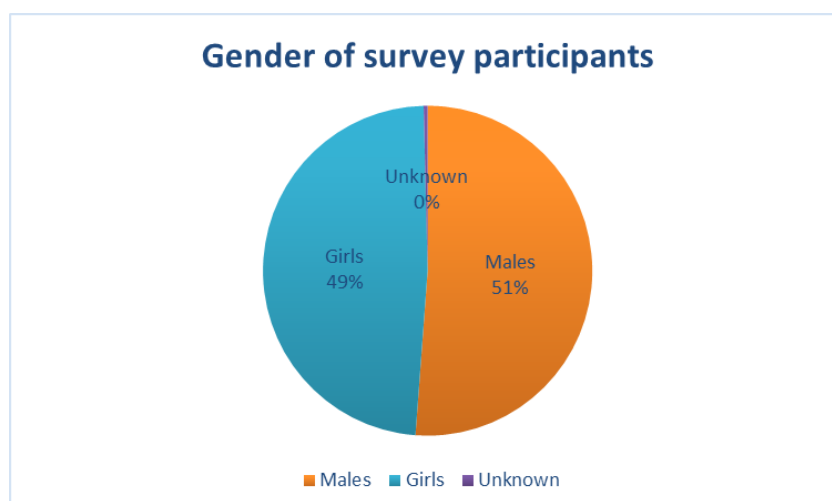
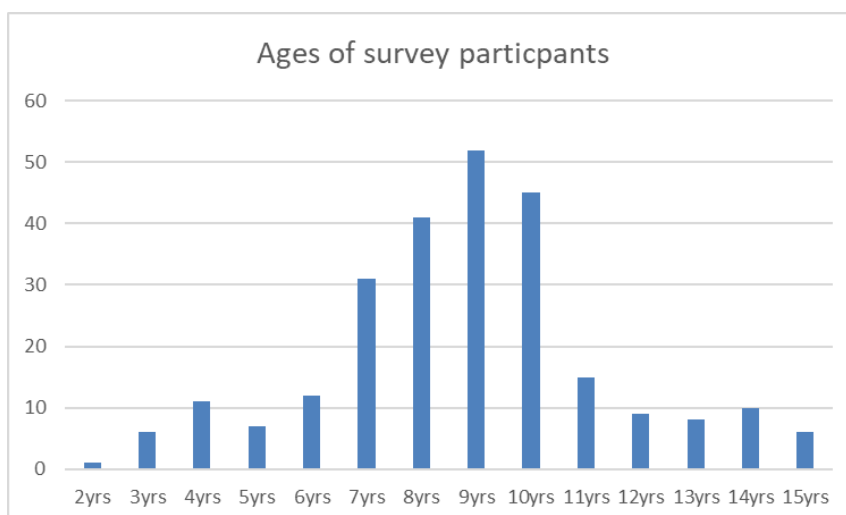
What did you tell us?

Using guidance from Play Wales and Welsh Government, the Local Authority created a survey for children and young people. Questions were developed to gauge children's play experiences relating to; temporal – how children spend their 'free time', spatial – how space supports or constrains children's play and access to space and psychological – permission to play. In this year's survey there were also question relating to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Play survey:

Surveys were circulated to children and young people via partners, schools, local events, play sessions, afterschool clubs and an online version promoted on social media.

254 children participated in the survey...



120 were consulted through our focus groups, including children with disabilities, gypsy/traveller children, children looked after and Welsh language children. A further 221 children, young people and parent/carers consulted during play sessions.

Focus group findings – what did children tell us?

- Why is play/hanging out important? Responses included: improving mental health, socialising, exercise, fun, being out in nature, our right to play, being happy, fresh air,
- Where/what they play when they are not in school? Children identified places they played including: parks, play areas, sports centres, woodland, streets, at home, relatives and friend's house, mountain, skate park, after school clubs, fields.
- What's good about them? Many gave examples of what they did; playing sports, cycling, playing games, skateboarding, tree climbing, fishing, running, jumping, climbing, walking, tag games, getting messy, lots of space, feel safe.
- What's bad about them? Bullies, older children, other adults, random people, dog poop, broken glass, litter, nothing to do.
- What are the barriers? Examples included; weather, traffic, other children, adults, access, park in disrepair. These were categorised into 3 main themes; temporal – how children spend their 'free time', spatial – how supports or constrains children's play and access to space, psychological – permission to play.
- What can we do to minimise the barriers? Participants identified what they could do themselves 'wear suitable clothing', 'carry a mobile phone', 'learn green cross code', 'go with friends'. 'walk away', 'tell an adult', 'call the police', 'pick up litter'.

What did Adults tell us?

When asked what was good or bad about the area for playing out there was a mix of responses with lots of parents noting the positives of living close to play areas or natural features like grassy areas/fields, lakes, woodlands etc and being close to areas that are good for playing.

Negatives included the poor maintenance of play areas and limited facilities for children of all ages to enjoy, dog mess, anti-social behaviour/vandalism and traffic.

When asked why they might travel outside of the area for play parents regularly noted the poor condition of our local play areas. Comments included;

'No decent clean parks in the area'

'The equipment in our local park needs updating'

'It's always overgrown with grass, litter and vandalism everywhere'

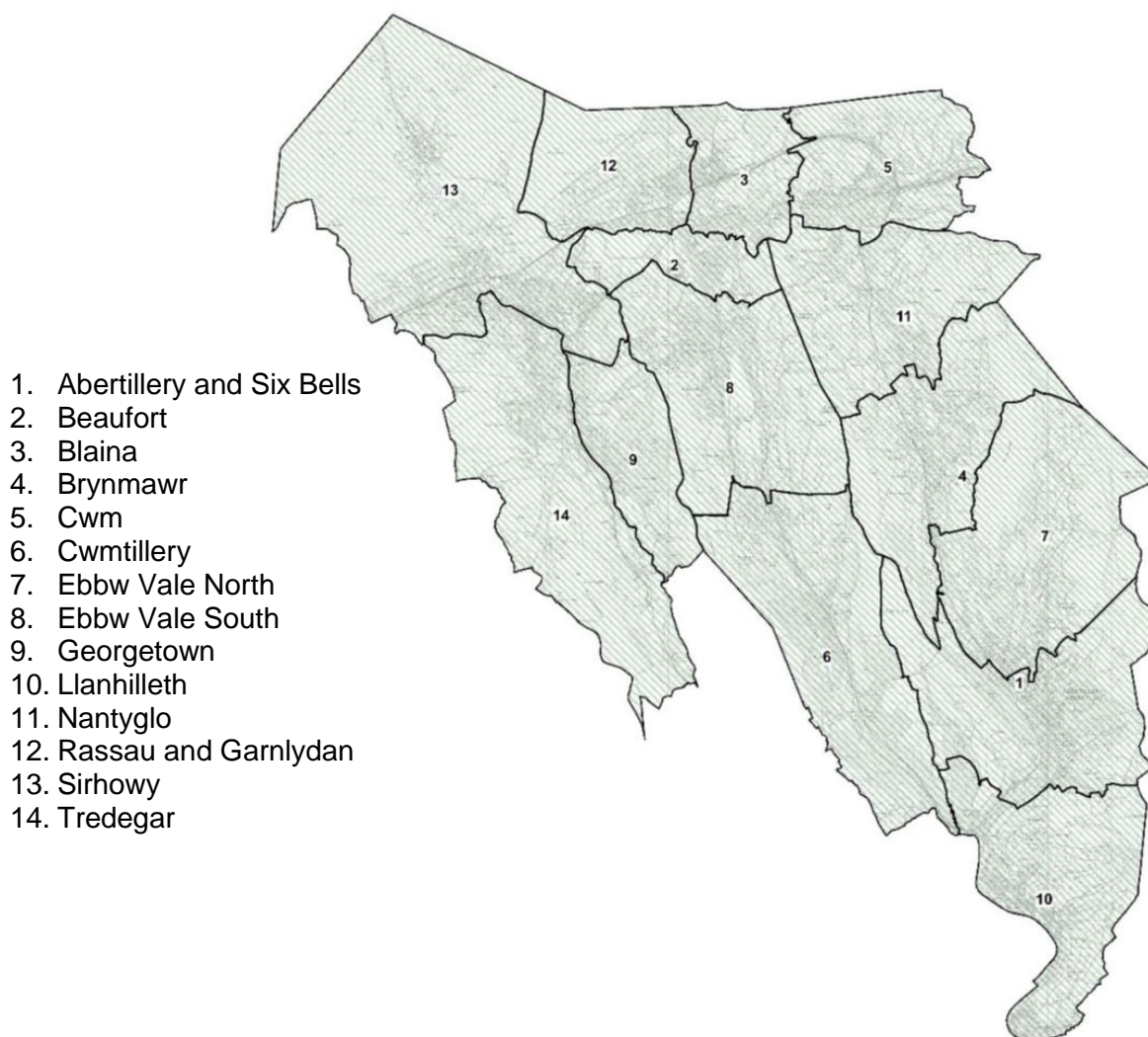
'Hardly anything for older children to play on, and the younger ones get bored'.

Throughout the pandemic when children couldn't leave their towns and travel was prohibited it emphasised how little we have in Blaenau Gwent. As children get older (into their teens) the lack of facilities like bike parks, bowling, tennis courts, assault courses, ninja warrior courses, woodland adventure play courses, laser tag, gaming/amusement arcades, splash parks, cinema and food complexes, limit opportunities for play and for hanging out. The lack of opportunities for children and young people are frequently a focus on social media.

Play diaries, case studies and observations during play sessions have also given insight to the play interests and needs of children and young people.

Challenges were faced and our consultation for this assessment was impacted by the pandemic with limited access for face to face consultation in settings, schools and limited public events.

Data captured has been analysed and helps to inform our ward 'play' profiles.



Where limited data is available the Local Authority will concentrate engagement to ensure an accurate picture for play is established for each area. The Local Authority and their partners will quantify and rank the level of opportunity and utilise the data to inform future development of services, ensuring gaps in play opportunities are prioritised.

The impact of the coronavirus on children's play

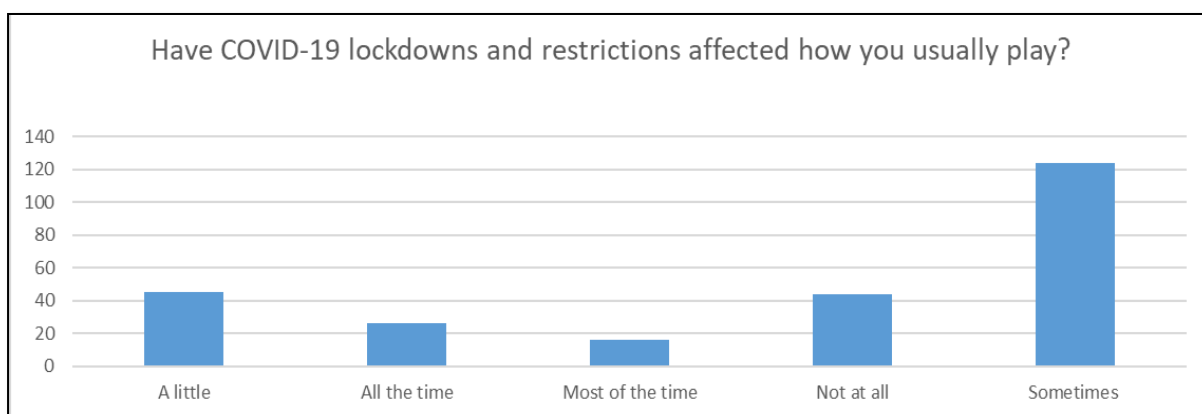
Despite some impact restricting the progress of higher level actions to support the Play Sufficiency Duty, there have been some opportunities that wouldn't have been progressed/developed without additional funding from Welsh Government issued to respond to the effects of the pandemic and the raised profile of play locally and nationally.

Evidence suggests (<https://senedd.wales/media/ixzpwqr5/cr-ld14286-e.pdf> and https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/FINAL_formattedCVRep_EN.pdf) that restrictions on space and permission to play during the recent pandemic has had a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people - physically, mentally and socially.

School closures and the restrictions placed on childcare and play settings and leisure providers have undoubtedly had a huge impact of children's ability to access play opportunities. The pandemic placed severe limits on opportunities for children to socialise outside of their immediate family and school classes for at least some of the time.

It is widely recognised that children's play is vital to aide recovery following the pandemic, with increased awareness and recognition of the value and benefits of play. Welsh Governments commitment to help re build confidence for children, young people and their families to integrate back into the community with Summer of Fun and Winter Wellbeing funding.

Surveys asked 2 specific questions exploring the impact of the pandemic on children's opportunities to play; 'Has Covid 19 affected how you usually play' and if yes 'how'.



16.5 % of replies stated that the coronavirus restrictions and lockdowns hadn't had an impact on how they usually played. Although there may be some potential disparities across the survey responses as 18 of these when asked to expand stated 'I had to stay in' or 'not allowed out'.

Not being able to see friends was the highest themed response when asking how coronavirus had affected them followed by not going out, closures of services and facilities.



Recognising the impact on the wellbeing of children and young people the Local Authority Play team developed a new project ‘Wild Camps’ building on the success of our Wild Tots groups. The Play team supported Families First during the Summer of 2020 to offer some play sessions during the school summer holiday in local communities. Attendances reflected the reluctance of families feeling confident to use services at this time. The coronavirus and lockdown have intensified children and families’ fears of being outdoors, of dirt and disease and of contact with other people. However reasonable this may be, it has to be balanced against the risks to children’s physical and mental health and well-being from being indoors and away from their friends for prolonged periods of time. By encouraging and supporting children to play in the natural environment and working with adults to explain the benefits of play for children’s health and wellbeing, learning and resilience we are able to take a balanced approach.

Our Wild Tots Parent and Toddler group saw a significant increase in registered families (400+) following the closure during the pandemic. The demand was so high that rather than turn families away the Local Authority offered an additional session to meet demand. Furthermore, sessions were offered free of charge to recognise the challenges many families had faced during the pandemic and the emphasis for opportunities to be outdoors based. Families expressed how their children had missed opportunities to play and to socialise with other children, for new parents who felt alone and isolated - the opportunity to play, to be outdoors, to meet others, to have a conversation about their new baby was greatly appreciated. One parent came along with a 9month old asking ‘*what do I do?*’ the reply ‘*sit your child down (in the mud) and take 2 steps back!*’



What did the assessment tell us?

With this fourth PSA, it has been possible to identify where progress has been made against the last PSA completed in 2019, by comparing the RAG ratings under each matter area. There has been progress in every single matter area and this is illustrative of the amount of work undertaken in the intervening years to raise the profile of play and of a high level of partnership working across departments and organisations. Some of the key findings in the assessment include;

Matter A: Population

A ward profile of population of 0-18 year olds has been collated to assist the Local Authority in identifying where play opportunities may be most needed. Data will be used to develop future consultation programmes ensuring we continue to increase our contact with children and young people and to promote engagement in future development of play provision. The information is available to all partners, organisations and stakeholders across Blaenau Gwent to minimise duplication, maximise resources and ensure play opportunities meet the greatest need.

Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs

The Local Authority has made significant progress in providing provision for children with disabilities, there is still further work to be done to undertake access audits of all play provision to give us a good understanding of what is available in Blaenau Gwent. The Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing 2021 Welsh Government programmes has enabled the Local Authority to work more with children with disabilities and gypsy/traveller children.

Matter C: Space available for children to play

Blaenau Gwent has a large number of open spaces and designated play areas. However, it is evident through the Play Sufficiency process and Local Authority review that static play areas are in desperate need of significant investment. There is much evidence to show that there is a high level of dissatisfaction with fixed play areas in Blaenau Gwent. Adults and children commented on litter, broken equipment, traffic and vandalism as barriers to accessing play areas. The poor state of the play areas is something that the Local Authority has recognised in its review of play areas conducted in 2018. The Local Authority has been fortunate to have received AWPOG capital funding for the last few years which has been used to undertake refurbishment and replacement of some items of fixed play equipment but as funding is limited this goes just a little way in addressing this big issue.

Evidence also shows that there is a lack of variety for children (particular older children) this is often vocalised on social media, reflected in focus groups and consultation for this assessment. There is also a growing concern across Blaenau Gwent in relation to the increase of anti-social behaviour due to lack of facilities and services.

There is a need to:

- Consider more non-prescriptive equipment, which can be used flexibly to meets the needs of large numbers of children with different needs and abilities.

- Promote the use of open and green spaces for play, which can offer children sometimes better opportunities to play creatively.
- Create more variety for children and young people’s play options (as vocalised by parents who were consulted) by attracting external investments and companies.
- Pilot the Play Friendly Communities programme to identify local open and green spaces that can be used to promote creative, active and adventurous play.
- Develop initiatives to raise awareness of children’s play

Matter D: Supervised Provision

Supervised play provision in Blaenau Gwent can be categorised as follows:

- Play provision (After School/Holiday Clubs/Open Access provision)
- Youth activities (Streetgames/clubs)
- Recreational activities (sports/arts/cultural/uniformed groups)



There are six staffed CIW registered play settings in Blaenau Gwent providing After School and Holiday Clubs and a varied landscape of providers, groups and organisation who offer play activities after the school day and during school holidays. There is a strong commitment to ensure that children receive rich play opportunities, however this is often met with the challenge of offering a childcare service to parents. Four after-school clubs in Blaenau Gwent have closed since 2020 following the pandemic there are a number of reasons; sustainability concerns through lack of service users with more parents working from home and working flexible hours and less reliant on after school care, financial sustainability following the pandemic and staff recruitment.

There is a need to:

- Seek ways to develop community led open access play provisions.

- Review further opportunities to increase play and recreational activities for children and young people.

Matter E: Charges for play provision

Support is offered to children with additional needs who have been referred through the Additional Needs Panel, Assisted Places are also offered to children from workless households that meet the criteria. No cost provisions are offered across the Local Authority by means of open access play sessions, community events, sessions delivered by Flying Start and Families First programmes. Barnardos offer a comprehensive programme of play activities for children with disabilities with some low cost activities organised by Aneurin Leisure Trust. Welsh Governments Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing 2021 has helped the LA to respond to feedback received from children, young people and parents, that there is a need for more no/low cost activity.

Matter F: Access to space/provision and information, publicity and events

Play is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development, not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live. The Local Authority and partners recognise that play is essential to the health and well-being of children. In the past children's play has been considered facility-based provision whereas it is now being accepted as an environmental issue, i.e. creating the type of environment where children are able to get out and play with their friends. Creating a more child-friendly environment has the potential to create many more opportunities for play than facility provision could do alone. However, facility-based provision is valued by children and adults, providing a service to working parents (breakfast/after school/holiday clubs) and dedicated space for play (static play areas/playing fields).



Family Information Service (FIS) social media and online search facility, as well as email, and telephone options currently provides information on play provision, activities and events but this is not complete and relies on Officers, individual clubs and organisations providing information about specific services, events and activities.

There is a need to:

- Regularly update 'play' information on the designated section of the corporate website.
- Share case studies of community led initiatives in supporting children's play.
- Provide Family Information Service (FIS) with information linking to the full range of play opportunities for children and families.
- Promote positive attitudes to play when engaging with local communities and the media.
- Improve the way that we engage with the public and use the Family Information Service and Press Office to communicate effectively.

Matter G: Securing and developing the play workforce

The Local Authority is fortunate to have a Play Sufficiency Officer and Business Development Officer who support the sector and develop the Play and playwork workforce, including sessional workers and volunteers. There are a number of key staff in specific service areas (e.g. Education, Social Services, Leisure, Youth Service, Environment, Regeneration, Planning) whose work contributes to children's play.

There is a need to:

- Commission/offer training awareness sessions about play for professionals and key decision makers
- Consider a joint approach with other Local Authorities to provide training and support to the play workforce.

Matter H: Community engagement and participation

The Local Authority has a strong commitment in making Blaenau Gwent a place where all citizens are treated as valued members of the community, whose voices are heard and needs considered across the range of policy making areas. The cost of interacting with individual communities can be extremely high, the Local Authority need to continue to work with partners to ensure a robust mechanism is implemented to minimise duplication and maximise outcomes. The Local Authority recognise that Children's participation is most effective when the issues for consideration have a direct relevance to them within their communities and they can see their input has made a difference.

There is a need to:

- Develop links with partners to ensure play is a regular theme for engagement
- Continue to work with partners to ensure a robust mechanism is implemented to minimise duplication and maximise outcomes.

Matter I: Play within relevant policy and implementation agendas

Play is embedded in Local Authority policy and implementation agendas for Health and Well-being, Child Poverty, Early Years/Childcare initiatives and intergenerational initiatives.

In Education, many schools have developed interesting and stimulating play environments. Schools encourage children to cycle to school where it is practical for them to do so and play is actively promoted during morning, afternoon and lunchtime breaks supported and promoted via the Early Years, Childcare and Play Teams 'Play Friendly Schools' award programme. This needs to be continued to be rolled out to schools across Blaenau Gwent following the pandemic.

Planning: There are significant housing developments across Blaenau Gwent however there continues to be a challenge in consideration for the play needs of children and their families. Any conditions around Section 52 are prioritised for schools and there are concerns that to build in funding for play would jeopardise site sales.

There is a need to:

- Develop links with planners to ensure children's play needs are considered in all housing developments.
- Develop a 5-year plan to attract larger scale investment to provide opportunities for children and young people to play and hang out in their local communities.
- The Local Authority will continue to examine all of its policy agendas for their potential impact on children's opportunities to play and assess what targets and actions are required to enhance children's play opportunities.



What are we going to do?

The Local Authority and its' partners, continue their commitment to further develop children's play facilities and play spaces, extending the range of open access play provision and ensuring that opportunities continue to support and promote the play needs and interests of children across Blaenau Gwent. The Local Authorities' Play Sufficiency Action Plan has been developed to maintain the strengths and address the shortcomings identified in the assessment.

Our 2022 Action Plan has been developed through discussions with stakeholders and partners considering;

- Is this a pressing need?
- Is it very likely that we can make a big difference addressing this action?
- Does the action address the play needs of a vulnerable group?
- Do we have capacity to work on this action?
- Can we start working on this straight away?

The Local Authority also considers;

- Are any of our partners working on this already that we could work with or support?
- What are the cost implications of this action?
- What are the benefits of this action?
- Do we have the skills and expertise locally to address the action?

The accountability of delivering the actions in the plan are not the responsibility of any one department and are very reliant on effective partnership working. Some aspects are also reliant on external sources of grant funding that are short term in nature and may impact on the sustainability of some of the actions.

Our Action Plan priorities for 2022

1. Support local communities to develop play opportunities
2. Deliver workshops for Year 11 and community groups on childcare and play as a career.
3. Continue to talk and listen to you
4. Identify local communities to pilot the launch of the Play Friendly Communities programme
5. Support schools to provide and develop opportunities for play
6. To roll out a programme of free activities for 0-25 year olds through Welsh Government's 'Summer of Fun'
7. Recruit Community Play Volunteers to support the delivery of play opportunities
8. Co-ordinate Blaenau Gwent's celebrations for National Playday on the 3rd August 2022 with the theme 'All to play for – building play opportunities for all children'



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Agenda Item 11

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th September 2022**

Report Subject: **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Haydn Trollope, Executive Member
People and Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Ceri Bird, Service Manager Children's 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)
12.07.22	14.07.22	07.09.22				14.09.22		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
To receive the Blaenau Gwent Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) and Action Plan 2022-2027.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 **The Assessment Process**
Under the Childcare Act 2006 Local Authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare for the needs of working parents/carers in their area for children up to 1st September after they turn 14 years, or until they reach the age of 18 in the case of children with a disability.
 - 2.1.1 Under new guidance, Local Authorities are required to conduct a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) every five years to assess a range of factors including supply, demand, costs, workforce and the views of a range of stakeholders about the local childcare market. Previously CSA's were conducted every three years and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has produced them in 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017. The CSA provides the information required to enable the Early Years, Childcare and Play team and partners to identify gaps in provision and identify areas for development. An Action Plan is then developed to monitor actions that need attention. The CSA and Action Plan 2022 – 2027 is attached to this report. The progress of the Action Plan will be reported annually in June and the Action Plan will be updated.
 - 2.1.2 The Early Years, Childcare and Play (EYCP) team conducted the assessment, using various methods, from July 2021 to April 2022, collecting a range of data from;
 - Parents/carers
 - Children
 - Childcare Providers
 - Local Employers

- Schools
- Further Education College
- Umbrella organisations

- 2.1.3 Collection of data presented a number of challenges to the team and there were some issues again with the data provided by childcare providers. Some of these issues with provider data were resolved locally by using local data systems to identify gaps and fill in missing information. The assessment process is designed to take a snapshot of the childcare market at a given point in time, July/August 2021, in this case. The assessment does take account of developments that have happened since though and a full account of the impact of Covid is also presented in the assessment.
- 2.1.4 The parent survey was undertaken at an All Wales level, with Local Authorities promoting the survey in their localities. Despite heavy promotion on social media and visits to play and leisure sessions in October half term 2021 to directly target parents, there was a disappointing response with only 233 parents/carers completing the survey. The response rates for all Local Authorities in Wales were similarly disappointing.
- 2.1.5 The assessment process is designed to take account of both current and future demand to assist in the planning and development of childcare for the next 5 years. Whilst parental demand data can be derived from parental questionnaires where there is a good sample size, it can also be derived by looking at trends and developments that can impact on childcare uptake. The EYCP team were only able to draw general observations from the parental survey due to the low sample size, but have accounted for developments that could/will impact on childcare demand in the assessment document and action plan.
- 2.1.6 Unfortunately, the timing of this assessment has not allowed for updated Census data to be used and so this will be accounted for in the Progress Report and Updated Action Plan for 2023, if there is any meaningful change.
- 2.1.7 The assessment of supply and demand has been considered in relation to Community Planning Areas this year as per the 2017 assessment, they are; Sirhowy, Ebbw Fawr, North Ebbw Fach and South Ebbw Fach.

2.2

Findings

The population in Blaenau Gwent, especially the 0 to 15-year-old group has been in decline for several years and is projected to remain in decline up to the end of this decade. In itself that could suggest the need for childcare is likely to decline. However, there are other factors outlined in the report that are expected to impact on the childcare sector. These include current growth in the housing market in Blaenau Gwent, potential growth in the employment sector and the expansion of key Welsh Government programmes (Childcare Offer and Flying Start).

2.3 **Parent/Carer Survey**

In common with all previous assessments the most common form of childcare used in Blaenau Gwent was still informal care through family and friends.

2.3.1 A significant majority of parent/carers reported being either very or quite satisfied with their current childcare provider (95%).

2.3.2 For those not happy with their childcare, the following improvements were suggested in order of most prevalent;

- Become more affordable
- Extend their opening hours/More hours available
- Offer more flexible sessions
- Better quality provision
- Different location
- Childcare better at meeting child's additional needs
- Offer overnight and evening care

2.3.3 Parents were asked specifically about barriers to accessing Welsh medium childcare and reasons given included: distance to provision, availability, insufficient opening hours and cost.

2.3.4 Parents were asked why they didn't use childcare and in common with the last assessment, the primary reason given was affordability of childcare. Over half of parents surveyed were using informal childcare through family and friends, although some of those were using formal childcare too.

2.3.5 Comments from parents evidenced there is still a strong feeling about the perceived 'unfairness's' of the limited and geographical nature of the Flying Start programme and thus the free childcare for 2 year olds.

2.3.6 As noted earlier in the report the low number of respondents makes it difficult to use findings to help plan for future childcare needs, but they represent a good snapshot of views about the sector.

2.3.7 In terms of future demand, the survey indicated most parents expected to use more childcare in future or their needs would stay the same. Types of childcare required demonstrated a continued reliance on informal childcare, followed by a need for breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and full day nursery places.

2.4 **Supply**

At the time the data was collected in July 2021, there were 56 providers in Blaenau Gwent, an increase of one provider since the assessment in 2017. However, there have been providers that have closed since Summer 2021 (one after-school club and four childminders), so the current total now stands at 51 providers. Since 2017 there are now more providers registered to offer full day care, with an increase from ten to sixteen providers. Some providers changed their registration from sessional to full day care to

support the Childcare Offer pilot and others to assist with the Covid-19 response. This is positive as it offers parents more flexibility with childcare hours offered, but it has resulted in a small decline in overall registered childcare places. (Sessional childcare having been counted previously by the number of both afternoon and morning places).

- 2.4.1 There are concerns at the loss of childminders and after-school provision, echoed by the Umbrella Organisations that support those sectors but this could be because demand has reduced as more parents are working from home they are tending to carry out the school run and after school care themselves.

2.5 **Covid Impact**

This latest assessment was required to include a section on the impact of Covid. The assessment notes the efforts made by the sector from the earliest days of the pandemic to support key worker families and vulnerable families. Blaenau Gwent had one of the lowest setting closure rates in Wales, with over 65% of providers remaining open. Supporting the sector to remain open was a priority for the EYCP team who worked around the clock to support providers with answers to queries and reassurance, PPE packs, model risk assessments and extra funding opportunities.

- 2.5.1 Whilst there has been an undoubted impact on all providers, the impact has been most acutely felt by the after-school sector, with stand-alone clubs based at schools remaining closed until Summer term 2021. Many clubs have not reopened since due to concerns around sustainability and difficulties with recruitment as some staff moved on to other jobs when the clubs were closed.
- 2.5.2 The huge number of grant schemes provided by Welsh Government to support settings needs to be acknowledged and no doubt played a big part in the largely positive outlook of the sector with regard to their future sustainability. There remains concern regarding the impact of the pandemic on quality and safety, financial stability, recruitment and retention but most providers indicated they expected to be in business for a year or longer.

2.6 **Gap Analysis**

Taking account of all the information gathered, gaps in the following areas were identified;

- Childcare for parents working atypical hours
- Welsh medium provision
- Provision suitable to meet the needs of children with Additional Learning Needs
- Childminder provision in Sirhowy and Ebbw Fach
- Childcare for older children (after-school and holiday provision)

However, further feasibility will need to be undertaken, to ensure the development of any new services does not cause displacement or sustainability issues for existing providers.

2.7 **The Action Plan**

The action plan seeks to address gaps identified in the assessment and builds on the previous action plan for 2021-22. It acknowledges that some of the gaps identified were already known and plans to close the gaps were already in place, largely through Capital Programme projects. Actions include;

- Delivery of all capital projects (Swffryd Flying Start hub, Glyncoed Full Day Care, Blaina ICC extension, Welsh medium seedling school)
- Work to attract new childminders to set up in Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr
- Work to establish feasibility of After-School/Holiday Clubs at primary schools
- Development of a Full Day Care Capital scheme in Brynmawr
- Improve inclusion in settings
- Promote Welsh language use and learning within existing settings
- To attract new Welsh language providers to take up tender opportunities in Blaenau Gwent
- To develop more robust data capture from parents/carers with issues
- To develop a new workforce development plan addressing recruitment and retention concerns

2.7.1 The draft assessment and action plan and Executive Summary were submitted to Welsh Government on 30th June as required by regulation.

Following approval by Corporate Leadership Team the document went out for a public consultation period that ended July/August and scheduled for approval by the Executive, by 30th September 2022.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1**

Approve the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan 2022 and agree that it be submitted to Welsh Government

3.2 **Option 2:**

To request further information and additions/amendments are made to the CSA and Action Plan, prior to submission to Welsh Government.

3.3 **Organisational Development comments**

Not applicable

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

Links to Council Priorities within the Corporate Plan -

4.1 **Social Services**

- 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 develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of poverty.

Good quality childcare and play opportunities have a significant impact on the development of children. Children attending childcare are supported to reach their developmental milestones and are encouraged to take up healthy habits in terms of social relationships, physical activity, approaches to learning, meals, drinks and snacks. Childcare staff often act as an 'early warning system' for families and children experiencing problems. All settings undergo Safeguarding training and have the option of additional training in domestic abuse, neglect and online safety. Many of our settings have received awareness training of the Families First programme and know how and when to refer struggling families. They also often help support the early identification of children with emerging additional needs and act appropriately to refer and signpost families to support.

A partnership approach towards working with the childcare sector is vital to ensuring the sustainability of the sector and a maintained focus on quality improvement.

4.2 **Education**

- To improve pupil outcomes, progress and wellbeing, particularly for our more able and our most vulnerable

We have three non-maintained early years education settings in Blaenau Gwent and all support pupils to progress at a good rate whilst attending and work is geared to individual children's developmental levels.

Children attending pre-school settings are supported to learn through their play and develop cognitive skills, physical abilities, new vocabulary, social skills, literacy etc. Unstructured free play not only offers benefits that protect against the harmful effects of stress, but play also gives children unlimited opportunities to discover their own interests and competencies. Play allows them to use their creativity while developing imagination, dexterity, and physical and emotional strength.

Our pre-school settings track and support the development of children attending to ensure they are school ready by the age of 3 years. The EYCP team has a transition process in place to ensure as smooth as possible a transition is had between the pre-school and Foundation Phase Nursery settings.

4.3 **Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities**

All childcare settings are encouraged to sign up to the Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme. The environment section of the scheme is concerned with the promotion of a safe, stimulating environment which

reflects the importance of the people within it with an emphasis on caring for the environment within and outside of the setting.

We encourage settings to take a creative approach in the design of activities and resources promoting re-use and recycling wherever possible.

4.4 **Economic Development and Regeneration**

- To work with partners to provide effective employment support and access to skills development.

There have been some notable successes in attracting new people into the childcare sector by offering introductory and Level 2 CCLD training. Coleg Gwent have worked with the EYCP to secure funding for and promote a Level 3 CCLD qualification.

The EYCP annual training programme allows staff and volunteers in all of our settings to access both mandatory training and CPD opportunities.

4.5 **Links to priorities within the Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan;-**

4.5.1 **Objective 1 - The Best Start In Life For Everyone**

Quality childcare benefits children, families and the economy. The EPPSE (The Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education project) research (2014) shows a child attending high quality childcare has more chance of getting better exam results leading to higher earnings, more chance of holding down a job and commit fewer crimes than those who did not attend high quality early years childcare. The EYCP team is committed to improving the quality of childcare across Blaenau Gwent to ensure our children have the best possible experience from our settings.

4.5.2 **Objective 2 – Safer and Friendly Communities**

Childcare creates a central safe haven for little ones of society to attend, creates jobs in local communities and are places where parents get to know each other from their child's early days.

4.5.3 **Objective 3 – To Look After and Protect the Environment**

See 4.3 above.

4.5.4 **Objective 4 - To Forge New Pathways to Prosperity By Creating Extra Job Opportunities**

The childcare sector in Blaenau Gwent has grown at a significant rate over the last 15 years. As a result, there are more small childcare businesses growing in our communities, with more jobs being created. Affordable childcare acts as a spur to economic growth and the Childcare Offer is supporting some families to use childcare for the first time or to increase the amount of childcare they currently receive. The Flying Start expansion to be rolled out from September is highly likely to encourage use of childcare by families that do not currently use childcare. This is enabling parents to access work and to increase their working hours, improving economic activity rates. For parents receiving funded childcare the additional money

saved could be money that is spent within our communities on other goods or services, creating a further economic benefit.

4.5.5 **Objective 5 - To Encourage People To Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices**

Childcare settings in Blaenau Gwent are encouraged to sign up to Blaenau Gwent Healthy and Sustainable Preschool Scheme which encourages our little ones to make healthy choices from a very young age promoting, protecting and embedding the physical, mental and social health and wellbeing as they grow up. In Blaenau Gwent we have Full Day Care Nurseries, Sessional Childcare, Playgroups and all Flying Start Child Care Settings signed up to the award. The award covers seven health topics: Nutrition and Oral Health, Physical Activity/Active Play, Mental and Emotional Health, Wellbeing and Relationships, Environment, Safety, Hygiene and Workplace Health and Wellbeing.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

Not applicable.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is a statutory a duty for the Local Authority to submit a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every five years.

5.3 ***Legal***

No legal issues identified.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

As outlined above.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Performance and progress of the action plan are monitored by the Service Manager, Early Years Childcare and Play Manager and through the Early Years Development, Childcare and Play Partnership.

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

In addressing actions set out in the action plan, parents and carers can expect that there will be a sufficiency of childcare in Blaenau Gwent to meet most needs, offering choices around childcare type and language offered.

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

As part of the assessment process the Local Authority has sought the views of a range of stakeholders, including parents/carers, children, childcare providers, umbrella organisations, schools, employers and employment organisations.

The assessment has also been subject to a 28 day public consultation.

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

The assessment and action plan acknowledge that the delivery of additional childcare schemes takes time and there are likely to be factors that influence demand for childcare that are as yet unquantifiable. There is a need to have a clear longer term plan for extensions and improvements to the childcare sector, whilst recognising there needs to be flexibility in responding to changing circumstances.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

As outlined in Section 4 above.

6.6 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The Early Years, Childcare and Play team works collaboratively with Flying Start, Families First, Education, Health services, childcare and play providers and other key stakeholders through the Early Years Development Childcare and Play Partnership (EYDCPP) and through day-to-day contact.

6.7 ***EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

N/A

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Progress will be monitored by the Service Manager and through EYDCPP meetings.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan 2022-27

Appendix 2 – Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Executive Summary

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
and Action Plan 2022-27

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1) Introduction

Section 22 of the Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to secure, as far as is reasonably practicable, provision of childcare that is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area to enable them to:

- take up, or remain, in work; or
- undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

Local authorities are required to undertake a full assessment of the childcare provision in their area taking account of supply and demand and stakeholder views. They must conduct an assessment at least every five years and keep their assessment under review in between the main assessments, as part their annual reporting to Welsh Government.

In determining whether the provision of childcare is sufficient, the local authority must have regard to the needs of parents in their area for:

- the provision of childcare in respect of which the childcare element of working tax credit or universal credit is payable
- the provision of childcare in respect of which employer supported childcare or tax-free childcare is payable
- the provision of childcare for children who have special educational needs or require specialist care due to disability
- the provision of childcare involving the use of the Welsh language
- the provision of childcare which enables them to access their Foundation Phase early education entitlement
- the provision of childcare which enables them to access their entitlement for funded childcare places

This Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has been undertaken using a variety of methodologies to capture information relating to the supply of childcare, the demand for childcare and views about the childcare market in Blaenau Gwent from key stakeholders. Supply data has been largely provided to Local Authorities via the SASS process conducted by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). However, a very small number of local providers did not comply with the requirement to complete the SASS process and so they were followed up with a survey issued by the Early Years Childcare and Play team. A further survey (issued to providers in Spring 2022) sought further information about the impact of Covid-19. Information relating to demand has been collected via a parent survey conducted on a national basis during Autumn 2021, and is also derived from population data, intelligence about the local business market, housing developments and in respect of national programmes. This report has been produced taking account of the Welsh Government “Childcare Act Guidance” and supplementary guidance issued during 2021. The accompanying action plan will seek to address any gaps identified in the childcare sector locally and both the Assessment and Action Plan will be submitted to Welsh Government, along with an Executive Summary report, by 30th June 2022. An update on the action plan and progress

report will be submitted on an annual basis up to 2027 when the next full assessment will be undertaken. The information contained within this assessment and action plan serves multiple purposes: it directs the work of the Early Years, Childcare and Play team in working to address gaps; it links with and supports other key strategic plans including the Local Well-being Plan, the Corporate Plan and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032. It also provides a source of information to childcare providers or potential childcare providers about the state of the sector locally and any potential opportunities for business expansion, and it provides information to parents/carers or other interested parties about the role the Local Authority plays in supporting sustainability and quality in the local childcare market. Furthermore, it provides information for Welsh Government to consider in the design of key programmes to meet strategic aims.

Whilst the assessment necessarily focusses on supply and demand at a key point in time (in this instance Summer/Autumn 2021) it will also consider factors that have become apparent since, both in relation to the Coronavirus pandemic and national developments in Welsh Government programmes; expansion of Flying Start to all 2- year-olds, the extension of Childcare Offer for parents in education or training, the review of the school day and year.

Data gathering has taken place over the Summer, Autumn and Spring of 2021 and the assessment has been written in the late Spring with a view to it going through the Local Authority's governance process June to September 2022. A 28-day Public Consultation on the draft Assessment will take place during July/August 2022.

Much of the data we have to build a picture of local demographics is from the Census data and currently this is only available from the 2011 Census. The information released for the 2021 Census will be used for the annual updates and progress reports. The report includes a section on the impact of the Covid-19, which are still currently unfolding. The report will include an update on setting numbers, as sadly we have seen settings closed since the SASS data was collected in Summer 2021 and will provide some commentary on challenges faced during the course of the pandemic and challenges expected in future.

The Early Years Development Childcare and Play Partnership will undertake a monitoring role, scrutinising progress and challenging the robustness of the actions to date. The group meet quarterly, and the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan 2022 will be a regular item on the agenda. Annual update reports are also provided to the Social Services Departmental Management Team.

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan 2022 has been reported through and approved by the Early Years Development Childcare and Play Partnership, the Social Services Departmental Management Team, Corporate Leadership Team and Executive Committee.

2) Principal Statement

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council values the importance of childcare and the impact that has on economic prosperity. It has continued to build on a rapid expansion of the childcare sector between 2000 and 2014 to improve both the sufficiency and quality of childcare offered to local families. The number of childcare places has fluctuated slightly since 2014 but has remained consistently between 1,000 and 1,300.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council remains committed to supporting and improving quality in childcare and play settings to ensure that the sector contributes to the strategic priority that 'Every Child Has the Best Start in Life'. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council shares Welsh Government's view that the provision of high quality childcare and early years education plays an important role in tackling poverty and reducing inequalities, as set out in Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan. There is a multitude of evidence that underlines the critical importance of early years experiences to future outcomes of children over a range of areas including health, education and economic prosperity. High quality childcare and early years education can have a positive influence on outcomes for children, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council are committed to continuing to strive for quality and excellence in all of our childcare and early education provision.

Having been one of the first Authorities in Wales to introduce a Quality Assurance scheme, there has been an ongoing push to ensure the schemes being used properly reflect current local needs and environments and acknowledges up to date good practice. Since the last CSA was completed the Early Years, Childcare and Play team (EYCP), along with colleagues from Flying Start have developed a safeguarding annex to be used alongside the assessment tools, reflecting the importance the Council places on childcare settings having skilled practitioners to support early identification/prevention and protect vulnerable children. There has also been development of new in-house Quality Assurance tools (We Play, Learn and Play at Home and Quality Matters) that replaces the Environmental Ratings Scheme used previously, these tools support quality in settings of all types. Colleagues from the Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme, Early Years Transformation Programme and childcare leaders and practitioners have worked with the Flying Start and EYCP teams to contribute to the development of the latest tool 'Quality Matters', which is to be rolled out during 2022. The Early Years, Childcare and Play (EYCP) team has a dedicated Quality Improvement Officer and a Childcare Strategy Team Leader, whose roles, in working with the providers to raise quality, has delivered results with quality scores improving in recent years. The role complements roles in Flying Start that undertake similar work and there is a close working relationship between both teams to ensure consistency of advice, joint delivery of training and sharing of good practice. The Play Sufficiency

Officer also supports this process by offering expert advice and training on play. There has been a Community Of Practice group established for the last three years where Officers across teams are able to work together, share information and plan training.

Blaenau Gwent CBC has used innovative and creative approaches to encourage the uptake of childcare and promote childcare careers, including childcare roadshows and the production of targeted marketing materials over the years. The EYCP team continues to promote the childcare sector, making increasing use of social media over the last few years to reach a wider audience than possible through more traditional means. The Family Information Service plays an integral role within the team delivering outreach sessions (when permitted) at Job Centre Plus offices and ante-natal clinics and supporting a variety of Local Authority and community events, to promote childcare and other family services. The need to attract more people into childcare and play training has been recognised and we have worked with the local college to develop an introductory course for childcare, 'Steps into Childcare', which have been delivered since 2017. We also deliver introductory play courses in-house. The role of the Childcare Business Development Officer has been critical in recent years, supporting the team with procurement and development of childcare services and supporting the sector to be sustainable through a particularly difficult two years.

Blaenau Gwent has successfully rolled out Flying Start to 13 LSOA's, working with up to 1071 children and their families each year, demonstrating a very positive impact on outcomes for children. The EYCP team works closely with Flying Start colleagues to develop and share good practice and offer continuous professional development opportunities for the whole childcare workforce.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council recognises the provision of childcare is also incredibly important to working parents and parents in training, affording them the opportunity to be economically active and contribute to the area's economic prosperity. We have good links with colleagues in Education, Regeneration and Planning to ensure we work together to identify and where appropriate support/challenge any developments that may have an impact on childcare needs locally.

3) Partnership Working and Consultation

Cwlwm Partners

The Early Years Childcare and Play team has a good working relationship with all umbrella organisations, with representatives from each sitting on the Early Years Development Childcare and Play Partnership (EYDCPP) to receive and share information about the sector generally and to scrutinise the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and annual updates reports and action plans.

A standard Local Authority survey was sent to all Umbrella organisations in Autumn 2021. None of the organisations felt able to comment on the range, quality, affordability, flexibility or suitability of the sector in Blaenau Gwent, specifically as they would have to do this for 22 Authorities, however all were able to provide more general responses to questions about their thoughts relating to the state of the market and offer specific improvement suggestions for specific groups, summarised below.

NDNA Cymru noted the impact of Covid-19 and protective measures has had on income for Day Nurseries and highlighted this had created uncertainty about their future. They had concerns about sustainability and the recruitment of qualified staff. They noted that increasing staffing costs are likely to impact onto the prices charged to parents, resulting in concerns about affordability. New settings opening on school sites, potentially displacing existing places in other local settings was suggested as creating a potential financial burden for parents, especially for those with younger children, if Day Nurseries have to increase fees to remain viable. In terms of improvements for key groups there was a strong focus on making sure families were aware of the choices, programmes and financial support available to them. An additional point was made in relation to the need for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) training for staff within the new ALN system.

Early Years Wales noted they had a wide range of members in Blaenau Gwent, which included the full range of childcare provider types. They noted the work they were undertaking to help settings recover after the Covid-19 which included work on sustainability, recruitment, risk assessments and quality. They raised concerns about staff recruitment and retention and the impact this was having on service levels. Early Years Wales stated they would welcome the expansion of Flying Start to assist low-income families. They noted they would like to see clear referral pathways and information made available with regard to support for children with ALN. It was suggested that websites and social media were an important source of information for parents and the range of information available through their online channels was highlighted.

PACEY Cymru highlighted concerns with the general decline in numbers of childminders across Wales and highlighted 2 de-registrations in the first two quarters of 21/22 in Blaenau Gwent, with only one new registration. PACEY Cymru have been focussing their work on promoting

childminding as a career choice and childcare option for families. It is noted that Blaenau Gwent do not fund childminders to provide either Flying Start childcare or Early Education places and it is suggested that this would be of benefit to low-income families, ensuring parity of opportunity across Local Authority areas and better outcomes for children through continuity of care. Work undertaken with various employment organisations was outlined. The introduction of the new ALN system was highlighted as a significant development and a wish was expressed to find out more about implementation at a local level. The potential opportunity and benefits for families with children who have disabilities to use approved Nannies was also noted. The flexibility of childminders to support working families with atypical working hours/patterns for a broad age range of children was raised. Lastly, a point was made in relation to the limits placed by Planning on the numbers of children a childminder can care for, before planning permission is required and the process and costs associated with applying for the relevant permission.

Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Club noted a lack of Out of School childcare provision in Blaenau Gwent, with a significant number of places being delivered through Day Nurseries, rather than stand-alone clubs, with implications in terms of fees charged. The need to develop Welsh medium Out Of School care was also raised as was the need to explore demand for childcare in schools that were not currently served by Out Of School services. Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Club suggest that more needs to be done to encourage greater flexibility in services to meet the needs of parents working atypical hours (noting this type of work is often linked with low paid work). They note the benefits of settings becoming registered, to allow families to use Government funding schemes and also suggest that existing schemes be expanded (e.g., Flying Start, Childcare Offer) to increase eligibility. The need to support settings to be inclusive and accessible so that children with complex needs can be cared for, was highlighted. Sustainability is a major concern, and it is suggested that organisations carefully consider raising rental charges and also consideration is given to the impact of initiatives like SHEP, Playworks Holiday Programme and training camps has on registered providers. The need for close collaboration between the childcare sector and education, noting parental preference for onsite childcare, was noted. General issues sometimes experienced by settings located at schools were cited as a hindrance. Issues with recruitment and retention were also highlighted and a call for action to be taken at a local and national level was made, recognition of the professional status of the workforce was seen as part of this.

Mudiad Meithrin note a lack of Welsh medium provision in Blaenau Gwent and the desire for every child in every part of Wales to have access to play, learn and grow through the medium of Welsh. The need to experience full Welsh language immersion for best outcomes was highlighted. An offer to work with the Local Authority to set up Welsh language immersion playgroup sessions in their settings (following on from a successful pilot) was made. Promoting the benefits of Welsh medium childcare and education was raised, as was ensuring eligible families take up their offer of Flying Start. The ambition for access to Welsh medium childcare for children with disabilities was for it to be

easy and frictionless. Ensuring access to information to information about childcare options and Childcare Offer was a need for working families. It was suggested providers seek to extend their hours to fit in with parental needs and that Welsh speaking childminders needed to be recruited. Several recommendations were made with regards to improvements to the information contained on the Local Authority website.

Schools

A survey was sent to all 21 primary schools in Blaenau Gwent but there was a very limited response, with only 3 surveys being returned. Those schools all had childcare settings on site and felt this was beneficial and all were aware of other childcare services operating locally. One Head wanted more information about the Childcare Offer and two Heads were unsure if Childcare Offer benefitted working parents. There was a mixed view on the sufficiency of local childcare and the difficulty with take-up rates/sustainability/recruitment for after-school clubs was noted. In addition to registered childcare providers on site, one school was offering space to a parent and toddler group.

All schools in Blaenau Gwent have nursery provision and all offer free Breakfast Club. Broadly speaking there is good support from schools for local childcare provision, with 11 out of the 21 primary schools having childcare located on site. There were concerns raised with Education during 2021 regarding more schools starting to offer full-time Foundation Phase nursery places and the impact this would have on local childcare providers and that situation is being monitored.

Employers and Employment Organisations

Surveys were shared with both employers and employment organisations via the Blaenau Gwent Multi-Agency Forum. Unfortunately, only one response was provided.

The Childcare Business Development Officer sits on the Forum and regularly shares relevant information with the EYCP team regarding employment and training developments discussed at the Forum. Our plans with regards to childcare training, expansion, tender opportunities and updates on Childcare Offer are also fed into this group.

Direct outreach work via the Family Information Service (FIS) with Job Centre plus was stopped during Covid-19, however, has been restarted from April 2022. Previously FIS has met with individuals and groups of job seekers to support with guidance around childcare, funding sources and childcare careers. It is planned this activity will resume and offer additional insights into barriers faced by parents looking for work.

Local Safeguarding Board

EYCP team Officers have undergone training via the Gwent Safeguarding Board to enable them to deliver an Introduction to Safeguarding for Children and Adults to childcare and play practitioners in Blaenau Gwent. They also have the opportunity to attend information exchanges and good practice events. There are strong links with both the Safeguarding Manager in Children’s services, who has attended Childcare Network meetings to provide information to practitioners, and the Safeguarding in Education Manager who has supported the teams in the development of and quality assurance of our in-house safeguarding assessment tool.

Children

Children attending After School Club provision and the School’s Grand Council were specifically targeted to complete a survey regarding their views on childcare. The survey was also shared more widely on social media with parents encouraged to ask their child to participate. Despite best efforts, only 9 children completed the survey. A focus group was convened to consult with Children Looked After and their carers, but only one carer and two children attended, out of eight families invited. Unfortunately, they had no experience of childcare to share their views on that, but were able to share views on how they played that have been incorporated into the Play Sufficiency Assessment.

Four of the children used registered childcare either after-school or in the holidays, 3 were cared for by grandparents and one was solely cared for by the parent/guardian. 4 of the children said they would attend an after-school club at comprehensive, but all were under 8 years old. 6 of the 8 felt there was not enough to do in the holidays.

When asked how they would like to spend their holidays the children told us:

‘Going nice places with my friends’

‘Hanging out with friends’

‘On days out’

‘Sports – swimming, gymnastics, football, karate, climbing session, day trips, walks. I really enjoyed the free sessions that ran during

the last Summer holidays’

‘With family and friends going to places that are fun and of interest’

‘Youth Club and Tik Tok’

‘Play Outside’

I really enjoyed the free sessions that ran during last Summer holidays especially the martial arts sessions, Eden Centre and swimming’

Welsh Education Strategic Plan

There are clear and strong links with between the Early Years Childcare and Play Team and Education. The Early Years Childcare and Play Manager sits on the Welsh Education Forum and various subgroups of that Forum.

There is a strong commitment in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022 – 2032 on strengthening Welsh in Education and in the Early Years in Blaenau Gwent. Actions identified, relative to childcare, include:

- Increasing the capacity within existing childcare and early years (Welsh medium sector) by at least 2 settings in order to feed school-based nursery and Welsh medium Statutory education provision
- The development of an effective promotion and engagement strategy, which highlights the benefits of being bi-lingual, dispels myths and creates opportunities for increased participation
- Committing to a workforce development plan in partnership with EAS, and Coleg Gwent, along with other key partners

The WESP document details the childcare sector contribution in recent years to Outcome 1 ‘More nursery children/three-year-olds receive their Education through the medium of Welsh’. They include:

- Developments already underway to extend the number of childcare places available in Welsh in the Ebbw Fawr and Sirhowy areas.
- Approval for a Welsh medium setting in South Ebbw Fach to become a registered early education provider to meet the concerns of parents in that catchment regarding 3-year-olds using school transport.
- Work undertaken by the Family Information Service in the promotion of Welsh language resources is ongoing.
- Mudiad Meithrin have opened a new Ti a Fi in Sirhowy and a Cylch Meithrin has been registered, although not yet open due to recruitment issues.
- English medium Day Nursery in Ebbw Fawr has piloted delivering daily Cylch Meithrin sessions, supported by Croesi’r Bont.
- Success of Cymraeg for Kids programme

The Blaenau Gwent Welsh in Education Forum will continue to progress expansion of Welsh medium education and childcare in Blaenau Gwent. The Forum is very proactive and has strong representation from key stakeholders from Early Years through to Adult Education members.

Local Well-being Assessment

The Gwent Local Well-being Assessment has been recently published. Underpinning that are the well-being assessments for each of the four Community Planning Area within Blaenau Gwent, along with the eighteen for each Community Planning Area in the other Gwent Local Authorities. There is recognition in the assessment that *'Childcare is not just a service for parents who work; it is a valuable service for children too. Research indicates that childcare can provide immediate and long-term benefits to children from the poorest backgrounds if they receive high quality provision in their early years, improving prospects future generations'*.

The assessment notes the impact poverty has on our local population and, at 45%, Blaenau Gwent has the largest proportion of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the top 20% most deprived LSOAs in Wales, as defined by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. The Assessments indicate that there are a reasonable range of types of provision across most community planning areas. However, Welsh medium childcare and provision for children with special and educational needs and disabilities is generally low across Gwent. Being a stay-at home parent or receiving support from family or friends who look after children were the most common reasons for parents in Gwent not using formal childcare.

In terms of the Childcare and Early Education Sector the assessment notes:

- Coronavirus has had a disruptive effect on education. School attendance has been affected and led to periods of remote learning for pupils. We don't yet know what the long-term impact on learning will be.
- Children and young people need to have the best start in life is clear and we know that much of the inequality and poor life circumstances experienced in our communities is preventable or its impact can be reduced.
- Cost and availability of childcare can be a barrier to working parents being able to work and Childcare Sufficiency Assessments tell us that:
 - The cost of childcare is a barrier for many families across Gwent.
 - More flexible opening times/wrap-around childcare arrangements are needed to assist parents on irregular shift patterns.
 - Both these factors are contributing to increased economic inactivity.

4) Population

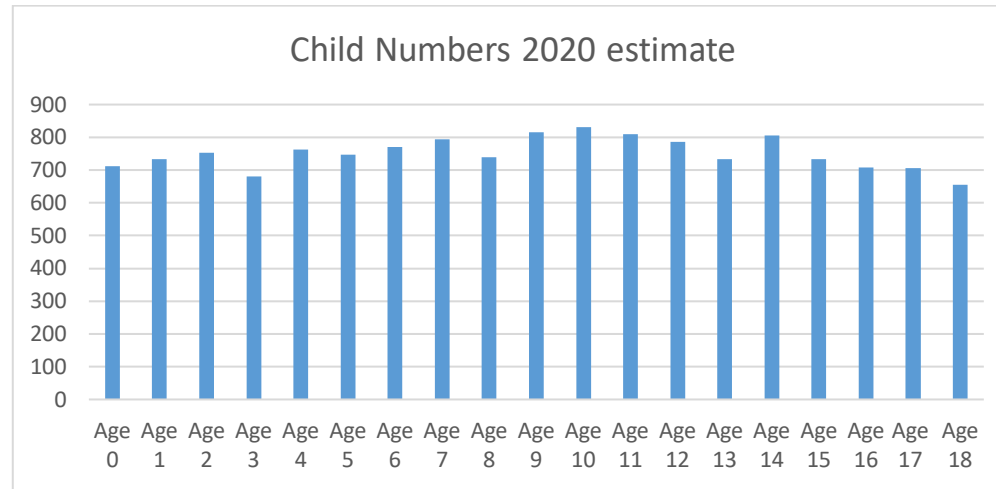
Blaenau Gwent is located in the Heads of the Valleys area of South East Wales. It is one of the smallest Local Authorities in Wales both in terms of geographical area and population size. Some of the data required for this assessment is dependent on census information collected by the Office for National Statistics. The last census was undertaken in 2021, but results are not yet published, so some of the data is sourced from the 2011 census. Therefore, some of the information used to support this assessment may now be somewhat outdated and will require updating for the 2022/23 CSA Progress Report and Updated Action Plan.

Population statistics show that the population in Blaenau Gwent has been in decline for several decades, although the rate of decline has decreased in the last 30 years. The latest 2022 total population estimate is 69,548. Population projections indicate that there will be continued population decline up to 2031, although relatively small (estimated 0.7%). However, the estimates also indicate that there will be a more notable decrease of 7.9% in those aged 15 and under.

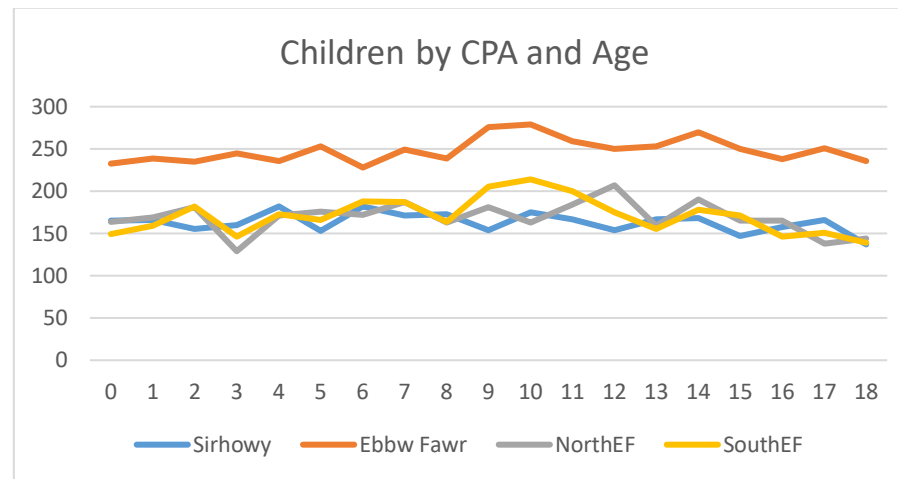
Live birth data for the last 4 years, see below, demonstrates a declining birth rate, which would seem in keeping with population projections.

Year	Live birth rate number
2020/21	623
2019/20	695
2018/19	775
2017/18	749

The 2020 population estimate, indicates the numbers of children by age group in 2020.



When separated into Community Planning Areas the figures show greater numbers of children living in Ebbw Fawr (4719), but similar numbers in Sirhowy (3100), North Ebbw Fach (3208) and South Ebbw Fach (3248).



The 2011 Census data showed Blaenau Gwent's Black and Ethnic Minority population to be just under 1,900. This equates to 2.6% of the total population and well below the Welsh average 6.7%. In 2001 the percentage of people in Blaenau Gwent from minority ethnic groups was 1.8%, approximately 1,300 people, which shows a notable increase from 2001 to 2011. Even so, in 2011 Blaenau Gwent still had one of the lowest levels of people from minority ethnic groups in England and Wales.

The number of Welsh speakers was lower at 7.8% in Blaenau Gwent in 2011 than the Gwent region and significantly lower than the all-Wales average of 19%. This figure shows a decline from 2001 when the percentage was 9.5% and was in keeping with the decline seen across Gwent and Wales as a whole.

The Disability Index in Blaenau Gwent currently has 240 children/young people (161 children aged between 0-17 years and a further 70 Young People aged 18-24 years). As a proportion of the total population for those age groups, that is 1.3%. The Local Authority recognises that there are different definitions of disability and thresholds to access services that may mean not all children are counted.

The Local Authority currently has 197 children looked after, age broken down as follows;

Age Range	CLA Numbers
Under 1 year	8
1 – 4 years	33
5 – 9 years	37
10 – 15 years	77
16 – 18 years	42

The following table shows the numbers of children living in workless households in 2018. It shows there are a higher proportion with almost one in every five children living in workless households in Blaenau Gwent, higher than the Wales average and significantly higher than the UK average.

Children living in workless/mixed or working households by number and percentage of households	Working households (None of working age in employment) %	Mixed households (some working age in employment) %	Working households (all working age in employment) %
United Kingdom	14.5%	27.9%	57.6%
Wales	17.2%	27.4%	55.3%
Blaenau Gwent	19.9%	25.5%	54.6%

5) Supply

Overview – Childcare Types, Services and Places

This information reflects data collected in Summer 2021 via the SASS process to present a snapshot picture of childcare services at a point in time. Updates where appropriate will be included in the narrative for each childcare type as circumstances have changed for some providers since data was collected.

Childcare Type	Childcare Services	Registered	Unregistered
Childminder	Total Childminders	32	0
	Full Day Care	31	0
	Half Day Care	25	0
	Before School	28	0
	After School	28	0
	Wraparound	24	0
	Holiday	32	0
	Other	0	0
Full Day Care	Total Full Day Care *	16	0
	Full Day Care	11	0
	Half Day Care	14	0
	Before School	5	0
	After School	8	0
	Wraparound	13	0
	Lunch	7	0
	Holiday	14	0
	Other	0	0
Sessional Day Care	Total Sessional Care	6	0
	Morning Session	6	0
	Afternoon Session	5	0
	Wraparound	0	0

	Lunch	2	0
	Holiday	2	0
	Other	0	0
Out of School Care	Total Out of School Provision	3	0
	Before School	0	0
	After School	2	0
	Holiday Club	1	0
Nanny	Total Nannies	0	0
Play Provision	Total Play provision	0	12
	BG Play Team	0	6
	SHEP	0	6

There were no unregistered childcare providers at the time data was collected, only play provision was unregistered. One previously unregistered after-school club has closed, and one further unregistered club decided not to re-open following the pandemic.

At the time of recording there were no nannies in Blaenau Gwent that we were aware of, however one person has registered through the Voluntary Approval Scheme in Spring 2022.

There was no crèche provision in Blaenau Gwent.

The table below illustrates that there is a spread of childcare and play services available across Blaenau Gwent. Whilst the number of providers offering both sessional and out of school childcare appear low, it is important to note that most providers registered to deliver full day care offer sessional, after-school and holiday places. Additionally, all childminders offer at least some holiday care.

Childcare Type	Numbers of Providers by Community Planning Area				
	Sirhowy	Ebbw Fawr	North Ebbw Fach	South Ebbw Fach	Total
Childminders	4	7	10	11	32
Full Day Care	4	7	2	3	16
Sessional Day Care	2	1	1	2	6
Out of School Care	0	0	2	0	2
Play Provision	2	4	3	3	12

It is notable that whilst the numbers of childminders registered in Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr are significantly lower than the numbers in North Ebbw Fach and South Ebbw Fach, both of those former areas are well served in terms of full day care provision.

Registered Places Term Time Provision

Childcare Type	Registered Places Term Time				
	Maximum Capacity	Number of Children Using Service	Total Places Across All Services	Number of Vacancies across all Services	Waiting List
Childminder	228	239	1226	167	7
Full Day Care	621	809	2678	416	49
Sessional Day Care	260	229	229	128	0 #1
Out of School Care	110	130	110	40 #2	0

#1 only one provider recorded a waiting list for 70, assumed to be an error

#2 one provider noted 200 vacancies but only registered for 40 places (they were closed at the time data was collected)

The total number of registered places across all provision is 1,219. For comparisons with previous CSA's where sessional day care places were counted twice (where there were 2 sessions being provided in the same day), that total amounts to 1,335 places.

In almost all childcare types there are more children on the books than there are registered places. This is because by far the most common attendance pattern is part time, which sometimes means one registered place is spread across 2 or more children.

Unregistered Term Time Provision

There is no unregistered provision during term time at this time. After-school clubs that have previously run as unregistered provision have been lost due to Covid.

Registered Places – School Holidays

Childcare Type	Registered Places School Holidays			
	Maximum Capacity	Number of Children Using Service	Number of Vacancies	Waiting List
Childminder	228	N/K	N/K	6
Full Day Care	496	N/K	N/K	0
Sessional Day Care	44	N/K	N/K	0
Out of School Care	70	N/K	N/K	0

The numbers of places are significantly less at 836

The data supplied via SASS does not distinguish between children attending or vacancy rates for holiday and term time care.

Unregistered Provision – School Holidays

Unregistered provision consists of open access play sessions and the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP). Open access play provision runs in Blaenau Gwent over three days per week for 5 weeks of the Summer holidays, during October and February half term. There is no defined limit on places offered, as this will depend on the numbers of staff and volunteer are available on any day to support the sessions. Sessions typically run at 6 sites each week for two hours each time.

SHEP ran in 6 schools in Summer 2021, offering 280 places across 2 weeks of provision. The provision is targeted at children most in need by the schools so is not necessarily an option for all working parents seeking holiday childcare.

Childminders

At the time of data collection Blaenau Gwent had 32 childminders offering 228 registered places over 1,120 different types of provision (full days, half days, before school, after school, school holiday). This is a decrease of four childminders since 2017 and sadly there have been a further 2 de-registrations since the data was captured in Summer 2021.

The table below demonstrates the services offered, geographical spread of childminders on language categorisation:

Area	Total Number	English Medium	English and Welsh Medium
Sirhowy	4	4	0
Ebbw Fawr	7	3	4
North Ebbw Fach	10	7	3
South Ebbw Fach	11	9	2
Total	32	23	9

Nearly all childminders offer a good range of services, with a good spread in each Community Planning areas:

Services	Sirhowy	Ebbw Fawr	North Ebbw Fach	South Ebbw Fach
Full Day Care	4	7	10	10

Half Day am	3	6	8	8
Half Day pm	3	6	9	7
Before School	4	6	7	11
After School	4	6	7	11
Holiday Care	4	7	10	11

There is a lot of choice available in two community planning areas – South Ebbw Fach (eleven childminders) and North Ebbw Fach (ten childminders), in terms of numbers of childminders and services available. There is less choice in Ebbw Fawr (seven childminders) and a very limited choice in Sirhowy, with only four providers identified. No childminder in Blaenau Gwent offers a Welsh medium service although 9 are categorised as offering both English and Welsh. Whilst there are childminders offering this mixed language provision in all other areas, there are none in Sirhowy.

Whilst the data indicates most childminders offered a range of services in terms of Monday to Friday provision and early morning to early evening provision, there is no late evening/overnight care available, and no childminder offers a weekend service. Opening hours range from 6.00am in the morning to 18.30pm in the evening and there are providers offering services over 12 hours each day in each area. All childminders provide at least some holiday provision across the Summer holidays, however twenty-four childminders reported that they didn't open for the Christmas holidays (or had not yet decided at the point they completed the survey. One provider in South Ebbw Fach did not open for any of the half term holidays and one further childminder did not open at Easter. Six childminders in total did not open for May half term. Otherwise there is good coverage over most school holidays in each area.

The majority of children (60%) using childminders in 2017, did so on a part-time basis but that has increased to 80% in 2021. Full time attendance has decreased from 34% of children in 2017 to 16% of children in 2021 and those attending ad hoc has remained a similar proportion (5% in 2017 and 4% in 2021).

Childminders were caring for 277 children ranging in age from under 12 months up to 11 years of age and at the time of the survey were caring for 6 children with additional needs, a proportion of just over 2%.

The hourly cost of childminder provision ranges from £4.00 per hour to £6.00 per hour, but by far the most common charge was £4.50 per hour. Calculated as an average of all provider charges in each area, North Ebbw Fach is slightly more expensive at £4.89 per hour and Ebbw Fawr produced the cheapest average at £4.37 per hour.

There are a significant, but reducing, number of vacancies across the Borough for childminder services, with a vacancy rate of 13%, compared to 30% in 2017. Seven childminders recorded a waiting list for full day care places, one for afternoon care and three for after school care. The vacancy rate could indicate supply is sufficient, although there is potential to offer more parental choice and flexible childcare, through childminders in the two Community Planning Areas where there are lower numbers. Whilst there are only four childminders operating in Sirhowy and seven childminders operating in Ebbw Fawr, both of these areas are well served by day nursery provision. However, there is potential for growth as childminders could offer more flexibility for some families. It is also important to note that none of the childminders in Sirhowy offer a service in Welsh or in both English and Welsh, so there is potentially a gap in provision in respect of language choice in this area. This may be more sought after by parents with the opening of the new Welsh medium seedling school in Tredegar in 2023/24.

Covid has been a major challenge for childminders with fifteen childminders having to temporarily close their service on at least one occasion. Only one childminder felt that they didn't have sufficient PPE during the pandemic. Sixteen childminders said there had been less training offered, but four felt there had been more. (It may be that the online nature of training offered during the pandemic made it easier for some to access training). Fourteen childminders were unsure of their future sustainability, whilst the remaining eighteen felt confident about their sustainability for another year or longer.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The loss of childminder numbers in Blaenau Gwent is a concern, not just because of the loss of childcare spaces that brings overall but also because of the reduction in choice of types of childcare available for parents/carers. Childminders can sometimes offer flexibility that setting based providers cannot and many parents prefer a home-based setting.

There is some indication that vacancies have diminished since the last full assessment, and this should support sustainability moving forward. Whilst a significant number of childminders were unsure of their future last Summer, it is hoped the grants supplied to the sector in the second half of 2021/22, along with the reduction in of restrictions should provide a more stable base for their businesses.

All but three childminders are registered to deliver Childcare Offer, but none are commissioned to deliver Flying Start or Early Education currently. The expansion of Flying Start will potentially offer more opportunities for childminders and this is being actively considered currently.

Engagement with the Local Authority in terms of training uptake and attendance at Network had significantly improved up until the pandemic. During the pandemic regular communications from the Early Years Childcare and Play team were shared with childminders and there were virtual meetings held to discuss and offer help with grants specifically.

There is a gap in the area for childminding services that could be delivered through the medium of Welsh and extending the number of services that can offer both English and Welsh would be very desirable.

There is also a potential gap for parents who need childcare at atypical times (very early morning, late evening, overnight) that could be considered both by existing childminders and those considering becoming a childminder for those that may want to look for a unique selling point.

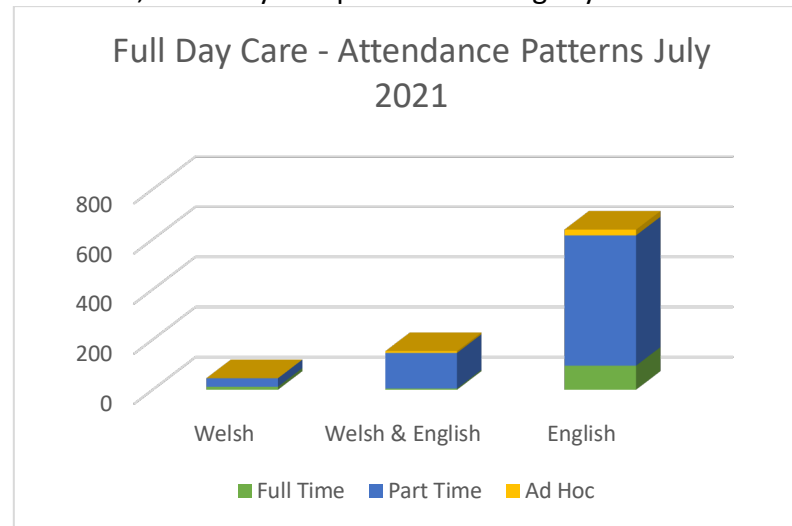
Full Day Care

The number of providers registered to provide full day care has increased significantly from ten to sixteen, since the last CSA conducted in 2017. The providers are made up of eight Day Nurseries (2 new nurseries opened through the pandemic), 2 Cylchoedd Meithrin and 6 Playgroups who between them offer 621 registered childcare places with 3073 places across service types. There are full day providers in every community planning area; four in Sirhowy, seven in Ebbw Fawr, two in North Ebbw Fach and three in South Ebbw Fach. They offer a range of services from full day care to wraparound and lunch service. The table below illustrates the range of services and places offered by providers, for each Community Planning Area:

Service Type	Sirhowy	Ebbw Fawr	North Ebbw Fach	South Ebbw Fach
Full Day Care	104	316	48	42

Half Day Nursery am	129	284	48	81
Half Day Nursery pm	110	284	48	81
Playgroup/Cylch Meithrin am	0	48	43	69
Playgroup/Cylch Meithrin pm	0	48	43	42
Before School	85	153	48	62
After School	85	270	158	42
Lunch	83	108	72	39
TOTAL	596	1511	508	458

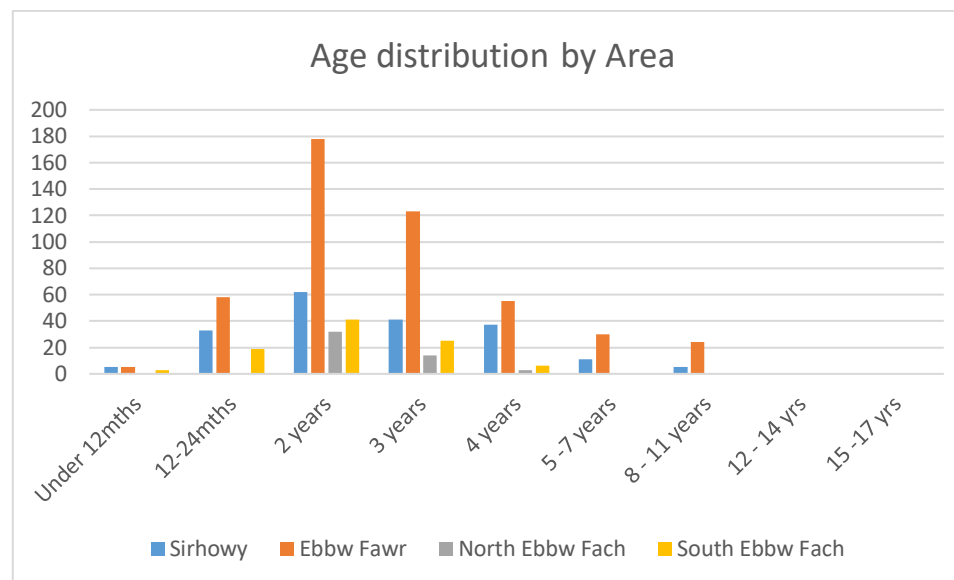
The number of places is significantly higher in Ebbw Fawr, than the other three community planning areas, that area being particularly well served by Day Nurseries with four operating in and around Ebbw Vale. The numbers of full day/half day care and playgroup places in North Ebbw Fach are significantly lower than other areas, with only one provider serving Brynmawr and the top end of Nantyglo.



There has been a significant change in attendance patterns since the last CSA, although part-time attendance remains the most prevalent type, it has increased significantly from 55% to 83%. In contrast full-time attendance has reduced from 36% to 13% and ad hoc attendance from 9% to 4%.

None of the Day Nursery providers identified as Welsh medium providers; one identified as using both English and Welsh, whilst the remaining seven are English medium settings. One Day Nursery in Ebbw Fawr has been piloting the delivery of a Cylch Meithrin service within their setting with some success. The two Cylchoedd Meithrin, that provide full day care for 38 registered places, offer a shorter day than full Day Nursery settings at 6 hours maximum. One playgroup, previously identified in 2017 as a Welsh medium setting, now identifies as an English and Welsh setting and the remaining five playgroup providers identified as English medium settings.

It is notable that the significant years for the provision of full day care services are between the ages of 2 and 3 years, with a decline in numbers from 4 years onwards and no take up post 11 years of age.



32 of the 731 children attending full day care were identified as having a disability or additional needs, which represents 4% of the children taking up childcare places.

The providers reported 410 vacancies over their range of services in July 2021, which is 15% of total services provided and represents a decrease in vacancy rate which was standing at 34% for the same period in 2016.

Only two community planning areas had providers reporting waiting lists – Sirhowy (39 children) and Ebbw Fawr (8 children), all relating to English medium services.

There are 2 Cylchoedd Meithrin offering 95 places, across morning, lunch and afternoon sessions. Up to 99 children were accessing a place in Summer 2021.

The hours of provision range from opening times of between 7.00am to 9.15am and the session end times from 2.45pm to 6pm. Day nurseries typically opening from 7.30am to 6pm, and the Cylchoedd Meithrin/playgroups run from between 9am and 3.30pm. No full day care providers offer late evening finishing times or weekend provision. Session lengths vary from 2.5 hours up to 10.5 hours. There are full day nurseries offering the longer opening hours in each of the Community Planning Areas.

Day Nurseries are generally open for 50/51 weeks of the year (closing for 1-2 weeks at Christmas but open for the remainder of the year. The Cylchoedd Meithrin and Playgroups are more mixed with only four settings offering some holiday provision.

Costs for Cylchoedd Meithrin and Playgroups ranged from £8.50 to £15.00 per session and full day nursery costs ranged from £36 to £45 per day.

Covid had a huge impact on Full Day Care providers with eleven of the 16 providers temporarily closing at least once (by Summer 2021). The two Cylchoedd Meithrin closed early in the pandemic and remained closed for 5 months, five other providers closed for a period of 2-3 months. All providers felt at the onset of the pandemic they had no access to sufficient PPE, although all felt they had sufficient in July 2021. Only five settings said there had been an impact on staffing ratios. Fourteen of the providers has all staff undertaking weekly Lateral Flow Tests, the remaining two had some staff undertaking them. Whilst only ten of the sixteen providers had staff who had to isolate by Summer 2021, it is anticipated that most, if not all, have now had staff isolating. The majority of providers said that there had been less training available. One provider felt lack of IT had impacted on this and two noted lack of staff cover had been a factor. Eight providers noted the restrictions on completing practical elements of training qualifications had been an issue. Lack of availability of suitable training was also highlighted by eight providers but only two felt the training they needed was still unavailable at the time the survey was conducted. Twelve of the sixteen were operating at full capacity in Summer 2021, only one provider was unsure of their future sustainability, one felt confident for 6 months and the remaining were confident for the next year or longer.

Strengths and Weakness

There has been a significant increase in full day care provision since the last full assessment in 2017, there are three new settings in three Community Planning Areas (Sirhowy, Ebbw Fawr and South Ebbw Fach) and the other additions have been created by sessional day providers re-registering to deliver full day care. Whilst still offering sessional care, particularly relevant for Flying Start providers, these providers have been able to offer wraparound services enabling them to offer Childcare Offer to parents that need that service.

After identifying a gap for full day nursery in South Ebbw Fach in 2017, a bid for a new build was put forward and approved as part of the Childcare Offer Capital Programme, however this gap has now been met by a new provider opening up in Llanhilleth in 2021. Plans to pursue the option of a new Full Day Nursery in that area under the Capital Programme have since been dropped, not wanting to displace new provision, with funding moving to support other schemes in Blaenau Gwent. One of those schemes is Flying Start hub expansion at Swffryd, which is currently progressing. An opportunity to deliver full day care for 2–12-year-olds from the newly expanded hub should be tendered in Summer 2022, creating further full day care spaces in South Ebbw Fach.

A gap in provision of Full Day Care has been identified in North Ebbw Fach, specifically in the Brynmawr area, which currently only has one playgroup provider offering limited opening hours.

There are a good range of services available through full day care providers in each of the community planning areas, but limited choice for those parents wanting provision in Welsh or in both Welsh and English. One of the other schemes approved under the Childcare Offer Capital Programme was for a Welsh medium full day nursery to be built in the Ebbw Fawr area, to meet the need for Welsh medium provision. Additionally, Welsh medium sessions have been piloted by a full day care provider in the Ebbw Fawr area, meeting some need in the meantime and hopefully adding to the range of choices for Welsh medium in the longer term. The opportunity to extend the pilot into other English medium full day care providers in all areas of Blaenau Gwent would be welcomed.

There are also plans to incorporate a new Welsh medium childcare setting into the new seedling school planned for Tredegar under the Welsh Medium Schools grant. This is likely to become a full day care provider to provide the greatest flexibility for the setting to support local parents.

Whilst the range of opening hours particularly for the full day nursery providers is currently good, it would seem there is demand (although difficult to quantify) for providers offering care for atypical hours. This could be a service for existing or new providers to consider piloting or providing.

Sessional Care

There are currently six sessional care providers in Blaenau Gwent, a reduction of eight providers since the last assessment, including five registered and three unregistered providers. As outlined in the full day care section, some providers have re-registered as full day care providers.

Community Planning Area	Welsh	Welsh and English	English
Sirhowy	0	1	1
Ebbw Fawr	0	0	1
North Ebbw Fach	0	1	0
South Ebbw Fach	0	2	0
TOTAL	0	4	2

The table above indicates the number of settings in Blaenau Gwent, which completed the SASS as sessional providers in July 2021, categorised according to the language they operate in. It does not include settings that are registered for full day care but offer sessional care and are recognised as offering sessional care locally to avoid double counting. They will, however, be included in the assessment of strengths, weaknesses and gaps in service.

The settings offer 284 places over their range of services; morning sessions, afternoon sessions and lunch services, no provider reported offering wraparound care. The numbers of places per area for term time and the numbers of children attending are in the table below.

Community Planning Area	Number of places offered	Number of Children Attending

Sirhowy	80	94
Ebbw Fawr	56	26
North Ebbw Fach	72	29
South Ebbw Fach	76	106

Taking into account the settings registered for full day care but offering sessional care places there are at least two providers in every community planning area and a reasonable spread of places across the four community planning areas. There are, however, now only 2 providers offering Welsh medium sessional care (both registered as full day care), with the setting that had been categorised as Welsh medium in Sirhowy in the last CSA, re-categorising themselves as English and Welsh medium. The existing Welsh medium settings are in North Ebbw Fach and South Ebbw Fach.

In terms of vacancies, four providers reported they had vacancies ranging from one place to twelve places. Only one provider reported having a waiting list (for a morning session) but has stated 70 children were waiting for a morning place. This is assumed to be an error as the figure seems unrealistically high.

Only two settings offered holiday care, one in Sirhowy and one in South Ebbw Fach, offering some care in the Summer, February and Easter holidays, but not at October half term, Christmas or May half term.

Opening hours vary, with one provider only offering morning sessions but the remainder offered both morning and afternoon sessions, two settings offer a lunch service. Morning and afternoon session lengths are typically set at 2.5 hours for all registered settings. Settings are registered to offer care for children in the 2 years to 4 years' age group.

Charges per session range from £9 - £11 per session.

All settings are registered to deliver Childcare Offer and all but one is registered with Flying Start.

Covid has impacted on all providers with all settings having closed at least once during the pandemic, three providers closed for over three months. All providers felt they had access to sufficient PPE. No setting had seen an impact on staffing ratios and all staff had been doing the weekly LFT testing. There was a mixed view on the impact on training, with three settings reporting there had been more, two less and one saying there had been no change. Every setting was confident about their future sustainability for at least the next year or longer.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Although the overall number of providers registered to deliver sessional care has declined, the number of sessional places available has not because seven full day care providers offer sessional care places in addition to the existing six registered providers. Settings evolving by re-registering to become full day care providers to meet the needs of parents and to enable them to offer Childcare Offer is very much a positive both for parents and for the settings themselves in terms of sustainability.

There are currently fewer Welsh medium sessional providers than there were in 2017 (a reduction of one provider), however as outlined in the full day care section above, plans are progressing to meet identified gaps in both Ebbw Fawr and Sirhowy.

There has been an increase in the number of settings that are commissioned to deliver Flying Start and the future expansion of that programme offers real opportunities for all sessional providers to receive funding to deliver this programme, along with other childcare provider types. All settings are registered to deliver The Childcare Offer for Wales, and this helps with sustainability/profitability.

All providers support the Funded Childcare scheme (previously Assisted Places). Providers offer support for children with Additional Learning Needs and have engaged well with preparation and learning associated with the introduction of the Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal Act (Wales) 2018.

All providers engage well with the EYCP team and comply with our transition arrangements, attending transition meetings (as appropriate) and completing transition paperwork. Attendance at Network events is usually very good, as is uptake of training.

Several providers have benefitted from a range of grants that have been offered during the pandemic period and the outlook of the sector is positive with settings reporting some confidence in their sustainability.

Crèche Provision

There is currently no crèche provision in Blaenau Gwent. Flying Start has recently put an opportunity to provide crèche provision out for tender, but there were no applicants, and the opportunity has been re-tendered and a promotional exercise undertaken to try and encourage the setup of a mobile crèche.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Given there is no current provision operating in Blaenau Gwent, there are no strengths to be identified.

There is a need for crèche provision to support key Welsh Government programmes and in particular Flying Start and Families First parenting programmes, so this is a weakness in the local childcare sector currently. However, current feedback suggests that the limited nature of crèche services combined with general recruitment difficulties make it a difficult service to sustain for local providers and so the opportunity has been shared on a wider basis to attract a new provider into Blaenau Gwent.

Out of School Childcare

As of July 2021, there were only two stand-alone out of school clubs in Blaenau Gwent, both based in North Ebbw Fach. Sadly, since then one further club has closed leaving only one remaining club open. At the time data was being collected there were 130 children attending the clubs on a mix of full-time, part-time and ad hoc basis but the majority attending ad hoc.

The club that remains open offers both after school and holiday provision and categorise themselves as English medium setting.

At the time of data collection, the one provider that has subsequently closed reported 40 vacancies, but at the time the club was not open.

The remaining club did not report on vacancies or waiting lists. That provider offers holiday club for all holidays apart from the Christmas weeks. Charges are £6 for an after-school session and £20 for holiday care.

Strengths and Weaknesses

There are huge concerns about the loss of stand-alone after-school provision in Blaenau Gwent, with four after-school providers being lost over the last three years, all school-based providers. The re-opening of Out of School clubs after the Covid pandemic was a difficult area to through for the EYCP team. The pandemic has undoubtedly had a huge impact with after-school clubs being prevented from re-opening up until early Summer term 2021 due to Local Authority and schools concerns around the difficulties in managing protective measures by maintaining bubbles/avoiding children from different classes mixing. The position has been exacerbated by the loss of demand, loss of staff and issues with recruiting new staff. From anecdotal evidence it appears that some parents, who have been enabled to work from home during the pandemic, no longer require after-school provision as they are managing their childcare needs themselves; this has had an impact on demand levels.

Whilst other childcare providers do offer after-school and holiday provision, it is recognised that these providers are often more expensive than stand-alone school-based clubs and most are off school sites meaning children have to travel to the childcare setting.

In 2017 there had been only one stand-alone holiday club and that remains open. This is an English medium service so there is no provision for children, parent/carers wanting a service in Welsh or in both Welsh and English.

The EYCP team will be working with local schools, including the Welsh primary, to ascertain the need for after-school care for their pupils, but conscious of the need not to displace other forms of childcare in the process and also being careful to juggle supply alongside demand.

Open Access Play Provision

Open access play opportunities have increased significantly in recent years, firstly through a commissioning arrangement with a neighbouring Local Authority and in the last two years, through deployment of our own Local Authority Play Team.

Open access sessions are typically offered in most school holidays once a week in 6 locations across each of the community planning areas. The timings of sessions are restricted to 2 hours and children under eight must be accompanied by parents.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The opportunity to access free play opportunities in each of the community planning areas is a positive for children and their parents/carers and feedback received is overwhelmingly positive. However, the limited nature of provision (being in one location once a week, for some holiday weeks with times limited to two hours), is unlikely to present childcare options for most parent/carers.

Inevitably budget restrictions mean the number of sessions we are able to offer is limited and there is no current scope for extending this provision. Although we have been able to employ two new Play Leaders in the last two years through the Welsh Government Playworks grant, the level of service offered is still very dependent on volunteers, some of whom have been working with the team over some years. As volunteers move on, it is necessary to recruit and train new volunteers.

Nanny

There is only one nanny registered as living in Blaenau Gwent (recent registration – April 2022), but no information about services offered or costs is currently kept by the Family Information Service. This is a welcome addition to the range of services available as there have been no nannies in the area previously that we have been aware of.

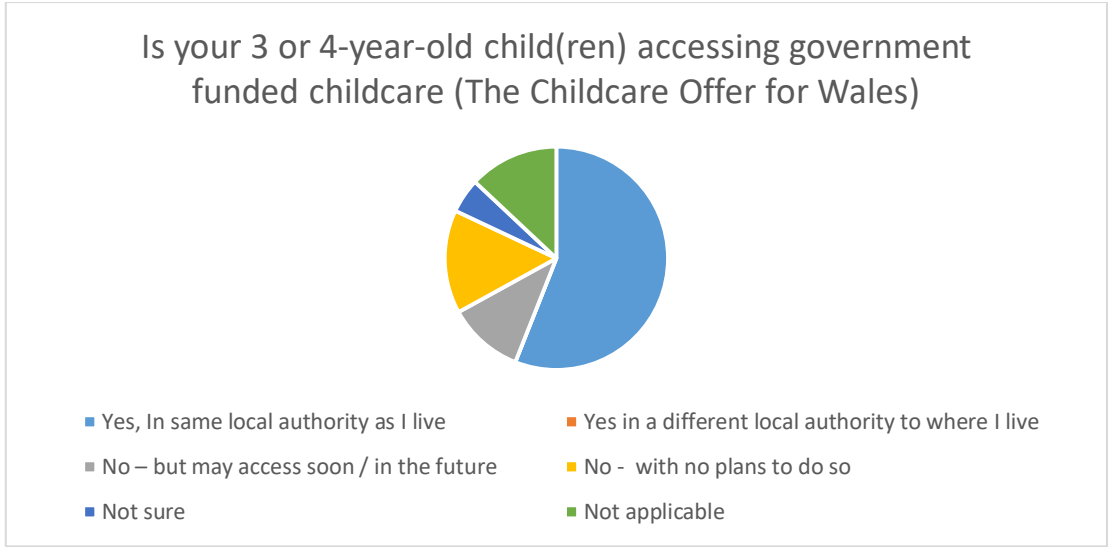
Strengths and Weaknesses

The cost of hiring nannies is likely to still be a barrier to individuals offering the service and parents choosing this form of childcare in Blaenau Gwent. Affordability of childcare remains the top concern for those both currently using childcare and those intending using it in future. According to Talent.com the average nanny salary in the UK in 2022 is £26,325 equating to over £500 per week.

6) The Childcare Offer for Wales

Only four out of fifty-six childcare providers reported they had not registered to deliver Childcare Offer in Blaenau Gwent.

There are a further 142 out of county providers registered in Blaenau Gwent to deliver Childcare Offer for children from Blaenau Gwent and/or Torfaen. As of April 2022, there were 17 children from Blaenau Gwent accessing Childcare Offer in other Local Authority areas. The respondents in the survey with 3–4 year-olds were largely using childcare in Blaenau Gwent (56%), 15% of respondents had no plans to use Childcare Offer and 11% said they may access soon or in the future:



Reasons for not using The Childcare Offer for Wales largely centred around the child being in full-time education, but other reasons given included:

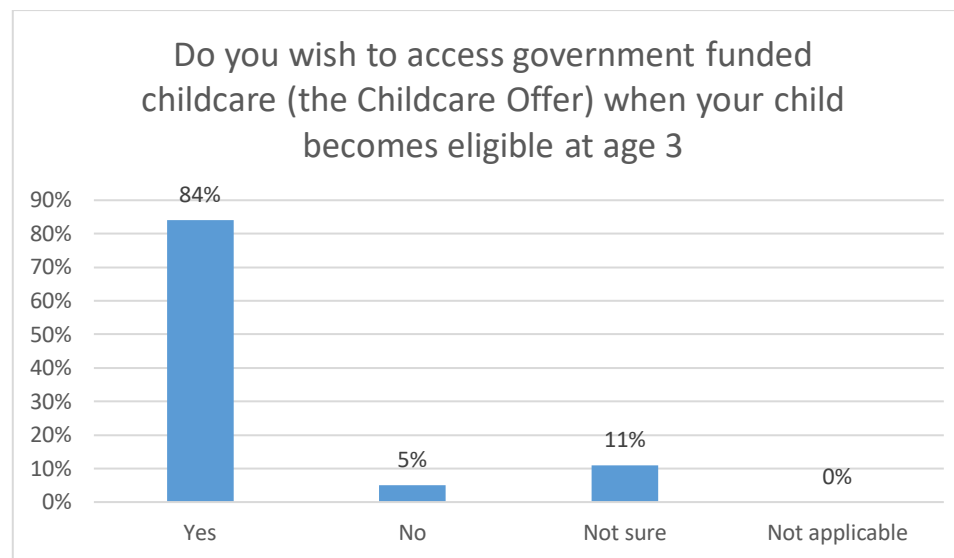
'I am no longer eligible for the childcare funding for my youngest as my husband recently got made redundant the end of July and is now actively re-seeking employment. Therefore I am the only parent working full time with a wage.'

'Not heard of it'

'Not available to me'

'Don't think it's available to us due to not being a flying start family'

A significant majority of respondents, who had younger children, also said they would use Childcare Offer when their child turned three:



The table below shows application numbers for each term since the programme was piloted in Blaenau Gwent. A term-by-term comparison, taking account of the suspension of the scheme in Spring/Summer 2020, shows an upward trend in terms of numbers applying for the Childcare Offer.

Blaenau Gwent CBC		Comments
Term	No. of Applications received	
Autumn Term 2017	181	1 st round of applications, so 2 cohorts of children eligible
Spring Term 2018	77	

Summer Term 2018	80	
Autumn Term 2018	106	
Spring Term 2019	98	
Summer Term 2019	92	
Autumn Term 2019	97	
Spring Term 2020	105	Childcare Offer was suspended due to COVID during this application round
Summer Term 2020	52	Childcare Offer was suspended due to COVID during this application round
Autumn Term 2020	97	
Spring Term 2021	92	
Summer Term 2021	78	
Autumn Term 2021	123	
Spring Term 2022	110	Application round remains open
Summer Term 2022	67	Application round remains open

Strengths and Weakness

The majority of providers in Blaenau Gwent (93%) are registered to deliver Childcare Offer in Blaenau Gwent, offering a wide choice of provision for parents wanting to access the Offer. Several children are able to access the Offer in other Welsh Local Authority areas, so cross border arrangements appear to be working well. Since the pilot was introduced, several providers have re-registered as full day care,

extended opening hours, or added holiday provision to meet the needs of parents wanting to access the Offer, and some have added pick-up/drop off services to provide full wrap-around.

A significant majority of parent/carers reported they were either using or intended to use Childcare Offer when their child became eligible. In Blaenau Gwent, all parents of children approaching three are targeted with information about the Childcare Offer. Most parents/carers seem aware of the Offer, and this was also the case for stakeholders that responded to the surveys issued.

The application process can be complicated for some parents, especially those that are unemployed and different Local Authorities use different application systems, making it impossible for an approved case to be simply transferred from one area to another. Feedback from providers has demonstrated levels of frustration and administrative burden caused by some providers having children from more than one Local Authority area meaning they are dealing with two or more Local Authorities and navigating different claims/payments systems.

It is anticipated the introduction of one national digital platform for both parent applications and providers' claims/payments, will simplify things for both parent/carers and providers alike.

The recent rate review and increase in hourly rate from £4.50 per hour to £5.00 per hour from April 2022 has been warmly welcomed by local providers, who had been in receipt of the same rate since 2017.

Welsh Government have recently announced the programme will be extended to parent/carers of three and four-year-olds in training, this will undoubtedly increase application rates further.

7) Flying Start

Flying Start settings in Blaenau Gwent are a mix of Local Authority run settings (2) and commissioned providers (13). All settings take fee payers, Childcare Offer children and offer Local Authority Funded Childcare Scheme places in addition to Flying Start children, so no setting is Flying Start only. The numbers of children attending a setting with a Flying Start place can vary from one child to thirty-three.

A new childcare provision is currently being developed on the Swfrydd Primary School site which will go out to tender shortly for a new or existing provider to bid for. It is envisaged the provision will be open by the end of 2022.

Providers have typically been located in or close to allocated Flying Start geographical areas, however, in order to respond to demand for outreach places, further providers have been commissioned to allow parents/carers access to childcare close to where they live. There are currently no childminders commissioned to provide a service. Additional work is currently being undertaken to support more existing childcare providers to become registered Flying Start providers. A new framework for Childminders to become registered as providers will also be available by September 2022 to support the expansion of the Flying Start programme. The expansion programme will prioritise: addressing deprivation, increasing Welsh language provision and addressing gaps in availability of provision.

Childcare Type	Providers by Area				
	Sirhowy	Ebbw Fawr	North Ebbw Fach	South Ebbw Fach	Total
Full Day Care	3	4	2	3	12
Sessional	1	1		1	3

There are two providers offering Welsh medium provision, one in South Ebbw Fach, one in North Ebbw Fach. Seven providers reported offering a service in both English and Welsh with the remaining seven offering a service in English only.

Year	Take-up No/Eligible No	Take-up Rate
2017-18	244/269	91%
2018-19	261/231	89%
2019-20	202/219	92%
2021-22 Term 1	96/106	91%

Take up of Flying Start childcare remains high in Blaenau Gwent as illustrated in the figures above. Flying Start collect information from parent/carers about reasons for declining a Flying Start place and in 2020-21 these were as follows:

Reason for Decline	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Total
Attends private/full time childcare	0	0	0	0
Parent anxious	2	1	1	4
Alternative childcare e.g., grandparents	1	2	0	3

Due to age	1	1	0	2
Transport	1	0	0	1
Moving out of area	1	1	0	2
Private childcare outside FS area	1	0	1	2
Decline/No reason Given	1	1	1	3

Only 16 parents completing the parent survey were accessing Flying Start childcare, parents not accessing Flying Start areas gave the main reasons as not living in a Flying Start area/not being eligible. Comments included:

'We live one street away from access'

'Not living in a flying start area unfortunately, I did when my daughter was born up until recently and I found it really helpful. It's a shame only certain areas are classed flying start areas as my baby on the way will miss out'

'No information on it don't know where it is if I'm in a flying start area etc'

'I don't live in a flying start area'

'No because its not available to me. The houses on the opposite side of the street in cwm are eligible for flying start but my side are not.'

'Not in flying start area'

'Don't live in a flying start area'

'I don't think we are eligible'

'No as previously explained no longer eligible.'

'Not in the right area for flying start!'

'Because flying start isn't acceptable in my area or post code.'

'Flying Start in our area depends on what postcode you live in. As my post code does fall into the relevant post code she misses out on the Flying Start childcare and all activities that they put on during the year'

One Local Authority Flying Start setting was repurposed to respond to the Covid pandemic and first lockdown, extending their registration to offer a service to a greater age range of children and longer opening hours for vulnerable and key worker children. That same setting has continued to extend the service post Covid and has moved from morning only Flying Start sessions to include afternoon sessions to meet the childcare demand in that area.

Strengths and weaknesses

There is a good mix of Flying Start provision in Blaenau Gwent, with a choice of settings across Community Planning areas that provide either sessional or full day care, enabling parents to have continuity of childcare and wraparound care if needed. There is a choice of language provision in only two areas currently, but there are plans to build new Welsh medium provision in both Ebbw Fawr and Sirhowy, both areas having been identified in previous gap analyses (reported in the Full Day Care section).

Settings engagement with the Local Authority quality assurance process has always been very positive, a new scheme has been recently developed and childcare settings, including Flying Start providers, have been included in the development process.

There are well established transition arrangements in place to ease the transition of children into the setting and then onto starting school nursery. All settings engage with the process and attend transition meetings.

The outcomes for children accessing Flying Start childcare, and the programme as a whole, are monitored closely and reported to Welsh Government. The management information produced helps to shape future delivery of this service.

One of the weaknesses of Flying Start is that it is not a universal service available to all children and parents in Blaenau Gwent. There remains a sense that parents feel there is an unfairness in the post-code nature of the service. The planned expansion of Flying Start from September 2022, should help alleviate this.

Further there is suggestion, from some childminders and PACEY Cymru, that childminders should be able to register to deliver Flying Start in Blaenau Gwent. This is something that will be considered as part of the Flying Start expansion plans as mentioned above

8) Free Breakfast Club Provision

All primary schools in Blaenau Gwent offer free breakfast club, although services were stopped during Covid due to concerns about maintaining bubbles and limiting infection/self-isolation risks. All have reopened since the beginning of January 2022.

Area	Name of Schools
Sirhowy	Deighton Primary, Glanhowy Primary, Bryn Bach Primary, Georgetown Primary, St Joseph's RC Primary
Ebbw Fawr	Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Primary, All Saints RC Primary, Willowtown Primary, Cwm Primary, Glyncoed Primary, Beaufort Hill Primary, Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary

North Ebbw Fach	Blaen-y-Cwm Primary, St Mary's Church in Wales Primary, St Mary's RC Primary, Coed-y-Garn Primary, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, Ystruth Primary
South Ebbw Fach	Abertillery Learning Community: Tillery Street Campus, Roseheyworth Road Campus, Six Bells Campus, St Illtyd's Primary, Soffryd Primary

9) Foundation Phase Nursery

Blaenau Gwent has three non-maintained settings and twenty-three primary schools offering Foundation Phase Nursery. The locations of the settings/schools are set out below, along with admission numbers.

Area	Name of Settings/Schools	Admission Number
Sirhowy	Tiggys Day Care	Not specified – demand led
	Deighton Primary	30
	Glanhowy Primary	65
	Bryn Bach Primary	30
	Georgetown Primary	60
	St Joseph's RC Primary	41

Ebbw Fawr	Acorns Playgroup	Not specified – demand led
	Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Primary	58
	All Saints RC Primary	30
	Willowtown Primary	60
	Cwm Primary	52
	Glyncoed Primary	52
	Beaufort Hill Primary	30
	Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary	26
North Ebbw Fach	Blaen-y-Cwm Primary	26
	St Mary's Church in Wales Primary	30
	St Mary's RC Primary	53
	Coed-y-Garn Primary	30
	Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	60
	Ystruth Primary	37
South Ebbw Fach	Cylch Meithrin Brynithel	Not specified – demand led
	Abertillery Learning Community:	
	Abertillery Campus	59
	Roseheyworth Campus	45
	Six Bells Campus	45
	St Illtyd's Primary	30
Swffryd Primary	19	

Every primary school and campus of 3-16 schools in Blaenau Gwent offers early years education, offering places in every ward in each community planning area. Additionally, there are now three non-maintained providers, an increase of one provider since the last assessment, which allow parents extra places and choice, including language choice (as the latest provider to register is a Welsh medium setting). Take-up of early years education remains high in Blaenau Gwent, dropping a little in 2020/21 and 2021/22, possibly as a result of Covid concerns:

2021/22	92%
2020/21	92%
2019/20	99%
2018/19	94%

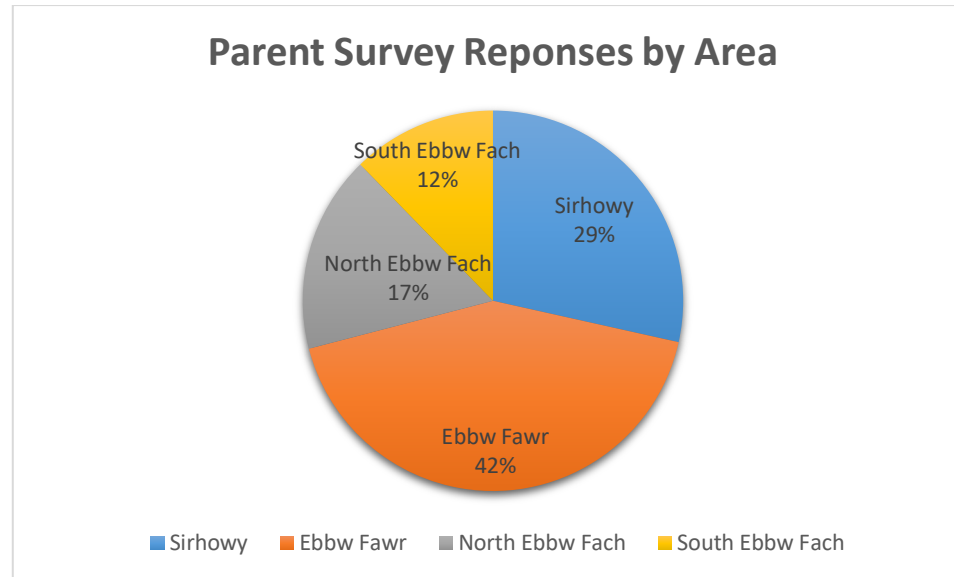
2017/18 97%

All children are offered places over 5 days per week but whilst all non-maintained providers offer 12.5 hours, the hours offered by school providers does vary from 10 hours per week to 30 hours per week and can sometimes vary in one school depending on whether a morning or afternoon place is offered.

10) Understanding the Needs of Parents/ Carers

233 parent/carers completed the childcare survey indicating their Local Authority area was Blaenau Gwent, however it could be ascertained from the data 28 surveys were completed from parents living outside of the area. Local Authority area could not be ascertained for a further 28 parent/carers. The number of responses is very low, despite great efforts made to promote the survey heavily across Blaenau Gwent, and so will not necessarily be representative of the full parent/carer cohort in the area.

The geographical split for those respondents living in Blaenau Gwent is as follows:



There are respondents from each area, but there is a much higher proportion of responses from parents/carers living in Ebbw Fawr at 42%, which is greater than the overall population proportion at 33%. Conversely, the response rate for South Ebbw Fach was far lower at 12% than the proportion of overall population at 23%.

Parents/carers told us the childcare they were currently using term time and in holidays was as follows:

Term Time		Holidays	
Childcare	Total Number	Childcare	Total Number
Childminder	28	Childminder	23
Before School Club/Breakfast Club	50	Holiday Club	9

After School Club	23	Private Day Nursery	67
Private Day Nursery	71	Playgroup	5
School Nursery	25	Pre-Prep (Private) School	0
Play Group	12	Cylch Meithrin	0
Drop Off Creche	1	Drop off creche	1
Nanny	0	Nanny	0
Au Pair	0	Au Pair	0
Family/friends (paid)	5	Family/friends (paid)	8
Family/Friends (unpaid)	137	Family/friends (unpaid)	133
None	20	None	30
Cylch Meithrin	2	Other	0
Other (not stated)	9		

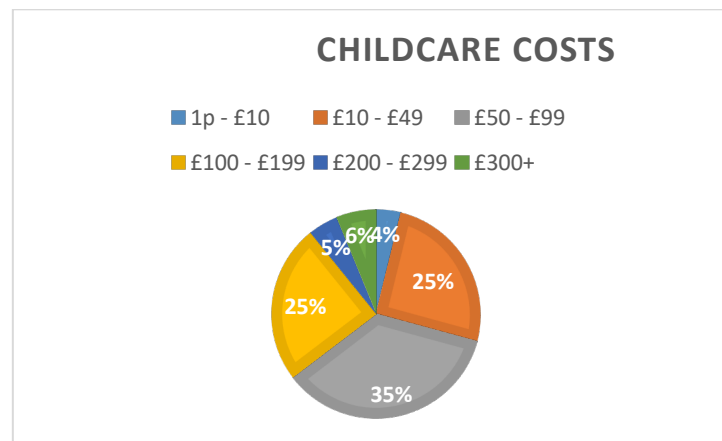
In common with results from the last assessment, there is still a significant number of parents relying on informal childcare, both during term times and in holidays. In terms of more formal provision, the most popular form of registered childcare with respondents is Full Day Nursery, followed by Childminders.

9 out of 43 parent/carers with two-year-olds were accessing a Flying Start place. Parent/carers not accessing Flying Start were largely living outside of a Flying Start area, so ineligible.

For the 77 parent/carers with three–four-year-olds, 55 reported using early education and 34 reported using Childcare Offer. Reasons for not using Childcare Offer included: child in full time school, not heard of it, not eligible.

9.5% of respondents said their child had a disability, 11% said their child had a special education or additional learning need.

Whilst a larger proportion of parent/carers reported they had no childcare costs, a significant number of the total proportion used unpaid family/friends' care. Of those having to pay, the most common cost was between £50 and £99 per week.

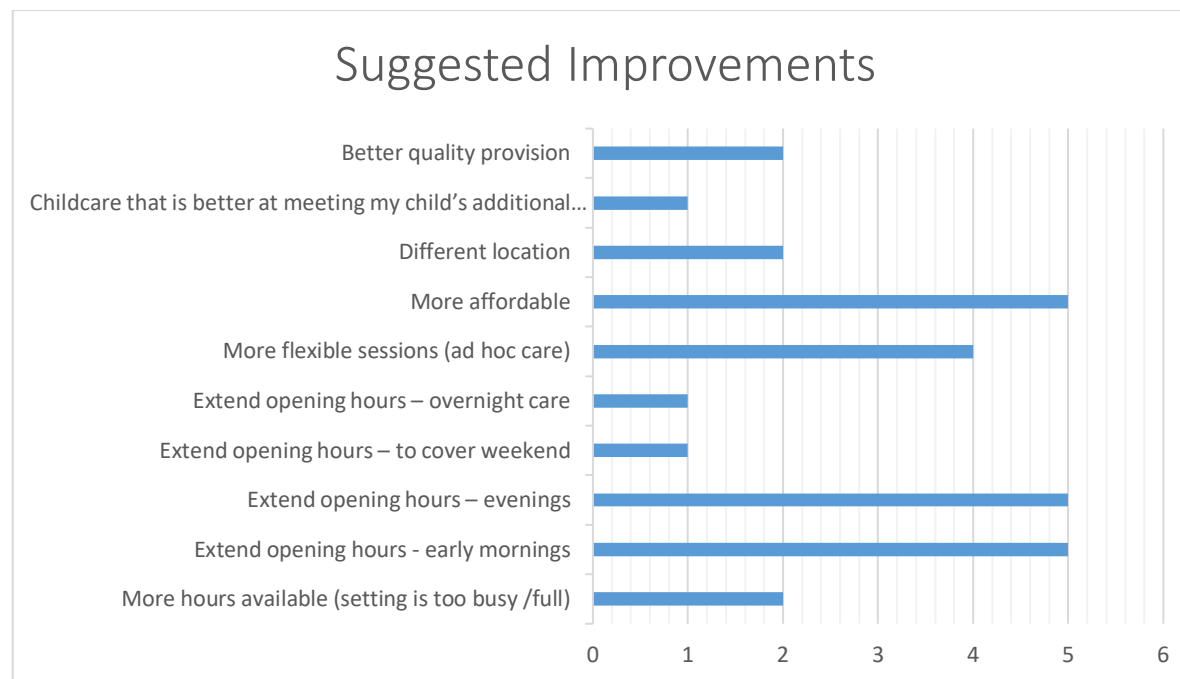


As indicated by the provider survey the majority of children are attending settings on a part-time basis. Only 38 parent/carers indicated they used 30 hours or more childcare a week.

A significant majority of parent/carers reported being either very or quite satisfied with their current childcare provider (95%).

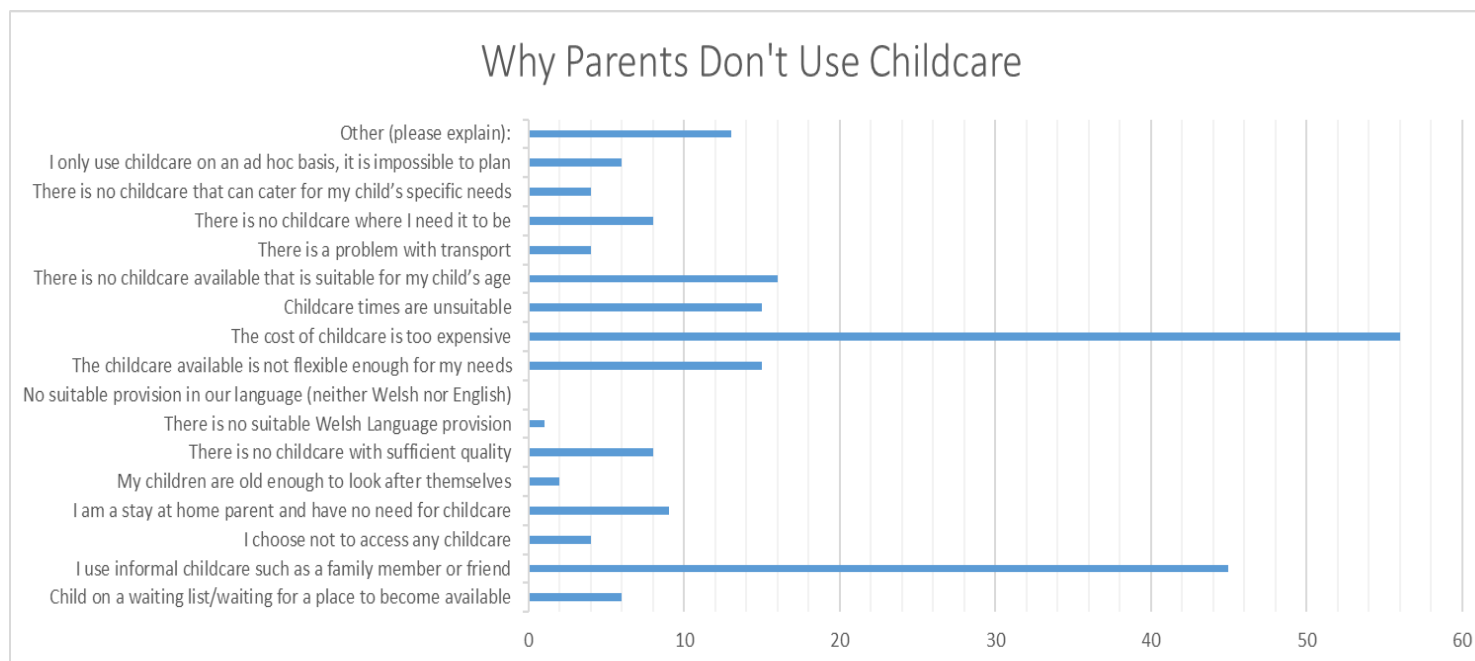
Parent/carers noted barriers to accessing Welsh medium childcare included distance (11 respondents), availability (11 respondents), Insufficient hours (5 respondents) and Cost (3 respondents).

For those not happy with their childcare, the following improvements were suggested:



Affordability and extended opening hours feature most prominently in parent responses.

Respondents not using childcare were asked to provide reasons why they did not, and the top reason given (by some margin) was the cost of childcare. This was followed by a preference for using family/friends. Whilst the numbers are relatively low, it is concerning that some parent/carers report difficulties with finding childcare available for their child's age and suitable for their needs. Some parents also have difficulties with the flexibility offered by services.



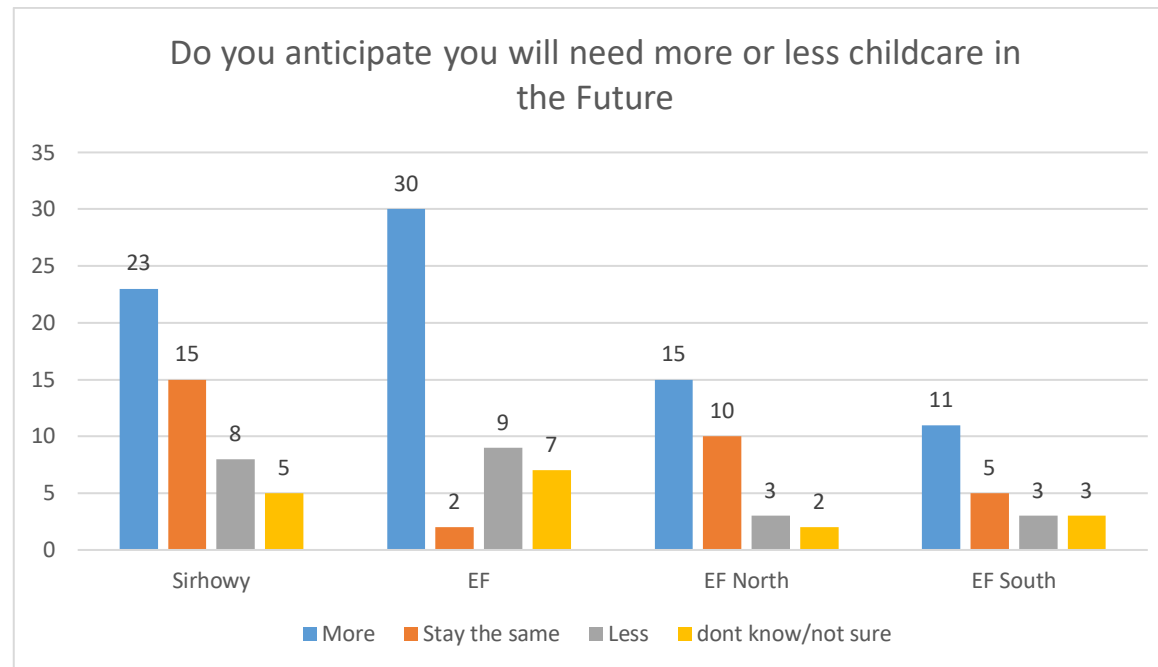
Other comments about childcare services were invited at the end of the survey and responses can be sorted into themes which include:

- After-School/Breakfast clubs not running during in the pandemic was very problematic
- Lack of provision for children with ALN and disabilities
- Costs of childcare being prohibitive to working/increasing work hours
- Flexibility of opening hours being an issue
- Provision for older children harder to source
- Concerns about quality of care

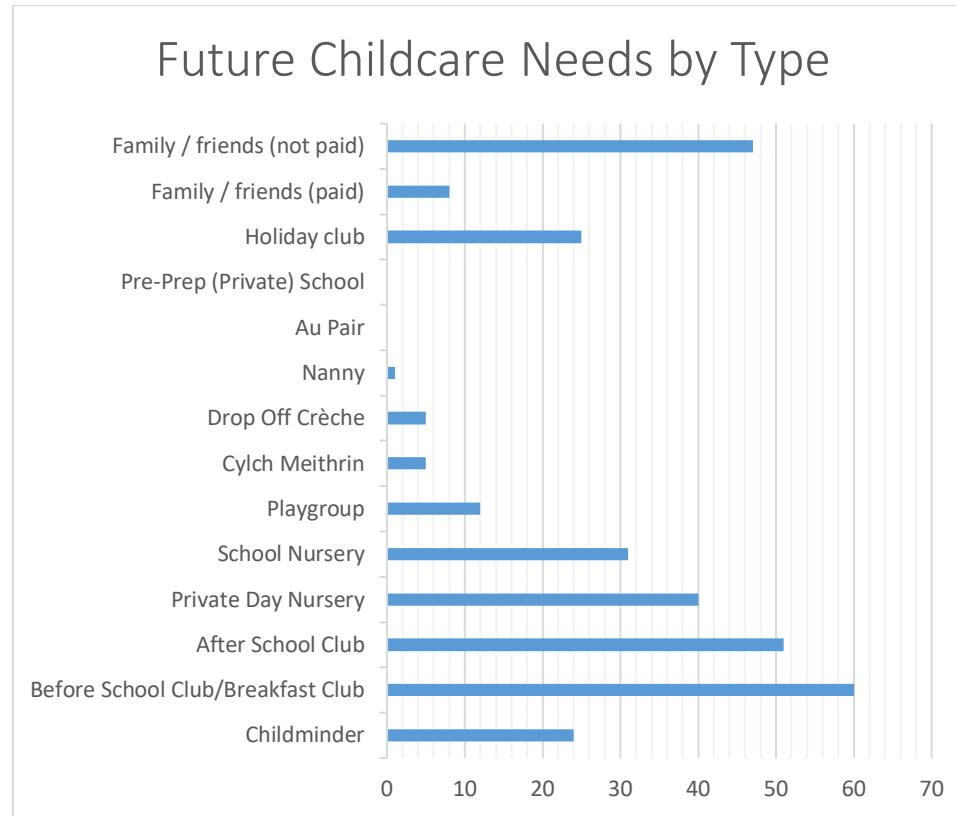
11) Future Demand

Parent/Carer Survey

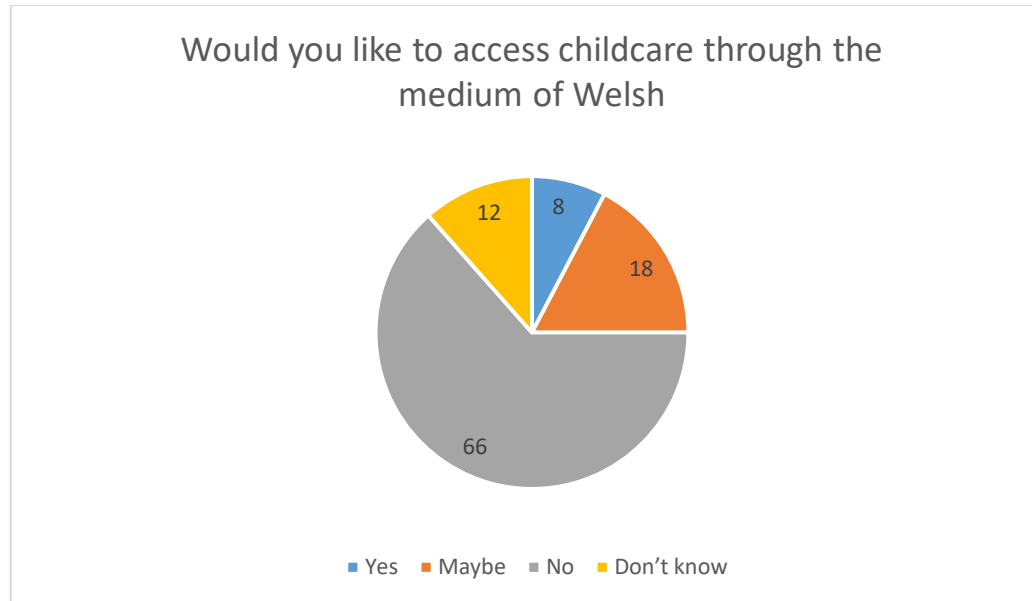
Survey results indicate that the majority of respondents said that they would need more childcare in future. Broken down by Community Planning Area, there appears to be greatest future demand in Ebbw Fawr, followed by Sirhowy, North Ebbw Fach and then South Ebbw Fach.



When asked what type of additional childcare was required in future, the results indicate a continued reliance on unpaid family/friends care but also higher demand for breakfast club, after-school club and full day nursery places. However, it must be noted again that the sample size is not large, and caution must be taken with regards to 'potential' future plans for childcare.



49 respondents indicated they had some Welsh language skills. In terms of demand for Welsh medium childcare specifically, the parent/carers response indicates that combined 26 parents indicated either they would like or would possibly like to use Welsh medium services.



Key Developments

Current population data suggests there will be continued population decline in Blaenau Gwent, particularly marked in the 0-15 group. This in itself, if confirmed by the latest 2021 Census data, could indicate the need for childcare may also decline. There are, however, other factors that will impact on, or could impact on future childcare needs.

These include the expansion of the Flying Start programme, starting in 2022, with the intention of offering childcare provision to all two-year-olds in the coming years. Whilst the first-year expansion is relatively small in terms of numbers, with an additional 88 children being able to access childcare from September 2022, eventually the full cohort of two-year-olds accessing childcare will drive much greater demand. In Summer 2021, 475 two-year-olds were attending a childcare setting, as a proportion of the population estimate of 733 children (for one-year-olds in 2020, that would be two-year-olds in 2021) that represents 65%. Within that 65% of children that attend childcare, it is also important to recognise that not all those children will be attending settings five days a week. SASS evidence shows part-time attendance is by far the most common form of attendance. The numbers of children increasing the days they attend a setting, along with children becoming eligible

for Flying Start childcare who otherwise would not have attended, is likely to result in a much greater need for pre-school childcare provision. The Flying Start team and Early Years Childcare and Play team are currently working to scope current capacity against growing demand.

The extension of the Childcare Offer for Wales to parents accessing training and education from September 2022, may further impact on the numbers of three and four-year-olds accessing childcare. It is difficult to quantify numbers as many of the children that may now fall into eligibility under this extension may already be accessing childcare funded by parents, PACE or college funding schemes.

There are a significant number of new housing developments that could attract families to move into Blaenau Gwent. The huge increase in people having home-working opportunities is encouraging many families to extend their house search areas and the relatively lower house prices in Blaenau Gwent may attract families from neighbouring areas. Plans for approximately 1500 new homes in the Ebbw Fawr area and just under 300 homes in the Sirhowy areas could attract new families into those areas and could impact on childcare needs, in those areas specifically, or more widely in Blaenau Gwent. There are currently no major business developments planned that would have an impact on likely demand levels for childcare.

Welsh Government plans on potentially extending the school day in Wales and restructuring term dates may also impact on childcare needs or the pattern of childcare offered in future, particularly for after-school and holiday care providers. Pilots conducted in Spring Term 2021 offered some children an extended school day with an hour added to the end of the school day, this may negate the need for childcare for some parents, but is not likely to suit all parents, who may need childcare later into the afternoon and early evening. Changes to term dates may have less of an impact, unless the number of term weeks are increased.

Blaenau Gwent is one of ten Local Authorities involved in the Cardiff City Deal which is '*designed to build on the region's sectoral strengths, its high skill base and three successful universities and accelerate economic growth and productivity through a series of considered targeted investments in skills, infrastructure, innovation-led scalable projects and priority industry sectors and businesses*'. With collective investment levels expected to reach £1.2bn, it is estimated to deliver 25,000 new jobs in the region over a twenty-year period. This could mean the unemployment levels in Blaenau Gwent decline, which could lead to demand for childcare from working parents.

The pandemic has offered a lot of working parents much more flexibility in their working hours and offered home-working or hybrid working arrangements. It appears that many organisations are not currently planning to revert to pre-pandemic working models and that flexible working arrangements will be retained. This does seem to have impacted the childcare sector during the pandemic, with a particular impact on attendance patterns (far fewer children attending full time) and reduced use of after-school care.

12) Cross Border Provision

There is agreement among Gwent Local Authorities that children can access Foundation Phase Nursery in another Local Authority in the region and costs will be picked up by the Local Authority in which the child is accessing provision.

There are currently no children from outside Blaenau Gwent accessing Foundation Phase Nursery in non-maintained settings in Blaenau Gwent. The Local Authority does not have access to information about children from Blaenau Gwent accessing Foundation Phase Nursery or childcare elsewhere.

There are strong working links with other Gwent Local Authorities and the South Wales Education Achievement Service in supporting the early years education providers. There are regular meetings to share information, to agree grant allocations and priorities for the sector. Local Authorities join the termly Network events to provide updates of relevance to providers.

There is also close co-operation with the other Childcare Offer delivery authorities where a family move from one area to another to support continuation of the service, whilst eliminating the potential for double funding.

13) Workforce Development

Local Authorities (LA) have a duty written within the Childcare Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities (revised 2016) to provide access to an appropriate level of training that ensures childcare providers are able to run effectively and efficiently.

Blaenau Gwent EYCP team monitor qualifications and training undertaken on an annual basis and records training as it is undertaken in-house. The team uses the information gained to plan for training needs, enhanced by information provided by the Quality Improvement Officer, the Play Sufficiency Officer, Flying Start Advisory Teacher and Flying Start Childcare Co-ordinator which is picked up during quality assurance and monitoring/support visits. Input is also provided by the Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Officer and colleagues sitting on the Early Years Additional Needs Support panel. The records are also used to alert providers to training that is due to/or has expired and to monitor take-up/compliance with training/qualifications required under National Minimum Standards. The following extract of the spreadsheet demonstrates how the team use data for monitoring and planning. With the introduction of the Childcare Offer for Wales, and the proposed expansion of the Flying Start programme, it is essential that a profile of the current workforce be maintained to ensure that it meets the need to support both new and existing provision to meet the current national minimum standards and relevant programme requirements.

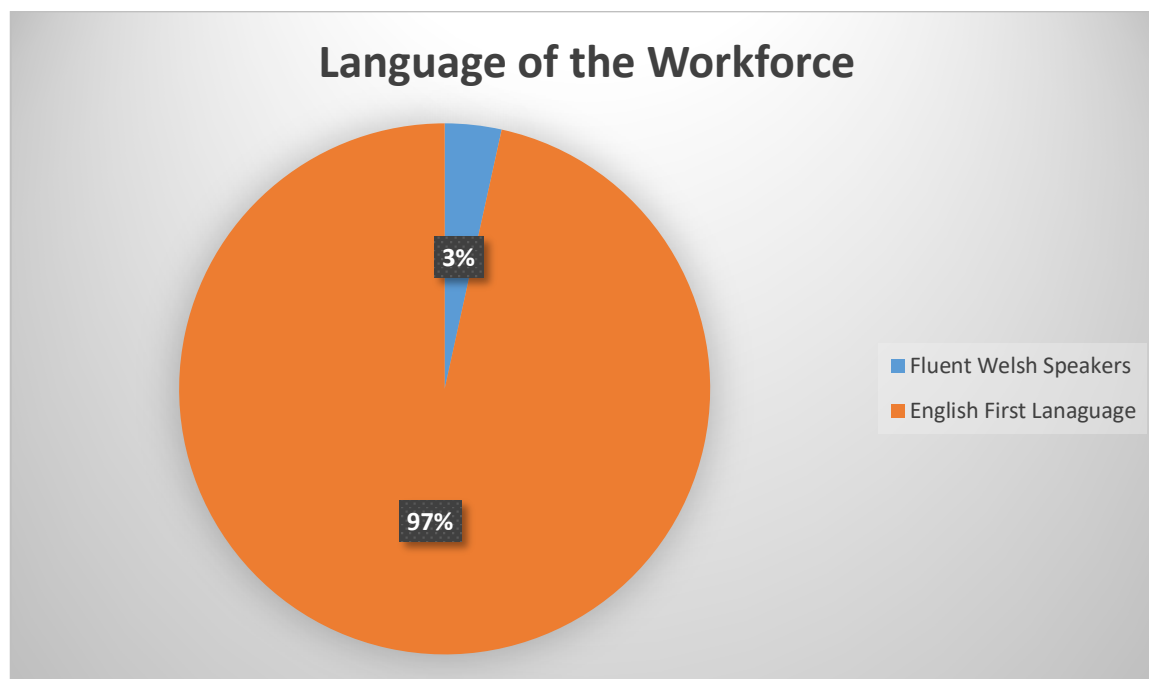
There is a strategy in place for developing the workforce in Blaenau Gwent, that acknowledges we have to keep “growing our own” early years’ practitioners. Eighteen years ago a strategy was developed to offer the community of Blaenau Gwent introductory Children’s Play training at OCN level, completed in 2 hours a week for 10 weeks. This could then lead onto NVQ level 2s and 3s in Childcare Learning and Development, CCLD (now in Childcare Learning Play and Development, CCPLD). The childcare workforce can be very unstable with fewer entering the workforce than leaving, key factors contributing to this instability can be the low pay, work demands, demographic characteristics, and in Blaenau Gwent specifically, continuous professional development opportunities. Our childcare practitioners often leave childcare to work in higher paid family support roles in Education, Health and Social Services, which is good for the economy, the social care sector and the individual but contributes highly to instability of the sector and which is why we must keep attracting students in secondary schools and the community to enter childcare. Early years degree courses have recently been funded for colleagues within the EYCP team.

The Workforce within Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

The Early Years, Childcare and Play workforce within Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council consists of 236 childcare practitioners with 98% of those being female. There has been some fluctuation in the size of the workforce with an increase of 6% (as of March 2022) which is attributed to the 2 new Day Nurseries that have opened in the last 2 years along with 1 new Preschool. These openings have mitigated the losses over the last 2 years with 9 childminders de-registering, the closure of 4 After School Clubs and 1 Preschool.

Language of the Workforce

The majority of the workforce use English as their first language, with two settings; Cylch Meithrin Helyg Bychan and Cylch Meithrin Gwddi Hw stating they use fluent Welsh. Within the total workforce 3% are fluent Welsh speakers and 97% state English is their first language.



Recruitment and Retention

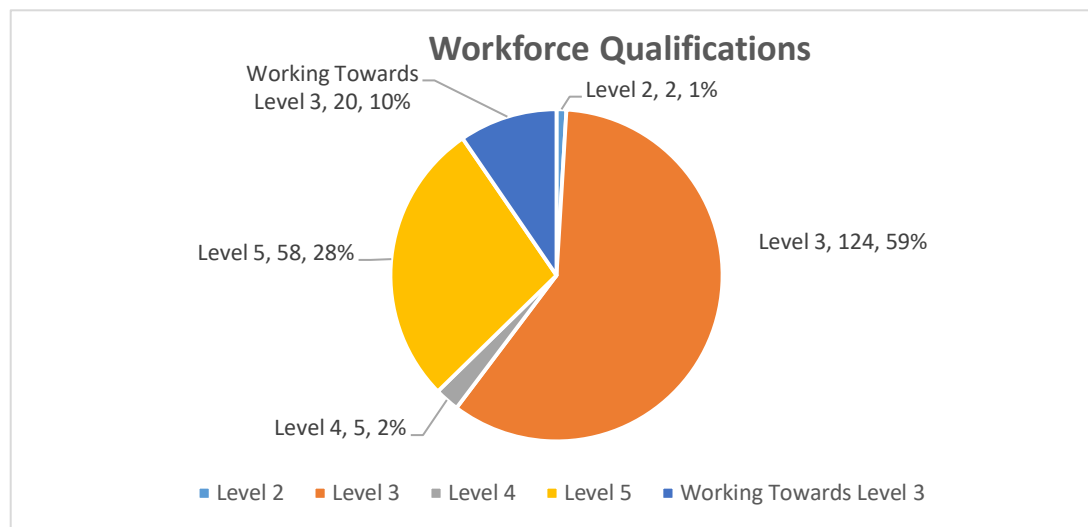
The Early Years Childcare and Play team continue to work in partnership with CWLWM, the local college, schools, Job Centre Plus, Communities for Work and other work programmes; to promote Early Years Childcare and Play and encourage people to seek a career in the childcare sector. Childcare providers in the borough have reported their concerns in finding suitable qualified staff to recruit, this has been affected considerably due to Covid-19 with practitioners reportedly leaving the sector to work elsewhere and a reduction in the enrolment of new students onto childcare courses locally in the past 2 years.

Impact on National Qualifications and the workforce due to Covid-19

There has been a notable decrease in the number of students enrolling on childcare qualifications due to the restrictions caused by Covid-19. In addition, there has also been a decrease in the number of childcare practitioners accessing further childcare study due to the following reasons: work placements not allowed to take place, settings temporarily closing and students unable to progress with the competency/evidence sections of their qualification, bubbles within the childcare provision and also many of the childcare workforce were furloughed.

Qualifications and the Childcare Workforce

In Blaenau Gwent County Borough, the statistics indicate that, of the 236 childcare workforce, 77% possess a Level 3 Childcare Qualification & 25% of the workforce hold a Level 5 Childcare Qualification. Further analysis of the statistics below shows the breakdown of the highest qualification held of the 236 childcare workforce:



Mandatory Training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

There are some clear training and qualification needs which have to be considered when planning the training and qualification programme for 2022/23, and the subsequent 3 years. For example, in the next 5 years we will be dedicated to delivering New Curriculum, Foundation Learning and Additional Needs training. Being able to offer relevant, high-quality training, as well as new training from leading sector professionals will ensure the children accessing Early Years, Childcare and Play are experiencing the best possible outcomes.

The team co-ordinate a robust mandatory and CPD training programme for all individuals who work in the Childcare, Early Years and Play sector within the Borough. Training in some topics is offered at various levels. Safeguarding Level 1, 2 and 3 courses are fully funded (reflecting the importance we place on high standards in safeguarding practice), all in-house delivered CPD training is offered at a subsidised rate of £5.00 per place & all other external training is offered on a full cost recovery basis.

The following mandatory training courses are provided on an annual basis either by the Early Years Childcare and Play team or tendered externally through our Workforce Development department and are required to be renewed every 3 years:

Safeguarding Level 1 & 2

Level 2 Basic Food Hygiene

Paediatric First Aid

Additional Learning Needs

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Annually a full training programme is designed following input from colleagues as outlined above. Prior to Covid-19 all training courses were offered face-to-face but since 2020 training is now also delivered online. CPD Courses delivered from 2017-22 include:

Neglect Level 3	Domestic Abuse Level 3
Autism	Block Play
Playing Throughout the Seasons	Signalong
Campfires Burning	Outdoor Learning
Planning	Observation
Loose Parts	Risk Benefit
The Developing Child	Woodland Crafts
The Keyworker to Success	Leadership Clinic
Elklan	Motivating Staff
Recruitment & Retention	Internet Safety
Schemas	Treasure Baskets
Volunteers in Play	Sun Safety
Improving Physical Activity through Play	

ComIT training

The Communication Intervention Team (ComIT) is a service set up for children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).

ComIT aims to meet the additional needs of children and young people with a non-clinical diagnosis and primary need of Speech, Language and Communication (SLC0 when that need is severely impacting on the child's learning).

ComIT have produced guidance and training for practitioners who provide Early Childhood Education and care for children aged between 0-3 years 11months. It aims to develop practitioner knowledge of SLC development and practitioner confidence and skills to identify and meet children's needs within the setting.

Even though Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has a well-qualified Early Years Childcare and Play workforce we still have childcare practitioners who would like to further their qualifications by enrolling on higher level courses. In addition, we continue to have individuals interested in becoming registered childminders and signpost them direct to PACEY to enrol on the childminding course and support them following qualification.

14) Covid Impact

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on all aspects of society in Wales, it has touched every family, community, organisation and business. In terms of the impact it has had on the childcare sector, there are two main areas to consider. Firstly, the critical role of childcare in the Government's pandemic response and secondly the impact the pandemic has had on settings as organisations/businesses and the resulting impact on families and communities.

From the early days of the pandemic, it was very clear the strategic role that childcare settings were to play in the Government's response to the pandemic. The need to keep keyworkers in the NHS, social care, blue light services and other identified essential workers in work was paramount and for working parents that meant a need for childcare to remain open to enable those workers to work. The picture for settings in the early days of the pandemic was changing rapidly with providers making decisions about whether opening was a viable and safe option for them. During the pandemic a significant number of providers in Blaenau Gwent remained open to provide a service to keyworker and vulnerable children. During the first lockdown period, only 33.9% of services closed completely representing 42.8% of childcare places. The Local Authority team was also able to put in place arrangements to ensure a service could be provided to key worker if needed and vulnerable children. The Flying Start team re-purposed one of their settings within a week to specifically to support vulnerable children, completing a variation for Care Inspectorate Wales to enable them to offer extended provision to a greater age range to accommodate sibling groups. The Flying Start team also worked closely with Social Services Children's teams and the Family Information Service to help place children who couldn't access the repurposed hub. The EYCP team set up the Welsh Government's Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme within weeks at the beginning of the pandemic to ensure that places were found for keyworker and vulnerable children and funding was delivered quickly to providers delivering these necessary services.

Providers that had closed in the early days, largely re-opened from late June 2020 and remained open (except for intermittent individual Covid closures), with the exception of most after-school provision that had been impacted by concerns around use of school buildings, the mixing of bubbles and school closures.

The level of commitment and flexibility within the sector was further tested in response to Summer holiday 2020 arrangements for vulnerable children, as where settings were limiting their numbers of children and operating on a 'bubble' basis, there were concerns about finding placements for vulnerable children. The local sector responded magnificently, with providers going above and beyond to accommodate children, including creating new settings/expanding very quickly to ensure they could offer services those children who needed it.

Several schemes to support settings financially have emerged during the pandemic including the Economic Resilience Development Fund, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Self-employed Income Scheme, Childcare Provider Grant, Childcare Offer Small Capital Covid Grants, Cwtch (sustainability) Grants and other schemes related to Education. Whilst there have been challenges in setting up administrative systems quickly to deliver these grants, they were successfully delivered in partnership with other Local Authority colleagues, Umbrella Organisation support and with the childcare providers themselves. Over £547,000 has been distributed to settings during 2021/22, the administration of these grants has had a huge impact on the work of the EYCP team.

The closure of childcare to children other than keyworker and vulnerable children demanded that we review our support for children with ALN and children attending childcare through our Assisted Places schemes, who were unable to access their childcare place. Plans were put in place to offer alternative services with resource packs being delivered to children's homes and regular contact maintained with professionals within the EYCP team to support families to continue with play, learning and development at home.

After a period of suspension during Spring and Summer Term 2020, the Childcare Offer was restarted during August 2020 and presented a huge challenge for the Local Authority team and childcare providers, due to the shortened timeframe for dealing with, effectively, double the number of applications. Changes to the eligibility guidance which needed to be understood and implemented presented further challenge. A huge effort by both the Local Authority and childcare providers meant the scheme was back up and running from September 2020.

The level of challenge there has been for childcare providers and the teams supporting providers, both within the Local Authority and in other organisations, during 2020-22 cannot be overstated. Difficulties with staffing and Covid closures has been especially difficult for lots of providers, with real concerns expressed over sustainability. Up until the date SASS data was collected, we had only lost three providers in Blaenau Gwent, one full day care provider and two after-school club (one registered, one excepted). Sadly, since then further businesses have closed, with two more after-school clubs closing and four further childminders deciding to close doors. Feedback suggests that whilst sustainability was a key consideration, other issues, notably difficulties in recruiting staff and individuals opting for a different career also played a large part in decisions. There have been particular issues for the after-school sector, much of which is co-located on school premises and subject to additional considerations in re-opening due to school concerns about access and managing bubbles. Despite lots of support offered with developing risk assessments to allow for safe re-opening, some clubs have closed citing issues with staffing as the primary cause.

Providers were issued with a survey in Spring 2022 and reported on some of the key issues they had been facing. Concerns with the quality and safety of provision were top concerns during the pandemic and this is borne out by anecdotal evidence collected for Welsh Government in Spring 2021, when providers felt the restrictions very much affected practice.

Support for training, support and training in additional learning needs and better communications were also suggested. There was also a concern about the amount of Welsh medium provision with 45% of respondents feeling there was not sufficient provision with suggestions made around increasing Welsh training opportunities and the provision of language guides.

The EYCP team has made significant changes to the way in which it has worked with settings over the pandemic period. Guidance prevented face-to-face visits to settings for over a year and, for a period, restrictions made it impossible or difficult to bring people together to attend training. Most work has migrated to online and telephone contact, with great use made of Microsoft Teams to keep in contact with settings. Our training programme was modified during 20/21 to allow most training to take place online and the majority of training in 21/22 remained online also. This has benefitted settings and staff working in them by reducing travel time to attend courses and in some cases, it has also allowed for larger groups to attend training. It is planned to have a mixed programme for 22/23, as this will allow us to offer the hands-on training alongside training that is suited to online delivery.

Progress against actions to address gaps identified in the last CSA and subsequent progress reports has been impacted significantly by the Covid pandemic with many being taken forward to the action plan associated with this current CSA. The main focus of our work as a Local Authority team during the last year has been on supporting and guiding the childcare sector to stay open and remain sustainable and supporting families requiring/using childcare.

In terms of overall childcare numbers there was a decrease during 2020-21, the number childcare places decreasing from 1403 places to 1335 places.

In 2018, proposals were submitted to Welsh Government under the Childcare Offer Capital programme to develop new childcare places to increase capacity in areas where supply was not sufficient for supporting places for Childcare Offer. Five projects were approved, including one small capital grant scheme for local providers. Whilst the grant offered under the small grants scheme has been fully used in 19/20, 20/21 and 21/2, delays in the larger capital projects have been caused by the pandemic and progress has been much slower than planned. In the interim period one of the proposals was withdrawn due to a new provider opening a full day care facility in the area we had proposed building a full day care centre. The three remaining projects (extension to Swffryd Flying Start childcare setting, extension to Blaina ICC childcare and a new full day care centre in Ebbw Vale) are all progressing now and there has been an additional project granted approval under the Welsh medium grant for a Meithrin to be included in the new Welsh medium seedling school planned for Tredegar.

15) Gap Analysis

This analysis will consider the supply and demand of childcare, summarise the gaps in provision with a specific focus on the following areas:

- Childcare provision for children of parents who work atypical hours
- Welsh medium childcare provision
- Childcare provision for different language categories

The analysis will also outline childcare needs which are not being met in the Local Authority area, including those which relate to the:

- Types of childcare available
- Age of children for whom childcare is available
- Affordability of childcare
- Times at which childcare is available
- Location of childcare

Childcare provision for children of parents who work atypical hours/Times at which childcare is available

There is very little formal childcare available for parents working atypical hours. The earliest any provider opens is 6am and the latest they close is 6.30pm. The majority of providers offer a start time of between 7am and 9am. Only one provider (a Day Nursery) offers childcare on a Saturday and there is no provision available on Sundays. Whilst the parental demand survey suggests some parents do struggle with childcare at atypical hours, it is important to recognise that the sample size was really quite small. However, the employment profile of Blaenau Gwent shows a significantly higher proportion of people working in the manufacturing, care, leisure and services sector than the Wales average. This should suggest a higher demand for flexible childcare as these occupations often require shift and weekend working patterns. Evidence suggests there is still a significant number of parent/carers in Blaenau Gwent that rely on family and friends to care for their children and also some evidence that parents' co-ordinate their work hours to care for children between them. As the expense of childcare has been noted as one of the main barriers to using childcare, this may limit the take up of flexible childcare where it could be offered.

All providers have to consider the additional staffing costs and overheads they would incur in extending opening hours and contrast these with the potential additional business the extended hours could attract. New providers, particularly childminders (whose overheads may be less than setting-based provision), could consider offering atypical hours as a unique selling point.

Welsh medium provision

There is a clear lack of Welsh medium provision in Blaenau Gwent, with two community planning areas, Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr, currently having no Welsh medium provision at all. Those areas have, however, already been identified in the previous assessment and follow up reports and capital build plans are in place to bring full day care childcare options to both of those areas. The parent survey conducted indicated barriers to accessing Welsh medium provision included distance and availability and some demand was reported for Welsh medium childcare in future by 26 parent/carers that either wanted or would consider Welsh medium childcare. More local provision, offering wider opening hours may encourage those parents to take up Welsh medium options when needed. There are currently no childminders operating in Welsh, although some offer a service in both Welsh and English. There are only English medium childminders in Sirhowy which offers a more restrictive choice for parent/carers in that area. Current Welsh medium providers in North and South Ebbw Fach only offer childcare to children aged two to four years and for limited hours during the day. There is no after-school or holiday provision offered in Welsh.

There has been a Cylch Meithrin registered in Sirhowy, but the provision remains unstaffed and closed currently. The Local Authority would welcome that provision opening soon to begin building demand for the new seedling school. Welsh medium sessions have been incorporated into English medium Day Nursery provision in Ebbw Fawr, extending choice in that area. Extending this pilot into other English medium Day Nurseries would be very welcome. The need to develop services especially in light of the new Welsh seedling school to be built in Tredegar is desirable. The new full day care options will help meet some of these gaps identified but the need to explore recruiting Welsh speaking childminders, or upskilling childminders, particularly in the Sirhowy area is clear. The need to look at Welsh medium after-school provision beyond the new developments in Ebbw Fawr and Sirhowy is also needed to ensure there is access for children living in/attending school or early education in North and South Ebbw Fach.

Childcare provision for different language categories

There are a very small number of ethnic minority families in Blaenau Gwent and no direct evidence to suggest there is a need for childcare to be delivered in other languages at this time. All settings are encouraged and supported by the Local Authority to be fully inclusive and to respect and celebrate diversity.

Types of childcare available/Location of childcare

Whilst overall supply of childcare meets demand in Blaenau Gwent and there has been considerable progress since the last CSA, there are still some gaps in provision in relation to childcare types which will be limiting parental choice. There are low levels of childminders in the Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr areas, particularly in Sirhowy with only four childminders, which restricts parental choice. There is a good spread of sessional day care providers across all Community Planning Areas (although many are now registered as full day care providers) and plans to open new full day care facilities in Ebbw Fawr and Sirhowy will enhance existing provision and choice.

There is a significant drop in the numbers of childcare places available in the school holidays across every community planning area but there is no evidence from either the parent/carer survey or via Family Information Service records to suggest this constitutes a gap for parent/carers.

Parent survey data suggest that some families have difficulties finding suitable childcare for children with additional learning needs or special educational needs. Provider survey responses note more could be done to help them be more inclusive. Whilst all providers are encouraged to be inclusive, work needs to be done to assess what providers need and further training needs to be offered to providers.

Age of children for whom childcare is available

Childcare is available for children of all ages in each community planning area, with Day Nurseries and Childminders offering care to the broadest age range. There is a much greater number of places and childcare types available to 2–4-year-olds in Blaenau Gwent because of the number of sessional day care places on offer. Although childcare is available for children up to the age of 17, very few children attend childcare after the age of eleven. There was some evidence via parent survey to suggest that some parents find it harder to find suitable childcare for older children. School-based provision could fill this gap, but feasibility will need to be tested to ensure any new provision setting up is likely to succeed.

Affordability of childcare

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that affordability is a key issue for parents. Expense/ affordability is consistently highlighted as a concern by parent/carers, despite the programmes that offer funded childcare (Flying Start and Childcare Offer). There has been an increase in the number of providers registered to deliver Flying Start in Blaenau Gwent and almost all providers are registered to deliver Childcare Offer. This allows working parent/carers opportunities to save money on childcare costs. Parent/carers responding to the survey indicated receiving other support with childcare costs, namely the childcare element of Working Tax Credits/Universal Credit, Tax Free childcare, Childcare vouchers and Student grants. With Blaenau Gwent workers' earnings being significantly lower than the Welsh average, this is perhaps

unsurprising, particularly at the moment with the cost of living crisis affecting most families. Over half (28) of childcare providers were receiving tax free childcare payments or childcare vouchers from parents/carers in Summer 2021. All Day Nurseries currently accept both of those schemes, the majority of childminders also (twenty accept tax free childcare and twenty-five accept childcare vouchers), however, 6 out of 14 playgroups do not accept either of those schemes, the only stand-alone after-school and holiday club accepts tax free childcare but not childcare vouchers.

It is not unsurprising, but a little concerning, that half of all childcare providers responding to our survey were intending on increasing their prices this year. Whilst they need to, to remain sustainable moving forward, additional costs will undoubtedly be difficult for lots of families. The expansion of the Flying Start programme to all two-year-olds will be welcomed by all families but working families are likely to benefit the most as it should reduce their childcare costs overall or allow them to use childcare for the first time. The extension of the Childcare Offer to include parents in training is also a welcome help for parents looking to upskill and join or re-join the workforce. There is a need to continue to promote all forms of financial help to parents, particularly as programmes are expanded and extended to ensure no-one misses out on funded childcare which they are eligible for.

16) Action Plan

Priority	Action	Milestones	Timeline
<p>1. To complete all existing Capital programme projects and develop additional plans in response to identified gaps.</p>	<p>1a. Childcare Offer Capital Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glyncoed FDC • Blaina ICC extension 	<p>Tender for construction work evaluated</p> <p>Construction undertaken</p> <p>Tender for childcare provider</p> <p>Opening of new provision</p> <p>Design finalised</p> <p>Planning application submitted</p> <p>Tender for construction issued</p> <p>Construction work undertaken</p> <p>Childcare Setting expansion</p>	<p>Spring 2022</p> <p>Summer 2022</p> <p>Spring 2023</p> <p>Spring 2024</p> <p>Summer 2022</p> <p>Summer 2022</p> <p>Autumn 2022</p> <p>Spring 2023</p> <p>Summer 2023</p>
	<p>1b. Flying Start Capital programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swffryd Hub extension 	<p>Construction work commenced</p> <p>Tender for childcare provider issued</p>	<p>Summer 2022</p> <p>Summer 2022</p>

		Childcare tender awarded	Summer 2022
		Construction completed	Spring 2023
		Childcare setting open	Spring 2023
	1c. Welsh medium education grant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cylch Meithrin provision at new seedling school in Tredegar 	Planning application submitted	Summer 2022
		Tender for construction issued and evaluations completed	Summer 2022
		Construction starts	Autumn 2022
		Childcare tender issued	Spring 2023
		School/setting opens	Spring 2024
	1d. To bid for further Childcare Offer capital grant to develop a new Full Day Care setting in North Ebbw Fach (Brynmaur)	To submit a grant proposal when the next grant programme opens	To be confirmed
2. To support the rollout of Flying Start childcare to all 2 year olds from September 2022	2a. To support the Flying Start team in the assessment of the need for additional childcare places, with a focus on increasing Welsh language provision and addressing gaps in availability of provision.	Once rollout area agreed, undertake mapping of local provision, identifying gaps.	Summer 2022 – ongoing
	2b. To support the Flying Start programme with setting a specification for childminders to become Flying Start providers.	Development of childminder specification and promotion of scheme to local childminders, including CPD/qualification route advice.	Summer 2022 – ongoing

<p>3. To ensure all childcare settings are inclusive and children with disabilities have access to suitable care</p>	<p>3a. To ensure all childcare settings in Blaenau Gwent are inclusive and can offer suitable care.</p>	<p>The ALN Support Worker to develop an audit tool to assess how inclusive settings are and levels of compliance with the new ALN Act.</p> <p>Undertake an assessment of all settings.</p> <p>To offer support and information to support settings have confidence in their roles.</p>	<p>Autumn 2022</p> <p>Autumn 2022 - ongoing</p>
	<p>3b. To ensure that ALN training needs of childcare practitioners are assessed, and the annual training programme meets the need of the sector in terms of ALN training.</p>	<p>Early Years Additional Support Panel to discuss training needs of the sector and agree priorities for the next year</p>	<p>Summer 2022 - ongoing</p>
<p>4. To extend childcare choice/types in relation to childminding and after-school club provision</p>	<p>4a. To attract more people to become childminders in Blaenau Gwent, particularly in Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr, where numbers are lower</p>	<p>To work with PACEY in promoting childminding as a career.</p> <p>To offer specific information about the benefits of childminding as a career to students undertaking the Steps Into Childcare course.</p> <p>To revise the Childminder briefing and offer sessions 3 times per year.</p> <p>To promote childminding as a career during visits to parent and toddler groups, visits to school, Job Centre plus events and</p>	<p>Summer 2022</p> <p>Autumn 2022/Spring 2023</p> <p>Autumn 2022 – ongoing</p> <p>Autumn 2022 - ongoing</p>

		<p>with the Blaenau Gwent Multi-Agency Forum.</p> <p>To work with the Flying Start programme to identify how childminders can register to deliver Flying Start programme and to promote opportunities to existing and potential new childminders.</p>	Summer 2022
	4b. To explore the potential for new after-school/holiday clubs to set up	<p>To work with schools to undertake feasibility studies to assess the need for after-school and holiday childcare, prioritising the schools that have recently lost provision</p> <p>To promote Playwork careers and qualifications to existing childcare and education workforce, college and year 11 students.</p>	<p>Autumn 2022 – Spring 2024</p> <p>Autumn 2022 - ongoing</p>
5. To extend Welsh language options for parents/carers seeking childcare	5a. To increase the use of Welsh within existing settings, so there is an increase in the number of settings reporting they operate in both English and Welsh at the next CSA.	<p>To promote Welsh language learning to the whole workforce, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network events • Monitoring/QA visits • Training • Development of Welsh language resources • Signposting to Camau and Cwlwm Welsh Language Co-ordinators 	<p>Autumn 2022 – ongoing</p> <p>Autumn 2022</p>

		To work with Mudiad Meithrin SAS programme to identify the potential for the pilot of Welsh medium sessions within English medium settings to be extended	
	5b. To establish the need for Welsh language after-school care with pupils using Ysgol Bro Helyg and the new seedling school planned for Tredegar	To design and undertake a feasibility study for use in Ysgol Bro Helyg (taking note most pupils use school transport) To replicate the above for the new seedling school when open	Spring 2023 Autumn 2024
	5c. As part of Capital programmes (see above), to seek Welsh language providers to establish in Glyncoed (Ebbw Fawr) and Tredegar (Sirhowy).	Tender documents to outline Welsh language requirements and delivery expectation	Spring 2023
6. To have robust systems in place for collecting information about issues with childcare from parents/carers or other stakeholders	6a. To set up a follow up system for contacting FIS enquirers to identify where parents have had difficulty accessing childcare or other issues related to childcare	Enquiry system to be set up To include a section on the FIS website, under development, to report issues with accessing childcare	Autumn 2022 Autumn 2022
	6b. To encourage stakeholders in other organisations to share information with us when parents having difficulties in accessing childcare are identified.	An audit to be undertaken on an area basis of services and organisations that could become FIS champions Roll out of FIS Champion scheme Develop system for reporting in issues	Autumn 2022 Spring 2023 Summer 2023
7. To develop a workforce development plan, considering recruitment and retention issues,	7a. To set up a task and finish group to consider recruitment and retention issues, to feed into a workforce development plan.	To identify appropriate stakeholders To set up meetings To produce a workforce development plan	Summer 2022 Autumn 2022 Spring 2023

setting key actions to support the sector			
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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
Executive Summary

June 2022

1) Introduction

Under the Childcare Act 2006 Local Authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare for the needs of working parents/carers in their area for children up to 1st September after they turn 14 years, or until they reach the age of 18 in the case of children with a disability. Under the 2016 guidance, Local Authorities are now required to conduct a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) every five years to assess a range of factors affecting childcare locally including supply, demand, costs, workforce and the views of a range of stakeholders about the local childcare market. Previously CSA's were conducted every three years and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has produced them in 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017. The CSA provides the information required to enable the Early Years Childcare and Play team and partners to identify gaps in provision and areas for development. The Action Plan is then developed to drive forward actions required. Progress against actions within the Action Plan will be reported annually in June of each year and further actions agreed, before the next full assessment is undertaken in 2027.

2) The Assessment Process

The Early Years Childcare and Play (EYCP) team conducted the assessment, using various methods, from July 2021 to April 2022, collecting a range of data from;

- Parents/carers
- Children
- Childcare Providers
- Local Employers
- Other Local Authority Departments (Education, Planning and Regeneration)
- Schools
- Further Education College
- Umbrella organisations

The collection of data presented a number of challenges to the team with low levels of responses to all surveys issues, despite a great deal of promotion being undertaken. The parent survey was undertaken at an All Wales level, with Local Authorities promoting the survey in their localities. Despite heavy promotion on social media and visits to play and leisure sessions in October half term to directly target parents, there was a disappointing response with only 233 parents/carers completing the survey. The response rates for all Local Authorities in Wales were similarly disappointing.

There were also some issues with the data provided through the Self-Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) process, with some providers not having submitted any information and some information being missing or inaccurate in some cases. Some of these issues with provider data were resolved locally by using local data systems to identify gaps and fill in missing information.

The assessment process is designed to take a snapshot of the childcare market at a given point in time, July/August 2021, in this case. The assessment does, however, take account of developments that have happened since and a full account of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is also presented in the assessment.

The assessment process is designed to take account of both current and future demand to assist in the planning and development of childcare in the future. Whilst parental demand data can be derived from parental questionnaires where there is a good sample size, it can also be derived by looking at trends and developments that can impact on childcare uptake. The EYCP team were only able to draw general observations from the parental survey due to the low sample size, but have accounted for developments that could/will impact on childcare demand in the assessment document and action plan.

Unfortunately, the timing of this assessment has not allowed for updated Census data to be used and so this will be accounted for in the Progress Report and Updated Action Plan for 2023, if there is any meaningful change that could impact on the sector/actions already included in the Action Plan.

The assessment of supply and demand has been considered in relation to Community Planning Areas this year, as per the 2017 assessment, they are; Sirhowy, Ebbw Fawr, North Ebbw Fach and South Ebbw Fach.

3) Findings

The population in Blaenau Gwent, especially the 0 to 15-year-old group has been in decline for several years and is projected to remain in decline up to the end of this decade. In itself, that could suggest the need for childcare is likely to decline. However, there are other factors outlined in the assessment, that are expected to impact on the childcare sector. These include growth in the housing market, potential growth in the employment sector and the expansion of key Welsh government programmes (Childcare Offer and Flying Start).

Parent/Carer Survey

In common with the last assessment the most common form of childcare used in Blaenau Gwent, as reported by parents/carers completing the questionnaire, was informal care provided through family and friends.

A significant majority of parent/carers reported being either very or quite satisfied with their current childcare provider (95%).

For those not happy with their childcare, the following improvements were suggested in order of the most prevalent;

- More affordable
- Extend opening hours/More hours available
- More flexible sessions
- Better quality provision
- Different location
- Childcare better at meeting child's needs
- Overnight and evening care

Parents were asked specifically about barriers to accessing Welsh medium childcare and the reasons given included: distance to provision, availability, insufficient hours and cost.

Parents were asked why they didn't use childcare and in common with the last assessment, the primary reason given was affordability of childcare. Over half of parents surveyed were using informal childcare through family and friends, although some of those were using formal childcare too.

Comments from parents/carers made it clear there is still a strong feeling about the perceived 'unfairness' in the limited and geographical nature of the Flying Start programme.

In terms of future demand, the survey indicated most parents/carers expected to use more childcare in future or that their needs would stay the same. The stated types of childcare required in future demonstrated a

continued reliance on informal childcare, followed by a need for breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and full day nursery places.

Supply

At the time the data was collected in July 2021, there were 56 providers in Blaenau Gwent an increase of one provider since the assessment in 2017. However, there have been some providers that have closed since then (one after-school club and four childminders), so we now have four fewer providers. Since 2017 there are now more providers registered to offer full day care, with an increase from ten to sixteen providers. Some providers changed their registration from sessional to full day care to support the Childcare Offer pilot and others to assist with the Covid-19 response. This is positive as it offers parents more flexibility with childcare hours offered, but it has resulted in a small decline in overall registered childcare places. (Sessional childcare having been counted previously by the number of both afternoon and morning places).

There are concerns at the loss of providers and places, especially in childminder and after-school provision. This concern is echoed by the Umbrella Organisations that support those sectors.

Covid Impact

This latest assessment required Local Authorities to include a section on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The assessment notes the efforts made by the sector from the earliest days of the pandemic to support key worker families and vulnerable families. Blaenau Gwent had one of the lowest closure rates in Wales, with over 65% of providers remaining open.

Whilst the pandemic has had an undoubted impact on all providers, the impact has been most acutely felt by the after-school sector, with stand-alone clubs based at schools having to remain closed from the onset of the pandemic until Summer term 2021 in Blaenau Gwent. Some clubs have not reopened at all due to concerns around sustainability and difficulties with recruitment.

The number of grant schemes brought in to support settings is acknowledged as a positive and these grants have no doubt have played a big part in the largely positive outlook of the sector with regard to their future sustainability. In Spring 2022, there were remaining concerns regarding the impact of the pandemic on quality and safety, financial stability, recruitment and retention, but most providers indicated they expected to be in business for a year or longer.

4) Gap Analysis

Taking account of all the information gathered, gaps in the following areas were identified;

- Childcare for parents working atypical hours
- Welsh medium provision
- Provision suitable to meet the needs of children with Additional Learning Needs
- Full Day Care provision in Brynmawr
- Childminder provision in Sirhowy and Ebbw Fach
- Childcare for older children (after-school and holiday provision)

The Action Plan

The action plan seeks to address gaps identified in the assessment and builds on the previous CSA action plan for 2021-22. It acknowledges that some of the gaps identified were already known and plans to close the gaps were already in place, largely through Capital Programme projects. Actions include;

- Delivery of all capital projects (Swffryd Flying Start hub, Glyncoed Full Day Care, Blaina ICC extension, Welsh medium seedling school, Brynmawr Full Day Care)
- Work to attract new childminders to set up in Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr
- Work to establish feasibility of After-School/Holiday Clubs at primary schools
- Improve inclusion in settings
- Promote Welsh language use and learning within existing settings
- To attract new Welsh language providers to take up tender opportunities in Blaenau Gwent
- To develop more robust data capture from parents/carers with childcare issues
- To develop a workforce development plan addressing recruitment and retention concerns

The full assessment and action plan, along with this Executive Summary, are to be submitted in draft to Welsh Government on 30th June. The final document will be submitted to Welsh Government following a public consultation period planned for July/August and approval by the Executive, by 30th September 2022.

Agenda Item 12

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 31.08.22

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 02.09.22

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th September 2022**

Report Subject: **Revenue Budget Monitoring - 2022/2023,
Forecast Outturn to 31st March 2023 (as at 30th June 2022)**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr S Thomas – Leader of the Council & Executive Member
Corporate Overview & Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources**

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				13/09/22	14/09/22		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the forecast financial outturn position across all portfolios for the financial year 2022/2023 (as forecast at 30th June 2022).

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 This report provides details on the following:
 - Forecast financial position to the end of March 2023 across all portfolios
 - Budget virements actioned during the period April to June 2022
 - Forecast outturn for Fees & Charges
 - Forecast of Reserves to be applied during the period

 - 2.2 This report forms part of the Council's financial reporting framework to members.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

The report will be considered by the Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 13th September 2022, and any feedback from the committee, will be provided verbally to the Executive.

 - 3.1 **Option 1 (Recommended Option)**
 - Members to consider and provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report.
 - Approve the budget virements, detailed in paragraph 5.1.14 & Appendix 4, in excess of £250,000 in line with the constitution.
 - Note the application of reserves

 - 3.2 **Option 2**

Members do not accept the report and do not approve the budget virements.

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

4.1 This report supports the Council Corporate Plan proposed outcome statement 2020/2022 “An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities”.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

5.1.1 The overall forecast outturn across all portfolios as at 30th June 2022, is an adverse variance of £0.57m before net transfers to specific reserves (of £0.62m) and a small favourable variance of £0.05m after net transfers to specific reserves.

5.1.2 The forecast overall financial position across all portfolios at 30th June 2022 is shown in the table below:

Table 1 – Portfolio Summary

Portfolio/ Committee	2022/2023 Revised Revenue Budget	2022/2023 Forecast Outturn @ 30 June 2022	Favourable/ (Adverse) Variance	Favourable/ (Adverse) Variance (after Net transfers to Specific Reserves)	Append ref:
	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Corporate Services & Financial Management & Strategy	17.92	17.79	0.13	0.39	1a
Social Services	49.94	49.88	0.06	0.31	1b
Education & Leisure	68.30	68.52	(0.22)	(0.22)	1c
Economy	1.79	1.85	(0.06)	(0.06)	1d
Environment	29.66	30.13	(0.48)	(0.38)	1e
Planning	1.44	1.44	0.00	0.00	1f
Licensing	0.13	0.14	0.00	0.00	1f
Total	169.19	169.76	(0.57)	0.05	

5.1.3 The forecast includes a number of assumptions, the main ones being:

- The proposed pay award of £1,925 on all pay points from 1 April 2022 for NJC & JNC officers
- 20% uplift to Home to School contractors will continue to March 2023
- The impact of inflation on prices will continue to March 2023

5.1.4 **Use of Reserves**

5.1.5 The net transfer from individual portfolios to specific reserves total £0.62m and this includes:

- £234,960 from the Supporting Additional Capacity Reserve (which includes additional resources for areas such as Health & Safety, Civil Contingencies, Payroll, Decarbonisation and Digital)
- £32,180 from the Community Safety & CCTV Reserve (to support a new Policy Officer for CCTV until the SLA with Caerphilly CBC is established)
- £56,298 from the Infrastructure Staffing Reserve (to support new Welsh Government Legislation requirements)
- £45,458 from the Homelessness Transitional Funding Reserve (to fund a specialist EHO for empty properties)
- £249,243 from Social Services Displaced Expenditure Reserve (relating to displaced grant expenditure and cost of living increases in excess of grant allocation in relation to Early Years Childcare)

5.1.6 **Pay & Pay Contingency**

5.1.7 The current local government employers pay proposal for 2022/23 is a £1,925 increase on all pay scales. If agreed this will result in pay increases ranging from 4% to 10%. The average increase will be 6.3%

5.1.8 The impact of the proposed pay award will increase costs (compared to 2021/22) by £3m. When compared to the Council's agreed budget of an assumed 4% increase there is a cost pressure of £1.15m relating to pay.

5.1.9 The pay award contingency has been reallocated to portfolios forecasting an overall adverse variance for the year.

5.1.10 With the exception of the use of reserves identified in 5.1.5, as the overall forecast is a small favourable variance, it has been assumed that the additional costs, related to the pay award (in excess of the agreed budget) and the impact being seen as a result of the cost of living crisis, is funded from within underspending budgets, and not specific reserves. Virements from underspending budgets have been actioned and where these are in excess of £250,000 they have been highlighted in section 5 and Appendix 4.

5.1.11 **Budget Virements**

5.1.12 Budget virements are actioned to address in year overspends, cost pressures or to realign budgets to reflect service needs.

5.1.13 The Constitution requires budget virements in excess of £250,000 between portfolios to be approved by the Executive, Table 2 details the virements actioned during the period April to June 2022 relating to the Pay Award contingency, with Appendix 4 identifying further budget virements actioned subject to approval.

5.1.14 Table 2 – Budget Virements – Pay Award Contingency

Portfolio	£	Reason
From: Corporate Services	877,540	Allocating pay award contingency budget to services to meet the cost of the expected pay award
To: Education	58,890	
Environment	739,110	
Economy	41,380	
Planning	31,310	
Licensing	6,850	

5.1.15 **Portfolio Analysis**

5.1.16 An analysis of significant adverse variances per Portfolio are detailed below.

5.1.17 **Corporate Services – Council Tax Collection (£0.305m adverse variance)**

5.1.18 There is currently a cost pressure on Council Tax Collection, due to forecasted increase in the provision for bad debts (at this point in time).

This cost pressure has been offset by a budget virement from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). The underspend on CTRS has arisen due to:-

- The budget incorporates as assumed increase on Council Tax Levels of 4% (in line with the MTFs assumptions) however the actual average Council Tax increase agreed by Council was approx.1% (in respect of Police & Community Councils precepts) and
- The number of claimants claiming CTRS reducing back to pre covid levels (although this will need to be monitored during the year as the Cost of Living Crisis could attract more claimants).

Date	Number of Cases
01/06/22	8,525
01/06/21	9,226
01/06/20	9,203
01/06/19	8,818

5.1.19 **Education – Home to School Transport (£0.502m adverse variance)**

5.1.20 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.

It was previously agreed that the identified cost pressure would be funded from the inflation and service cost pressure reserve, however, given that the overall forecast position is favourable funding from specific reserves have not been applied at this time.

5.1.21 **Environment – Catering (£0.54m adverse variance)**

5.1.22 The cost of living crisis is having a significant impact on the cost of provisions for the school meals services, with forecast costs increasing by £965,406, (83%) when compared to 2021/2022.

The Council's largest food supplier is indicating significant cost increases in products e.g. some commodities have increased by as much as 54%, this coupled with increased fuel costs is impacting upon overall costs.

This variance does not take account of the anticipated increase in uptake from September when Universal Free School Meals (UFSM's) is rolled out to Nursery and Infant children. It has been assumed that this will be fully funded by Welsh Government.

5.1.23 **Fees & Charges**

5.1.24 The 2022/2023 portfolio estimates include income budgets in relation to fees & charges (excluding Council Tax) of £14m across all portfolios. Attached at Appendix 2 is an analysis of income against budget for the financial year for individual portfolios. The forecast provisional outturn is reporting an adverse variance of £0.70m, primarily relating to lost income: -

- Sale of properties £0.289m & Fees and charges in respect of Care £0.268m (This shortfall is being offset by the overall underspend within the Social Services Portfolio).

5.1.25 Whilst the analysis of fees and charges is useful, it should not be considered in isolation, as elements of any shortfall within Portfolios can be inextricably linked to underspends in expenditure within the same budget heading. Where this is the case, budget holders should action budget virements to ensure that the income targets reflect more accurately expected income. Likewise, any over achievement in income which offset overspends in expenditure within the same budget, should be treated in the same way.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 Grants form a significant element of the Council's income and support the delivery of priority services to the people of Blaenau Gwent. There is a risk that

- a reduction or cessation of grant funding will result in service levels reducing or services no longer being delivered.
- 5.2.2 A grants register has been developed and is being maintained and will be considered as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 5.2.3 There is a risk that Action Plans will not address the cost pressures identified.
- 5.2.4 Action Plans have been developed, identifying actions to mitigate the forecast cost pressures. The Action Plans will be monitored as part of the Budget Monitoring and Reporting Framework and the impact reported to the Corporate Overview & Performance Scrutiny Committee, Executive Committee and the Cost of Living Working Group.
- 5.3 **Legal**
N/A
- 5.4 **Human Resources**
N/A
6. **Supporting Evidence**
- 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**
- 6.1.1 A summary page for each portfolio is contained in Appendices 1a to 1g.
- 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***
- 6.2.1 The report details the financial implications for the Council in providing services to the communities of Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
- 6.3.1 CLT have considered the forecast financial position for 2022/23 (as at 30th June 2022).
- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
- 6.4.1 For new and emerging cost pressures identified during the financial year, budget holders have produced Action Plans which should address the cost pressure during the year. These Action Plans will form part of the quarterly budget reports and will be submitted to the Cost of Living Working Group for scrutiny, challenge and monitoring.
- 6.4.2 Cost Pressures are also considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 6.5 ***Preventative focus***
- 6.5.1 Existing, new and emerging cost pressures are considered as part of the annual budget setting process and additional funding awarded where it is likely that the cost pressure will continue into future years.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
- 6.6.1 Accountancy works closely with budget holders during the financial year in producing the financial forecast, identifying cost pressures and in developing Action Plans

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

N/A

6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

6.8.1 The Council is committed to the Decarbonisation Plan to achieve a carbon neutral public sector by 2030 and the Bridging the Gap programme includes a Strategic Business Review, Low Carbon.

6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

All Strategic Business Reviews go through the EqIA process.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1

7.1.1 Financial reporting to Corporate Overview & Performance Scrutiny and the Executive is carried out on a quarterly basis. Where services are reporting significant cost pressures, there will be a requirement for Budget Holders to develop and implement Action Plans these will be reported to the Cost of Living Working Group, on a quarterly basis.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1a – Corporate Services and Financial Management Portfolio

Appendix 1b – Social Services Portfolio

Appendix 1c – Education Portfolio

Appendix 1d – Economy Portfolio

Appendix 1e – Environment and Infrastructure Portfolio

Appendix 1f – Planning and Licensing Committee

Appendix 2 – Fees and Charges

Appendix 3 – Summary of Reserves

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CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2023	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
	£	£	£
SUMMARY			
<u>DEPARTMENTAL AND OTHER RECHARGEABLE SERVICES</u>			
Corporate Services Department	(95,990)	167,400	(263,390)
Resources Department	0	100,595	(100,595)
Sub Total	(95,990)	267,995	(363,985)
<u>COMMERCIAL SERVICES</u>			
Archives	148,670	153,844	(5,174)
Festival Park	102,570	108,557	(5,987)
Housing Benefit	(116,270)	(100,566)	(15,704)
ICT Service	0	0	0
Cross Cutting	(59,310)	(59,310)	0
Community Hubs	196,320	204,611	(8,291)
Sub Total	271,980	307,136	(35,156)
<u>LEGAL & CORPORATE COMPLIANCE SERVICES</u>			
Registration of Electors	17,860	17,860	0
Conducting Elections	0	0	0
Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths	48,100	64,172	(16,072)
Sub Total	65,960	82,032	(16,072)
<u>GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIP SERVICES</u>			
Corporate Management (inc Audit Fees)	109,510	109,522	(12)
Democratic Representation and Management	1,323,130	1,288,797	34,333
CCTV Cameras	208,680	208,689	(9)
Civil Contingencies	106,890	104,273	2,617
Sub Total	1,748,210	1,711,281	36,929
<u>RESOURCES SERVICES</u>			
Corporate Management	355,790	349,625	6,165
Non Distributed Costs	940,920	930,874	10,046
Apprenticeship Levy	358,430	354,215	4,215
Council Tax Collection	(1,165,020)	(1,160,418)	(4,602)
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	10,004,370	9,837,104	167,266
N.N.D.R. Collection	(106,820)	(111,456)	4,636
Grants and Subscriptions	88,410	88,410	0
Cross Cutting Budget	1,085,640	501,840	583,800
Sub Total	11,561,720	10,790,193	771,527
<u>CORPORATE CHARGES</u>			
Corporate Recharges	4,366,000	4,366,000	0
Sub Total	4,366,000	4,366,000	0
CORPORATE SERVICES TOTAL EXPENDITURE	17,917,880	17,524,637	393,243

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SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2023	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
	£	£	£
SUMMARY			
<u>SOCIAL SERVICES</u>			
Children's Services - Commissioning and Social Work	3,939,340	4,054,656	(115,316)
Looked After Children	7,494,490	7,328,392	166,098
Family Support Services	192,370	207,831	(15,461)
Youth Justice	237,580	250,930	(13,350)
Other Children's and Family Services	2,407,710	2,384,354	23,356
Older People Aged 65 or Over	7,147,410	7,119,257	28,153
Adults Aged Under 65 with a Physical Disability or Sensory Impairment	18,290	18,210	80
Adults Aged Under 65 with Learning Disabilities	3,721,690	3,732,286	(10,596)
Adults Aged Under 65 with Mental Health Needs	556,660	597,634	(40,974)
Other Adult Services	463,570	497,839	(34,269)
Community Care	17,341,130	17,018,344	322,786
Support Service and Management Costs	934,170	949,494	(15,324)
Corporate Recharges	5,487,140	5,487,140	0
Socvial Services COVID-19 Costs	0	(17,268)	17,268
SOCIAL SERVICES TOTAL EXPENDITURE	49,941,550	49,629,098	312,452

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EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2023	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
	£	£	£
SUMMARY			
SCHOOLS BUDGET			
Individual Schools Budget	50,430,260	50,430,260	0
Education Improvement Grant	267,730	267,715	15
Other Costs	725,420	736,864	(11,444)
Supporting Special Education Needs	1,730,430	1,599,258	131,172
Schools Budget Total Expenditure	53,153,840	53,034,097	119,743
LEA BUDGET			
Strategic Management	2,264,410	2,275,610	(11,200)
Assuring Access to Schools	2,439,820	2,918,246	(478,426)
Facilitating School Improvement	396,350	395,131	1,219
Supporting Special Education Needs	380,730	319,986	60,744
LEA Budget Total Expenditure	5,481,310	5,908,973	(427,663)
OTHER EDUCATION SERVICES			
Further Education and Training	135,960	88,899	47,061
Youth Service	345,390	365,278	(19,888)
Other Expenditure	143,850	129,619	14,231
Education Departmental Budget	195,970	154,020	41,950
Other Education Services Total Expenditure	821,170	737,816	83,354
CORPORATE CHARGES			
Corporate Support Recharges	4,671,690	4,671,690	0
Reserve Funding - Cost of Living & Service Pressures	0	0	0
Corporate Charges Total Expenditure	4,671,690	4,671,690	0
Education Total Expenditure	64,128,010	64,352,576	(224,566)
LEISURE TRUSTS			
LEISURE TRUSTS			
Aneurin Leisure Trust	2,875,550	2,879,785	(4,235)
Awen Leisure Trust	198,900	205,725	(6,825)
Sub Total	3,074,450	3,085,510	(11,060)
RETAINED SERVICES			
Corporate Recharges	1,102,170	1,082,947	19,223
Sub Total	1,102,170	1,082,947	19,223
Lesire Trusts Total Expenditure	4,176,620	4,168,457	8,163
EDUCATION PORTFOLIO TOTAL EXPENDITURE	68,304,630	68,521,033	(216,403)

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ECONOMY PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2023	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
	£	£	£
SUMMARY			
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>			
Economic Strategy and Development - Departmental Budget	92,940	92,961	(21)
Estates Management - Rechargeable	12,030	149,763	(137,733)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>104,970</u>	<u>242,724</u>	<u>(137,754)</u>
<u>ECONOMY SERVICES</u>			
Affordable Housing	0	0	0
Aspire	0	0	0
Community Benefits Investment	0	0	0
CSCS	(10,200)	(424)	(9,776)
Destination Management	10,200	10,202	(2)
DRIVE	0	0	0
Financial Support to Business	4,410	4,409	1
General Offices	(24,360)	(24,361)	1
Industrial Land	7,390	7,390	0
Inspire	0	0	0
Nursery Units/Misc. Industrial Premises	(793,750)	(880,791)	87,041
Pentagon	0	0	0
Regeneration Projects	5,100	6,179	(1,079)
Resilient Project	0	0	0
Estates Management Non Rechargeable	(96,590)	(96,593)	3
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>(897,800)</u>	<u>(973,989)</u>	<u>76,189</u>
Corporate Recharges	2,583,380	2,583,380	0
Total Expenditure	<u><u>1,790,550</u></u>	<u><u>1,852,115</u></u>	<u><u>(61,565)</u></u>

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ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Total Expenditure to March 2023	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
	£	£	£
SUMMARY			
<u>COMMUNITY SERVICES</u>			
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>			
Environment Department - Corporate Division	179	(40,490)	40,669
Environmental Services Division	0	(1,017)	1,017
Technical Services - Engineering & Property Management	78,740	78,741	(1)
Enforcement	25,280	19,184	6,096
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>104,199</u>	<u>56,418</u>	<u>47,781</u>
<u>WASTE COLLECTION</u>			
Household and Trade Waste Collection	644,738	493,643	151,095
Recycling Collection	2,640,000	2,848,122	(208,122)
Bulky Waste Collection	2,523	11,994	(9,471)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>3,287,261</u>	<u>3,353,759</u>	<u>(66,498)</u>
<u>WASTE TRANSFER</u>			
Civic Amenity Sites	358,009	322,592	35,417
HWRC Roseheyworth	319,653	284,077	35,576
Transfer Station	1,033,557	988,836	44,721
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>1,711,219</u>	<u>1,595,505</u>	<u>115,714</u>
<u>WASTE DISPOSAL</u>			
Disposal Of Waste	1,101,830	1,250,368	(148,538)
Recycling Disposal	382,649	50,878	331,771
Trade Waste Collection, Transfer & Disposal	(13,845)	0	(13,845)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>1,470,634</u>	<u>1,301,246</u>	<u>169,388</u>
<u>WASTE SERVICES</u>			
<u>PUBLIC SERVICES</u>			
County Borough Cleansing	1,150,994	1,203,428	(52,434)
Cemeteries / Crematorium	(173,378)	(121,087)	(52,291)
Grounds Maintenance	1,035,374	1,031,517	3,857
Countryside Recreation Sites	37,419	37,419	0
General Entertainment	2,489	3,879	(1,390)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>2,052,898</u>	<u>2,155,156</u>	<u>(102,258)</u>
<u>FACILITIES MANAGEMENT</u>			
Corporate Landlord	1,730,142	1,727,665	2,477
Corporate Property	30,073	25,167	4,906
Building Cleaning	317,924	316,294	1,630
Catering Account	311,105	847,534	(536,429)
Appetite For Life	44,585	44,585	0
School Breakfast Club	439,699	462,999	(23,300)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>2,873,528</u>	<u>3,424,244</u>	<u>(550,716)</u>

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Total Expenditure to March 2023	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
	£	£	£
<u>HIGHWAYS & ROADS SERVICES</u>			
Highways - Street Care Team	9,010	2,220	6,790
Non Operational Land	1,490	0	1,490
Licensing (Highway Permits)	(52,211)	(52,211)	0
Shopping Arcade, Abertillery	2,834	2,834	0
Road and Street Works Acts	(16,589)	(16,589)	0
Multi-Storey Car Parks	277,154	277,154	0
On Street Parking	1,122	1,122	0
Surface Car Parks	32,421	32,421	0
Public Transport Co-Ordination	924	924	0
Bridges	79,145	79,145	0
Structural Maintenance (Principal and Other Roads)	176,688	183,698	(7,010)
Environmental Maintenance (Principal and Other Roads)	19,831	19,831	0
Safety Maintenance (Principal and Other Roads)	73,142	73,336	(194)
Routine Repairs (Principal and Other Roads)	861,912	888,386	(26,474)
Street Lighting	1,260,145	1,260,143	2
Winter Maintenance	399,947	402,017	(2,070)
Sub Total	3,126,965	3,154,431	(27,466)
<u>TRANSPORT SERVICES</u>			
Traffic Orders	(16,841)	(16,841)	0
Highways Adoptions	(9,950)	(9,950)	0
Traffic / Accident Research	16,001	16,001	0
Traffic Management	6,895	6,895	0
Civil Parking Enforcement	2,100	20,632	(18,532)
Road Safety Education	22,939	23,156	(217)
Crossing Patrols	177,836	178,782	(946)
Concessionary fares and Support to Operators	284,395	265,852	18,543
Local Transport Plans	2,680	2,680	0
Home to School Transport	0	0	0
Transport and Heavy Plant	139,656	139,658	(2)
Sub Total	625,711	626,865	(1,154)
<u>CULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES</u>			
General Administration and Markets	(25,868)	(9,107)	(16,761)
Countryside Programme and Management	1,718	1,718	0
Landscaping and Afforestation	20,716	20,716	0
Reservoirs, Tips, Quarries and Mines	10,333	10,333	0
Flood Defence And Land Drainage	56,488	56,488	0
ENRaW	0	0	0
City Deal	99,144	99,144	0
Sub Total	162,531	179,292	(16,761)
COMMUNITY SERVICES TOTAL EXPENDITURE	15,414,946	15,846,916	(431,970)

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Total Expenditure to March 2023	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
	£	£	£
<u>PUBLIC PROTECTION</u>			
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>			
Environmental Health	46,788	56,746	(9,958)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>46,788</u>	<u>56,746</u>	<u>(9,958)</u>
<u>CARAVAN SITES</u>			
Cwmcraehen Caravan Site	(41,092)	(28,308)	(12,784)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>(41,092)</u>	<u>(28,308)</u>	<u>(12,784)</u>
<u>ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH</u>			
Food Safety	6,395	(848)	7,243
Control of Pollution	9,578	16,422	(6,844)
Dog Wardens	0	1,843	(1,843)
Animal Health and Welfare	23,827	0	23,827
Pest Control	63,240	69,133	(5,893)
Littering and Dog Control Orders	0	0	0
Health and Safety at Work (Commercial Prem.)	1,540	(2,865)	4,405
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>104,580</u>	<u>83,685</u>	<u>20,895</u>
<u>HOUSING SERVICES</u>			
Homelessness	275,616	239,010	36,606
20 Church Street	16,116	16,116	0
General Properties	(8,160)	(6,642)	(1,518)
Housing Access	69,263	66,023	3,240
Works in Default	(255)	(287)	32
Disabled Facilities Grants	1,061	0	1,061
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>353,641</u>	<u>314,220</u>	<u>39,421</u>
<u>TRADING STANDARDS</u>			
Trading Standards	16,015	3,868	12,147
Inspection and Enforcement	4,437	1,330	3,107
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>20,452</u>	<u>5,198</u>	<u>15,254</u>
PUBLIC PROTECTION TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>484,369</u>	<u>431,541</u>	<u>52,828</u>
<u>CORPORATE CHARGES</u>			
Fire Service	3,551,477	3,547,672	3,805
Coroner's Court	125,123	125,123	0
Corporate Recharges	10,080,865	10,080,865	0
CORPORATE CHARGES TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>13,757,465</u>	<u>13,753,660</u>	<u>3,805</u>
Overall Portfolio Total	<u>29,656,780</u>	<u>30,032,117</u>	<u>(375,337)</u>

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PLANNING COMMITTEE AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Item	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2023	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
	£	£	£
PLANNING COMMITTEE SUMMARY			
<u>BUILDING CONTROL</u>			
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>			
Building Control	10,240	10,237	3
<u>BUILDING CONTROL SERVICES</u>			
Building Regulations	19,220	19,219	1
Dangerous Structures	23,100	23,099	1
<i>Building Control Total Expenditure</i>	52,560	52,555	5
<u>DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT</u>			
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>			
Development Management	16,890	16,875	15
<u>DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES</u>			
Dealing with Applications	(202,311)	(202,312)	1
Planning Appeals	3,319	3,320	(1)
Enforcement	(10)	0	(10)
<i>Development Management Total Expenditure</i>	(182,112)	(182,117)	5
<u>DEVELOPMENT PLANS</u>			
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>			
Development Plans	5,084	5,087	(3)
<u>DEVELOPMENT PLANS SERVICES</u>			
Development Plans	100,460	100,460	0
<i>Development Plans Total Expenditure</i>	105,544	105,547	(3)
Corporate Recharges	1,465,230	1,465,230	0
PLANNING COMMITTEE TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,441,222	1,441,215	7

PLANNING COMMITTEE AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Item	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2023	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
	£	£	£
LICENSING COMMITTEE SUMMARY			
Licensing	83,592	85,979	(2,387)
Internal Recharges	51,166	51,166	0
LICENSING COMMITTEE TOTAL EXPENDITURE	134,758	137,145	(2,387)

Fees and Charges Forecast 2022/2023 (As at June 2022)

Portfolio	Service	Description of Income	Income Source	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Forecast	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
				£	£	£
Fees & Charges						
Corporate Services	Communications	Advertising	Fees & Charges	3,000	2,082	(918)
Corporate Services	Business Support	External Printing and photocopying charges.	Fees & Charges	8,160	3,237	(4,923)
Corporate Services	Legal Fees	Legal Charges	Fees & Charges	14,330	3,156	(11,174)
Corporate Services	Corporate Support	Land Charges	Fixed - Set Locally	32,150	44,493	12,343
Economy	General Offices	Rental Income	Fees & Charges	810	8,313	7,503
Economy	Departmental	Reimbursement of staff costs and receipts for external works	SLA	70,469	70,469	0
Environment	Household & Trade Waste Collection	Trade Waste Collection & Disposal Income - Commercial	Fees & Charges	0	0	0
Environment	Enforcement Team		Fees & Charges	2,030	2,030	0
Environment	Recycling Collection	Recycling Collection & Disposal Income - Commercial Customers	Fees & Charges	259,820	353,676	93,856
Environment	Trade Waste	Trade Waste Collection & Disposal Income - Commercial Customers	Fees & Charges	298,818	218,706	(80,112)
Environment	Bulky Waste Collection	Bulky Waste Collection	Fees & Charges	71,690	65,296	(6,394)
Environment	Recycling Disposal	Sale of Recyclate Materials	Fees & Charges	879,384	862,445	(16,939)
Environment	County Borough Cleansing	C&CR - External Cleansing Works	Fees & Charges	23,940	32,341	8,401
Environment	Cemeteries / Crematorium	Burial Fees	Fees & Charges	494,814	455,419	(39,395)
Environment	Cemeteries / Crematorium	General Properties	Fees & Charges	3,000	3,000	0
Social Services	Meals On Wheels	Sale of Meals	Fees & Charges	175,280	164,889	(10,391)
Environment	Grounds Maintenance	Income from Letting of Playing Fields, Ground Rent & Way Leaves	Fees & Charges	76,395	130,994	54,599
Environment	General Properties	Rental Income	Fees & Charges	8,160	6,642	(1,518)
Environment	Cwmcrachen Caravan Site	Rental	Fees & Charges	113,948	117,373	3,425
Environment	Dog Wardens - now in	Byelaw Enforcement Fees	Fees & Charges	0	0	0
Environment	Corporate Landlord	Civic Centre - Rental of Land	Miscellaneous	184	309	125
Environment	School Catering Service	Sale of Meals		954,054	841,840	(112,214)
Financial Management and Strategy	Accountancy Division	Administration charges for administering Appointeeships	Fees & Charges	26,030	18,148	(7,882)
Infrastructure	Technical Services - Engineering & Property Management	Reimbursement of staff costs and receipts for external works	Fees & Charges	427,317	427,317	0
Infrastructure	FEP - Increase in Income	Fees	Fees & Charges	0	0	0
Infrastructure	Licensing (Highway Permits)	Skips & Scaffolding Permits	Fees & Charges	52,369	52,369	0
Infrastructure	General Administration and Markets	Rental income	Fees & Charges	30,351	30,351	0
Infrastructure	Traffic Orders	Income from contractors, Welsh Water etc. for road	Fees & Charges	25,307	25,307	0
Infrastructure	Road and Street Works Acts	Inspection fees, section 74's, FPN, coring, Dropped kerbs etc.	Fees & Charges	36,261	36,261	0
Infrastructure	Highways Adoptions	Highway Searches	Fees & Charges	9,950	9,950	0
Infrastructure	Multi-storey Carparks	Charge to Coleg Gwent	Fees & Charges	30,000	30,000	0
Infrastructure	Civil Parking Enforcement	FPN's	Fees & Charges	105,000	60,120	(44,880)
Infrastructure	Public Transport Co-Ordination	Charge to bus companies for use of Brynmawr Bus Station	Fees & Charges	234	234	0
Licensing	Hackney Carriages	Licence Fees	Fees & Charges	46,931	39,664	(7,267)
Licensing	Private Hire Vehicles	Licence Fees	Fees & Charges	1,830	4,222	2,392
Licensing	Scrap Metal	Sale of Scrap Metal	Fees & Charges	600	3,083	2,483
Planning	Enforcement	Enforcement Fees	Fees & Charges	610	0	(610)
Planning	Development Plans	Heritage Officer Income	Fees & Charges	0	0	0
Social Services	Other Children's and Family Services	Training Fees (Early Years tied in with expenditure which is set	Fees & Charges	0	0	0
Social Services	Older People aged 65 or over	Fees & Charges in respect of Care (Cwrt Mytton, Home Care, Extra Care & Joint Day Care Unit)	Fees & Charges	598,350	603,934	5,584
Social Services	Adults aged under 65 with Learning Disabilities	Fees & Charges in respect of Care (Augusta, Supported Living Bungalows & Community Options)	Fees & Charges	341,150	73,108	(268,042)
Social Services	Adults aged under 65 with Mental Health Needs	Fees & Charges in respect of Care (Vision House & Ysbyty'r Tri Chwm)	Fees & Charges	25,420	1,174	(24,246)
Social Services	Support Service and Management Costs	Fees & Charges in respect of Piper Alarms (IAA)	Fees & Charges	0	0	0
			Sub - Total	5,248,146	4,801,951	(446,195)

Fees and Charges Forecast 2022/2023 (As at June 2022)

Portfolio	Service	Description of Income	Income Source	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Forecast	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
				£	£	£
Fees & Charges - Set Nationally						
Corporate Services	Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths	Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths	Fixed - Set Nationally	94,770	86,095	(8,675)
Environment	Food Safety	Hygiene ratings & Health Certificates	Fixed - Set Nationally	2,162	13,414	11,252
Environment	Control of Pollution	Environmental Permits	Fixed - Set Nationally	17,228	10,378	(6,850)
Environment	Health and Safety at Work (Commercial Prem.)	Petroleum + Tattoo Licences	Fixed - Set Nationally	0	2,565	2,565
Environment	Trading Standards	Explosives Licences	Fixed - Set Nationally	0	0	0
Licensing	Licence Fees	Various (Gambling, Premises/ Clubs & Street Trading)	Fixed - Set Nationally	56,968	56,282	(687)
Planning	Dealing with Applications	Planning Application Fees	Fees & Charges	213,360	213,360	0
Planning	Building Regulations	Building Regulation Fees	Fixed - Set Nationally	95,620	95,620	0
Social Services	Older People aged 65 or over	CHC Income (Home Care)	Fixed - Set Nationally	0	44,671	44,671
Social Services	Adults aged under 65 with Learning Disabilities	CHC Income (Augusta House; Supported Living Bungalows; Community Options)	Fixed - Set Nationally	50,000	73,288	23,288
Social Services	Community Care	Fees & Charges in respect of Care	Fixed - Set Nationally	2,896,975	2,857,578	(39,397)
Social Services	Older People aged 65 or over	Sale of Property (Cwrw Mytton)	Fixed - Set Nationally	0	44,671	44,671
Social Services	Community Care	Sale of Property	Fixed - Set Nationally	292,340	3,741	(288,599)
Social Services	Community Care	CHC Income	Fixed - Set Nationally	690	0	(690)
Social Services	Support Service and Management Costs	CHC Income (Adult Service Managers)	Fixed - Set Nationally	0	0	0
			Sub - Total	3,720,113	3,501,663	(218,451)
Fees & Charges - In Line with Local Agreements						
Economy	Industrial Land	Ground rent and commercial bookings	Fixed - Set Locally	2,750	2,750	0
Economy	Nursery Units/Misc. Industrial Premises	Rental income for industrial units	Fixed - Set Locally	808,200	895,280	87,080
Economy	Estates - Non Rechargeable	Ground Rent	Fixed - Set Locally	145,110	118,200	(26,910)
Economy	Financial Support to Business	Ground rent and commercial bookings	Fixed - Set Locally	2,650	2,650	0
Economy	CSCS	Charges for Construction Skills Certificates	Fixed - Set Locally	10,200	434	(9,766)
Environment	Corporate Landlord	Little Stars Nursery - Rent (Recovery of costs)	Miscellaneous	8,839	13,287	4,448
Education	Inter Authority Recoupment	Charges to other Local Authorities for SEN placements within Blaenau Gwent Schools	Fixed - Set Locally	301,930	369,150	67,220
			Sub - Total	1,279,679	1,401,751	122,072
			TOTAL - FEES & CHARGES	10,247,938	9,705,365	(542,573)
SLA						
Aneurin Leisure Trust	SLA Income	Provision of Support Services	SLA	213,410	213,410	0
Environment	Grounds Maintenance	SLA	SLA	168,220	167,748	(472)
Financial Management and Strategy	Accountancy Division	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	185,480	185,480	0
Corporate Services	Organisational Development, Payroll & Health & Safety	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	319,620	319,620	0
Corporate Services	Legal Fees & GDPR	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	41,980	41,980	0
Corporate Services	Communications	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	3,250	3,250	0
Corporate Services	Performance (SIMS Support)	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	77,270	77,270	0
Corporate Services	Business Support (Courier)	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	5,770	5,770	0
Financial Management and Strategy	Creditors Division	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	6,480	6,480	0
Corporate Services	ICT	Support Services SLA with Schools	SLA	0	0	0
Environment	School Catering	SLA with Schools (excludes Corporate Landlord)	SLA	1,161,439	1,161,439	0
Environment	Cleaning Services	SLA with Schools	SLA	1,113,217	1,113,217	0
Infrastructure	CPM - Schools Biodiversity SLA	SLA with Schools	SLA	14,566	23,200	8,634
Infrastructure	Winter Maintenance	SLA with LA's for salt Storage	SLA	13,260	13,260	0
			Sub - Total	3,323,962	3,332,124	8,162

Fees and Charges Forecast 2022/2023 (As at June 2022)

Portfolio	Service	Description of Income	Income Source	Revised Estimate 2022/2023	Forecast	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
				£	£	£
Court Fees/Fixed Penalty Notices/Fines						
Corporate Services	Corporate Services and Strategy	Legal income and land charges. Advertising.	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	10,000	2,640	(7,360)
Education	Welfare Service	Fixed Penalty Notices	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	2,190	1,927	(263)
Environment	Littering and Dog Control Orders -	Income in relation to FPNs	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	0	0	0
Corporate Services	Payroll Division	Attachment Orders	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	1,020	343	(677)
Financial Management and Strategy	Council Tax Collection	Court Costs	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	162,680	162,680	0
Financial Management and Strategy	NNDR	Court Costs	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	1,800	0	(1,800)
Corporate Services	Housing Benefits Account	Admin Penalties	Court Fees/FPN/Fines/Legal	25,000	0	(25,000)
			Sub - Total	202,690	167,590	(35,100)
Consortium Arrangements						
Economy	General Offices	Annual Service & Rental Charge to Torfaen CBC in relation to Archives	Consortium Arrangements	49,970	49,970	0
Environment	Disposal Of Waste	Contribution from SVWS	Consortium Arrangements	110,000	0	(110,000)
Environment	Cemeteries / Crematorium	Crematorium Income - Reallocation of surplus at year end	Consortium Arrangements	41,925	41,925	0
Environment	20 Church Street	Housing Advice Centre Contribution	Consortium Arrangements	12,454	13,550	1,096
Environment	Housing Access	Income from Housing Associations in relation to Administration of the Common Housing Register	Consortium Arrangements	110,760	120,843	10,083
Environment	Environmental Health	Public Protection Collaboration with Torfaen CC	Consortium Arrangements	0	0	0
			Sub - Total	325,109	226,288	(98,821)
Miscellaneous						
Education	Supporting Special Educational Needs	Internal Income - Recovery of pupil lead funding from schools.	Internal Income	104,040	69,296	(34,744)
Corporate Services	Cross Cutting	Rebates - Energy & Randstad	Miscellaneous	32,500	32,500	0
Corporate Services	Cross Cutting	Purchase Card Income	Miscellaneous	26,810	26,810	0
Infrastructure	L&A - Invasive Weeds	Contribution from Caerphilly for Treatment of Knotweed	Miscellaneous	10,200	10,200	0
			Sub - Total	173,550	138,806	(34,744)
			OVERALL TOTAL	14,273,249	13,570,173	(703,076)

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Summary of Reserve Movements 2022-2023

Appendix 3

Name of Reserve	Balance B.Fwd	Increase	Decrease	Risk Assessed Adjustment	Forecast Expenditure	Balance C.Fwd	Utilised march provisional out turn		Other Not Included in Management		Balance
							As per Management A/c's		A/c's		
							Actual Expenditure	Anticipated Expenditure	Actual Expenditure	Anticipated Expenditure	
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Earmarked for Capital Purposes											
Capital Inflation & Service Cost Pressure	1,000,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000,000.00
Corporate Landlord	150,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	150,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	150,000.00
Deminimus Capital Works	101,575.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	101,575.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	101,575.46
Facilities	118,769.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	118,769.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	118,769.00
Energy Centre	270,383.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	270,383.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	270,383.20
Industrial Units	240,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	240,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	240,000.00
IT Infrastructure	225,811.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	225,811.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	225,811.79
New Operating Model	492,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	492,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	492,000.00
The Hive	419,715.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	419,715.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	419,715.00
WRAP Regional Vehicles	253,359.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	253,359.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	253,359.85
Total Earmarked for Capital Purposes:	3,271,614.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,271,614.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,271,614.30
Usable Earmarked Revenue Reserves											
Budget Contingency Fund / Invest to Save	64,351.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	64,351.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	64,351.89
Business Support Hybrid Model	53,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	53,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	53,000.00
Corporate Landlord Building Rationalisation	73,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	73,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	73,000.00
COVID19 Response & Recovery	1,526,920.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,526,920.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,526,920.00
Customer Services	95,892.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95,892.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95,892.05
Discretionary Housing Payments	111,865.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	111,865.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	111,865.87
Displaced Expenditure - Social Services	201,700.52	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	201,700.52	(16,815.00)	(59,535.00)	0.00	(46,803.00)	78,547.52
Downsizing & Redundancy	183,038.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	183,038.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	183,038.71
Election Costs	176,228.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	176,228.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	176,228.83
Financial Planning / Resilience	3,554,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,554,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,554,000.00
Future Interest Rate	644,055.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	644,055.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	644,055.89
General/ Voluntary Sector Grants	27,680.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	27,680.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	27,680.00
ICT	1,388,225.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,388,225.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,388,225.46
ISB Reserve	117,469.81	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	117,469.81	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	117,469.81
Inflation & Service Cost Pressure	1,361,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,361,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,361,000.00
Insurance Liabilities	3,198,250.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,198,250.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,198,250.21
Invest to Save	1,000,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000,000.00
Local / Strategic Development Plans	143,512.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	143,512.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	143,512.54
Match Funding Regeneration Projects	114,386.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	114,386.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	114,386.57
Members Local Grants	22,468.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	22,468.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	22,468.79
Payroll Project Management	23,529.97	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	23,529.97	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	23,529.97
PRC Funding	100,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100,000.00
Rail Loan Interest	38,188.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	38,188.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	38,188.00
Re-fit Loan Repayments	263,878.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	263,878.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	263,878.66
Specialist Commercial Advice (Silent Valley)	72,816.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	72,816.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	72,816.50
Social Services - Legal Costs	400,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	400,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	400,000.00
Social Services - RIF (ICF)	600,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	600,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	600,000.00
Stock Conditions Survey	12,137.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12,137.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12,137.34
Strategic Business Reviews	168,553.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	168,553.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	168,553.27
Superannuation	600,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	600,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	600,000.00
Supporting Additional Capacity	369,300.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	369,300.00	(42,510.59)	(192,449.41)	0.00	0.00	134,340.00

Taxation	133,913.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	133,913.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	133,913.08
Technology Park Feasibility Study	26,017.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	26,017.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	26,017.00
Test, Trace, Protect Service	4,514.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,514.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	(4,514.40)	0.00
Transport Oncost	147,470.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	147,470.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	147,470.00
Waste Services Reserve	120,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	120,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	120,000.00
Winter Maintenance	200,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	200,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	200,000.00
Total Usable Earmarked Revenue Reserves:	17,337,365.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	17,337,365.36	(59,325.59)	(251,984.41)	0.00	(51,317.40)	16,974,737.96
Unusable Earmarked Revenue Reserves											
Building Control Fees	38,239.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	38,239.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	38,239.34
Cardiff Capital Region City Deal	670,361.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	670,361.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	670,361.00
Deposits and Bonds	3,200.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,200.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,200.00
Land & Property Charges	117,199.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	117,199.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	117,199.90
LMS Balances	6,213,861.65	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,213,861.65	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,213,861.65
Section 106 Agreements	191,988.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	191,988.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	191,988.51
SEW Adoption Collaboration	712,028.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	712,028.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	(28,000.00)	684,028.21
Social Services - Gwent Regional Development (SP)	40,110.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	40,110.30	(2,040.00)	(4,974.64)	0.00	0.00	33,095.66
Workforce Development Collaboration	340,124.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	340,124.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	(90,124.00)	250,000.00
Total Unusable Earmarked Revenue Reserves:	8,327,112.91	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,327,112.91	(2,040.00)	(4,974.64)	0.00	(118,124.00)	8,201,974.27
Revenue Grants and Contributions Unapplied											
All Age School Forum	131,659.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	131,659.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	131,659.01
Aneurin Bevan Health Board - Education	18,225.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	18,225.89	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	18,225.89
Community Safety & CCTV	71,606.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	71,606.15	0.00	(32,180.00)	0.00	0.00	39,426.15
Contribution to Crematorium Infrastructure Works	63,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	63,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	63,000.00
Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme	897,428.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	897,428.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	897,428.00
Early Action Together Programme	3,196.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,196.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,196.38
Early Years Grant	298,277.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	298,277.83	0.00	(165,878.42)	0.00	0.00	132,399.41
Education - Gypsy Travellers	40,804.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	40,804.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	40,804.42
Food Risk Management	132,729.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	132,729.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	132,729.00
Head 4 Arts	71,062.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	71,062.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	71,062.00
Homelessness Transitional Funding	140,917.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	140,917.78	(307.95)	(45,150.49)	0.00	0.00	95,459.34
Individual Electoral Register	46,494.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	46,494.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	46,494.30
Infrastructure Staffing	186,600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	186,600.00	(13,155.00)	(43,143.00)	0.00	0.00	130,302.00
LEA / ALN Grant	141,379.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	141,379.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	141,379.16
Participatory Budget	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Period Poverty	77,687.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	77,687.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	77,687.05
Planning WAG Grant - Planning Committee	2,103.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,103.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,103.66
Regen General Contributions Unapplied (Town Centre Management)	51,172.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	51,172.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	51,172.25
Rights of Way Diversions	20,255.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20,255.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20,255.00
Scrutiny Development	7,867.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,867.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,867.15
Small & Rural Schools Grant	7,601.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,601.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,601.00
SMIFFs	2,688.84	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,688.84	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,688.84
Syrian Resettlement Programme	184,530.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	184,530.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	184,530.38
Tai Calon Highways Maintenance (Commuted Sums)	396,058.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	396,058.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	396,058.80
Youth Service	256,433.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	256,433.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	256,433.34
Total Revenue Grants and Contributions Unapplied:	3,249,777.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,249,777.39	(13,462.95)	(286,351.91)	0.00	0.00	2,949,962.53
Total:	32,185,869.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	32,185,869.96	(74,828.54)	(543,310.96)	0.00	(169,441.40)	31,398,289.06

New

	Budget Virement Out of Portfolio	Budget Virement Into Portfolio	Budget Virement Within Portfolio	COMMENTS
	£	£	£	
CORPORATE SERVICES				
Council Tax Collection			300,000	Budget realignment to address a cost pressure
Council Tax Reduction Scheme			(300,000)	Budget realignment to address a cost pressure
SOCIAL SERVICES				
Cwrt Mytton			74,800	Budget realignment to address cost pressure
Supported Living Bungalows			89,950	Budget realignment to address cost pressure
Home Care			70,250	Budget realignment to address cost pressure
Extra Care			70,570	Budget realignment to address cost pressure
The Promenade			10,400	Budget realignment to address cost pressure
Older People			50,000	Budget realignment to address cost pressure
Augusta House			35,000	Budget realignment to address cost pressure
Adults Legal			40,000	Budget realignment to address cost pressure
Community Care			(440,970)	Budget realignment to address cost pressure
Total	0	0	0	

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Agenda Item 13

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 31.08.22

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 02.09.22

Committee: Executive Committee

Date of meeting: 14th September 2022

Report Subject: Capital Budget Monitoring, Forecast For 2022/2023 Financial Year (As at 30 June 2022)

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Thomas – Leader & Executive Member Corporate Overview & Performance

Report Submitted by: Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	24/08/2022				13/09/22	14/09/22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of each Portfolio's actual and forecast capital expenditure against funding approvals for the 2022/2023 financial year, as at 30th June 2022.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 This report provides details on the following:

- Forecast financial position to 31st March 2023 across all portfolios
- Details of any significant adverse and/or favourable variances

- 2.2 This report forms part of the Council's financial reporting framework.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Option 1 (Recommended Option)

To accept the report and

- Provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report.
- Continue to support appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council.
- To note the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital & Corporate Team, to safeguard Authority funding.

3.2 Option 2

Do not accept the report.

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

- 4.1 This report supports the Forward Looking Corporate Plan 2020/22 as it ensures effective forward financial planning arrangements are in place to support the

Council's financial resilience. This is a key element to achieving "An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities"

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

5.1.1 The current capital programme is approximately £134m and is funded by: -

Wales Government Grant - £108m
 Other grant funding - £6m
 Council Resources - £22m

It is forecast that expenditure of £65.7m will be incurred on capital projects / schemes during 2022/23, with the remainder allocated for use in future years.

The overall financial position as forecast at 30th June 2022 indicates a breakeven position against a total in year capital budget of £65.69m.

The overall position across all Portfolios is shown below: -

Total Approvals Q1 (June 2022)	Future funding	In year funding	Forecast Expenditure to 31/03/2023	Actual Expenditure to 30/06/2022 (Month 3)	Forecast Variance underspent / (overspent)
£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
134,353	68,661	65,692	65,692	7,598	-

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

5.2.1 Expenditure against external funding approvals needs to be maximised in order to avoid loss of funding. If significant delays in capital expenditure are anticipated or contract costs rise due to the impact of Covid-19, inflation pressures and the cost of living crisis, liaison with funding bodies will be required at the earliest opportunity in order to secure approval for funding re-profile.

5.2.2 There is a high level of uncertainty surrounding the impact the cost of living crisis will have on costs, particularly where contracts have yet to be let / awarded.

5.2.3 If funding re-profile cannot be agreed and capital schemes are not kept within budget, then capital reserves may be committed beyond affordable levels, with the consequence that projects that have not yet commenced may be deferred or not undertaken, so impacting upon future Capital Programmes.

- 5.2.4 If capital schemes do not achieve the required level of expenditure within the correct financial year and further peaks of the Covid-19 pandemic results in projects facing significant delay, funding may be lost to the Authority and be detrimental to the Authority's chances of securing future funding.
- 5.2.5 The aforementioned risks are mitigated as far as possible through close working relationship with Budget Holders, Technical Services and external funding bodies such as Welsh Government. This ensures that where possible, funding is maximised or funding amendments are secured should the need arise.
- 5.2.6 Where overall funding approvals are likely to be exceeded and additional compensatory funding sources cannot be identified, budget holders in consultation with the Capital & Corporate Accounting Team, will initially report the consequences to the Corporate Leadership Team, including proposals to defer/delete other approved schemes.

5.3 **Legal**
n/a

5.4 **Human Resources**
N/A

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.2 The Capital Expenditure Report is attached at Appendix 1.

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

6.2.1 The report details the financial implications for the Council in providing capital investment for the communities of Blaenau Gwent.

All forecast overspends and underspends are managed in order that secured funding approvals are not lost and to mitigate any potential adverse impact upon future Capital investment in Blaenau Gwent.

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

The Capital Programme is developed to support the Council's strategic priorities and is considered and agreed by full Council. Corporate Overview & Performance Scrutiny and Executive Committees consider the budget monitoring reports on a quarterly basis and provide challenge as appropriate.

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

It is essential that all forecast overspends and underspends are managed in order that secured funding approvals are not lost and to mitigate any potential adverse impact upon the future capital programme.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The Capital & Corporate Team will continue their close working relationship with budget holders and external funding bodies to ensure that funding is maximised or funding amendments are secured in future financial years.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Capital & Corporate Team works closely with budget holders in producing the financial forecast and with external funding bodies to ensure that where possible funding is maximised or funding amendments are secured should the need arise.

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

N/A

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

The Council is committed to the Decarbonisation Plan to achieve a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. The Capital Programme currently contains schemes which promote the reduction of carbon emissions such as ReFIT, Electric Vehicle Charge Points, Innovation for Decarbonisation - WBRID and the purchase of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles. New Council buildings should be designed to the latest energy efficiency standards.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

N/A

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***

The Corporate Leadership Team, Corporate Overview & Performance Scrutiny and Executive Committees consider the budget monitoring reports on a quarterly basis and provide challenge as appropriate.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Capital Programme Expenditure

Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2023/3

Capital Programme Funding Estimates Summary

<i>Portfolio</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure To: June 2022</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
Corporate Services Portfolio	2,142,610	334,385	1,808,225	12,385	322,000	334,385	0
Social Services Portfolio	5,525,471	3,431,099	2,094,372	143,123	3,287,976	3,431,099	0
Economy Portfolio	16,809,300	8,787,260	8,022,040	714,119	8,073,141	8,787,260	0
Education and Active Living	31,666,885	14,047,231	17,619,654	306,714	13,740,517	14,047,231	0
Environment Portfolio	4,952,622	640,501	4,312,121	149,914	490,587	640,501	0
Infrastructure Portfolio	68,868,699	38,448,077	30,420,622	6,254,894	32,193,183	38,448,077	0
All Portfolios	4,387,240	3,576	4,383,664	3,576	0	3,576	0
Total Capital Funding	134,352,827	65,692,129	68,660,698	7,584,725	58,107,404	65,692,129	0

End of Report

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Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: June 2022</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
Corporate Services Portfolio								
Corporate Services								
327102	Corporate Properties H&S and Capital Wo	341,080	144	340,936	144	0	144	0
327103	Civic Centre Decommissioning	993,507	12,241	981,266	12,241	0	12,241	0
327104	Democratic & Community Hubs	44,412	0	44,412	0	0	0	0
327106	ICT Roadmap	763,611	322,000	441,611	0	322,000	322,000	0
Corporate Services		2,142,610	334,385	1,808,225	12,385	322,000	334,385	0
Corporate Services Portfolio		2,142,610	334,385	1,808,225	12,385	322,000	334,385	0

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Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: June 2022	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Social Services Portfolio								
Childrens Services								
323152	Beaufort Road - Extension Training Flat	38,978	12,670	26,308	0	12,670	12,670	0
324719	Flying Start - Cwm 2	30,000	30,000	0	0	30,000	30,000	0
324721	Flying Start - Ebbw Vale North	2,082	2,082	0	0	2,082	2,082	0
324724	Flying Start - Sirhowy Primary	3,840	3,840	0	0	3,840	3,840	0
324728	Flying Start - Blaina ICC	235,000	235,000	0	0	235,000	235,000	0
324735	Flying Start Brynithel FS Centre	606	606	0	0	606	606	0
324736	Flying Start Additional Works	85,153	85,153	0	17,931	67,222	85,153	0
324737	Flying Start Capital (Covid-funding)	12,863	12,863	0	0	12,863	12,863	0
324738	FS Covid Recovery - Cwm Dev. Garden S	109,150	109,150	0	520	108,630	109,150	0
324739	FS Covid Recovery - Scout Hall	49,671	49,671	0	493	49,178	49,671	0
324771	Childcare Offer - Badminton Scheme	1,500,000	1,500,000	0	0	1,500,000	1,500,000	0
324772	Childcare Offer - Blaina ICC Scheme	1,101,552	428,936	672,616	0	428,936	428,936	0
324773	Childcare Offer - Swfryd Scheme	726,632	726,632	0	7,256	719,376	726,632	0
324775	Childcare Offer - Brynmawr	532,230	0	532,230	0	0	0	0
Childrens Services		4,427,757	3,196,603	1,231,154	26,200	3,170,403	3,196,603	0
Adult Services								
323003	Health & Safety	35,121	35,121	0	33,972	1,149	35,121	0
323005	Tackling Food Poverty - WLGA	34,279	4,535	29,744	4,535	0	4,535	0
323120	Disabled equipment	285,000	0	285,000	0	0	0	0
323144	ICF Main Capital Programme	85,862	2,205	83,657	2,205	0	2,205	0

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<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: June 2022</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
323147	Intermediate Care Fund	3,133	0	3,133	0	0	0	0
323149	Better Care Capital Project	3,789	2,442	1,347	2,442	1	2,442	0
323151	Augusta House - Enablement Pods	463,197	2,860	460,337	2,860	0	2,860	0
323154	WLGA - Care & Support Equipment & Ada	187,333	187,333	0	70,909	116,424	187,333	0
	Adult Services	1,097,714	234,496	863,218	116,923	117,573	234,496	0
	Social Services Portfolio	5,525,471	3,431,099	2,094,372	143,123	3,287,976	3,431,099	0

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Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: June 2022	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Economy Portfolio								
Tredegar Regeneration								
326163	Tredegar HLF	524,123	0	524,123	0	0	0	0
	Tredegar Regeneration	524,123	0	524,123	0	0	0	0
Ebbw Vale Town Centre								
326191	TRI - Urban Centre Commercial Property I	170,792	170,792	0	170,792	0	170,792	0
326192	TRI- Urban Centre Residential Property E	122,660	122,660	0	0	122,660	122,660	0
	Ebbw Vale Town Centre	293,452	293,452	0	170,792	122,660	293,452	0
Valleys Regional Park								
326200	VRP Ebbw Fach Trail	899	0	899	0	0	0	0
326205	VRP - Discovery Gateway	19,778	0	19,778	0	0	0	0
326207	Parc Bryn Bach - Co Working Space	298	0	298	0	0	0	0
	Valleys Regional Park	20,975	0	20,975	0	0	0	0
The Works Site								
325097	Big Arch	960,057	960,057	0	290,587	669,470	960,057	0
325103	Learning Works	37,985	0	37,985	0	0	0	0
325220	Site Investigation Works	19,001	0	19,001	0	0	0	0
	The Works Site	1,017,043	960,057	56,986	290,587	669,470	960,057	0
Other Regeneration								

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Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: June 2022	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
326006	Tech Valley s Initiative	403,604	0	403,604	0	0	0	0
326180	Lime Avenue Business Park	430,679	5,018	425,661	5,018	0	5,018	0
326181	Lime Avenue Employment park	2,495,101	0	2,495,101	0	0	0	0
326182	Box Works	5,251	5,251	0	5,251	0	5,251	0
326183	Regain 2	5,122,418	5,122,418	0	25,228	5,097,190	5,122,418	0
326184	Brexit Schemes	419,465	0	419,465	0	0	0	0
326193	TRI - Town Centre COVID-19 recovery ad:	488,710	6,225	482,485	6,225	0	6,225	0
326194	TT - Trinity Chapel & Abertillery Librar	1,150,388	1,150,388	0	0	1,150,388	1,150,388	0
326225	Heat Networks Project	17,385	0	17,385	0	0	0	0
326227	Innovation for Decarbonisation - WBRID	201,240	201,240	0	138,900	62,340	201,240	0
326251	Constrained Units	190,000	0	190,000	0	0	0	0
326252	Constrained Units - Roseheyworth	6,409	0	6,409	0	0	0	0
326265	Victoria Business Park - Development	8,747	0	8,747	0	0	0	0
326266	Brynmawr Retail Development	747,929	747,929	0	0	747,929	747,929	0
326267	Blaenau Gwent Digital	36,218	13,766	22,452	13,766	0	13,766	0
326268	Covid Recovery for Town Centres	55,902	18,133	37,769	18,133	0	18,133	0
326269	HIVE – Hi Value Engineering Centre - Mor	2,951,095	40,217	2,910,878	40,217	0	40,217	0
326271	Land Release Fund - Pithead Baths	223,166	223,166	0	0	223,166	223,166	0
	Other Regeneration	14,953,707	7,533,751	7,419,956	252,739	7,281,012	7,533,751	0
	Economy Portfolio	16,809,300	8,787,260	8,022,040	714,119	8,073,141	8,787,260	0

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Education and Active Living								
Education Services								
324125	Education Minor Works	5,360	5,360	0	4,123	1,237	5,360	0
324138	Education Capital Maintenance	44,142	44,142	0	2,600	41,542	44,142	0
324139	Education Capital Maintenance 20/21	209,053	209,052	1	0	209,052	209,052	0
324141	Bryn Bach - Kitchen Rep & Classroom ren	30,000	30,000	0	0	30,000	30,000	0
324142	Georgetown Windows & Boiler Replaceme	6,206	6,206	0	0	6,206	6,206	0
324143	Rhos-y-fedwyn - Refurbishment	3,945	3,945	0	1,053	2,892	3,945	0
324144	St Marys - Refurbishment	187,270	187,270	0	0	187,270	187,270	0
324145	Tredegar Comp - Food & Technology	30,070	30,070	0	0	30,070	30,070	0
324146	Deighton - Kitchen	57,851	57,851	0	0	57,851	57,851	0
324147	Tredegar Comp Upgrade Services and Ac	3,450	3,450	0	0	3,450	3,450	0
324148	Coed y Garn Roof & Remedial Works	58,261	58,261	0	0	58,261	58,261	0
324149	Brynbach Primary Disabled Adaptations	60,061	60,061	0	0	60,061	60,061	0
324150	Ebbw Fawr - Developing 3/4 classrooms, t	100,000	100,000	0	0	100,000	100,000	0
324151	Tredegar Comp Upgrade Electrical Supply	10,625	10,625	0	0	10,625	10,625	0
324152	Brynmawr Refurbishment	61,198	61,198	0	18,699	42,499	61,198	0
324154	Abertillery Learning Community	193	193	0	0	193	193	0
324155	Brynmawr Comp Lift	110,000	110,000	0	0	110,000	110,000	0
324156	River Centre Boiler	3,367	3,367	0	0	3,367	3,367	0
324157	Tredegar Comprehensive Kitchen Electric	48,273	48,273	0	0	48,273	48,273	0
324161	Pen Y Cwm – Refurbishment Works	54,133	54,133	0	6,087	48,046	54,133	0
324166	Beaufort Hill Boiler	98,274	98,274	0	411	97,863	98,274	0

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324167	Soffryd Boiler	50,000	50,000	0	411	49,589	50,000	0
324168	St Marys Boiler	99,213	99,213	0	822	98,391	99,213	0
324170	Deighton Fire Alarm	11,453	11,453	0	0	11,453	11,453	0
324171	Abertillery LC Doors	26,565	26,565	0	26,565	0	26,565	0
324172	Brynmawr Foundation Doors	41,982	41,982	0	0	41,982	41,982	0
324174	River Centre Windows/Ventilation	2,343	2,343	0	0	2,343	2,343	0
324182	Brynmawr Running Track	120,000	120,000	0	0	120,000	120,000	0
324183	Swffryd	120,000	120,000	0	0	120,000	120,000	0
324184	Tredegar Track	15,000	15,000	0	0	15,000	15,000	0
324185	Glanhowy Ramp	100,000	100,000	0	0	100,000	100,000	0
324201	Class Size - Willowtown	5,444	5,444	0	0	5,444	5,444	0
324203	Period Poverty	5,028	5,028	0	0	5,028	5,028	0
324206	Georgetown S106	69,557	0	69,557	0	0	0	0
324252	Electrical Upgrade - Glanhowy	9,498	9,498	0	9,498	0	9,498	0
324253	Universal Free School Meals Equipment	336,407	336,407	0	32,068	304,339	336,407	0
324260	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Sofrydd Prima	98	98	0	98	0	98	0
324519	Digital 2030 Capital Grant - Post 16	4,621	0	4,621	0	0	0	0
324530	ALN	22,299	0	22,299	0	0	0	0
324532	Ebbw Fawr ASD	3,890	0	3,890	0	0	0	0
324560	Schools IT Infrastructure	2,809	2,809	0	2,809	0	2,809	0
324580	Brynmawr 3G Pitch	173,004	173,004	0	112,786	60,219	173,004	0
324590	Tredegar Comp 3G Pitch	79,359	0	79,359	0	0	0	0
324743	21st Century Schools Six Bells Project	326,624	326,624	0	137	326,487	326,624	0

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324750	Band B - Welsh Medium New Build	9,853,337	5,433,331	4,420,006	24,659	5,408,672	5,433,331	0
324751	Band B - New Primary Ebbw Fawr Valley	8,569,508	4,895,000	3,674,508	0	4,895,000	4,895,000	0
324752	Band B - Secondary Remodelling Brynma	3,179,737	200,000	2,979,737	0	200,000	200,000	0
324753	Band B - Secondary Remodelling Abertille	3,197,316	200,000	2,997,316	0	200,000	200,000	0
324754	Band B - Secondary Remodelling Tredega	3,196,970	200,000	2,996,970	0	200,000	200,000	0
324755	Band B - Welsh Medium Remodelling Bro	751,111	431,058	320,053	3,244	427,814	431,058	0
324756	Band B - Rhosyfedwen	6,758	6,758	0	6,758	0	6,758	0
	Education Services	31,561,663	13,993,346	17,568,317	252,829	13,740,517	13,993,346	0
	Active Living Services							
329088	Bryn Bach Park Roof	12,439	0	12,439	0	0	0	0
329092	ALC - Changing Room Refurbishment	20,000	0	20,000	0	0	0	0
329095	AWPOG - Play Equipment	64,778	45,880	18,898	45,880	0	45,880	0
329097	Play Equipment	8,005	8,005	0	8,005	0	8,005	0
	Active Living Services	105,222	53,885	51,337	53,885	0	53,885	0
	Education and Active Living	31,666,885	14,047,231	17,619,654	306,714	13,740,517	14,047,231	0

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Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: June 2022	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Environment Portfolio								
Environmental Services								
327039	Kerbside Collections	2,052	0	2,052	0	0	0	0
327044	AHP Waste Collections	52,380	0	52,380	0	0	0	0
327045	BRC Decommissioning Project	191,777	0	191,777	0	0	0	0
327046	Repair Cafe	1,066	0	1,066	0	0	0	0
327061	CATS	80,000	0	80,000	0	0	0	0
327065	Re:Fit	2,064,888	1,620	2,063,268	1,620	0	1,620	0
327067	Market Hall - Asbestos Removal	18,606	0	18,606	0	0	0	0
327068	Cemeteries Investment Programme	9,137	0	9,137	0	0	0	0
327070	WRAP Cymru Capital Funding	3,792	0	3,792	0	0	0	0
327071	Education Centre	297,265	59,019	238,246	59,019	0	59,019	0
327074	New Vale HWRC Refurbishment Works	145,439	0	145,439	0	0	0	0
327080	Cemetery Capacity - Cefn Golau Tredegar	527,028	877	526,151	877	0	877	0
327081	Cemetery Capacity - Dukestown Tredegar	218,834	0	218,834	0	0	0	0
327082	Cemetery Capacity - Brynmawr	133,334	0	133,334	0	0	0	0
327083	Cemetery Capacity - Brynithel Abertillier	96,334	0	96,334	0	0	0	0
327090	Fly Tipping CCTV	961	0	961	0	0	0	0
327110	Allotment Support Grant	30,698	25,576	5,122	2,156	23,420	25,576	0
Environmental Services		3,873,591	87,092	3,786,499	63,672	23,420	87,092	0
Housing Environmental Health								
328221	Remediation of Contaminated Land/Dereli	152,564	0	152,564	0	0	0	0

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Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: June 2022</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
350510	Improvement grants - new scheme	608,254	407,256	200,998	76,526	330,730	407,256	0
350550	Support for Independent Living	159,283	139,186	20,097	2,749	136,438	139,186	0
350560	Empty Property Grants	158,930	6,967	151,963	6,967	0	6,967	0
	Housing Environmental Health	1,079,031	553,409	525,622	86,242	467,167	553,409	0
	Environment Portfolio	4,952,622	640,501	4,312,121	149,914	490,587	640,501	0

Capital Programme - 2022/23 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2022/23

Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2023/3

Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: June 2022</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
Infrastructure Portfolio								
Engineering Services								
328149	SRIC - Tredegar Footway Improvements	25,000	25,000	0	26,675	(1,675)	25,000	0
328310	Local Transport Fund	1,925	1,925	0	1,925	0	1,925	0
328315	Local Transport Fund - Project Retention	16,020	0	16,020	0	0	0	0
328318	Active Travel Fund	783,487	783,362	125	20,455	762,907	783,362	0
328323	Resilient Roads Fund	79,001	79,001	0	37,972	41,029	79,001	0
328340	LTF Metro Plus	772,337	772,337	0	36,682	735,655	772,337	0
328344	LTF Bus Stop Infrastructure	387,813	387,813	0	144,931	242,882	387,813	0
328360	Rail Infrastructure Programme	66,293,022	36,000,000	30,293,022	5,983,587	30,016,413	36,000,000	0
328370	20mph Core Allocation	230,054	230,054	0	0	230,054	230,054	0
Engineering Services		68,588,659	38,279,492	30,309,167	6,252,227	32,027,265	38,279,492	0
Highways Network Management								
328063	Bridge Strengthening Works	1,857	0	1,857	0	0	0	0
328270	Highways Improvement Works	165,918	165,918	0	0	165,918	165,918	0
328334	LGBI - Trinant Hall	11,402	2,667	8,735	2,667	0	2,667	0
328404	Flood Damage - Emergency Repairs	828	0	828	0	0	0	0
328405	Aberbeeg Road Repairs	100,035	0	100,035	0	0	0	0
Highways Network Management		280,040	168,585	111,455	2,667	165,918	168,585	0
Infrastructure Portfolio		68,868,699	38,448,077	30,420,622	6,254,894	32,193,183	38,448,077	0

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Capital Programme - 2022/23 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2022/23

Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2023/3

Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: June 2022</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
All Portfolios								
All Portfolios								
300300	City Deal	3,662,700	0	3,662,700	0	0	0	0
303990	OS Capital Admin/Design & Supervision	524,000	0	524,000	0	0	0	0
321112	Disabled Access - Special Programme	3,576	3,576	0	3,576	0	3,576	0
324672	The Company Shop - Tred	196,964	0	196,964	0	0	0	0
All Portfolios		4,387,240	3,576	4,383,664	3,576	0	3,576	0
All Portfolios		4,387,240	3,576	4,383,664	3,576	0	3,576	0

Capital Programme - 2022/23 Funding Estimates
Capital Report 2022/23

Management Reports		Capital Programme Funding Estimates						
<i>Reporting Year: and Period: 2023/3</i>								

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: June 2022</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
	Total Capital Funding	134,352,827	65,692,129	68,660,698	7,584,725	58,107,404	65,692,129	0

End of Report

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Agenda Item 14

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 31.08.22

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 02.09.22

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **14th 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				06.09.22	14.09.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members of the Executive Committee with an opportunity to review 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 and will be considered by the People Scrutiny Committee on 6th September 2022, and any feedback will be provided verbally to the Executive Committee.
- 3.2 **Option 1:** Members to agree the report as presented, whilst also acknowledging that effective self-evaluation is an on-going process.

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

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 21st 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 suspended by WG since 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 1st 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>Improving educational standards and wellbeing for pupils, particularly at KS4. This priority is in conjunction with delivering the BG priorities in the EAS business plan, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>EDU.2</p> <p>Tier 2 and Tier 1 Improvement and Inclusion Business Plans.</p>	<p>Securing quality Inclusion provision, particularly to support vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM, through;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing Inclusion strategy/policies and practice; • Delivering ALN Reform; • Improving wellbeing for learners at all stages of development, with a focus on attendance, behaviour support, exclusions and equity; and, • Effective Monitoring, Evaluation and Review (MER) arrangements.
<p>EDU.3</p> <p>Tier 2 Education Transformation and Business Change Business Plan.</p>	<p>Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century. Priorities include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions and managing pupil places; • ICT Strategy and digitalisation; • Facilities management and the 21st Century Schools agenda; • Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for schools; • Home to School and Post 16 Transport; and, • Emergency planning and recovery etc.

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

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



Education Transformation and Business Change – Tier 1

- Admissions and managing pupil places;
- ICT Strategy and digitalisation;
- Facilities management and the 21st 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.

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.

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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:

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning from current self-evaluation process to inform next process.
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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

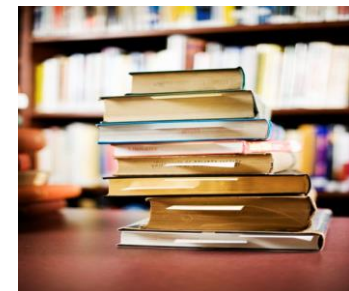
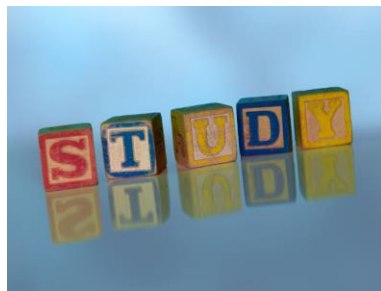
partnership and collaborative working and the involvement of stakeholders being a fundamental aspect to the Council's now mature approach to SE. The Self-Evaluation Policy is considerate of these complex arrangements and seeks to simplify and share the understanding, process and purpose of effective 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 it 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 21st 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 2nd 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 7th out of the 22 Welsh LAs.
- The proportion of learners attaining A*-C grades in Welsh 1st 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 1st 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 10th 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 2nd 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 2nd 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 3rd 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 21st 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.
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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 21st 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.
- 21st 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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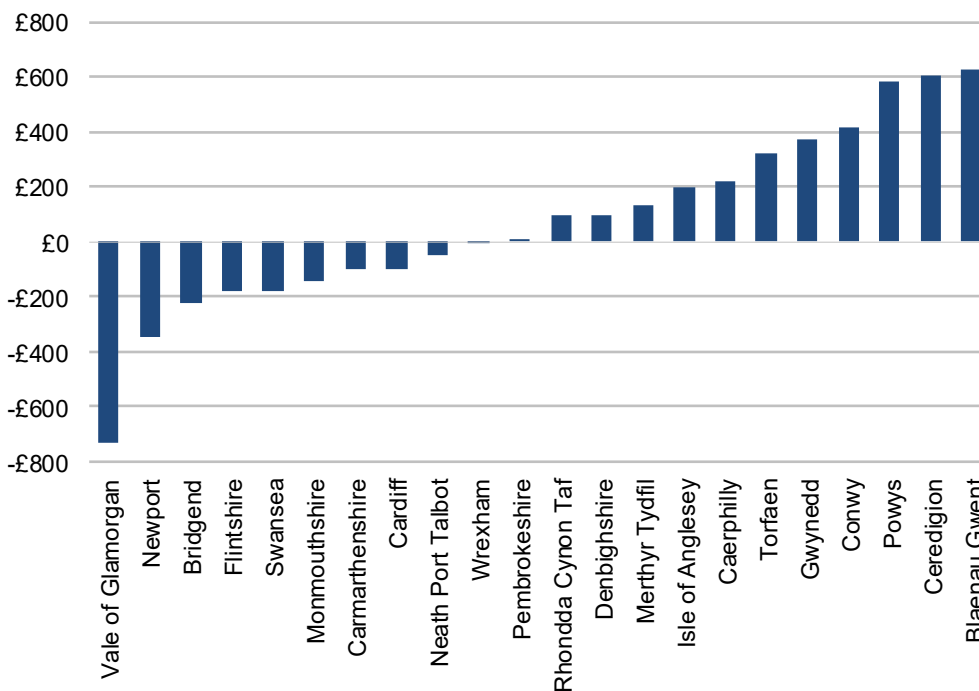
Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools: 2022-23

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.

In this release

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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>			
	2021-22	2022-23	Change in 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
Wales	2,598,142	2,739,990	141,848	5.5

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
Wales	2,913,110	3,096,152	183,042	6.3

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%
Wales	2,428,629	2,567,606	138,977	5.7	82.9%	86.8%

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

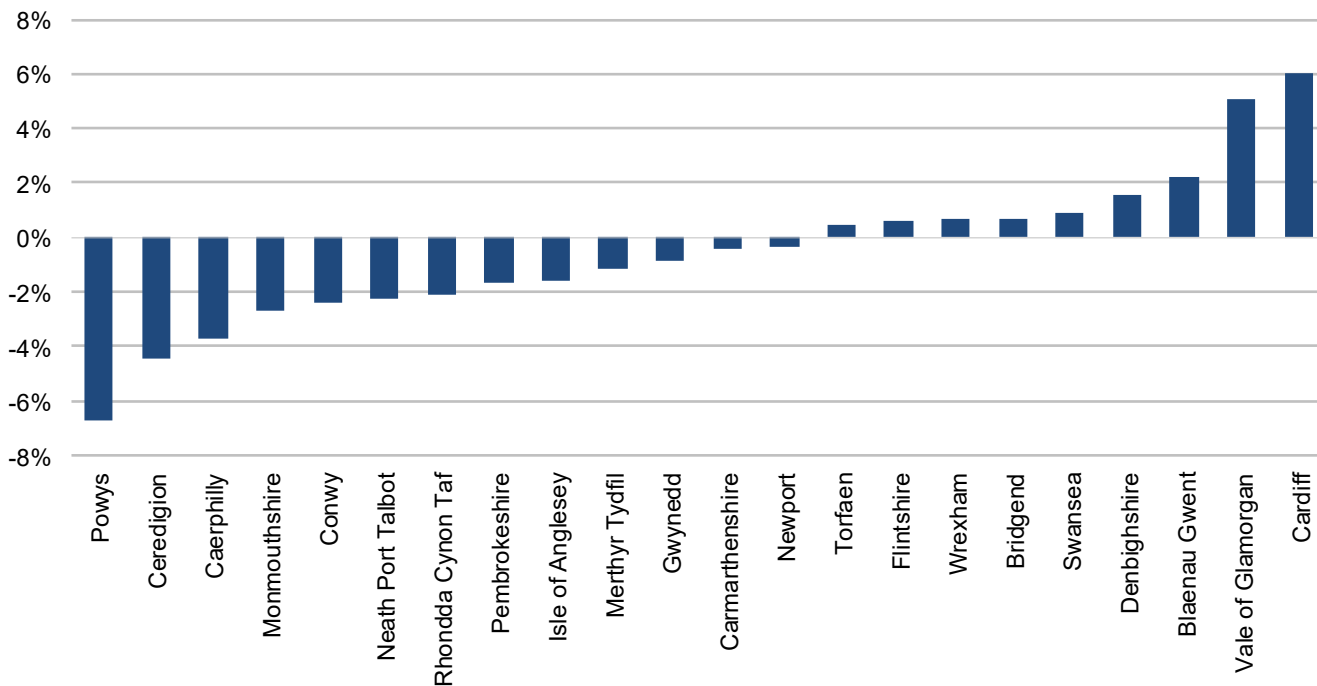
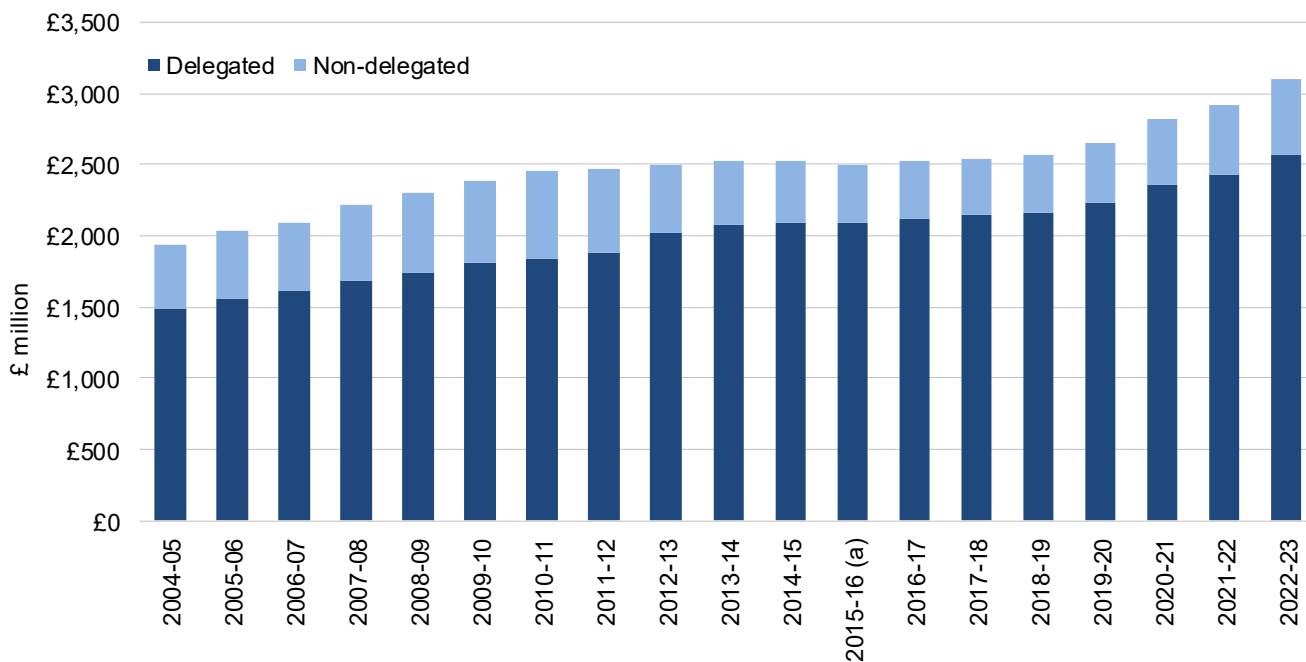


Chart 3 shows that schools budgeted expenditure is to increase by 6.3% in 2022-23.

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
Wales	215	37	14	206	3	67	59	103	300	142	11	1,156	528,546
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		
								2021-22	2022-23	change
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
Wales	10,345	5,059	5,628	5,806	24,795	5,617	1,156	6,387	6,773	6.0
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)

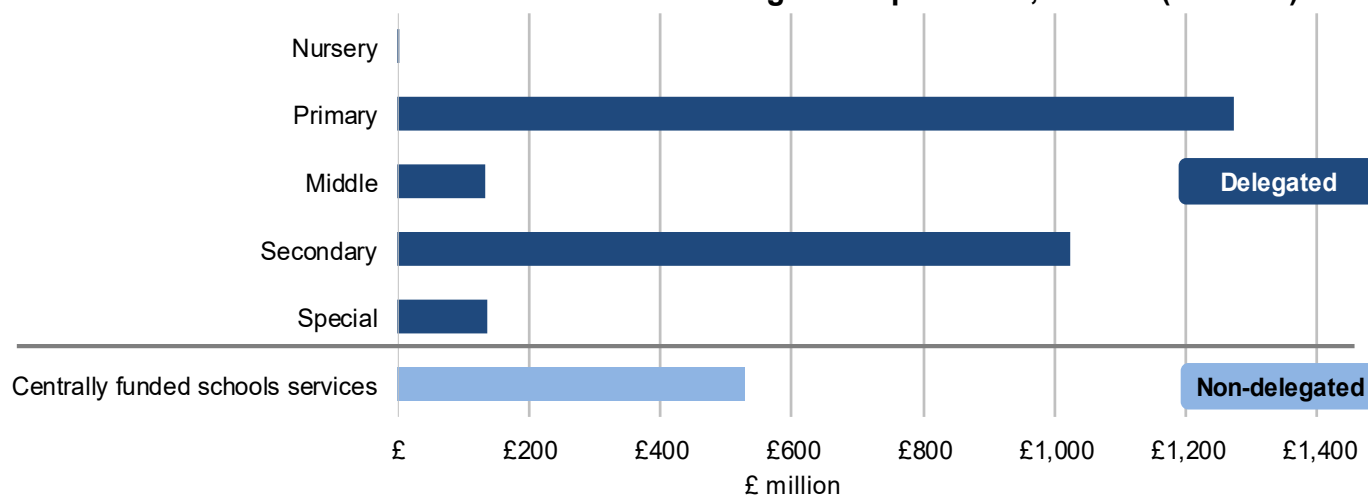
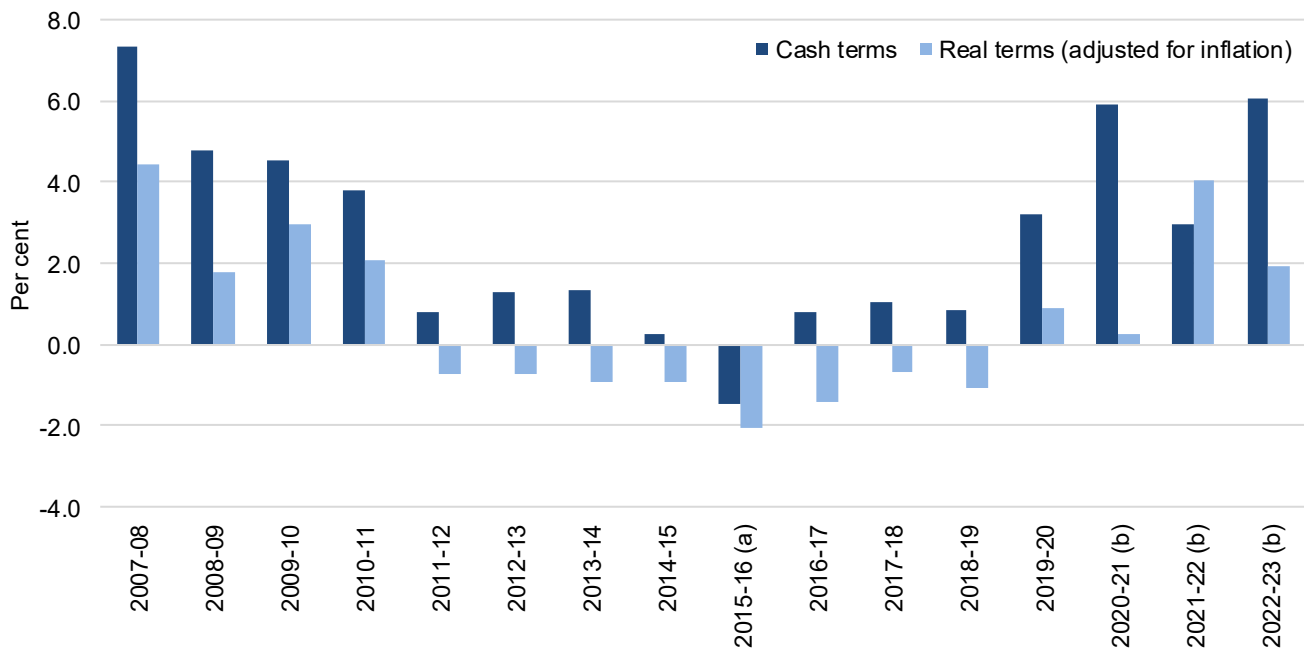


Chart 5 shows the percentage change over time in school budgets per pupil in cash and real terms. Over the past 10 years, school budgets per pupil have been increasing in cash terms in most years. There have been increases in real terms over the past four years.

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).

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

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

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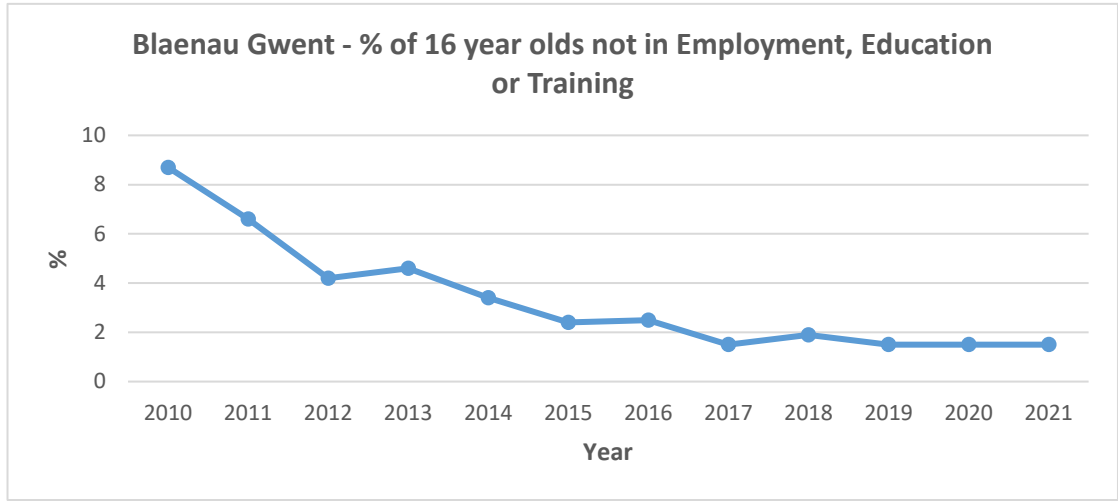


Priority Area	PI	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	Target (when will we know we have recovered)?
Learner Wellbeing	Applications – Nursery	693	696	675	714	627	The applications for 22/23 do not currently include Faith Schools for Nursery and Reception applications and Brynmawr for Secondary.
	Applications – Primary	739	731	720	701	634	
	Applications – Secondary	677	679	642	696	515	
		July 2019	July 2020	July 2021	April 2022		
	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		
		Apr 19 – Mar 20	Apr 20 - Mar 21	Apr 21 - Jul 21	Sept 21 – Apr 22		
	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)			
		2019	2020	2021	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.
		April 19 - March 20	April 20 - March 21	April - September 2021	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

NEETs



2010 to 2021 was a significant reduction in the numbers of young people becoming NEET in BG. 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%.

Value Added Progress between KS3 2019 and KS4 2021

Value Added – KS3-KS4

		KS3 – KS4 Value-added progress				
English Language		2015-17	2016-18	2017-19	2018-20	2019-2021
School 1		1.5	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.4
School 2		1	1.1	0.7	1.2	0.7
School 3		1.1	0.9	0.7	0.8	1.2
School 4		0.9	0.7	0.6	1.5	1.2
LA		1.1	1	0.8	1.2	1.1
		KS3 – KS4 Value-added progress				
Mathematics		2015-17	2016-18	2017-19	2018-20	2019-2021

There has been a significant difference in progress between English and Maths since 2017. Progress in English was almost twice that of Maths between 2017 and 2019, with a slight narrowing of the gap in 2020 and 2021.

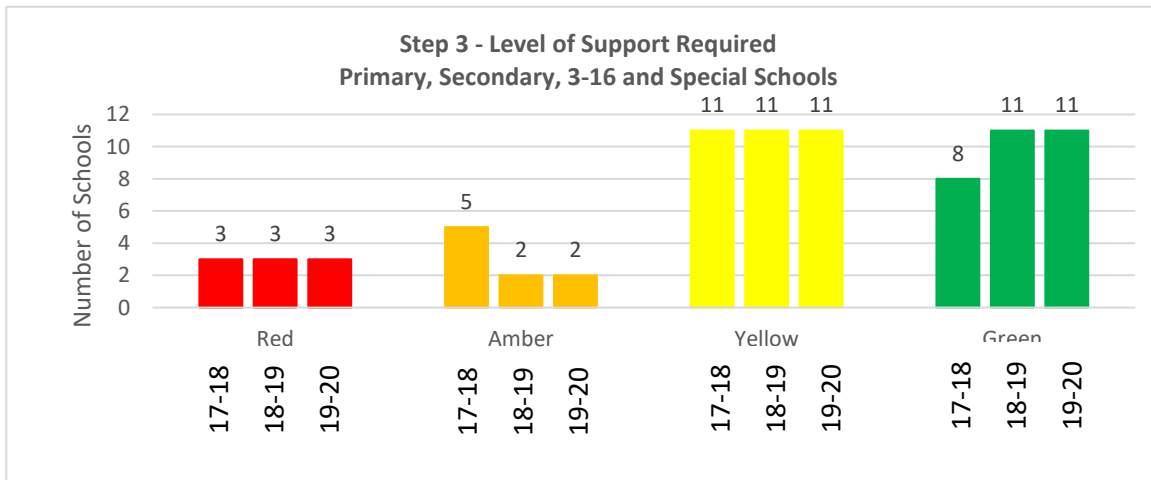
		School 1	0.9	0.9	0.4	0.9	1.1		
		School 2	0.5	0.4	-0.3	0.3	-0.2		
		School 3	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.8	1		
		School 4	0.4	-0.1	0.5	0.9	0.9		
		LA	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.7		
KS4 GCSE Centre Determined Grades 2021									
KS4 GCSE Centre Determined Grades as provided by Schools		Capped 9	APS Literacy	APS Numeracy	L2 Inc E/W&M (compared to 2019 results)	Level 1	5 A* - As	Best Science	Skills Challenge
	School	All	All	All	All	All	All	All	All
	School 1	373.5	41.5	39.5	55.9	98.2	19.8	36.2	40.1
	School 2	377.0	41.0	32.0	52.0	100.0	19.0	38.0	
	School 3	369.0	40.4	39.1	57.0	98.0	17.0	40.6	41.5
	School 4	335.9	32.6	35.1	41.9	87.8	12.1	32.7	35.6
									<p>School 1 - 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>School 2 - Performance improved in all indicators except for Numeracy which saw a decline of -3.0 points.</p> <p>School 3 - 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>School 4 - 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 & 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 – Sch4 +8.9%, Sch2 +15.9%, Sch3 +5.1% and Sch1 +4.7%.</p>

School Categorisation 2017-2020

School Categorisation

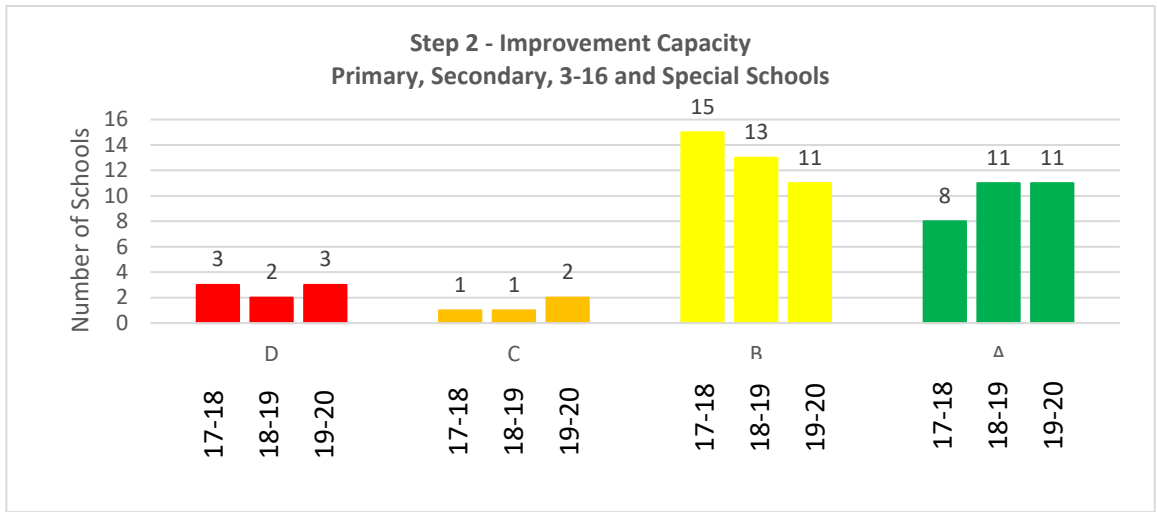
Step 3 – Level of Support Required		Numbers of Schools				Percentage of Schools			
		Red	Amber	Yellow	Green	Red	Amber	Yellow	Green
Primary	17-18	0	2	11	6	0%	11%	58%	32%
	18-19	0	2	8	9	0%	11%	42%	47%
	19-20	0	2	8	9	0%	11%	42%	47%
Secondary	17-18	1	0	0	1	50%	0%	0%	50%
	18-19	1	0	0	1	50%	0%	0%	50%
	19-20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



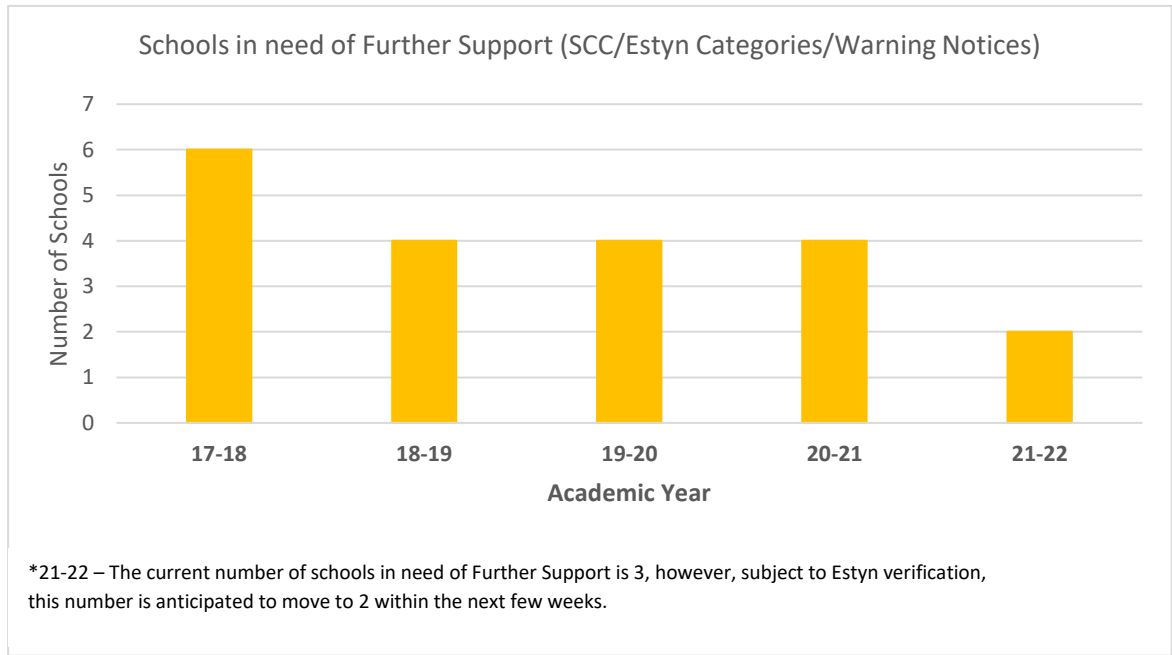
School Categorisation between 2017 and 2020, in relation to Step 3 – Level of Support Required, demonstrated an improvement in the number of schools identified as being Green (needing the least amount of support). The number of schools in the Red category remained that same, as did that of Yellow, however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



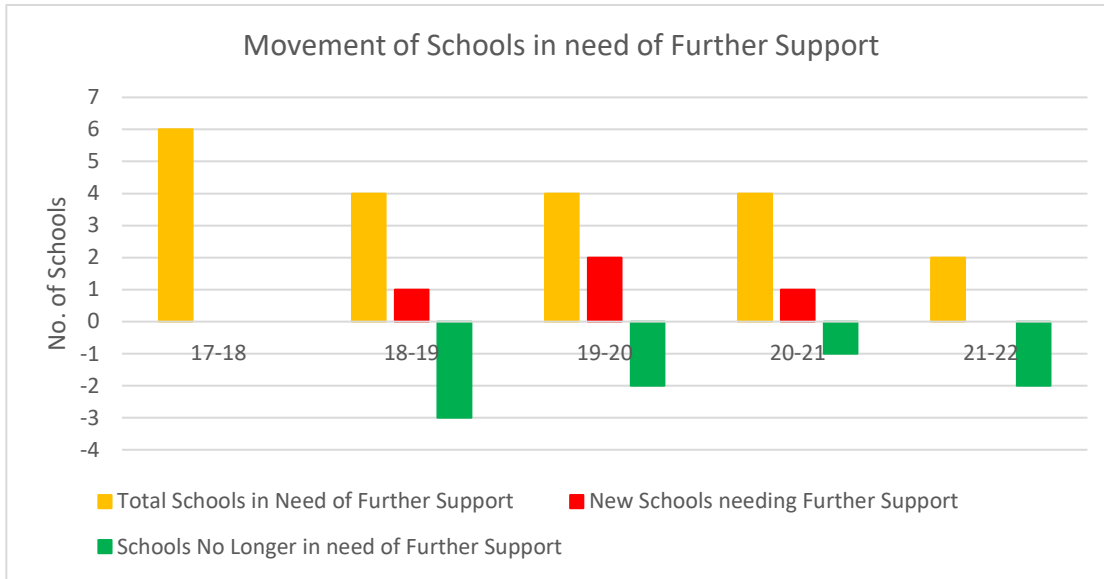
Schools in need of further support – SCC/Estyn Categories/Warning Notices

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.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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