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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

7th October, 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the People Scrutiny Committee will be held in virtually via Microsoft Teams - if you would like to attend this meeting live via Microsoft Teams please contact committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk on Tuesday, 18th October, 2022 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Damien McCann
Interim Chief Executive

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

2. APOLOGIES

To receive.

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg a byddwn yn cyfathrebu gyda chi yn eich dewis iaith, dim ond i chi rhoi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn creu unrhyw oedi.

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English and we will communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to any delay.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**
- To receive.
4. **PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 5 - 8
- To receive the decisions of the People Scrutiny Committee held on 30th September, 2022.
5. **ACTION SHEET** 9 - 10
- To receive.
6. **CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE REPORT, INCLUDING INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICES 1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE 2022 AND EDUCATION SUMMER TERM-2022** 11 - 66
- To consider the report of the Corporate Director Education and the Interim Corporate Director Social Services.
7. **IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME** 67 - 116
- To consider the report of the Corporate Director Education.
8. **FINANCIAL LIABILITIES OF THE REGIONAL INTEGRATION FUND** 117 - 134
- To consider the report of the Interim Corporate Director Social Services.
9. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 29TH NOVEMBER 2022** 135 - 138
- To receive.

To: Councillor T. Smith (Chair)
 Councillor J. Morgan, J.P. (Vice-Chair)
 Councillor C. Bainton
 Councillor D. Bevan
 Councillor K. Chaplin
 Councillor G. A. Davies
 Councillor J. Holt
 Councillor G. Thomas

Councillor D. Wilkshire
T. Baxter
T. Pritchard
Lewis R

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

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**SUBJECT: PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
- 30TH SEPTEMBER, 2022**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: Councillor T. Smith (Chair)

Councillors Jen Morgan, J.P. (Vice-Chair)
C. Bainton
D. Bevan
K. Chaplin

WITH: Corporate Director of Education
Interim Corporate Director of Social Services
Head of Adult Services
Head of School Improvement & Inclusion
Head of Governance & Partnerships
Press & Publicity Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</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> Apologies for absence were reported for Councillors J. Holt, G. Davies, Rhianna Lewis (Co-opted Member) and Alison Ramshaw (Interim Head of Children’s Services).	
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u>	

	No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.	
No. 4	<p><u>PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 6th September, 2022 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 6TH SEPTEMBER, 2022</u></p> <p>The Action sheet arising from the meeting held on 6th September, was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2021/2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>REVIEW OF INCLUSION/ALN STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted as presented and the attached strategies/policies and guidance.</p>	
No. 13	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23 – 18TH OCTOBER, 2022</u></p>	

	<p>Consideration was given to report of the Scrutiny & Democratic Officer.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Forward Work Programme for the People Scrutiny Committee on 18th October, 2022 be accepted. (Option 2)</p>	
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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet

People Scrutiny Committee

Date	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
06.09.22	Member Briefing Session in relation to Children Looked After and residential provision to be arranged.	Tanya Evans / Democratic Team	Briefing session included in Member Development Programme and will be arranged at an appropriate time.

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Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **18th October 2022**
Report Subject: **Corporate Safeguarding Performance Report, including Information for Social Services 1st April to 30th June 2022 and Education Summer Term–2022**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Haydn Trollope, Executive Member People & Social Services**
Cllr Sue Edmunds, Executive Member People & Education
Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Interim Corporate Director of Social Services**
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)
20.09.2022	04.10.22	06.10.22			18.10.22	26.10.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with corporate safeguarding performance information and analysis from Children's and Adults Social Services from 1st April 2022 to the 30th June 2022, and the Education summer term. Monitoring and reporting systems are well developed to ensure the Council can track information and evidence that the safeguarding agenda remains a priority for the Local Authority, and to identify Safeguarding areas within the Authority which require further development to improve Safeguarding practices and procedures.
- 1.2 The information provided will enable members to identify safeguarding trends and areas within the Authority that may require further development, to improve safeguarding practice in order to meet the safeguarding needs of the people within Blaenau Gwent.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report contains corporate safeguarding information as well as information from social services from 1st April 2022 – 30th June 2022 and education information from 1st April to 31st July 2022.
- 2.2 This report is written in order to provide a greater focus on the safeguarding agenda. It has been agreed that this report should be reported to the People Scrutiny Committee under the new political administration. These safeguarding reports have for many years been presented to a Joint Social Services and Education and Learning (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee, however there is strong recognition that safeguarding is everybody's business across the Council and this report should include corporate safeguarding activity as well as specific information in relation to Social Services and Education.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 Having scrutinised the information Members can:

- 3.2 **Option 1**
Accept the approach and information detailed in the report provided.
- 3.3 **Option 2**
Consider the information provided and make recommendations on where improvements can be made to the current monitoring processes for approval by the Executive Committee.
4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 The Safeguarding agenda is considered as part of the Council's Corporate Strategies that includes:
- Corporate Plan
 - Corporate Risk Register
 - Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy
 - Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy
- 4.2 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions. Social Services work to a number of regional and national safeguarding procedures which can be located on the South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board website: <http://sewsc.org.uk>
5. **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***
There is no impact on the budget both in the short and long term.
- 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***
The Corporate and Directorate Risk registers identify the highest risks for the Social Services Directorate, the Education Directorate as well as Corporate Services. These safeguarding risks are monitored as part of the quarterly report of the Director of Social Services.
- 5.3 ***Legal***
The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act came into force on 6 April 2016. The Act provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales.
- 5.4 ***Human Resources***
There are no human resources implications attached to this report.
6. **Supporting Evidence**
- 6.1 **Performance Information**
Performance and data is provided within the report and the accompanying data pack.
- 6.2 ***Corporate Safeguarding information***

6.2.1 **Overview**

The Corporate Safeguarding Leads Group is well established and has maintained a regular core group of senior representatives from across the Council. The Group meets four times per year.

6.2.2 The group consists of all leads/managers in all departments across the Local Authority and is in place to ensure the Council is meeting its corporate safeguarding responsibilities. The group ensures its activity is aligned to the Welsh Government's recently published Corporate Safeguarding Good Practice Guidance. The Group is chaired by the Children's Safeguarding Lead; whilst the chairing responsibilities should be managed by a rota basis it was agreed that following the COVID pandemic Children's Services would continue to chair for an additional twelve-month period.

6.2.3 The Corporate Safeguarding group has been responsible for driving forward the recommendations made following an inspection by Audit Wales. The recommendations are as follows:

1. To Improve corporate leadership and comply with Welsh Government policy on safeguarding
2. Ensure there is a corporate-wide policy on safeguarding covering all council services to provide a clear strategic direction and clear lines of accountability across the Council.
3. Strengthen safe recruitment of staff and volunteers
4. Improve accountability for corporate safeguarding by regularly reporting safeguarding issues and assurances to scrutiny committee(s) against a balanced and council-wide set of performance information
5. Establish a rolling programme of internal audit reviews to undertake systems testing and compliance reviews on the council's safeguarding practices
6. Include safeguarding within the internal audit programme to strengthen accountability and challenge.
7. Ensure the risks associated with safeguarding are considered at both a corporate and service level in developing and agreeing risk management plans across the council.

6.2.4 All these recommendations have been followed up with appropriate action being undertaken. Audit Wales returned to Blaenau Gwent Council in May 2022 to review this work; the Council awaits confirmation of their findings.

6.2.5 As part of the Corporate Safeguarding Leads forward work plan and in line with the recommendations from Audit Wales, each directorate has been requested to complete a Self-Assessment. These assessments have been completed and the Chair of the Corporate Safeguarding Leads group, is currently in the process of collating the findings from the self-assessment evaluations and will feed back these findings to the next Corporate Safeguarding Leads meeting which is scheduled for October 2022.

6.2.6

In order to achieve regional consistency, the regional Safeguarding Leads have been working on developing a unified Self-Assessment Tool. This is in the final stages of development.

6.2.7

A Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework has been developed and signed by CLT. The Corporate Safeguarding Leads are responsible for ensuring the framework is implemented and the uptake of the mandatory training, across the Council.

6.3 **Referrals to Social Services**

6.3.1 **Figure 1:1** Shows the number of referrals made to social services. The chart demonstrates an increase in referrals between Q3 (1,297), Q4 (1,550) and Q1 (1702). The data indicates no levelling off of referral rates although there was a slight decrease in Q2. However, despite this, referrals remain high across all Q's compared to previous years. The referral rates are currently being monitored and similar pictures have been observed across neighbouring authorities.

6.3.2 **Figure 1.1A** Shows the number of individuals associated with the referrals, the number of individuals who have had 2 or more referrals during the month and the highest number of referrals received by an individual during the month. This is a significant increase compared to the number of referrals in Q3 and Q4. This increase can be attributed to and correlates to the increase in the overall referrals received.

6.3.3 **Figure 1.2:** Shows the source of the referrals. As in previous quarters, police remain the highest referring agency (44% in Q3, 41% in Q4 and 41% in Q1), followed by Health and Education (both with 14%). In relation to Police being the highest referring agency, this has been the position for many years as Gwent Police Policy dictates that all incidents attended where children are present or linked, results in an automatic referral to Children's Services. As part of the Service Manager's forward working plan, this will be reviewed to understand the nature of the referrals. Currently a Detective Sergeant from Gwent Police is co-located in Children's IAA, to quality assure all PPNs received.

6.3.4 **Figure 1.3:** Shows the numbers of referrals received into the department on open cases. During Q4 the number increased to 1554 from 1116 in Q3, with a further increase to 1643 in Q1. This increase in referrals on open cases correlates with the overall increase in referrals generally into Children's Services. Again, this situation continues to be monitored regularly, especially in light of the current staffing crisis.

6.4 **Child Protection**

6.4.1 **Figure 2.2:** Gives a summary of the number of children on the child protection register and the numbers of registrations and deregistration is also included.

There were a total of 64 children on the child protection register in Q4 from 34 families. This was a decrease of 1 child from the previous quarter, but an increase of 5 in the number of families involved. The numbers of children on

the child protection register increased by 13 to 77 in Q1 involving 41 families which represents a further increase of 7 in the number of families involved.

Children's services have been using a strengths based model of assessment and intervention and this has proved very successful in how social workers intervene with families. The strengths based model requires assessments to consider what is working well within the family and what matters to families in respect of change. Risk management is a contributing factor in the assessments and is having a very positive outcome when engaging with all family members. Whilst we have seen a small rise in Q2 there is nothing to suggest the LA need to review its practice as the numbers have remained stable throughout all the Q's. This will continue to be monitored closely and any fluctuation trends will be reported into the Service Managers Meetings which are held on a monthly basis.

6.4.2 **Figure 2.3:** shows the categories of abuse linked to children on the Child Protection register over the past year. Neglect and Emotional/Psychological abuse remain the highest category of abuse.

6.4.3 **Figure 2.4:** relates to the age and gender breakdown of children on the child protection register with Males aged 10-15 being the highest (16), followed by females in the 5-9 and 1-4 age brackets (14).

6.5 **Adults Social Services**

6.5.1 **Figure 2.1:** relates to the number of reports received of an 'adult suspected of being at risk'. During the given period the total was 139. During the same period for the previous year (2020/21) there was a total of 146. This evidences that the figures are fairly static year on year with only a very slight increase.

6.5.2 **Figure 2.2:** The number of referrals received within the different categories of abuse or neglect are shown below. As in previous years the most referrals are received for females over the age of 65. The category of abuse most reported is one of neglect and the least reported is sexual which has been the situation for the last three years.

6.5.3 **Figure 2.3:** This relates to the places where the alleged abuse takes place. The majority of referrals were split between the alleged abuse taking place in the person's own home and in Care Home Settings. The alleged perpetrators in these cases could be paid carers going into the home or friends and family, or within a care setting including a health environment - this could be residential, nursing or respite care and again the alleged perpetrators could be paid carers, family and/or other service users.

6.5.4 **Figure 2.4:** Relates to persons alleged to be responsible for the abuse. Paid employees being alleged perpetrators for 26 in quarter 1, 25 being a relative or friend. To progress the referral, consent is needed from the alleged victim, but that consent can be overridden when a paid employee is the alleged perpetrator. In the domestic abuse cases a high proportion of alleged victims do not consent to the referral progressing through safeguarding. These

referrals are submitted to the police for further discussion and action as required.

- 6.5.5 **Figure 2.5:** Demonstrates that referrals received are from a variety of sources. The majority of the referrals were submitted from provider agencies. This is a trend every year and something to be expected as the provider agencies have a duty to report to social services if they suspect someone they work with is at risk of abuse or neglect. The category marked other includes referrals from DWP, fire and rescue, anonymous referrals and banks.
- 6.5.6 Safeguarding is an important part of the commissioning function and requires a substantial resource commitment from the Commissioning Team. The Commissioning Team provide crucial information in respect of commissioned services and providers, which contributes to informed decision making in relation to safeguarding cases. A member of the Commissioning Team attends every strategy meeting held for commissioned services to offer advice, guidance and perspective. The Contracts and Commissioning Team Manager and the three Contract Monitoring Officers are all fully trained non-criminal investigators and undertake investigations independently or jointly with colleagues, depending on the complexity and size of the investigation, or with health colleagues if there are nursing issues involved. Whether referrals progress to strategy meetings and/or investigation, or are closed down as inappropriate safeguarding referrals, there is very often some preliminary investigation work and/or recommendations/performance issues with providers to be acted upon and followed up by the Commissioning Team.
- 6.5.7 **Figure 2.6:** Referrals of domestic abuse are captured as part of the data return for the Welsh Government. During Quarter 1 there were 30 reports received for domestic abuse, 23 female and 7 male.
- 6.5.8 Each of the five local authorities have different structures in place to respond to concerns about domestic violence, however GWASB partner agencies are represented on local and regional domestic abuse forums. There are strong links between practitioners in safeguarding and domestic abuse fields of practice and domestic abuse training is available and is well attended by all agencies across Gwent in a variety of formats.
- 6.5.9 **Section 04 Fig 3.1/3.2** – Referrals from Education - The number of referrals to children's services is increasing. It is clear that when schools were re-purposed due to Covid, and closed to the majority of learners, the number of referrals to Children's Services was much lower and decreased significantly during the second lockdown period, though this was not as great as the decrease seen in the first lockdown period from March 2020. During the Summer term, there was a significant increase in referral rates into IAA, higher than the rate seen when schools re-opened to all learners following the first lockdown period. The number of referrals made directly to Families First from education has remained stable but has not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

6.6 **Education**

- 6.6.1 Members will be aware that Blaenau Gwent Council and the Education Directorate is committed to ensuring that Safeguarding in Education processes are robust, fit for purpose and are being consistently applied. Through this report Scrutiny Members are provided with an overview of the work that is undertaken in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are managed effectively and fulfil the requirements as set out in the Estyn framework for Local Government Education Services (LGES). This report is the first report that captures the broader data sets which will include training take up, safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable learners etc. Not all data will be reported to each meeting but over the course of the year all data will be reported so that Members can appropriately scrutinise the safeguarding arrangements.
- 6.6.2 The data presented within this written report is done so on an exception basis to bring key aspects of information to Members' attention and as such not all evidence in the supporting performance report will be included in this narrative.
- 6.6.3 **Section 05 Fig 1.1.1/1.1.2** - The Education Directorate risk register identified an increased risk during the period, in part because of the Corporate/Directorate's response to a critical incident in one school.
- 6.6.4 **Section 05 Figure 1.3.1/1.3.2: Safeguarding Policy** - The Local Government Education Services Safeguarding policy is reviewed annually. For 2021-22, all schools adopted the safeguarding policy. Partner agencies working with schools have a Safeguarding Policy in place which is reviewed annually by the Safeguarding in Education Manager.
- 6.6.5 **Section 05 Figure 2.2.1: Keeping Learners Safe audit tool** - In 2021-22, the Keeping Learners Safe audit tool was used as the model in Blaenau Gwent across the school estate for the self-evaluation of safeguarding. All schools completed this audit tool during 2021-22. One school needed a high level of support and work is on-going to support this setting.
- 6.6.6 **Section 05 Figure 3.1.1: Out of County Placements (OOC)** – A quality assurance process is in place to assess the suitability of placement prior to any placement being decided upon. This considers a review of the settings safeguarding policy and latest Estyn/ Ofsted report. Intelligence is shared across regional networks for local authority-maintained settings.
- 6.6.7 As at the Summer term 2022, one independent setting was identified as red i.e. safeguarding quality assurance processes gave cause for concern. The setting is presently not admitting any further pupils. There are two pupils currently in year 11 at this setting. This setting is monitored on a two-weekly basis by the CLA Education Coordinator.
- 6.6.8 **Section 05 Figure 4.1.1: DBS Position Statement** - There were 22 DBS/EWC escalations throughout the year: 3 for new DBS checks, all of whom were working from home; 2 were EWC registrations and the remaining 17 were for renewal DBS checks. Of these renewals, 5 were for

exam invigilators whose services were not required and 3 were for long term absentees from the workplace. Other factors contributing to renewal escalations were ID verification difficulties and longer time taken for the return of renewal certificates.

- 6.6.9 **Section 05 Figure 4.2.1/4.2.2: Training** - There has been a very slight decrease in the number of school staff completing the VAWDASV Group 1 online training over 2021-22 from 72% in the Autumn term to 70% in the Summer term. Designated staff are expected to undertake group 2 VAWDASV 'Ask and Act' training and all staff are expected to complete PREVENT training. Attendance at termly meetings for the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) in schools has remained stable throughout the year, with attendance during the Summer term at 64%.
- 6.6.10 **Section 05 Figure 5.2.1/5.2.2/5.2.3: Electively Home Educated Pupils** Annual visits by LA Officers to EHE pupils provides valuable information regarding the efficiency of the education provided and also allows for intervention if the education being provided is not suitable
- 6.6.11 The number of children EHE in Blaenau Gwent is below the Welsh Mean average (Figure 5.2.1)
- 6.6.12 **Section 05 Figure 5.2.2** identifies at a secondary level the number of pupils becoming EHE. Two of these schools during the year have recorded 13 pupils each becoming EHE.
- 6.6.13 **Section 05 Figure 5.2.4** When July 22 is compared to March 22 across all year groups there is an increase in pupils becoming EHE. The level of increase rises at key stage 4.
- 6.6.14 Support is offered to reintegrate pupils back into school or to signpost to other agencies where necessary. Home visits are offered, parents who refuse are few. Neutral venues are offered, and School Attendance Orders are used appropriately. Multi-agency meetings take place for pupils for whom there are concerns.
- 6.6.15 **Section 05 Figure 5.3.1/5.3.2: Children Missing in Education** - The Children Missing in Education Policy has been implemented across the local authority and tracking processes are embedded. Figure 5.3.1 identifies an increase in the number of children missing, it has increased from 14 in the autumn term 2021 to 17 in the Summer term 22. For pupils that move into the local authority welfare visits are undertaken and support to complete in-year transfers is given. Where pupils move out of the local authority, links are made with the receiving authority to ensure that the pupils are supported into school.
- 6.6.16 The data identifies that nearly all children are located, and Common Transfer Files (CTF) files are sent to the destination school when located in the UK. The occasions where their destination has not been confirmed are where children have moved back to their home country.

- 6.6.17 **Section 05 Figure 5.4.1: Youth Offending Referrals** identifies that during the Summer term 32 children were accessing support from the Youth Offending Service with a range of different interventions being provided. Most of these pupils are in mainstream secondary schools. The Education Welfare service works with schools to try and ensure that pupils receive their full entitlement to education. There is also representation at YOS resettlement and reintegration panel, which discusses pupils with unmet needs.
- 6.6.18 **Section 05 5.5: Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**
The Council's Community Safety team chairs a multi-agency Anti-Social Behaviour Case Group. The Group receive referrals about the anti-social behaviour of named individuals from a range of partners, though mainly the Police, which identify concerns about persistent and/or escalating anti-social behaviours in neighbourhoods across Blaenau Gwent. A well-established 4 Strike process is used to deal with the child and each case is assessed on the frequency and severity of the anti-social behaviour and its impact on victims and/or the community.
- 6.6.19 **Section 05 Figure 5.5.1** shows the number of children identified in the 4-Strike ASB Process, broken down by gender and age. Generally, more males have been involved in anti-social behaviour, this is the same for secondary school age children. The Education Welfare Service ensures that relevant information is shared with schools so that appropriate support can be put in place.
- 6.6.20 **Section 05 Figure 5.5.2** shows the types of anti-social behaviour incidents identified from children who have received Strike 1 and Strike 2 Warning Letters. Many issues are in relation to being part of a group, nuisance behaviour and setting fires. Schools have been provided with information on the SWFRS Reflect programme which would address fire setting. There is also an ASB policy in schools, which mirrors the 4 strike ASB process in the community.
- 6.6.21 **Section 05 Figure 5.5.3** shows the number of children identified in each stage of the 4-Strike ASB process. Most individuals do not progress past Strike 1. However, in Q1 there is an escalation in the number of Strike 3 cases, this is attributable to anti-social behaviour in one of our Town Centres. No Strike 4 cases were seen across all Quarters.
- 6.6.22 **Section 05 Figure 5.6.2: Child Employment** - There were 3 investigations undertaken because of illegal child employment. In the first case the employer was spoken to, and a warning issued. The child did not undertake any further employment. In the other 2 cases parents were spoken to.
- 6.6.23 **Section 05 5.9: Attendance**
Officers from the Education Welfare Service are in schools to enable intervention to take place where concerns are raised regarding pupil non-attendance.

- 6.6.24 **Section 05 Figure 5.9.2** identifies that during the Summer term, as a result of poor attendance which fell below 80%, two fixed penalty notices were issued, 6 cases were referred to court via the single justice process and no higher-tier cases were referred directly to court.
- 6.6.25 **Section 05** Figures 5.10.1 to 5.10.3 provides data on exclusion levels. Data is analysed on a regular basis and advice is given to schools to ensure that appropriate interventions/support is in place. Where pupils have been permanently excluded pupils are supported into new educational provision.
- 6.6.26 **Section 05 Figure 5.11.2: Physical Interventions**
Systems are in place within the Local Authority to report when Physical Interventions are used in school to manage pupils' behaviour. Following each incident, the school is required to record the incident in a Bound and Numbered book and complete an incident form. The incident form is sent to the Local Authority Education Directorate where it is recorded on a central recording system. During the pandemic, very low rates were reported. The number of incidents has increased over the three terms during 2021-22 and are now similar to pre-pandemic levels. Throughout 2021-22, nearly all physical interventions were reported by the two Special Schools in Blaenau Gwent and in the Summer term, no incidents were reported from mainstream schools.
- 6.6.27 **Section 05 Figure 5.12.1– 5.12.2 Bullying / Racist Incidents**
There are established arrangements in place for the reporting of bullying within schools. At the time of writing, the Summer term information is not available for inclusion, but an update can be provided at the committee meeting. The spring term data identified:
- 27 incidents of bullying recorded from 6 schools with all secondary/ all age settings submitting a positive return.
 - From the above verbal abuse had the highest rating of incidents (5) followed by racist, homophobic and physical bullying (4).
 - 16 schools confirmed that there were no reported bullying incidents.
 - This data will be enhanced e.g., the gender of perpetrators and victims, this will improve when using 'MyConcern' safeguarding package now deployed at all our schools.
- 6.6.28 The three schools who did not complete a return have been supported and reminded of the importance of completing returns. Strategic equality plans continue to be collated on a quarterly basis. Funding has been secured from WG and WLGA for further training to secondary schools on the equality and diversity considerations.
- 6.6.29 As can be seen from **Fig 5.13.1** very few bullying incidents lead to a pupil being excluded from school.
- 6.6.30 **Section 05 Figure 5.14.1: Peer-on-peer sexual harassment.** In response to the Estyn report, 'We don't tell our teachers – experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales', a BG

action plan has been developed to address the recommendations in the report.

- 6.6.31 **Figures 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 DBS Compliance** evidences all those within the Council who require a DBS and those who do not. Currently over 72% of Council employees require a DBS check. It is evident that this is an area in which we are performing exceptionally well. All directorates are performing at over 98% and those where no DBS is in place, there is a clear escalation process in place to ensure that managers and leads are aware and can take necessary action to resolve. Operational Teams receive fortnightly reports of all DBS applications currently in progress to enable Safeguarding escalation where required.
- 6.6.32 **Figure 6.2.1 VAWDASV Corporate Online Training** evidences that Corporate training has been provided to staff in respect of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence with 58% of staff having completed the VAWDASV online training.
- 6.6.33 All Wales Safeguarding Training online for staff was included in the online corporate induction module in 2019.
- 6.6.34 In terms of the wider workforce a suitable module is currently being evaluated by the corporate Safeguarding group which has been delayed due to the impact of the pandemic.
- 6.6.35 **Figure 6.4 Risk Register.** All data relating to the Risk Register will continue to be monitored and reviewed.

7. **Expected Outcome for the Public**

Quarterly reporting provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the Directorates and ensure accountability.

Those children who are assessed to be at risk of harm are protected and safeguarded, and the Local Authority adheres to legislation regarding statutory intervention.

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

The development of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the Departmental Safeguarding Leads meetings have been reconvened in 2021 and will help to ensure all departments within the Authority are aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and are kept updated with any emerging issues or trends within safeguarding.

Termly meetings also take place with the Safeguarding Leads from all the schools and monthly meetings take place between the safeguarding team and lead education staff.

The SEWSCB local Safeguarding Network group also reviews the safeguarding information to ensure all partner agencies are as fully aware as possible.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 looks to build and strengthen on existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners where possible in helping shape and influence future design of services

7.2 **Thinking for the Long Term (forward planning)**

The Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF) enables Social Services and corporate services to plan for the future as spend, risk and performance is continuously reported on and provides a baseline of service provision currently and where it needs to be in the future.

The rigorous self-evaluation processes ensure that key areas for development are identified and then embedded within business planning arrangements.

7.3 **Preventative Focus**

The work undertaken by the Social Services Directorate and the Education Directorate looks to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. Having a proactive rather than reactive approach to service planning can also help with planning resources.

Providing detailed safeguarding information to Scrutiny Committee enables Members to ensure risks are identified and acted on. The Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board has developed a new partnership agreement between local authorities and agency partners including Gwent Police, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Wales Probation Trust, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations, which sets out a clear and shared vision to ensure all adults in Gwent are safeguarded effectively through partnership working and community engagement.

7.4 **Collaboration / Partnership Working**

The South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board and its sub groups ensure a multi-agency collaborative approach to safeguarding. Blaenau Gwent fully participates in the Children's and Adults Safeguarding Boards.

Additionally, the Corporate Safeguarding Policy ensures each department has safeguarding leads and these meet together on a quarterly basis looking at safeguarding across the whole Authority. The Leisure Trust lead also participates in this meeting. Throughout the Q's partnership working with the police and statutory partners continued to progress. The Hub model is working well, with multi agency safeguarding meetings happening in a timely manner

7.5 **Integration (across service areas)**

All local authorities and partner agencies work together on safeguarding through the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board and Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board.

The development of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and the Departmental safeguarding leads meetings helps ensure all departments

within the Authority are aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and are kept updated with any issues/trends within safeguarding.

7.6 **EqIA**
N/A

7.7 **Monitoring Arrangements**

The Local Safeguarding Network Group is a subgroup of the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board and Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board. This group is made up of multi-agency representation from within Blaenau Gwent who monitor and review the safeguarding information and performance. This group has direct links with the Youth Forum to ensure the voice of the child is fully considered and heard on safeguarding issues.

The performance of the services across the Council is monitored throughout the financial year from April to March and reported to Scrutiny/Executive Committees.

8. **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

*Append 1 – BG Safeguarding Data Pack Oct22 Final
Containing data relating to April 2022-June 2022 Social Services, April 2022
– July 2022 for Education*

8.1 The following hyperlink provides further details on the governance and Structure: www.gwentsafeguarding.org.uk

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Safeguarding Performance Report

Social Services

1st April 2022 to
30th June 2022

Education

Summer Term 2022

Corporate Services

1st April 2022 to
30th June 2022



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

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Purpose of the report

The Council is committed to creating an environment which enables people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities whilst feeling safe and protected.

We believe that all children, adults and young people have the right to be safe from harm and it is a corporate objective to put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm.

We recognise our responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk, and this includes the contribution we make to working together with other agencies so that all children and young people reach their full potential and we continue to look after the most vulnerable people in our communities.

The purpose of this report is to provide safeguarding information that is recorded and monitored to ensure that we are indeed delivering this objective.

Monitoring and reporting systems are well-developed to ensure the department is able to track information and evidences that the safeguarding agenda remains a priority for the local authority.

Performance information is collated from Social Services, Organisational Development and Education information systems which identifies activity, demands and trends of data. This includes a number of items that are statutory requirements as part of the Welsh Government Performance Framework.

The report includes information on the following:

- Referrals received and their outcomes
- Children who are being safeguarded and analysis
- Quality assurance arrangements with education settings
- Broader issues within education that impact upon safeguarding
- Corporate progress on recommended proposals for improvement
- DBS Compliance
- Safeguarding Corporate Risk Register

This report will be shared with Senior Management Teams and presented to the Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee for Social Services, Education and Active Living.

00 | Community Profile - Demographics

Community Profile



– key benefit claimants August 2014 - 23.2% in Blaenau Gwent compared to all Wales level of 16.4%)

- The total rate of Blaenau Gwent's recorded offence levels was higher than comparative areas. For the year ending December 2014 Police recorded crimes - 76.89 crimes per thousand population in Blaenau Gwent compared to its most similar group of areas average (as defined by the Home Office) of 69.03 per thousand population.
- Total Population: **70,020** Number of 0 – 17 year olds: **13,619** (2020 Population Estimates)
- Number of Open cases to Children's Social Services as at 31st December 20: **1,108**
- Number of pupils attending primary schools: **6,123**
- Number of pupils attending secondary schools: **3,245**

- 45% of Blaenau Gwent's local areas are amongst the top 20% deprived areas in Wales. (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019)
- The proportion of benefit claimants amongst people of working age was higher in Blaenau Gwent than the proportion across the comparable authorities (working-age client group

01 Children's Social Services Referrals

Fig: 1.1 Number of referrals received by Social Services

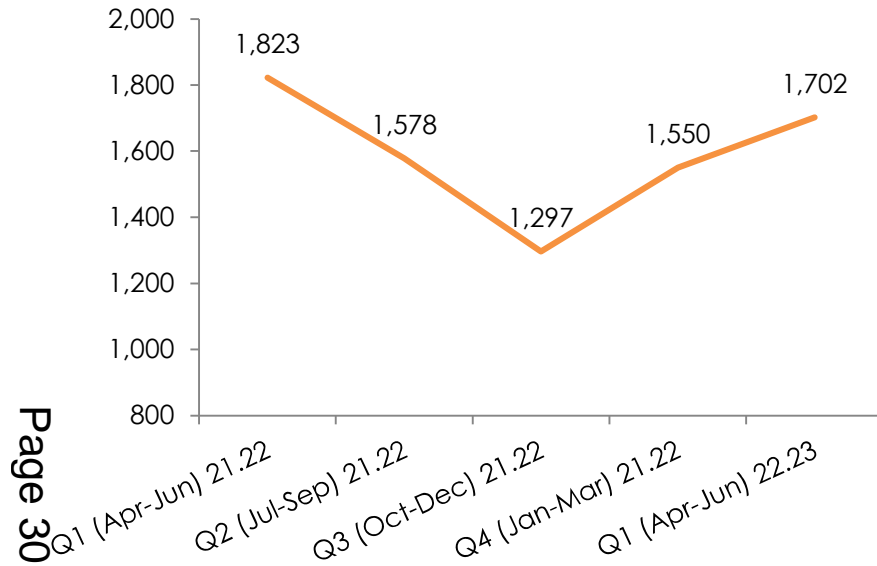


Fig 1.1a Number of individuals linked to referrals

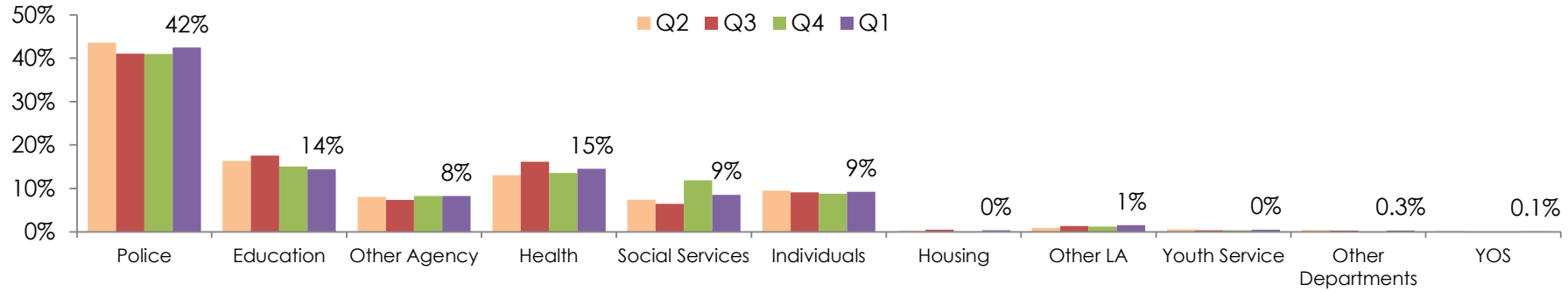
	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22
Referrals	428	495	329	458	501	591	506	655	464
No of Individuals	386	442	330	410	459	525	444	568	481
2+ Referrals	31	42	32	37	33	58	44	51	41
Highest No. of Referrals for an individual	6	6	7	8	5	3	7	8	6

Fig: 1.2 Number and Percentage of Referrals by Source (Q1, Q2, Q3 & Q4)

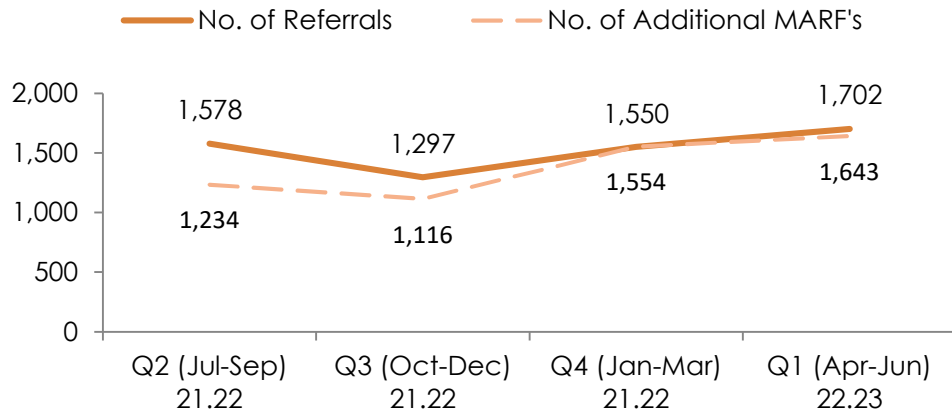
	Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4		Quarter 1	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Police	702	44%	565	44%	636	41%	698	41%
Education	141	9%	202	16%	260	17%	243	14%
Other Agency	148	9%	104	8%	114	7%	140	8%
Health	241	15%	169	13%	250	16%	230	14%
Social Services	124	8%	96	7%	100	6%	202	12%
Individuals	152	10%	123	9%	141	9%	149	9%
Education - Post 16		0.0%	0	0%	12	1%		0.0%
Education - OOC		0.0%	10	1%		0%	13	0.8%
Housing	9	1%	3	0%	7	0%	1	0%
Other LA	40	3%	11	1%	20	1%	20	1%
Youth Service	11	1%	7	1%	5	0%	6	0.4%
Other								
Departments	7	0.4%	5	0%	4	0%	0	0.0%
YOS	3	0.2%	2	0%	1	0%	0	0.0%
Total	1,578	100%	1,297	100%	1,550	100%	1,702	100%

01 | Children's Social Services Referrals

Graph showing the source of referrals and the percentage



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Fig: 1.3 Multi-agency referral forms (MARF's) received on open cases



03 | Adults' Social Services

Fig 2.1 Children on the Child Protection Register

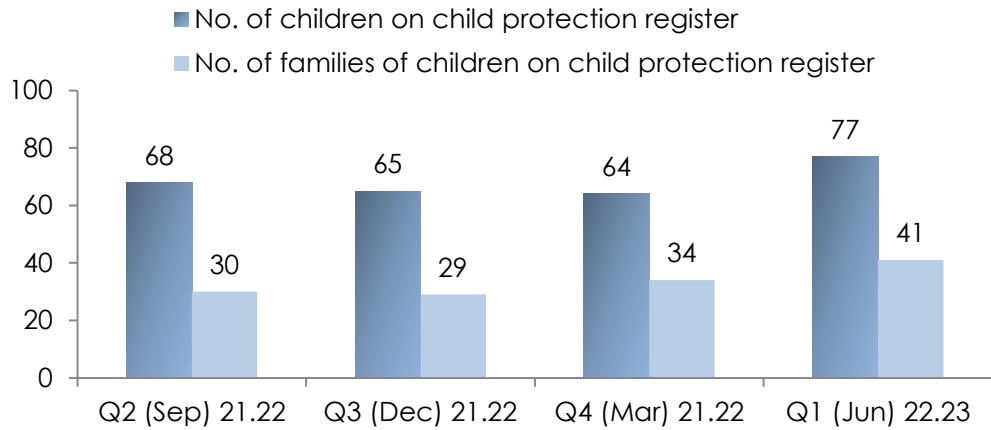
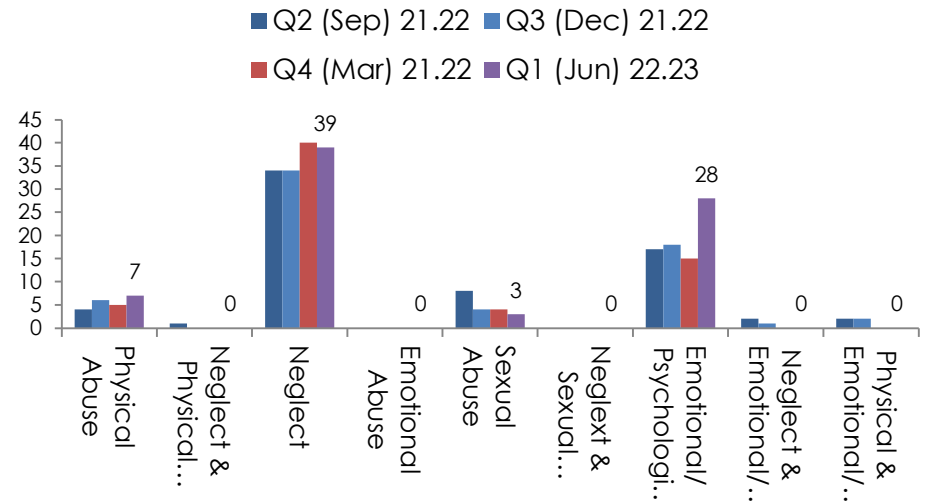


Fig 2.3 Categories of abuse



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Fig 2.2 Child Protection Register Summary

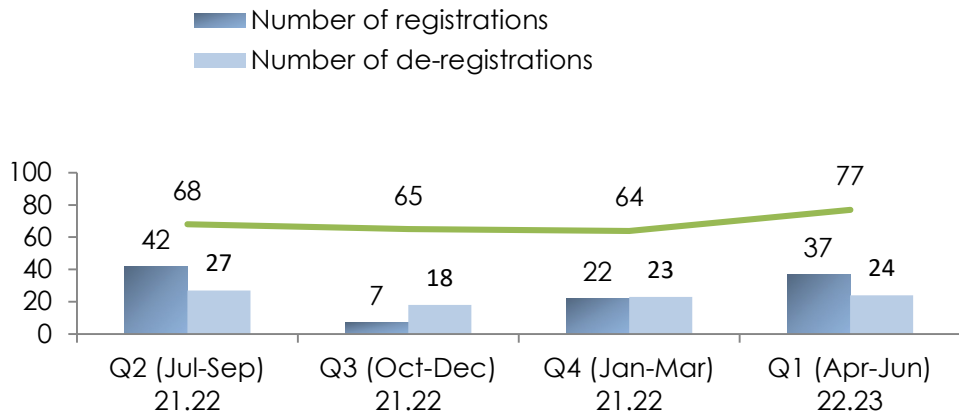
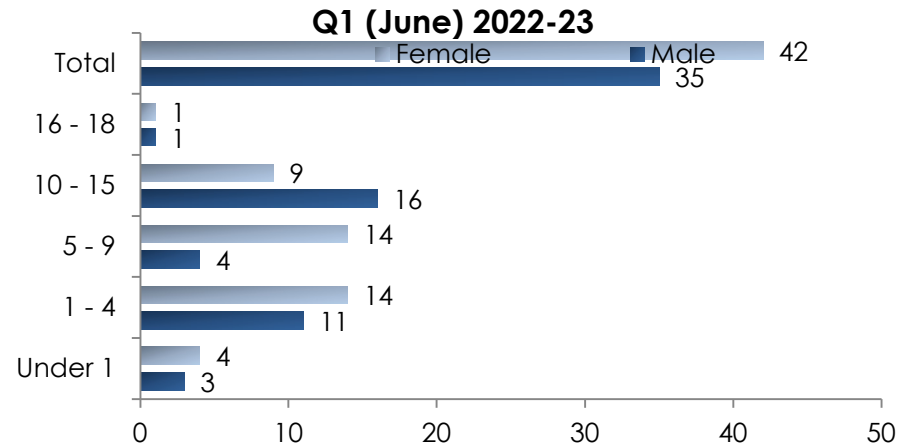


Fig 2.4 Age Breakdown of children on child protection register



03 | Adults' Social Services

Fig 2.1 Adults suspected of being at risk

Number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk received during the fourth quarter of 2019/2020	1/4/22-30/6/22 (Q1)	139
Number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk received during 2019/2020	1/4/21-31/3/22	553

Fig 2.2 Categories of abuse or neglect

Category of Abuse	Gender	1/4/22-30/6/22 (Q1)	1/4/22-30/6/22 (Q1)	1/4/21-31/3/22	1/4/21-31/3/22
Physical	Male	3	4	19	22
	Female	8	17	37	55
	Transgender	0	0	0	0
Sexual	Male	0	0	5	1
	Female	2	1	19	7
Emotional/Psychological	Male	1	3	24	7
	Female	6	4	53	23
	Transgender	0	0	0	0
Financial	Male	1	3	22	12
	Female	3	6	19	31
Neglect	Male	7	15	27	52
	Female	7	48	22	96
	Transgender	0	0	0	0
Total	Male	12	25	97	94
	Female	26	76	150	212
	Transgender	0	0	0	0
	Total	38	101	247	306

03 | Adults' Social Services

Fig 2.3 Place alleged abuse/neglect took place

Place alleged abuse	1/4/22-30/6/22 (Q1)	1/4/21-31/3/22
Own Home	48	248
Community	13	59
Care Home Setting	70	219
Health Setting	8	27
Other	0	0
Total	139	553

Fig 2.4 Person alleged responsible

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Person alleged responsible	Total	Total
	1/4/22-30/6/22 (Q1)	1/4/21-31/3/22
A spouse	8	35
A son or daughter	6	33
A family member who is not a child or spouse	10	47
A professional	26	131
A volunteer or unpaid worker	0	0
A friend	1	31
A neighbour	2	2
Another service user	3	49
Other Person	3	32
Not known	80	193
Total	139	553

Fig 2.5 Source of Referral

Source of Referral	Total	Total
	1/4/22-30/6/22 (Q1)	1/4/21-31/3/22
Self-reported	2	19
Relative / friend	5	32
Local authority	11	13
Police	3	23
Local health board	14	89
Independent hospital	2	0
Ambulance service	3	14
Care regulator	0	9
Provider agency	57	220
Probation	0	2
Third sector	4	35
Advocate	0	0
Education	2	4
Housing	4	11
Internal (Social Worker, Other Team)	17	60
Other	15	22
Total	139	553

Fig 2.6 Domestic abuse referrals

	Age 18-64	Age – 65 and over	Age 18-64	Age – 65 and over
	1/4/22-30/6/22 (Q1)	1/4/22-30/6/22 (Q1)	1/4/21-31/3/22	1/4/21-31/3/22
Male	0	1	2	4
Female	5	0	22	8

04 | Referrals from Education

Fig 3.1 Contacts by Source – Primary School

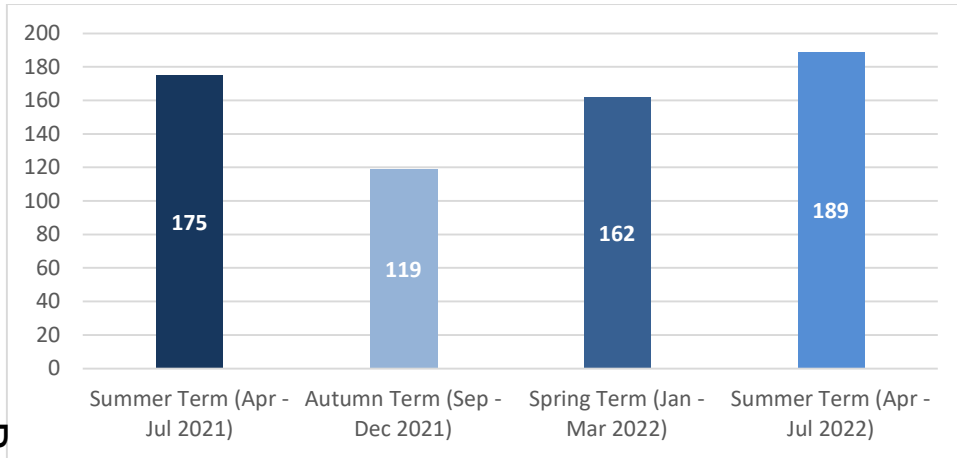
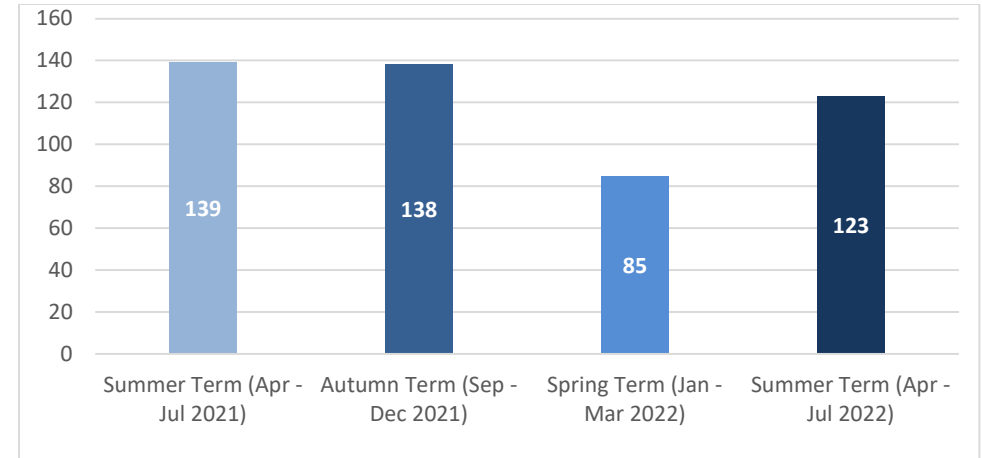


Fig 3.2 Contacts by Source – Secondary School



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Fig 3.3 Contacts by Source - Other

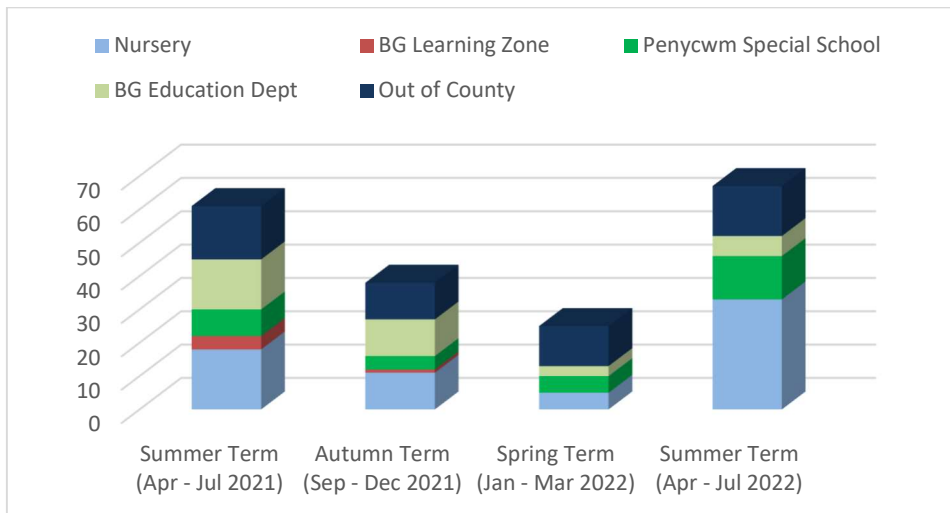
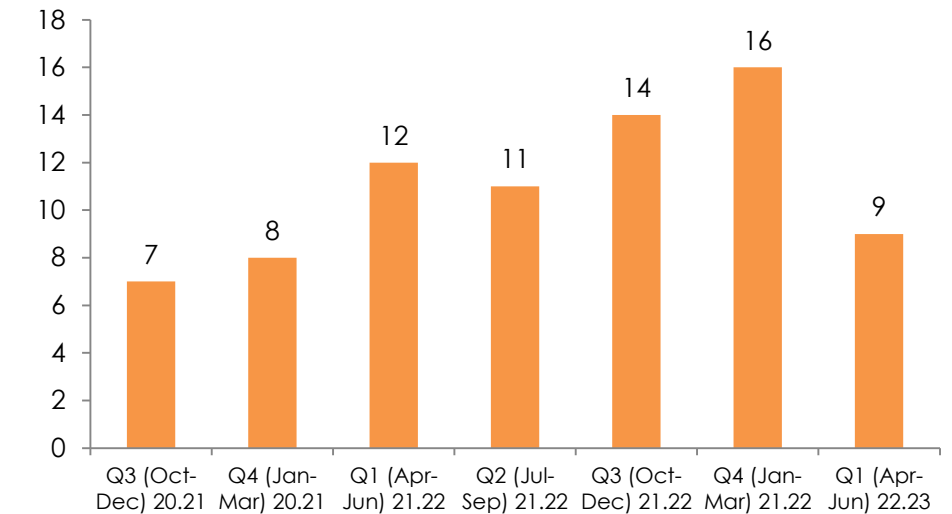


Fig 3.4 Referrals received from Youth Services



1. Regulatory

1.1 Education Directorate Risk

1.1.1 Education Risk Register

Ref No.	Description of Risk	Triggers	Consequences	Current Controls			Proposed further controls to mitigate / reduce risk			Progress Update		
				Likelihood	Impact	Status	Likelihood	Impact	Status			
Directorate Risk EDRR3 Corporate Risk Register CRR4	Safeguarding - Failure to ensure adequate. Safeguarding arrangements are in place for children & young adults in Blaenau Gwent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate assessments and monitoring Lack of documentation Increasing demand for services Lack of appropriate guidance and training Poor communication between all parties (internal / external) High turnover of staff Varying capacity as a result of the pandemic so routine activities do not take place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential significant harm / loss of life Long term reputational damage and confidence in the Council undermined Increase in complaints / Potential litigation / prosecution External intervention Increased pressure on budgets Low staff morale 	3	4	Critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint Social Services and Education Scrutiny established Education Designated Lead and Deputy Officer nominated Education Safeguarding Officer established and in post Gwent Adult Safeguarding Board SE Wales Safeguarding Children's Board Safeguarding is a standing item on CMT agenda Lead Executive Member has been identified for having responsibility for safeguarding Senior leadership have received Level 1 training. Programme of training for schools underway. Corporate leads established for each directorate who have been requested to identify staff for Level 1 training (3 dates have already been set) Safeguarding in Education matrix regularly updated *Use of MyConcern software in schools will be used to gather data, monitor positive cases and create consistency across the school estate. The roll-out project team is fully established. 	1	4	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved reporting systems and databases in place Inclusion protocol in place Education Safeguarding Manager close working with School Improvement and Inclusion Close working relationships with Social Services Directorate Youth Services safeguarding arrangements are effective and monitoring is through the corporate arrangements. Half termly meetings to be diarised * DMT receive regular QA reports from Safeguarding in Education Manager 	<p>Quarter 3 and 4 Progress Update October 2021 to March 2022</p> <p>As part of the forthcoming LALI meeting there is a focus on safeguarding and this area will also be considered as part of the WAO review. Within the Spring term the safeguarding matrix the following areas are identified to be continued to be progressed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The take up of safeguarding training by governors; and, DBS compliance to be improved at a governing body level <p>The self-evaluation for 2021/22 is nearing completion and this has highlighted areas for development and these were verbally reported to DMT in May 2022. Arising from this it has been agreed that a paper of safeguarding priorities and fwp of activities to be brought to a future DMT to make the most effective use of the resources available. Analysis of the schools' self-evaluation returns is ongoing and will inform a report to DMT and ultimately to Safeguarding Scrutiny.</p> <p>Moving forward, it is proposed that this Directorate risk will be included in the performance report. The data set for which has been extended to better mirror the Estyn framework.</p> <p>There is only one school that has to date not taken up the opportunity to use MyConcern and a meeting is arranged to discuss this further with the individual school.</p> <p>All schools are now using the 360 degree tool.</p> <p>The Safeguarding in Education Manager is leading on the action plan to respond to Estyns Sexual abuse report and this has three main work streams which are in train.</p> <p>There is a need to update the Directorate's prevent action plan and the Directorate has agreed to establish a Safer School Strategic Board and this first meeting is presently being arranged.</p> <p>The risk has increased from its present level and plans are in place to mitigate this but there is invariably a link to the risks identified in Social Services. In terms of capacity</p> <p>DMT 12th May 2022</p>

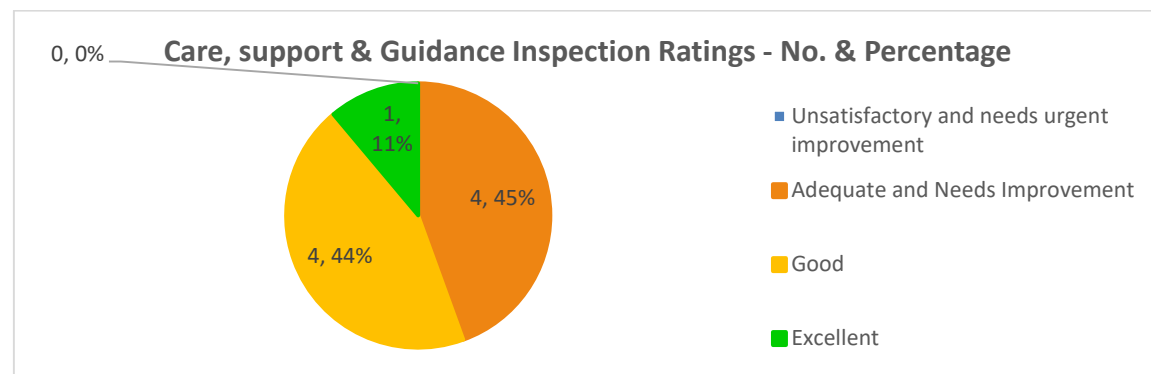
1.2 Estyn

1.2.1 The table below provides an overview of the Estyn judgements for schools inspected under the new arrangements from September 2017 up until **Error! Reference source not found.**

Phase	School#	School	Date report published	Follow-up Activity	Monitoring Visit 1	Standards	Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning	Teaching and Learning Experiences	Care, Support and Guidance	Leadership and Management	Out of Follow-up Activity
Primary	6772074	Georgetown C.P. School	Jun-22	Action Plan							
Secondary	6775401	Brynmawr Foundation School	Dec-19	SM		Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Adequate	Unsatisfactory	
Primary	6773309	St Mary's CIW Primary School	Mar-19			Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	
Primary	6772310	Rhos y Fedwen Primary**	Feb-17	Estyn Review		Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Jul-18
Primary	6772306	Blaenycwm Primary	May-18			Good	Good	Good	Excellent	Good	
Secondary	6774074	Abertillery Learning Community	01/02/2018 (revisit Jun-19)	SI	SI	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Unsatisfactory	
Primary	6773316	St Joseph's RC Primary	Jan-18			Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	
Primary	6772312	St Illtyd's Primary	01/10/2017 (revisit Mar-19)	Estyn Review		Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Mar-19
Primary	6772309	Glyncoed Primary*	Nov-17			Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	
Primary	6772070	Glanhowy Primary*	Feb-18			Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	

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1.2.2 Care, Support and Guidance Inspection Ratings



1.3 Policy

1.3.1 Compliance Statements

Partner Agency Safeguarding Policies in Place	Ac Year 21-22
No of Partner Agencies	4
Policies in Place	4
% Compliance	100%

1.3.2 Safeguarding Policies released and Governing Body Compliance

Safeguarding Policy Compliance	21-22
No of Schools in BG	25
Governing Body Compliance	25
% Compliance	100%

2. Systems/Quality Assurance

2.1 My Concern

2.1.1 My Concern Safeguarding Systems in Use

Safeguarding System	No. of Schools Using	% of Schools Using
My Concern	22	81%

2.2 Keeping Learners Safe audit tool

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2.2.1 School Returns

	21-22
No of Schools in BG	25
No of Schools who have used the KLS Safeguarding Toolkit to review procedures in the last 12 months?	25
% of Schools who have Reviewed	100%

3. Independent Settings

3.1 Pupils in Out of County Placements - LA and Independent Settings

3.1.1 – Out of County Placements

	Spring 2021	Summer 2021	Autumn 2022	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
LA	15	15	9	9	9
Independent	18	18	10	11	11

3.1.2 Overview of Safeguarding arrangements.

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Summer term 2022	No of Pupils	Of which are CLA	No of Settings	Green	Amber	Red
Independent	11	5	4	1	2	1
Other LA Maintained Schools	9	4	7	7	0	0

Green – SG QA gives no cause for concern

Amber – SG QA identifies actions required/further clarification

Red – SG QA gives cause for concern

3.2 Education Workforce Council (EWC) Registrations

3.2.1 EWC Registrations on Appointment

	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
No. of Incomplete EWC Registrations	5	0	0

4. Safe Workforce

4.1 DBS Position Statement:

4.1.1 New Starter/Rolling Programme DBS Checks Schools

Criteria	Total
Staff requiring a DBS	1263
Staff with a valid DBS	1262

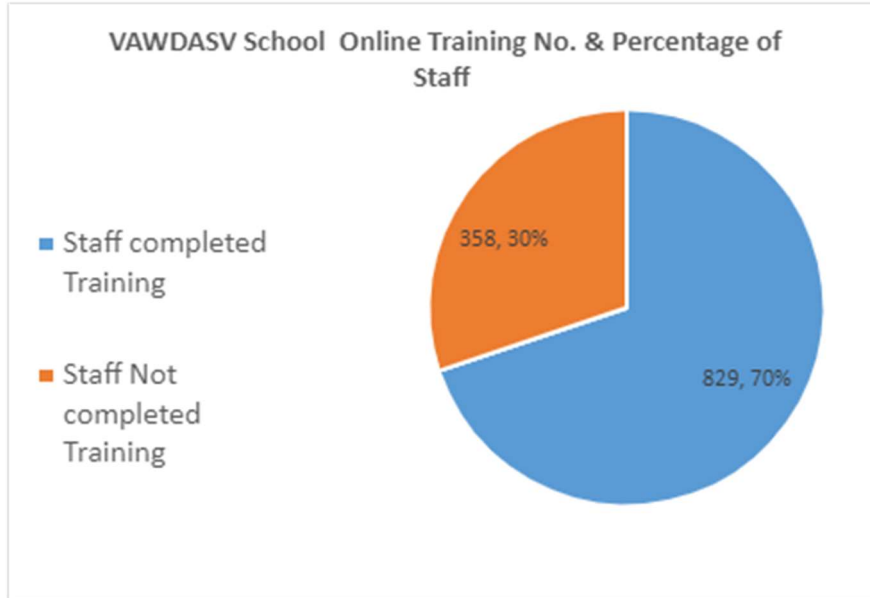
Out of Compliance	Less than 4 weeks		More than 3 months	Total
New Starters currently out of compliance	0		0	0
Rolling Programme currently out of compliance	0		1	1
Totals	0		1	1

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Appt Comments	Awaiting Certificate		Total	Escalation	
				Chased with Employee	Escalation to Operational Team
Awaiting ID documents	0		1	0	1
	0		1	0	1

4.2 Training

4.2.1 Basic/Enhanced VAWDA SV



4.2.2 Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP) Meetings

DSP Meetings	Aut 21	Spr 22	Sum 22
No of Schools Represented	16	17	16
% of School represented	64%	68%	64%

4.3 Professional Concerns

4.3.1 Professional Concerns Review

Professional Strat Meetings	Autumn 21	Spring 22	Summer 22
Total Number of PSMs	5	1	3
Number of Substantiated Concerns	2	1	1
% of Substantiated Concerns	40%	100%	33.33%

5. Vulnerable Children and Specific Incidents

5.1 Pregnant Schoolchildren

5.1.1 Numbers by Academic Year

No. by Academic Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
No. of Pregnant Schoolchildren*	1	1	2

*As numbers are so small, there are too few to report termly.

5.2 Electively Home Educated Pupils

5.2.1 Total Number of EHE Pupils

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	PLASC January 2022 No.	PLASC January 2021	PLASC January 2020 No.
Children electively home educated in BG	132	89	70
Children electively home educated in Wales (mean average)	197	180	132

5.2.2 The table below sets out the number of secondary age pupils who have become EHE or who have returned to school from being EHE during the summer, autumn, spring and summer terms.

Month	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4	
	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In
Apl – Jul 2021	3	0	1	0	3	2	3	0
Sept - Dec 2021	4		5	1	6		3	
Jan - Mar 2022	7	2	1		4		0	
Apr - Jul 2022	2	0	5	0	3	0	2	0
Total	16	2	12	1	16	2	8	0

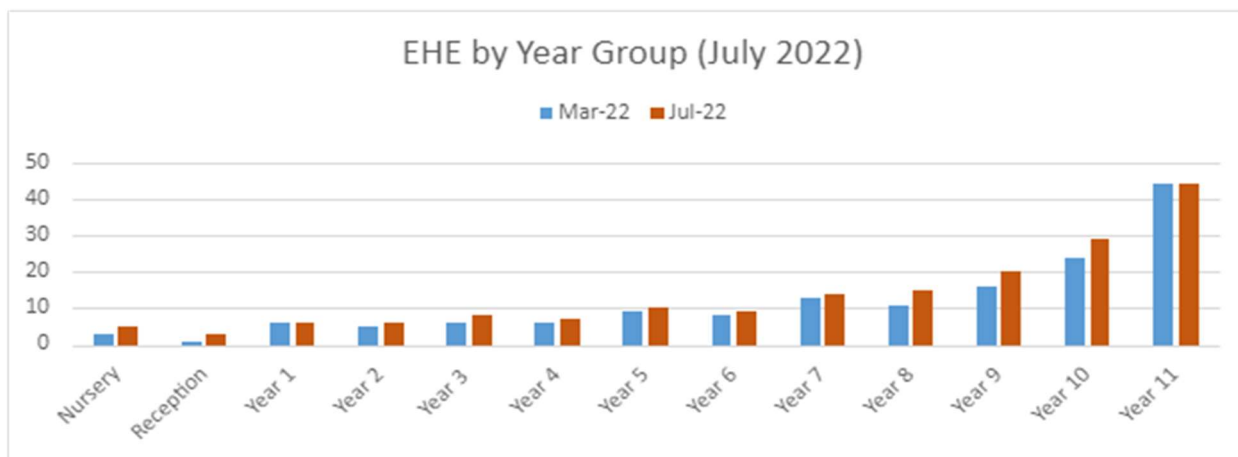
05 | Education

5.2.3 The table below sets out the number of additional pupils who have become EHE or who have returned to school from being EHE during the summer, autumn, spring and summer terms.

Month	Primary		College		Did not transition		Moved into/out of Borough (including BG pupils that were in OOC schools)		School place unavailable		Special School	
	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In
Apl – Jul 2021	7	1			1		6					
Sept - Dec 2021	5	9			1		11				1	
Jan - Mar 2022	2	2					7				1	
Apr - Jul 2022	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
Total	21	12	0	0	2	0	31	0	0	0	2	

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5.2.4 EHE Breakdown per year group



*Please note that all year 11 pupils are removed on the last Friday of June when they end compulsory school education.

5.3 Children Missing in Education

5.3.1 Referrals

No. of CMIE Referrals	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
CMIE in to BG	3	3	5
CMIE out of BG	11	10	12

5.3.2 Number of Children Missing

	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
No. of Children Missing	14	13	17

5.4 Youth Offending Referrals

5.4.1 Number of children accessing the Service

	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
No of Schoolchildren accessing YOS	23	34	32

5.4.2 YOS pupil Placement by Setting and Access

	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
Access			
FT	14	34	30
PT	3	0	3
Setting			
EHE	0	0	0
Special Schools	5	9	5
Mainstream - Primary	1	4	4
Mainstream - Secondary	11	21	23
Employed	3	0	0
NEET	3	0	0

5.4.3 REACH Interventions

	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
Prevention Programme	5	16	19
Community Resolution	12	13	10
Youth Caution	0	1	0
Youth Conditional Caution	1	2	1
Referral Order	2	2	2
Youth Rehabilitation Order	2	0	0
Remanded in Custody	1	0	0
Detained	0	0	0

5.5 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Data recorded in Quarters due to the team working through the summer.

5.5.1 Number, Age and Gender of Children Identified and Managed through Community Safety Team

	Q3	Q3	Q3	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q1	Q1	Q1
	21-22	21-22	21-22	21-22	21-22	21-22	22-23	22-23	22-23
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
No. of Schoolchildren Identified and Managed through CS Team	16	10	26	9	6	15	10	4	14

Age of Schoolchildren Identified and Managed through the CS Team	Q3	Q3	Q3	Q4	Q4	Q4	Q1	Q1	Q1
	21-22	21-22	21-22	21-22	21-22	21-22	22-23	22-23	22-23
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Primary Aged Pupils	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Secondary Pupils Aged 11-14	10	9	19	4	2	6	3	4	7
Secondary Pupils Aged 14-16	4	1	5	5	4	9	7	0	7
Total	16	10	26	9	6	15	10	4	14

5.5.2 Types of ASB Incidents

Incident	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23
Nuisance behaviour – part of a group	15	28	24	4	3
Setting fires – part of a group	2	7	0	6	4
Swearing	2	1	0	0	0
Possession of alcohol	1	0	0	0	0
Inappropriate use of an electric scooter	0	1	0	0	0
Trespass in a derelict building	0	4	0	0	0
Verbally abusive	0	4	0	3	0
No. of Individuals	20	45	24	13	6

NB Arson is treated as criminal not ASB

5.5.3 Warning Letters Issued

	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23
No of Warning Letters Issued					
1st Strike	19	43	24	13	6
2nd Strike	1	2	0	0	1
Strike 3 (multi-agency ASB Case Management Group)	4	3	2	2	7
Strike 4 (multi-agency ASB Case Management Group)	0	0	0	0	0

5.5.4 Cases by Agency to demonstrate Co-ordinated Intervention

Cases by Agency (involved in cases discussed at Strike 3 (multi-agency meeting))	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23
Youth Offending Service	1	2	1	1	4
Social Services	0	2	1	1	6
Families First	0	2	0	1	1
CAMHS	0	1	1	0	0
Youth Services	0	0	1	2	3
Registered Social Landlord	0	5	0	2	3
NxtGen Project	0	0	1	0	0
Fire Intervention Service	2	0	0	0	0

5.6 Child Employment

5.6.1 Number of Permits Issued

	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
No. of Permits Issued	4	0	2

5.6.2 Number of Investigations relating to Illegal Child Employment Activities

	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
No. of Illegal Child Employment Activities	0	1	2

5.7 Child Performances

5.7.1 Number of Licences Issued to Children and Chaperones

	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
No. of Licences Issues to Children and Chaperones	4	20	56
No of licences for chaperones	20	18	5
Body of persons approvals - group licences	10	6	7

5.7.2 Number of Chaperones attending Training

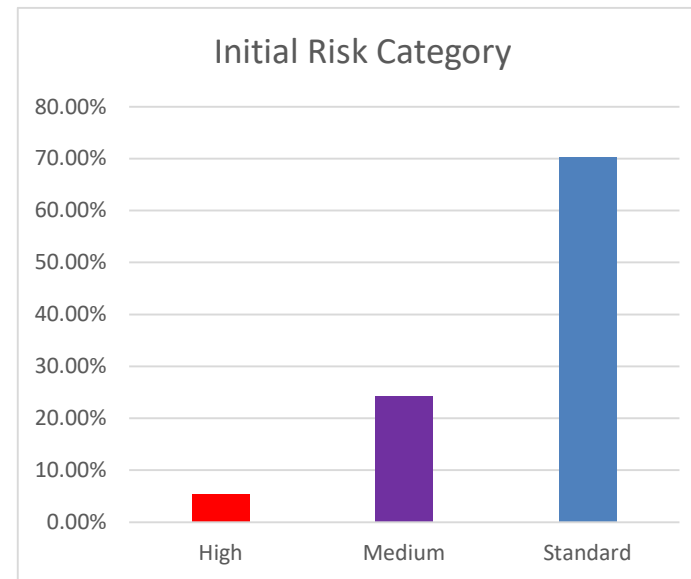
	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
No. of Chaperones	20	18	5
No of Chaperones attending Training	29	24	15

5.8 Operation Encompass

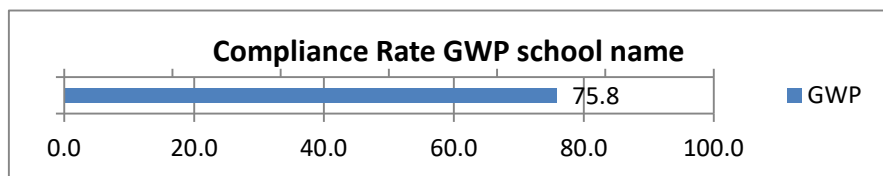
5.8.1 Number of Incidents in Period and Repeat Incidents

Term	Occurrences	CYP	Repeat Incidents
Autumn 2021	265	330	22.40%
Spring 2022	211	266	24.10%
Summer 2022	246	333	21%

5.8.2 Risk Level



5.8.3 % Compliance by Police



5.8.4 Comparative Data

	Spring 2021	Summer 2021	Autumn 2022	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
No. of Occurrences	296	141	265	211	246
No. of Children and Young People Involved	371	185	330	266	333
Average No. of CYP per Occurrence	1.25	1.31	1.25	1.26	1.35

5.9 Attendance

5.9.1 Primary and Secondary Attendance

	Autumn 2020	Spring 2021	Summer 2021	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
Primary Attendance	88.4	89.6	89.9	89.3	89.3	89.0
Secondary Attendance	84.3	83.0	84.8	85.3	85.3	84.8

5.9.2 Low Attendance and Implementation of Neglect Policy

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	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
Fixed penalties	0	0	2
Single Justice Process	5	0	6
Court Notices	0	3	0

5.10 Exclusions

5.10.1 Exclusions by Setting and Type

	Autumn 21			Spring 22			Summer 22		
	No. Fixed	Average No. of Days	Permanent	Fixed	Average No. of Days	Permanent	Fixed	Average No. of Days	Permanent
Primary	32	1.8		30	2.1		25	2.4	
Secondary	228	1.6	3	323	1.8	3	193	1.4	
Special	23	2.0		5	1		12	1.1	
Total	283	1.5		358	1.8		230	1.5	

5.10.2 Exclusions Linked to Bullying

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	Autumn 21		Spring 22		Summer 22	
	Fixed	Permanent	Fixed	Permanent	Fixed	Permanent
Primary	0		0		0	
Secondary	0		2		1	
Special	0		0		0	

5.10.3 Pupils with Multiple Exclusions

No of Exclusions	Autumn 21			Spring 22			Summer 22		
	No. Pupils	No of Exclusions	Average No. of Days	No. Pupils	No of Exclusions	Average No. of Days	No. Pupils	No of Exclusions	Average No. of Days
1	95	95	1.9	137	137	1.8	91	91	1.3
2	30	59	1.3	42	84	1.4	13	26	2.9
3	10	30	1.3	15	45	1.8	8	24	5.5
4	9	36	1.7	11	44	2.7	6	24	4.9
5	2	10	1.0	7	35	1.2	8	40	8.1
6+	8	53	1.8	2	13	2.5	4	25	10.4
Total	154	283	1.6	214	358	1.8	130	230	1.5

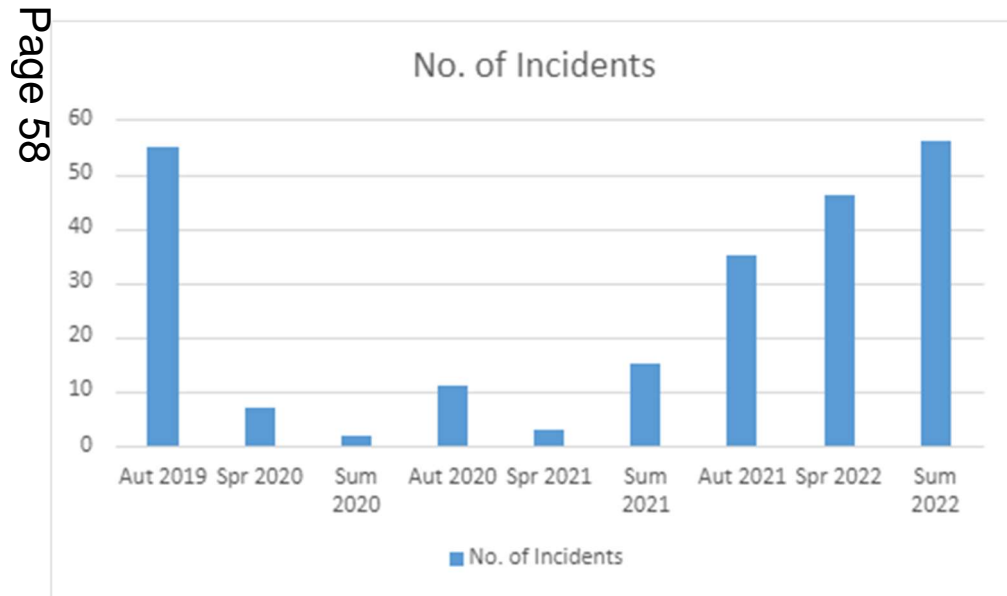
05 | Education

5.11 RPI Incidents

5.11.1 Number of RPI Incidents by Setting

<u>School</u>	<u>Number of incidents</u>
Special schools	55
Mainstream schools	0

5.11.2 RPI Trends



5.12 Racial Incidents and Bullying

5.12.1 Bullying Incidents (Rights Respect Equality returns)

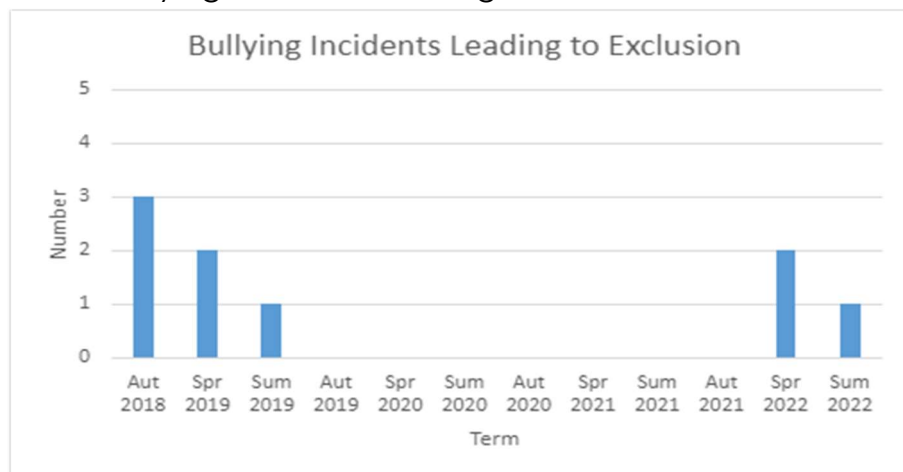
Spring Term 2022	
No of Schools submitting	22
No of schools submitting positive returns	5
No of incidents	27
No of Pupils involved	30

5.12.2 Bullying incidents by Setting

Spring Term 2022	
Top categories of reasons for bullying	
	Total
Verbal	8
Appearance	6
Physical	5
Homophobic	4

5.13 Bullying

5.13.1 Bullying incidents leading to exclusion



5.14 Sexual Harassment

5.14.1 Progress of the Peer on Peer Sexual Harassment Action Plan

This is a Data Development Item – please see report item 6.5.24

5.15 Safer Schools

5.15.1 Number of Safer Schools Tactical Meetings called under the Crime & Disorder Act

	Summer 22
No of Issues	1

5.15.2 Issues that hit the trigger for Safer Schools e.g. Criminal Exploitation, Violence, Threat to kill/of serious harm, Use of weapons

	Summer 22
No of Issues that hit the trigger for Safer Schools	1

5.16 Trips and Visits

5.16.1 Overview of Trips and Levels of Compliance

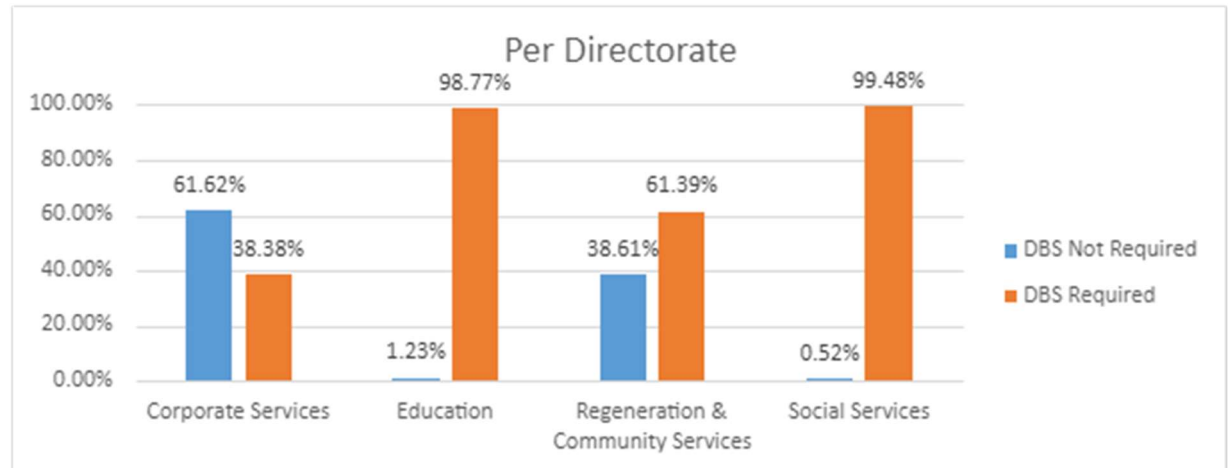
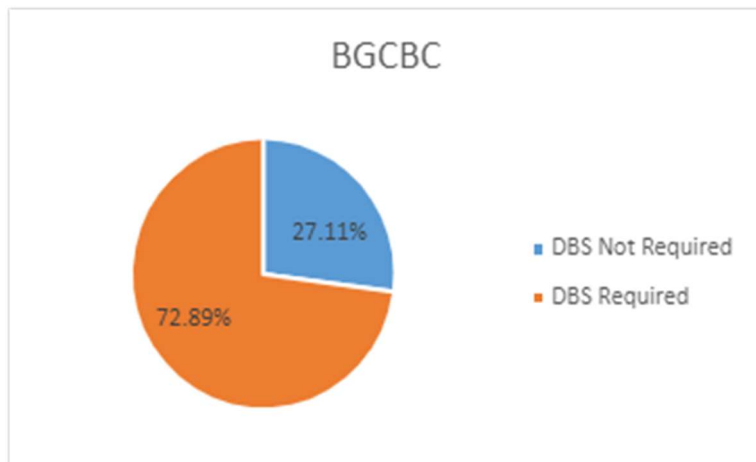
No. of Compliant Trips	Aut 21	Spr 22	Summ 22
All Schools	880	719	1105
% Compliance to policy	100%	100%	100%

6.1 DBS Compliance

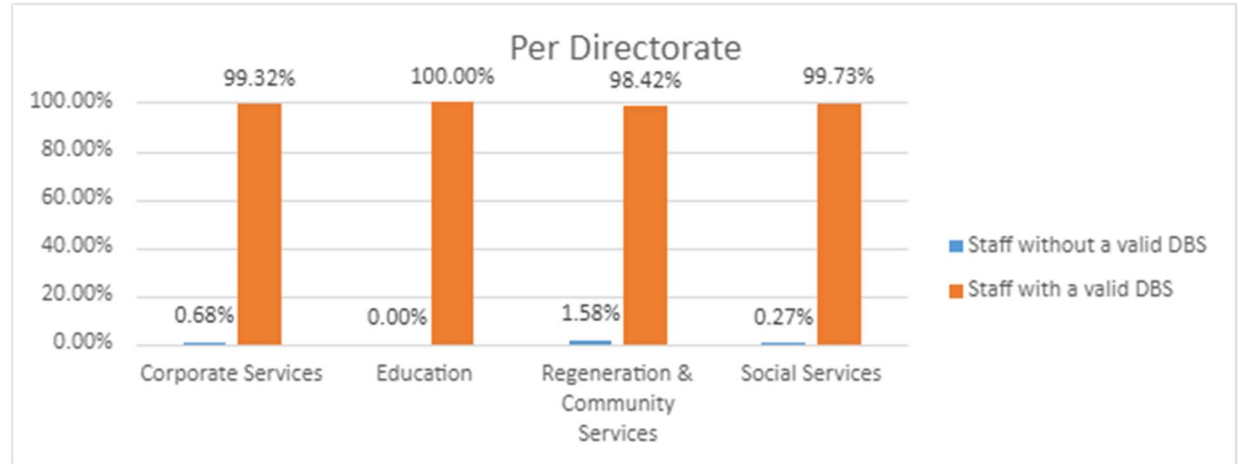
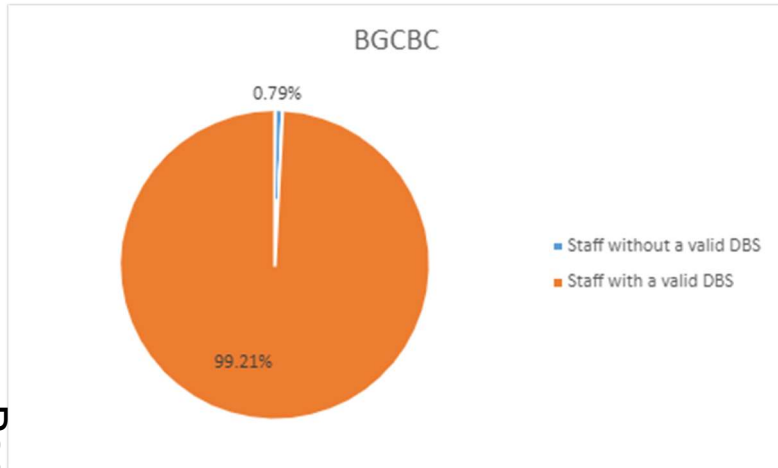
Managers are required to identify the requirement of a DBS check utilising the eligibility criteria, all DBS checks are renewed on a 3 yearly basis. Organisational Development co-ordinates this DBS process for new starters and 3 yearly rolling programme along with monitoring the compliance of these checks and we have formal escalation processes in place. The updates on the compliance with DBS are provided annually to Corporate Leadership Team but monitoring and escalation continues on a regular basis.

The latest submission to CLT was in April 2022 and is shown below:

6.1.1 Position Statement: Breakdown of Positions that require a DBS Check as at 31st March 2022



6.1.2 Breakdown of those employees in compliance with DBS requirements as at 31st March 2022



Escalation Process

Employees and Managers receive automated e-mails from the DBS system reminding that the process has not been completed.

Operational Teams receive fortnightly reports of all DBS applications currently in progress to enable Safeguarding escalation where required

6.2 VAWDASV Corporate Training Online

Corporate Training

Domestic abuse Training

Corporate training has been provided to staff in respect of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence with **58%** of staff having **completed** the **VAWDAS online training**.

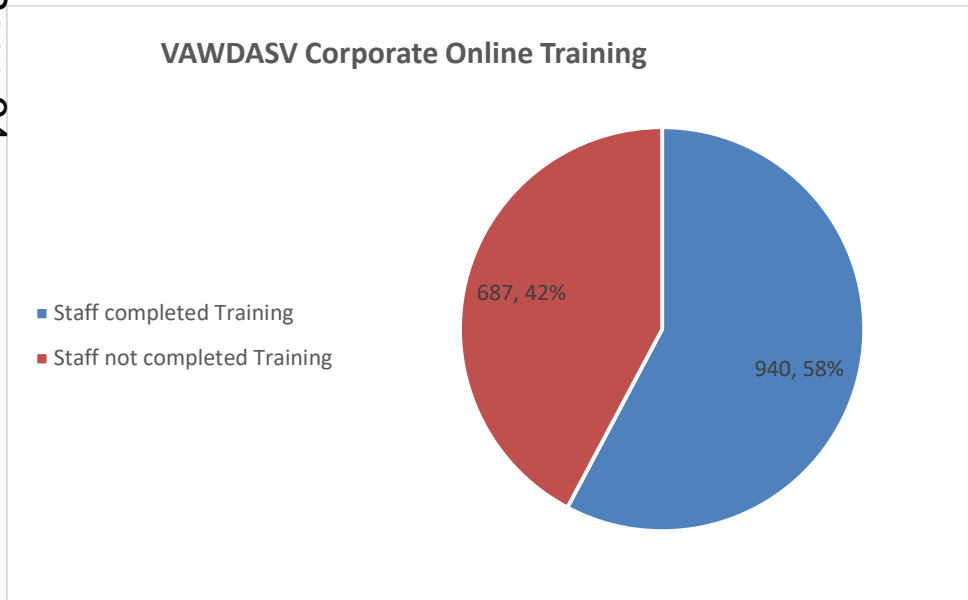
All Wales Safeguarding Training on line for staff

Online Safeguarding training was included in the online corporate induction module in 2019.

In terms of the wider workforce a suitable module is currently being evaluated by the corporate Safeguarding group which has been delayed due to the impact of the pandemic.

6.2.1 VAWDASV Corporate

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6.3 Risk Register

Ref No.	Description of Risk	Triggers	Consequences	Likelihood	Impact	Status	Current Controls	Likelihood	Impact	Status	Proposed further controls to mitigate / reduce risk	Risk Owner
CRR4	Safeguarding - Failure to ensure adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place for vulnerable people in Blaenau Gwent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is inadequate assessments and monitoring • If there is a lack of documentation • If there are increasing referrals for services • If there is a lack of appropriate guidance and training • If there is poor communication between all parties (internal / external) • If there is a high turnover of staff and difficulties in recruiting staff. *If there are increased levels of sickness in key areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential significant harm / loss of life • Long term reputational damage and confidence in the Council undermined • Increase in complaints / Potential litigation / prosecution • External intervention • Increased pressure on budgets • Low staff morale 	3	4	Critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gwent Adult Safeguarding Board • SE Wales Safeguarding Children's Board • Standing item on CMT agenda • Safeguarding Network • Director of Social Services has a corporate responsibility for safeguarding • Lead Executive Member identified for safeguarding • Adult protection co-ordinator and process in place in line with All Wales process. • Manager's report consistently on safeguarding to elected Members and the Corporate Leadership Team • Joint Education and Social Services Safeguarding Team • Joint Social Services and Education Safeguarding scrutiny meeting held 3 times a year • Joint Business unit and subgroups for adults and children • Quality assurance processes embedded in adult safeguarding • Corporate Safeguarding Leads established for each directorate. • Staff induction contains safeguarding training • Corporate Safeguarding Training Programme in place. • Corporate Safeguarding Policy updated 	2	4	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Plans will further embed risk assessment tools • Training for all staff on Domestic Abuse Corporately in progress 	Director of Social Services Director of Education Councillor Haydn Trollope

Progress Update as at Quarter 1 (April – June 2022)

Social Services - Vacancy rates are improving which was anticipated. Staff turnover is still an issue, this has affected the number of experienced staff in post. There is a robust induction programme for newly qualified staff and for staff that started during COVID. Induction programme covers basic training on all aspects of social work tasks.

Education – During the period there was a critical incident in one of the schools involving an alleged racist incident that continues to be investigated by the police. An overview of schools’ self-evaluation returns identified one school with significant areas to be addressed which is presently a SCC. implementation of MyConcern has continued to progress and work is ongoing with schools with one school yet to sign up to using this software.

There remains an invariable link to the risks identified in Social Services. The risk level remains unchanged.

6.4 Regulatory Proposals

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88	WAO	Follow-up review of Corporate Arrangements for the Safeguarding of Children Document Reference: 1521A2019-20	01/10/2019	<p>1. Corporate Safeguarding Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the Policy • Update the structure • Include updated information from the All Wales Policy • When adopted in April 2020, include information from the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures <p>Completion Date April 2020</p>	Alison Ramshaw (Corporate Safeguarding Group) T1 Families First, IAA 14+ and Safeguarding	Social Services	The Corporate Safeguarding Leads mtg were on hold during the first stage of the pandemic but reconvened during the latter part of the year. The chair of the CSL group wrote a report to CLT and the Audit Committee seeking approval to extend the completion dates of the WAO Safeguarding Review recommendations as the pandemic meant that no progress could be made. Extended dates were agreed and a further 12 months was approved. Work was completed on the updating of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy and a Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework has been developed. Both pieces of work are currently awaiting CLT approval prior to implementation. The Wales Safeguarding App is available to all those staff who have a works mobile and communications have gone out to alert those staff without a works mobile of the App which is available to all via Google search engine. Lead officers with responsibility for safeguarding are still to be identified
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Agenda Item 7

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **18th October 2022**
Report Subject: **Improving Schools Programme**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr S Edmunds, Executive Member**
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)
	29.09.22	06.10.22			18.10.22	26.10.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update on the Blaenau Gwent Improving Schools Programme, in line with national changes to school evaluation, improvement and accountability changes.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report covers all schools and settings within the County Borough identified by the Education Directorate, supported by the Education Achievement Service (EAS) and/or Estyn as needing to improve. The Blaenau Gwent (BG) Improving Schools Programme operates within the regional arrangements for supporting schools across South East Wales.
- 2.2 During 2021-22 the majority of BG's schools participated in a Professional Discussion with the Local Authority (LA), EAS and other partners. This discussion focussed on the school's priorities for improvement, the support it requires and identified practice that is worth sharing. Schools have received a series of briefing sessions across a range of forums, to enable them to prepare for the above new ways of working. This approach has continued for the 2022-23 academic year and all schools have been notified of the dates of their Professional Discussion session. Importantly, there has been an incremental reduction in Schools Causing Concern from 6 schools in 2019 to only 2 schools in 2022. Abertillery Learning Community has been removed from Estyn Significant Improvement category

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Option 1

Members to consider and accept the report as provided.

3.2 Option 2

Members to scrutinise the information detailed within the report and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.

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

4.1 Education remains a priority in the Corporate Plan. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 consolidates, clarifies, and reforms the law in relation to intervention in schools causing concern. The Welsh Government's statutory guidance for schools causing concern (February 2014) details the local authority powers of intervention in schools causing concern, the grounds on which those powers can be invoked and the procedures governing the intervention process.

4.2 Through our education provision we seek to ensure that provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people so that their progress and performance is ambitious and raises aspirations levels.

4.3 These key plans inform business planning arrangements at an Education Directorate level which when coupled with the findings of self-evaluation enables the right support to be put in place to support school to improve at an appropriate pace.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no direct financial implications for this report. However, the Council allocates approximately £50.4 million to schools via the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) to provide high quality education and to improve pupil outcomes. Blaenau Gwent continues to make a financial contribution to the regional EAS arrangements of approximately £350,000 from the core Education Directorate Budget and this is a decrease of 0.4% on the previous financial year.

5.1.2 There will be financial implications in supporting schools to improve and this is identified in the individual school support plan.

5.2 **Risk Including Mitigating Actions**

Risk is associated with ineffective processes to ensure good progress against priorities in identified schools. Failure to raise standards features in the corporate risk register of the Council, particularly in relation to schools causing concern. This risk is also reflected in the Education Directorate and EAS risk registers. Mitigating actions include the routine monitoring of quantitative and qualitative information, regular Securing Improvement Partnership meetings between the Council and the EAS, regular quality assurance meetings within the Education Directorate and across teams as well as school inspection findings.

5.2.1 There is regular review of a school's progress towards its priorities. For most schools not in a category this is achieved through professional discussions. As a result of the relaxation of the accountability framework, which culminated in the suspension of the routine collection of qualitative data by Welsh Government, this has created an inherent risk associated

with making informed judgements on school performance. School attendance and exclusion figures are monitored on a fortnightly basis. School's safeguarding processes are also closely monitored. The quality assurance arrangements that are in place include the safeguarding matrix, keeping learners safe audit tool and the quality assurance visits which the Safeguarding in Education Manager completes and reports findings through a FADE approach to Education DMT. Holistic support packages are devised via regular intra Council services meetings between OD, finance, health and safety, education, and school governor support services. The quality of provision i.e., the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms is monitored and supported via the EAS. The quality of school leadership is also supported extensively by the EAS via a range of programmes and school-to-school networks.

5.3 **Legal**

The Improving Schools Programme operates within the legal framework of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are implications arising from the action identified to support those schools identified as a school causing concern and/or in an Estyn category. This information is in the support plan for the school, the post Inspection plan and the Local Authority Statement of Action.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 **Schools in an Estyn Category**

6.1.2 **Brynmawr Foundation School (Appendix 1)**

- The school was inspected in October 2019 and placed within the category of schools requiring Special Measures.
- The school continues to be subject to a LA statutory warning notice to improve and intervention is now in place. The LA reviewed the statutory warning notice in the autumn term.
- Governance and the work of the Governing Body has significantly improved.
- The school now has an established Senior Leadership Team in place.
- A strong support plan continues to be implemented as part of the EAS Learning Network School model, working closely with Cardiff High School, with the Headteacher of Cardiff High School undertaking the role of School Improvement Partner. Coaching and mentoring of leaders forms a core aspect of this support.
- The school continues to be part of the Welsh Government's national pilot for multi-agency support for schools in special measures, which involves a range of partners supporting the school and monitoring its progress in a systematic and responsive way, tailored to the specific needs of the school. The next LA led meeting is in October 2022.

- Estyn has undertaken two monitoring visits since the last report to the former Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee with one visit occurring in the autumn term 21 and a further visit in the summer term 2022. In the most recent monitoring visit that occurred in the summer term 2022, inspectors reviewed two recommendations. 'R2 Improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning' and 'R4 Strengthen leadership at all levels to improve leaders' ability to identify areas for development and to plan effectively for improvement. Estyn noted the progress made and concluded that 'Brynmawr Foundation School is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.
- In particular, within the feedback, it was noted that for R2 - there are behaviour improvements. which have been sustained that are particularly around high tariff pupils. The new Assistant Headteacher role has had a positive impact although there is a concern as to whether the workload is too operational. The school now has a more systematic approach to behaviour but it needs to develop: -
 - The role of the pastoral Middle leaders
 - Focus on pupils' attitudes to learning and increase the challenge around the quality of teaching.
- R4 – Senior and middle leaders have undergone useful training and are developing in the right direction. Outcomes of the reviews are too generous, particularly judging the effectiveness of teaching in relation to its impact on learning. Some of the planning for improvement is still too broad and needs to be more whole-department level. Senior leaders should decide what is important and have a clear focus. There needs to be a relentless focus on teaching.
- As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is maintaining the level of follow-up activity.
- Estyn will re-visit the school in around four - six months' time to monitor progress against a sample of the recommendations.'
- A further Estyn monitoring visit is anticipated later this Autumn term.

Progress Update:

From evidence seen there is still work to be done, but the school is making progress against its recommendations although as set out above the pace of these improvements needs to progress. The school continues to be supported by Cardiff High School and a further monitoring visit is expected later this term. The next multi-agency meeting will focus on teaching and learning and will consider the role and impact that both senior and middle leaders will play in this area for improvement.

6.1.3 **Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community (Appendix 2)**

- The school was inspected in February 2018 and placed in the category of schools requiring significant improvement.
- The school received an Estyn monitoring visit in February 2022 and all six Recommendations were inspected:
 - R1. Improve standards, in particular outcomes at the end of key stage 4
 - R2. Improve standards of behaviour in the secondary phase
 - R3. Improve the quality of teaching
 - R4. Improve planning for progression of skills, including the Welsh language, and the breadth of the secondary phase curriculum
 - R5. Improve the quality and impact of leadership at all levels, including in self-evaluation and planning for improvement
 - R6. Provide robust financial management to address the deficit budget
- Estyn concluded that Abertillery Learning Community was ‘judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection in February 2022. As a result, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.’
- Following the outcome of the Estyn inspection the Local Authority formally withdrew the statutory warning notice under which the school had operated since 2018. However, the Local Authority will continue to support the school moving forward through the ALC Corporate Group continuing to function in supporting financial sustainability planning. The Learning Community will also be subject to regular Team Around the School (TAS) meetings to ensure that the school receives appropriate support to continue to improve. This support is particularly relevant as the experienced Headteacher that led the school out of significant improvement has recently advised the Governing Body and Local Authority of her intention to retire at the end of the Spring term 2023.

Progress Update:

- Arrangements are underway to secure a new Headteacher for the start of the summer term.
- The Learning Community will continue to receive support from the LA and the EAS, its commissioned school improvement service.
- This will include twice yearly professional discussions facilitated by the Local Authority and continuation of the ALC Corporate Group, which focuses upon the schools’ financial situation. The Resource Bases located at the setting will also be included in the LA review that is scheduled for this term.

6.1.4 **River Centre (Appendix 3)**

The previous report to the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee in October 2021 identified that:

- The LA is concerned that the school does not engage with key statutory LA functions and services. The pre-warning letter of Spring 2021, which set out the LA's concerns, particularly- relating to ALN Panel engagement and school improvement shortcomings e.g., the School Development Plan (SDP).
- Schools Causing Concern/TAS meetings have not provided the LA or EAS with the assurance of the effectiveness of the school's provision/admissions for learners. As a result of a lack of progress in addressing the issues identified in the Pre-Warning letter; a Statutory Warning letter was issued to the Governing Body in September 2021. This set out the statutory grounds for intervention as follows:
 - **Ground 2:** there has been a breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed in that:
 - 1. The Headteacher and the Governing Body have been unable to share effective self-evaluation and a school development planning cycle based on regular and robust first-hand evidence of both provision and standards, both within the SIP cycle and the Schools Causing Concern protocols.
 - It is the view of the School Causing Concern panel that the Headteacher does not provide governors with all the information they need in a timely fashion for those governors to comply with their obligations to challenge the Headteacher.
 - **Ground 5:** the governing body or Headteacher has failed, or is likely to fail, to comply with a duty under the Education Acts as set out in Ground 2 and,
 - **Ground 6:** the Governing Body or Headteacher has acted unreasonably in the exercise of any of its functions as set out in Ground 2.
- Over the past 18 months, there has been much needed significant changes to governance leadership and staffing. This has included a paid LA appointed Chair of Governors being appointed, additional governors to bring further capacity and expertise.
- Staffing has been in a state of flux and there is a need to stabilise the continuity of staff predominantly in the secondary campus. A new senior leader with a focus on wellbeing will start October 2022 and recruitment for a Head of Campus Secondary and two additional teaching staff has begun.
- The Headteacher remains absent from work and the school has benefited from two experienced Headteachers undertaking an Executive Headteacher role, with the most recent appointment commencing in April 2022. This has provided additional capacity to

the setting through the release of experienced members of that schools' senior leadership team.

- Team Around the School meetings since the last report have predominantly focused upon consolidating the setting following the Safer School's response. The Safer Schools approach was implemented in February 2022 in response to an incident that culminated with the implementation of three key work streams to support the setting:
 - Building safety and security – building and infrastructure around the River Centre, particularly around the secondary site;
 - Staffing – staffing workforce issues with regards to safety and cultural development within the setting; and,
 - Vulnerable learners – support and understanding associated with the needs and complexities of the learners.

- The group was chaired by the Corporate Director of Education and the purpose was to secure a partnership approach to ensure that the setting is fit for purpose for learners and staff, with the primary goal being for the River Centre to become a safe setting for all its learners and staff, particularly the secondary setting.

- In the summer term, the LA/EAS sourced an experienced School Improvement Partner with track record of working in a Special School similar to the River Centre to work closely alongside the school.

- Furthermore, during the summer term the school received an Estyn Inspection, which placed the setting into Estyn's Special Measures category. There were 7 recommendations included in the report which are:
 - R1 Address those issues identified in the health and safety letter
 - R2 Establish a clear purpose and vision for the school and implement a staffing structure that is fit for purpose and adequately reflects roles and responsibilities
 - R3 Ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently engaging, broad and balanced and prepares pupils well for their next stage in life and learning
 - R4 Improve the behaviour of pupils, particularly on the secondary campus
 - R5 Improve the quality of the learning environment and culture, particularly on the secondary campus
 - R6 Improve the outcomes for pupils, particularly those on the secondary campus
 - R7 Establish systems, procedures and routines across the school that are clearly understood by staff and relevant partners

Progress Update:

- The LA and EAS continue to work alongside school leaders to respond to the setting's Estyn Health and Safety Letter and develop a Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP).
- During the summer period significant work has been completed in respect of building works that has seen the following improvements to the suitability of the secondary campus. e.g., toilet improvements, fencing and site safety.
- There is a need to ensure that the staffing at the secondary setting stabilises and sufficient capacity is in place.
- The Safeguarding in Education Manager continues to support the setting in progressing the required actions in the Keeping Learners Safe audit tool. Termly progress reports will be provided to the Governing Body and Education DMT on any work in this area.
- The Education Transformation and Business Change Manager is exploring funding avenues to develop a further programme of building improvement works to improve the learning environment.
- Meetings are in train with the newly appointed School Improvement partner.
- The Corporate Director is reviewing the statutory warning notice in the light of the recent Estyn inspection.
- The placement of pupils at the secondary setting recommences at the start of the spring term. ALN Panel will utilise the risk matrix when determining future placements that will assess the known intelligence, context and inherent risks.

6.1.5 **Schools Causing Concern**

6.1.6 **Sofrydd Primary School**

In the Autumn term 2021, a formal review of progress against the recommendations of the review that took place in 2020, with the new Headteacher and the leadership team. The review concluded to: -

- to remove Sofrydd PS from the SCC/TAS protocol arrangements, but the Local Authority and EAS will arrange a visit that falls outside of SCC requirements.
- the Panel congratulated the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors on the significant progress made in such a relatively short period of time.

6.1.7 **School Inspections**

6.1.8 **Georgetown Primary School (Appendix 4)**

Georgetown Primary School was inspected in June 2022. The school received a positive Estyn report and has been asked to prepare a case study on its work in relation to how it has developed the indoor and outdoor environment to improve pupils' well-being and learning, for dissemination on Estyn's website. There were three recommendations for improvement that were identified:

- R1 Ensure that self-evaluation processes identify the aspects of teaching and learning most in need of development and focus precisely on the difference actions make to pupils' progress and skills.
- R2 Improve older pupils' standards of writing.
- R3 Improve teachers' understanding of effective classroom assessment, including feedback, so that they can evaluate pupils' progress, and identify how best to support their next steps in learning.

The school has drawn up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

6.2 Expected outcome for the public

6.3 Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

The regional pilot of new ways of working to reflect the new national arrangements for school evaluation, improvement and accountability has been evolved through the engagement of a variety of stakeholders including schools and members of governing bodies. A range of Council services and external partners are involved in delivering programmes to support schools requiring improvement. Monitoring progress towards targets enables effective targeting of support.

6.4 Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

Monitoring school progress against priorities facilitates support for schools to ensure that they achieve and maintain high quality outcomes in the long term

6.5 Preventative Focus

Through effective monitoring and evaluation of school performance, early identification of emerging areas for improvement can be achieved with consequent early intervention to secure improvement. The effectiveness of the LA's monitoring, 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 LA collaborates with neighbouring local authorities through the South East Wales Consortium for the provision of School Improvement services through the Education Achievement Service (EAS).

The LA also secures a range of pupil support services such as Hearing Impaired, Visually Impaired, Speech and Language, and Ethnic Minority support services through regional collaboration. Within the LA, the school improvement and inclusion leadership teams ensure that there is a coordinated approach to supporting schools in the Education Directorate and across the Council as a whole.

6.7 Integration (across service areas)

The LA commissions its school improvement function on a regional basis.

6.8 Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions

There are no implications arising from this report.

6.9 Integrated Impact Assessment

There are no implications arising from this report

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 Monitoring of improvement pathways is an important mechanism for ensuring that Members of the People Scrutiny Committee and the Executive are sufficiently informed to enable them to hold the authority to account effectively for the quality of education provision and hence pupil progress and outcomes.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Brynmawr Foundation School
- Appendix 2 – Abertillery Learning Community
- Appendix 3 – River Centre 3-16 Learning Community
- Appendix 4 – Georgetown Primary School



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Special measures

**Brynmawr Foundation School
Rhydwr
Intermediate Road
Brynmawr
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 4XT**

Date of visit: July 2022

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and
Training in Wales**

Outcome of visit

Brynmawr Foundation School is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is maintaining the level of follow-up activity.

Estyn will re-visit the school in around four - six months' time to monitor progress against a sample of the recommendations.

Under the provisions of Section 39 (9) of the Education Act 2005, every annual report to parents prepared by the governing body under Section 30 of the Education Act 2002 must include a statement on the progress made in implementing the action plan.

The Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (Wales) Regulations 2015 state that an induction period may **not** be served in a school requiring special measures i.e. as described in grounds 6 or 8 in section 2 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (1). The presumption is that schools requiring special measures are not suitable for providing induction for newly qualified teachers, other than in exceptional circumstances. Therefore, schools requiring special measures should not normally appoint a newly qualified teacher (NQT) to their staff.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Improve pupils' standards across the school, including their literacy and numeracy skills

Inspectors did not evaluate this recommendation during this visit.

R2. Improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has continued to develop its approaches to support pupils' behaviour and well-being. This is having a positive impact on behaviour in classes and around the school. Most teachers develop positive relationships with pupils and manage classroom behaviour suitably. However, the school has not focused closely enough on the impact that improving teaching has on pupils' attitudes to learning. As a result, teaching does not always engage pupils sufficiently to develop positive attitudes to learning.

The school's behaviour policy is well understood by staff and pupils and generally pupils respond positively to these expectations. Leaders have recently revised the policy around rewards for good behaviour and attendance, but it is too soon to

evaluate the impact of these changes. The school has further developed its 'Reset' strategy sensibly to respond to incidents of poor behaviour in lessons. This ensures that pupils reflect promptly on their behaviour in sessions with designated members of staff. In addition, the school has improved its graduated 'Stage 2 and Stage 3' provision to make available worthwhile targeted support and intervention in response to the needs of individual pupils.

Pastoral leaders monitor behaviour and interventions for individuals' needs carefully. This helps the school to evaluate the impact of interventions on pupils and decide how best to support them further. The school is developing positive relationships with parents and guardians through regular meetings and communication. Staff also work beneficially with a range of outside agencies, including providing an on-site space to allow them to support vulnerable pupils.

Most pupils are courteous towards each other, staff and visitors to the school. They behave sensibly at break and lunch times and when moving around the school building. These pupils are punctual to lessons and settle quickly. However, a few pupils are rowdy when moving between classes and arrive late to lessons.

A majority of pupils have generally positive attitudes towards their work. They listen appropriately to their teachers' instructions and complete the tasks set. These pupils engage suitably with classroom discussions and are willing to contribute when asked questions or allowed opportunities to work in pairs or small groups. They concentrate suitably to complete short tasks. A minority of pupils do not settle well to independent work. These pupils tend to waste time and are slow to complete tasks. They struggle to maintain their concentration when listening to instructions and when working independently. This leads to pupils producing brief or incomplete work in class. A few pupils talk over the teacher or disrupt learning with off-task behaviour.

In a few lessons, teachers provide challenging tasks and probe pupils' thinking through effective questioning, and this helps pupils to become enthusiastic and eager to learn. They show diligence and persistence and are eager to develop the standard of their work.

R3. Improve the effectiveness of teaching to motivate, engage and challenge pupils to make good progress in lessons

Inspectors did not evaluate this recommendation during this visit.

R4. Strengthen leadership at all levels to improve leaders' ability to identify areas for development and to plan effectively for improvement

Since the monitoring visit in October 2021, senior leaders have continued to develop their sense of shared vision and direction. They hold twice-weekly meetings, focused alternately on strategy and day-to-day work, which has helped to bring greater clarity. There is now a coherent distribution of roles within the senior leadership team and lines of responsibility are well understood.

Senior leaders have undertaken worthwhile professional learning with external partners and this has enabled them to begin to identify specific areas for improvement and plan appropriately. Middle leaders have also benefited from support to improve their leadership, for example on how to coach members of their teams and how to hold difficult conversations. This includes recently leading faculty reviews, with the support of senior leaders and external partners. Senior and middle leaders use a range of suitable processes to gather first-hand evidence and evaluate provision and learning. They have improved pupil behaviour by developing systems that are well understood and introducing additional provision to support more vulnerable learners. However, overall, evaluations of teaching and learning are over-generous and do not consider sufficiently how provision impacts on pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. This limits leaders' ability to plan precisely for improvement. Leaders do not always identify clearly enough the priorities for improving teaching or plan well enough to secure consistent improvements.

The school provides an appropriate range of professional learning opportunities for all staff, including those supported by external partners. Senior leaders have recognised the need to pause the number of new teaching strategies being introduced in order to consolidate those that are already in place.

Governors are supportive of the school. They have altered the governing body sub-committee structure this year to align more closely with the school's main priorities for improvement and this is helping them to focus their work appropriately.

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Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Significant improvement

**Abertillery Learning Community
Alma Street
Abertillery
Blaenau Gwent
NP13 1YL**

Date of visit: February 2022

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and
Training in Wales**

Outcome of visit

Abertillery Learning Community is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Improve standards, in particular outcomes at the end of key stage 4

Since the core inspection, the school has developed and implemented successful strategies to raise pupils' standards. During the Covid-19 pandemic, staff ensured that pupils had access to suitable provision to continue with their learning. This has contributed towards maintaining pupils' literacy and numeracy skills as well as enhancing their information communication and technology (ICT) skills. As a result, standards of pupils' work seen in lessons and books during this visit are better than at the time of the core inspection, particularly in the secondary phase.

Many pupils make sound progress in lessons and over time. They recall previous information well, for example by applying their understanding of the character of Eric in 'An Inspector Calls' to subsequent work on the play. Most pupils listen attentively to the teacher and their peers and respond eagerly to questions. Many respond to the teacher's questions accurately, using a range of appropriate vocabulary. A few pupils make strong progress in lessons. These pupils develop their verbal responses well, especially when encouraged by teachers' questions

Many pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. A majority extract relevant information from texts and summarise their findings well. In a few lessons, pupils simply copy the text into their written responses without exploring its meaning. Most pupils write at length with an appropriate sense of audience across many subjects. Many reflect carefully on their writing and redraft and refine their work well to make improvements. More able pupils write at length, express themselves fluently and use a wide range of vocabulary. A majority of pupils make basic errors in their spelling and a few struggle to express their ideas suitably in their writing.

The majority of pupils apply their numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics appropriately. For example, they calculate energy released from chemical reactions accurately in science. Pupils draw appropriate graphs to display data but, in a few cases, do not take enough care in labelling and plotting. In addition, they do not choose the appropriate type of graph to display data for different purposes. Pupils'

use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum has developed well and they are now suitably confident in, for example, constructing spreadsheets and producing animations.

R2. Improve standards of behaviour in the secondary phase

Since the core inspection, standards of behaviour have improved considerably in the secondary phase. Most pupils behave well in lessons, when moving around the school and during lunch and break times. In lessons, they adopt positive attitudes to learning and engage well in their work. They are respectful to each other and to adults in the school.

The 'ready to learn' behaviour policy is well established and understood clearly by nearly all staff and pupils. It is used consistently in most faculties and generally applied consistently by teachers. The policy was recently relaunched following pupils' return to school after a prolonged period at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has supported the improvements in behaviour across the school well and reduced disruption of pupils' learning by others.

The use of an internal exclusion area, the 'ready to learn' room, is effective in dealing with more challenging behaviour. The staff in this area ensure pupils are engaged in meaningful activities during their withdrawal from usual lessons. Since the core inspection, the overall number of fixed term exclusions has reduced considerably and the number of pupils that attend the 'ready to learn' room for poor behaviour has also declined.

The school has recently reviewed its pastoral staff structure to improve efficiency and accountability. Pastoral leaders record and monitor pupils' behaviour closely. They identify issues of concern regarding behaviour and implement suitable support strategies to address these concerns. They communicate their actions and strategies clearly with other staff.

R3. Improve the quality of teaching

Since the core inspection, the school has established a suitable range of helpful processes and systems to support the development of teaching. As a result, teaching in the secondary phase has improved overall, and has had a positive impact on pupils' progress, behaviour and attitudes to learning.

The school now monitors teaching rigorously. There is a structured approach to the quality assurance of teaching which includes lesson observations and work scrutiny. This is helping the school to identify strengths and areas for improvement more precisely. However, in a few areas, the evaluation of teaching is too positive, and this means that actions to improve teaching are not specific enough.

Senior leaders provide valuable support for teachers who need to improve. This includes careful action planning and supportive coaching. The school is also

beginning to share good practice in teaching and learning across subjects and phases. As a result, teachers demonstrate a willingness to explore new ideas and this is contributing to the development of a learning culture in the school.

Most teachers establish and maintain a productive learning environment in their classes. They start their lessons purposefully, help pupils settle to their work swiftly and manage behaviour positively. Overall, teachers, have much higher expectations of pupils than at the time of the core inspection. They plan more challenging work and use a wider range of teaching approaches to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. However, in a minority of subjects, teachers use worksheets too frequently which restricts how well pupils can develop their ideas and extend their writing.

In the majority of lessons, teachers plan activities that build pupils' learning sequentially and effectively. The school has focused on developing pupils' independent learning skills, and overall, this has had a positive impact, particularly on the quality of pupils' extended writing. However, in a few instances teachers place too much emphasis on developing independence by allowing pupils to continue working without appropriate input or monitoring. This leaves pupils unable to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding sufficiently.

A majority of teachers use questioning suitably to help pupils recall previous learning and to check their understanding. They prompt pupils to improve their answers, but do not promote extended verbal responses, or encourage discussion well enough. A minority of teachers provide helpful written comments that help pupils to improve. In a few subjects, for example in English, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their work and then make improvements. This has had a positive impact on their writing. Overall, improvements to feedback to pupils are at an early stage of development.

R4. Improve planning for progression of skills, including the Welsh language, and the breadth of the secondary phase curriculum

Since the core inspection, the school has taken effective steps to plan for skills progression across the curriculum. The co-ordinators, who work across phases, have implemented a strategic plan and introduced beneficial opportunities to develop pupils' skills. They have provided useful professional learning and support for staff to strengthen the provision for skills. Through appropriate monitoring and evaluation, they measure the impact of planned rich skills tasks.

The school focuses on providing suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their writing, and this is having a positive impact on the standards of pupils' written work. However, teachers' assessment of pupils' skills does not always help pupils to improve.

The school has a suitable programme to develop pupils' reading skills in key stage 3 and provides appropriate support for basic reading and numeracy skills across the

whole school. These programmes have been evaluated carefully and are having a beneficial impact on many of the pupils who access this support.

Since the core inspection, the school has continued to increase the expectation of pupils' progress in learning Welsh. Nearly all pupils in key stage 4 follow the GCSE full course in Welsh. Many teachers use everyday Welsh in their lessons, and this means that pupils hear Welsh frequently. However, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their spoken Welsh within and outside of Welsh lessons.

The school offers a suitably broad curriculum for key stage 4 pupils. Pupils now benefit from vocational courses at levels 1 and 2 and more choices that suit their needs. This has contributed to pupils being more engaged and interested in their learning than at the time of the core inspection. For pupils with specific needs, the school has begun to implement a curriculum that is tailored suitably .

R5. Improve the quality and impact of leadership at all levels, including in self-evaluation and planning for improvement

Abertillery Learning Community now has stability in leadership that serves the school well. The headteacher provides strong leadership across the school and is committed to securing high quality teaching and provision for all pupils. With the full support of the senior leadership team, she has established useful cross-phase working and ensured that this is central to effective strategic planning across the school. As a team, they have led the school well through the considerable challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, while at the same time focusing firmly on school improvement and addressing the recommendations from the core inspection.

Staff roles and responsibilities are clear and concise and as a result, staff have a good understanding of what is expected of them and what they can expect from leaders. This has helped to improve the morale of staff, create a sense of teamwork across the school and raise expectations around what pupils can achieve.

Leaders have strengthened arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning across the school. All leaders have received appropriate professional learning to help them carry out their responsibilities. This has been particularly helpful to middle leaders in developing their confidence and leadership skills. They are involved in a suitable range of evaluation activities, including a robust and consistent process of lesson observations. This process has been successful in raising the expectations of staff and promoting worthwhile professional reflection and dialogue. Leaders' feedback to teachers highlights their strengths and areas for improvement and encourages personal reflection. Leaders tailor professional learning specifically to suit the needs of individual teachers and support staff. They follow up on any targets for improvement routinely. Whilst there are notable improvements in the way leaders evaluate the work of the school, there remains inconsistency amongst middle leaders. This means not all have sufficiently high expectations of staff and pupils.

Leaders and teachers have strengthened their use of pupil voice across the school to support improvement. Pupils of all ages elect a representative for the school council. Class ambassadors provide valuable feedback on issues taken forward to the whole school council meetings. Their input has led to notable changes such as changing provision in the school canteen and the implementation of gender neutral changing rooms and improving transition arrangements for Year 6 pupils. This gives pupils a sense of ownership of important aspects of the life and work of the school.

Governors have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They receive regular reports from leaders about the school's progress against the core inspection recommendations. In addition, they are involved in gathering first-hand evidence, such as when joining school leaders on learning walks and talking to pupils about their learning. Governors use their skills effectively to provide a suitable level of challenge to school leaders.

R6. Provide robust financial management to address the deficit budget

The school has implemented an agreed recovery plan and addressed the deficit budget appropriately. It is forecast that the school will hold a healthy surplus by the end of the current financial year. Careful financial management by the business team, headteacher and governors and benefits from the redistribution of the individual schools budget has decreased the budget deficiency year on year. They consider carefully the impact of any planned spending in order to reduce unnecessary costs. A strategic budget plan aligns closely with a workforce plan to ensure that spending is affordable and contributes towards meeting the schools' priorities. Substantial restructuring of staffing and a review of service level agreements have contributed to making significant and savings.

The school has planned appropriately this financial year for its use of grant funding, including the pupil development grant. The school's use of significant grant funding, including the pupil development grant, is beginning to impact positively on pupils' outcomes and better engagement by pupils eligible for free school meals.

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Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

River Centre 3-16 Learning Community

**Pontygof
Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 5AZ**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

About River Centre 3-16 Learning Community

Name of provider	River Centre 3-16 Learning Community
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Special
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	53
Pupils of statutory school age	53
Number in nursery classes	*
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in [SECTOR] is [xx]%)	54.7%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in [SECTOR] is [xx]%)	100%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	27/06/2022
<p>The River Centre 3-16 Learning Community is a day special school in Blaenau Gwent. It provides education for children between the ages of 3 and 16. Following the closure of the local authority pupil referral unit (PRU), the school opened in January 2018. The school's catchment area is predominantly Blaenau Gwent. However, a very few pupils are placed by other local authorities in south Wales and a very few pupils are placed by English authorities.</p>	

The school is based on the two main sites that were the location of the PRU. The primary campus in Tredegar provides education for children from the foundation phase through to Year 7 and the secondary campus in Ebbw Vale provides education for pupils from Year 8 to Year 11. In addition, pupils who have high levels of anxiety and are unable to attend school attend Tŷ Afon, a converted house close to the secondary campus.

The school currently provides a home tuition service. Since the pandemic, this service has been provided remotely.

The majority of pupils have statements of special educational needs, and all have needs in relation to their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Just over a quarter of pupils have learning difficulties and very few are identified as having speech and language needs.

The majority of pupils are expected to attend the school over a short period of time to receive specific support to address their special educational needs and then return to mainstream school.

The majority of pupils are eligible to receive free-school meals. All pupils are from predominantly English-speaking backgrounds. A very few pupils are looked after by their local authority.

The school employs 11 teachers and 31 support staff.

Over the past 18 months the school has experienced significant and widespread changes in leadership and staffing and has been supported, at different times, by three interim executive headteachers.

The substantive headteacher has been in post since the school opened and was previously the headteacher of the PRU. This is the first inspection of the school.

At the time of the inspection Year 11 pupils had left school. However the attendance of pupils on the secondary campus, over time, is poor.

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

The River Centre 3-16 Learning Community was established following the closure of the local authority PRU. Based on two main campuses the school largely operates as separate entities. The result is that there are significant differences in systems, procedures, and processes between sites. The school does not operate as a cohesive organisation. The systematic collection, collation and analysis of key school performance information is extremely under-developed. This seriously impedes the ability of leaders to both report to, and be held accountable by, the governing body.

Pupils that attend the school have faced significant challenges in mainstream settings. Overall, the progress that pupils make in their learning and well-being is stronger for pupils that attend the primary campus and Tŷ Afon, than for those that attend the secondary campus. The positive aspects of provision that are found on the primary campus and Tŷ Afon are generally not found on the secondary campus. For example, the curriculum on the secondary campus is not sufficiently broad or balanced and does not prepare pupils well enough for their next stage of life and learning. In addition, the quality of the learning environment, including the culture, varies considerably across the campuses.

Over the past 18 months, there have been significant and wholesale changes to governance, leadership and staffing and these have had a detrimental impact on the learning experiences, well-being and outcomes for pupils. Staff too have been affected by these changes but generally remain committed to the pupils.

Pupils at the secondary campus experienced significant disruption to their education during the spring term of 2022. Senior leaders at the time determined that for health and safety reasons pupils should not attend the school and arrangements were made for them to attend alternative providers. Overall, attendance at these providers was low. Year 11 pupils missed a crucial part of their education whilst preparing to sit examinations. This is a significant cause for concern.

Overall, the school has failed to provide an acceptable standard of education for some of the most vulnerable pupils in Wales.

Recommendations

- R1 Address those issues identified in the health and safety letter
- R2 Establish a clear purpose and vision for the school and implement a staffing structure that is fit for purpose and adequately reflects roles and responsibilities
- R3 Ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently engaging, broad and balanced and prepares pupils well for their next stage in life and learning
- R4 Improve the behaviour of pupils, particularly on the secondary campus
- R5 Improve the quality of the learning environment and culture, particularly on the secondary campus
- R6 Improve the outcomes for pupils, particularly those on the secondary campus
- R7 Establish systems, procedures and routines across the school that are clearly understood by staff and relevant partners

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan showing how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils at the secondary campus make very limited progress in their learning. They do not always progress as well as they should or use their skills to a level that matches their ability. The disruptive behaviours of a minority of older pupils during lessons interrupt their own learning and that of their peers. However, despite the challenges faced by staff and pupils, nearly all pupils at the primary campus make suitable progress from their initial starting points.

At the primary campus, pupils settle quickly into the warm and caring environment which most pupils respond to well. This supportive environment is helping pupils, particularly those who previously found it hard to engage in education, to make suitable progress both academically and socially. This is due to the skilled support and encouragement they receive from teaching staff.

Many younger pupils develop their social skills effectively. They work in pairs or small groups, they follow instructions, take turns, co-operate with teaching staff and with each other and listen and respond appropriately to others in class discussions. This is a significant achievement for pupils when considering their prior educational experiences. For example, they commend their peers' successes and responses to questions in class. However, many older pupils do not engage well with their learning and do not listen well enough to teachers and support staff or when other pupils are speaking. They do not use their communication skills appropriately in a range of contexts throughout the day.

Over time, across the school, the majority of pupils develop their oracy skills in line with their ability. They are confident in responding to questions and share their opinions suitably. A few pupils extend and develop their ideas successfully. For example, in a science experiment, they discuss enthusiastically the reasons why their home-made boats may float or sink.

A majority of pupils develop suitable reading skills in line with their ability. They skim and scan texts and can locate information appropriately. Many younger pupils enjoy listening to a range of genres such as factually based materials and fiction texts. However, the majority of pupils do not get appropriate opportunities to develop their progressive reading skills across the curriculum and this hinders their progress in developing these skills.

The standard of writing across the school is variable. Many younger pupils, particularly those on the primary campus, develop their independent writing skills progressively. They improve their letter formation, spacing and legibility and are able to spell words and write short sentences successfully. In addition, a minority of pupils across the school develop an awareness of writing for different purposes. For example, they use effective adjectives to describe an imaginary character or use appropriate language and structure to analyse poetry. However, a majority of pupils, particularly those at the secondary campus, do not develop their writing skills well enough over time. These pupils make frequent careless errors and struggle to write at length.

Across the school, a majority of the pupils make suitable progress in developing their numeracy skills. For example, in mathematics they apply their understanding to work out the perimeter measurements for a variety of shapes, they understand coordinates and learn to budget for a shopping trip.

The majority of pupils are beginning to develop appropriate digital skills. For example, they produce simple spreadsheets, use coding programmes and use search engines to research and produce information sheets.

Many pupils improve their physical skills appropriately. For example, pupils enjoy activities such as basketball to develop their self-confidence and team working skills. Younger pupils develop their physical skills well with resources such as bikes and trikes available during break times.

A majority of pupils develop their creative skills appropriately. In their art lessons, pupils use different tools to create an attractive night sky painting as well as aboriginal art drawings. Younger pupils develop both their fine motor skills and their creativity by using clay to create a monster from a story book.

A minority of older pupils achieve a very narrow range of qualifications appropriate to their abilities. Overall, the qualifications offered are not relevant to pupils' age, additional learning needs, abilities, and interests.

Historically the proportion of pupils progressing into education, training or employment, at the end of key stage 4 has not been strong and has worsened over time. For the academic year 2020-2021 half of the pupils leaving key stage 4 did not progress into any form of education, training or employment

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Overall, many pupils feel safe in school and nearly all feel as though the school deals well with incidents of bullying. However, the behaviour of a minority of pupils at the secondary campus is disruptive. They frequently verbally abuse staff, each other, and damage property. At times, the secondary campus is not a safe environment for either pupils or staff. This is a significant and serious concern.

Overall, the majority of pupils are respectful and polite and interact well with staff and their peers. However, pupils on the secondary campus have fewer opportunities to interact and collaborate with each other. As a result, relationships between a minority of pupils are less well developed.

Relationships, particularly on the primary campus are supported very well when pupils attend the breakfast club. They sit together, chat with friends and reflect on their experiences from the previous day.

Many pupils respond well to motivating reward and sanction policies which help them to self-regulate. However, this is more effective on the primary campus. On the secondary campus, the curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning do not meet the needs of learners well enough. As a result, there are high numbers of unacceptable and inappropriate behaviour incidents which lead to a large number of recorded exclusions.

Pupils benefit from a developing range of educational visits which seek to enhance the well-being of pupils. This is particularly strong for pupils from the primary campus where most benefitted from experiences including alpaca walking and visits to National Museum Cardiff. These pupils are becoming increasingly aware of their role in their local community and the wider world. For example, pupils in the primary provision have established an effective 'pen pal' link with pupils in Norway. Pupils at Tŷ Afon are beginning to benefit from visits to places of cultural importance such as the Big Pit and also the local gym. This is particularly significant progress considering their high levels of anxiety.

Overall, many pupils are developing an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They can distinguish between healthy and non-healthy choices and about half recognise the importance of physical activity. On the primary campus for example, most eat fruit and drink water during their morning break and learn about the importance of healthy choices and living through the curriculum. Across the school, pupils develop good skills in preparing healthy food such as fruit kebabs and healthy smoothies.

Pupils on the primary campus contribute well to decisions in school that affect them, through their participation in the school council and eco committee. For example, pupils decided on which clothing from a particular era they would wear for their recent celebrations of the Queen's platinum jubilee and have more recently planned an outside forest learning area.

Owing to the Coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4.

Teaching and learning experiences

Overall, the school does not provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of pupils. The curriculum in the primary campus is suitable and takes into consideration the individual needs of pupils well. This campus is making appropriate progress in planning for the Curriculum for Wales. This approach is supporting pupils to develop creative and thinking skills, for example, when making mythical sea creatures out of clay.

However, there is no meaningful curriculum in place for the secondary campus. Policies and plans for key curriculum areas are not in place and the current timetabling arrangements do not provide the recommended 25 hours of full-time education for pupils. As a result, important subject areas are not routinely taught, for example, there is no delivery of personal and social education (PSE). Arrangements on the secondary campus do not provide pupils with appropriate accreditation opportunities. The range is too limited, and pupils are entered into examinations at inappropriate times of their education. As a result, pupils do not leave school with the skills and knowledge that prepare them for their next stage of learning. This is a significant shortcoming of the school.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the school introduced a suitable online curriculum offer for pupils who receive home tuition. This offer enables pupils to gain

a small range of accreditations. However, due to disruptions to leadership and staffing, a few of these pupils experienced inconsistent access to education over time.

The school offers a suitable range of beneficial activities for pupils to develop their physical skills and emotional well-being as part of the curriculum as well as within a positive reward programme. These include attending a local gym, mountain biking, swimming, trampolining and quad biking. In addition, the school provides a budget for pupils to purchase ice cream from a local shop, which strengthens their numeracy skills and understanding of money and change.

On the secondary campus, a minority of pupils' access education delivered by an external provider as part of their weekly timetable. For those pupils that attend, this offers valuable opportunities to develop practical and work-based skills. Over time a very few pupils progress onto an apprenticeship. However, leaders have limited oversight of the impact of the provision on pupils' learning at this provider. In addition, planning does not allow pupils to access the learning missed at the school when attending these sessions. As a result, these pupils miss important learning opportunities in core subject areas.

Staff at the school develop positive and caring relationships with pupils. Many staff demonstrate a good understanding of pupils' well-being needs which underpins learning. Support staff provide an invaluable role in supporting pupils learning and well-being. They are caring and empathetic and have shown great resilience and determination over a period of significant challenge and uncertainty. However, in part due to the high staff turnover on the secondary campus, not all staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour.

Around half of staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs and adopt successful teaching strategies to ensure pupils are ready to learn. On the primary campus, this has a clear impact on reducing the number of incidents of challenging behaviour with most pupils showing a reduction throughout their time in school. However, on the secondary campus, significant and ongoing disruption in the staff team has meant many pupils lack opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with important adults which impacts negatively on their behaviour and well-being.

The quality of teaching across the school is too variable. Where teaching is good, staff use questioning effectively to support pupils to recall their prior learning and apply this to new contexts. In these lessons, there is a suitable pace of learning and teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. For example, when teaching poetry, staff are effective language models for pupils and have good subject knowledge. However, where teaching is less effective, staff lack the appropriate subject knowledge to deliver lessons well, there is limited use of questioning and the pace of the lesson is slow, leading to significant disengagement from pupils.

The quality of teachers' planning across the school is inconsistent. Within the secondary campus it does not systematically reflect the needs of pupils, their individual education plan targets or build progressively on skills over time. This has a significantly negative impact on pupil progress.

There is inconsistent teaching of skills at the school. Where this is suitable, teachers provide engaging learning experiences that develop pupils' creative skills. For example, pupils use recycled materials to make jellyfish mobiles that are proudly displayed in classrooms. Across the school there is an over reliance on worksheets. Generally, these do not provide stimulating and authentic learning experiences for pupils and inhibit pupils' independence and creativity. Pupils are provided with opportunities to read as part of comprehension activities, but there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop a love of reading.

Assessment and feedback methods across the school are too variable. Within the primary campus teachers use baseline assessments of well-being and academic achievement to inform planning and monitor pupil progress. The use of assessment information on the secondary campus is weak. As a result, staff have an insufficient understanding of the progress pupils from this campus make.

Staff across the school provide pupils with generous praise to engage and motivate them in their learning. Where this is effective, feedback moves pupils forward in their learning successfully. However, overall, written feedback is poor and ineffective. As a result, pupils do not know what they need to do to improve.

Annual reports to parents are appropriate and provide useful information on attitudes to learning and progress made by pupils but do not indicate expected levels of progress well enough

Care, support and guidance

Overall, the lack of any routine collection of pupil information is a substantial shortcoming. The school does not possess necessary and valuable information on pupils' learning and well-being before they are placed at the school, this is particularly true of the secondary campus. This impedes the schools' ability to plan for the needs of its pupils. In addition, the school does not consistently take sufficient account of the requirements of pupils' statements of special educational needs. As a result, it is failing to meet its statutory duties to these pupils.

Over time, the school has produced detailed and informative individual learning plans for pupils. However, there is little evidence that these are used routinely across the school to adapt provision and approaches to meet the needs of pupils.

The school has employed a range of baseline assessments such as health and well-being, reading, spelling and numeracy which are used on entry to the school. However, the school does not use this information well enough, and approaches are not consistent across the campuses. In addition, teaching staff do not have ready access to the baseline assessment information for pupils. As a result, approaches to support pupils are not always specific enough to meet their individual needs. In addition, the school cannot demonstrate well enough the progress that pupils make across all aspects of the curriculum including their social and well-being skills.

Overall provision to support the well-being, social skills, literacy and numeracy needs of pupils is too variable and approaches to evaluating impact on pupils is under-developed. As a result, the school cannot demonstrate the impact of approaches on the progress made by pupils.

Staff on the primary campus successfully support parents in developing their understanding of the impact that trauma has on their child and modelling how to develop reading skills. There are well developed plans for a family engagement day at a local park.

The school has recently re-established links with Careers Wales to provide independent careers advice and guidance for Year 11 pupils. However, there are no secure transition plans in place for the current cohort of pupils, all of whom are due to leave the school in the current academic year. This is a significant shortcoming and impacts on pupils' progression into further education, training or employment when they leave the school.

The school does not have a consistent plan for supporting pupils in their transition from one campus to the other. At the time of the inspection, pupils from Year 7 remained on the primary campus due to health and safety concerns on the secondary campus.

Overall, on the secondary campus there are limited structured activities for pupils to engage with, particularly on arrival to the school, during break and at lunch times. As a result, a significant minority of pupils become disengaged quickly and their behaviour rapidly deteriorates. They become verbally abusive to one another and staff. Many staff do what they can to "talk pupils down", however the lack of overall structure has a substantial detrimental impact on pupils. Disruption to and within lessons is commonplace. The extent to which the secondary campus provides positive learning experiences for all pupils is limited.

Important school policies do not reflect recent changes within the school such as the implementation of new software to monitor behaviour and concerns. As a result, they lack clarity and guidance for staff on how to log concerns or incidents within the school. In addition, there is no guidance about how information on incidents across the school is used to promote safeguarding and acceptable behaviour.

Procedures for monitoring attendance across the school are inconsistent. Although the school retains statutory information on attendance of individual pupils, overall patterns in attendance and identification of issues are not analysed well enough.

Nearly all staff are fully aware of safeguarding procedures and believe that pupils are safe, however a few non-teaching staff are not sufficiently aware of procedures for safeguarding pupils. Procedures for ensuring staff have suitable training to safeguard children are not robust enough. In addition, leaders cannot provide evidence that mandatory safeguarding training, such as about Prevent, have taken place.

From the limited data available, the majority of the primary-aged pupils placed at the school on temporary placements have been subsequently placed in other specialist settings. This raises serious questions around the appropriateness of their placement at the River Centre

Leadership and management

Over the past 18 months, the school has experienced significant and wholesale changes in governance, leadership, teaching and support. Just under half the current

staff, including senior leaders, are on temporary contracts or in positions where they are undertaking additional responsibilities for colleagues that have resigned or are absent from work. The culmination of events over this period has had a very marked negative impact on the learning experiences, well-being, and outcomes for pupils, particularly those on the secondary campus. The situation has been unsettling for all staff.

Throughout this period of uncertainty, the school has been supported by three interim executive headteachers, each bringing their own perspectives on the work of the school. The current interim executive headteacher has worked very closely with the acting deputy headteacher and a senior leader from a local secondary school. Together they have determined appropriate priorities for the school. Staff and governors have been included in this process. School priorities largely focus on operational considerations for example, ensuring the safety of pupils and developing a safeguarding culture, developing staff understanding of trauma in children, and improving the quality of the learning environment, particularly on the secondary campus. Staff are beginning to feel more confident and secure with the current leadership team.

Several key policies are not in place, and this seriously impedes the ability of the school to make provision. Again, this impacts negatively on provision, including the learning experiences, well-being and outcomes for pupils. In addition, concerns relating to safeguarding arrangements were brought to the attention of school leaders during the inspection.

The interim executive headteacher has been gently and appropriately introducing support from his colleagues at a local school. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this.

Despite being established as a school in January 2018, the campuses largely operate separately. There are significant and substantial differences in processes and procedures across the school. The routine collection, collation and analysis of key school performance information is extremely under-developed, and this seriously impedes the ability of leaders to both report to, and be held accountable by, the governing body. Overall, the lack of systems and shared understanding of key roles has meant that the school is left with significant knowledge gaps when staff either leave their post or are absent. For example, the school is unable to account well enough for the progress that pupils make, particularly those that attend the secondary campus.

Formalised arrangements to value the contributions that individual staff make and plan for their professional learning are inconsistent and underdeveloped. Overall, the school does not comply with its statutory duty to undertake performance management of teachers. Teachers on the primary campus benefit from performance management but this arrangement is not in place for teachers on the secondary campus. There are no arrangements in place for performance management of support staff, yet around 70% of staff employed at the school are in support roles.

The school now benefits from governors that are highly experienced and able to offer extremely well-placed support and challenge on a range of strategic and practical matters. Governors are committed to the school and passionate about improving

provision. They accept that the school needs to make considerable improvements to achieve this and have been actively engaged with the current interim leadership team and staff in developing a clearer, shared understanding of the function and role of the school. However, it is difficult to judge how effective governors have been in both their support and challenge to leaders as minutes of historical governing body meetings have been recently amended. Neither governors nor staff fully understand their role or the purpose of the school when it comes to reintegrating pupils into either other specialist settings, such as special schools, or mainstream schools.

Governors do not comply with their statutory duty to provide annual reports to parents. Neither do they publish or understand how grants such as the pupil development grant are used.

Overall, the governance and leadership at the school has failed to deliver an education that meets the needs of pupils

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Georgetown C.P. School

**Oakfield Road
Tredegar
Blaenau Gwent
NP22 4LJ**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

About Georgetown C.P. School

Name of provider	Georgetown C.P. School
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	464
Pupils of statutory school age	329
Number in nursery classes	74
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	14.4%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 22.2%)</i>	10.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	3.6%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	06/06/2022
The percentage of pupils currently eligible for free school meals is 19.0%.	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website:
mylocalschool.gov.wales

- (a) The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Georgetown Community Primary School is a happy school, where staff, governors, parents and pupils all work together to create a safe and stimulating environment for learning. Pupils' well-being is at the heart of the school's work. Leaders have been very successful in improving the indoor and outdoor spaces to support pupils' emotional and social needs, as well as their physical skills, which are very good. This has been particularly important following the pandemic.

Through exciting learning activities, staff often engage and inspire pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well. Teachers make good use of the local area to help pupils to learn about their heritage, to think about issues that affect their community and to prepare them for the world of work. Most pupils make strong progress in listening, speaking and numeracy, including those who are vulnerable and have additional learning needs. From a young age, they become chatty, independent learners who collaborate well and take care of each other. By the time they leave Year 6, nearly all pupils have outstanding digital skills that support their learning across the curriculum. Their writing, however, is underdeveloped.

The headteacher and her deputy provide strong leadership for the school. They work together effectively, providing support and guidance to staff and parents through a time of great change and challenge in schools. There is a strong culture of trust within the school community. Parents know that leaders and governors make decisions in the best interests of their children. The current leadership team is fairly new but it has identified most of the important areas of the school's work that it needs to improve. This includes how teachers and pupils use assessment effectively to move learning forward. In general, the school's improvement processes do not focus precisely enough on identifying what impact its actions have had on pupils' progress and skills' development.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that self-evaluation processes identify the aspects of teaching and learning most in need of development, and focus precisely on the difference actions make to pupils' progress and skills
- R2 Improve older pupils' standards of writing
- R3 Improve teachers' understanding of effective classroom assessment, including feedback, so that they can evaluate pupils' progress, and identify how best to support their next steps in learning

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to how it has developed the indoor and outdoor environment to improve pupils' well-being and learning, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at Georgetown Primary School, many pupils, including the vulnerable and those with additional learning needs, thrive. They make strong progress in learning from their starting points, particularly in developing their speaking, digital and physical skills. Since returning to school following the disruption of the pandemic, pupils' development and application of their knowledge, understanding and skills across most areas of the curriculum is progressing well.

A few pupils start school with lower-than-expected communication skills and relatively poor personal and social skills. Due to the exceptional quality of the provision offered to the youngest children, most quickly become independent, as staff engage them in active play and learning experiences that inspire them. For example, they concentrate for a long time when cutting up a fish to explore its texture and when making sandwiches for a picnic. They are curious to explore their environment and staff react effectively to their changing interests.

By reception, most pupils instigate conversations with friends and adults, expressing their likes and their wonder at events, such as when a very important person came to visit for the school's recent Jubilee celebrations. As pupils move through the school, their listening and speaking skills improve very well. Nearly all express themselves confidently, and they clearly articulate their enjoyment of school. By the time they reach Year 6, many discuss challenging ethical issues maturely. They present strong opinions but agree or disagree respectfully with other pupils' views. Nearly all pupils greet people in Welsh confidently. They are proud of their heritage and many pupils across the school enjoy and participate eagerly in Welsh lessons. In the younger years, they make strong progress in the development of their communication skills in Welsh. For example, many pupils in Year 2 provide extended responses to a wide range of questions. However, the pandemic has hampered the confidence of a minority of older pupils and they struggle to sustain a conversation.

Overall, younger pupils' reading skills develop well. Nursery and reception pupils show an interest in books and enjoy listening to stories, joining in enthusiastically with rhymes and actions. By Year 1, many acquire a good understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds, and how sounds combine to form words. As pupils move through the school, they read with increasing fluency and understanding, although a minority of older pupils do not develop an effective range of strategies to support their reading of challenging words and texts. This hinders their ability to infer or deduce meaning when reading independently.

From a young age, most pupils show enthusiasm for writing when experimenting with mark making. They go on to write well, expressing their ideas with increasing freedom and independence. Older pupils develop a sound understanding of the characteristics of different genres and apply this knowledge appropriately in their work across the curriculum, for example to write arguments for and against keeping animals in zoos as part of their topic work. However, older pupils' writing often lacks craft, and for many, their written work does not reflect the quality of their spoken language. As a result, their ability to extend their ideas when writing for different

purposes, to redraft their work to improve its quality, and to use a range of punctuation, is underdeveloped. Due to the pandemic, a minority of pupils' spelling skills are not secure, and staff have recognised the need to improve these. Pupils' presentation of their work is variable and does not always show the pride they have in their learning.

Most pupils develop strong mathematical skills and apply these well to problem-solving in authentic learning contexts. For example, Year 2 pupils use containers to measure capacity accurately to the nearest 25 millilitres, when investigating how the amount of water in a bottle affects the pitch of the sound it makes when they blow into it. In Year 3, pupils use number skills competently to re-calculate the cost of buying items from a sandwich bar menu, when prices are reduced. By the time pupils reach the end of their time in the school, most apply their well-developed numeracy skills confidently in a range of creative situations. For instance, Year 6, pupils use bearings to track the route of a stranger washed up on a fictional island, using a computer-generated three-dimensional environment they have developed themselves.

By Year 6, pupils' digital skills are a strength. From an early age, they use digital cameras to record their learning experiences. Younger pupils log into mobile devices and access a range of programs independently to support their learning. Older pupils create databases, write simple codes to program a robot and use 'green screen' technology to create high-quality multi-media presentations linked to their topic work. Year 6 pupils apply their knowledge of software development to create an innovative 'app' about their local area. They use their digital skills ably to track where people are making downloads of this across the world.

Nearly all pupils develop their physical skills very well. Young pupils develop their hand-to-eye coordination, fine motor skills and balance effectively. They ride two and three-wheeled vehicles and climb using hand grips and foot holds confidently. Older pupils move nimbly and show controlled coordination, such as the Year 4 pupils who are able to side step at speed, and repeatedly bend to pick up, move and place down cones from one point to another during an outdoor game.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils in Georgetown are proud of their school. They feel safe and valued, and enjoy a strong sense of belonging. This helps them to develop as confident individuals who, from a young age, care for each other. Nearly all pupils are chatty, welcoming and courteous. They are confident and keen to share their learning experiences with visitors. Pupils trust leaders and staff to do their best for them and they appreciate the experiences and support they provide. Following the disruption to their learning caused by the pandemic, most pupils have successfully adapted to school life again.

Pupils are comfortable to share their thoughts and feelings with adults in the many supportive well-being spaces the school has created. Many pupils use the cleverly adapted spaces in their classrooms for individual reflection time, which has a positive impact on their well-being. Younger children engage well with the readily available resources that help them with specific concerns. Older children talk positively about how the recently developed class gardens create opportunities for high-quality collaborative work, as well as quiet time, which benefits their emotional and physical

health. Pupils enthusiastically discuss the well-being opportunities that teachers provide, such as small group support, where they learn about positive relationships and how to manage their feelings. They also enjoy listening to the school's popular radio station during break and lunchtimes, while they relax in the outdoors.

Pupils relish the varied opportunities to undertake a range of leadership roles that allow them to tackle issues that affect their community and influence school decisions. For example, the 'Heddlu Bach' pupil group works closely with local police officers to monitor traffic and parking where pupils cross the road between the school's two sites. Pupils remind drivers of how they should behave to keep pedestrians safe and provide valuable updates for parents and governors. Notably, the pupil council has strongly influenced the development of the school's behaviour policy. Pupils have a mature understanding of its value in supporting the school rules, rewards and sanctions that they have developed themselves. Because of this high level of ownership, most pupils' behaviour across the school is excellent. This has a positive effect on their ability to engage and concentrate on their learning. Pupils understand their rights and feel strongly about fairness and equity.

There is an overwhelming feeling of positivity towards learning in the school and most pupils engage enthusiastically with their tasks. Nearly all pupils have well-developed independent learning skills. They sustain concentration from an early age and focus well when completing tasks alone or collaboratively. Although older pupils make occasional improvements to their work during lessons, for example to correct spellings or punctuation, they do not have a secure enough understanding of their next steps in learning.

Older pupils develop their creative and entrepreneurial skills exceptionally well as part of exciting business projects where they design, produce and sell highly professional items to the public. As well as developing their knowledge of the world of work, this has a positive impact on pupils' team working and budget management skills. Most pupils are confident individuals who participate keenly in the extra-curricular sports activities that the school has recently re-introduced. They enjoy making healthy meals and drinks as part of their curriculum experiences. Nearly all make healthy choices at snack and lunchtimes, explaining why a balanced diet is important. Most pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has established appropriate mixed-phase teams to consider how best to provide pupils with stimulating learning experiences across the areas of learning and experience as it introduces a Curriculum for Wales. This whole-school approach to planning has improved teachers' understanding of curriculum design and informed their collaboration with local schools about how best to progress pupils' skills and behaviours for learning. To broaden pupils' interests, develop their wider skills and support them towards meeting the four curriculum purposes, staff, parents and pupils

have identified ten common learning opportunities that every pupil should experience in Georgetown.

The school has worked highly successfully to develop the learning environment and support the provision for skills through authentic learning experiences. Staff use outdoor areas for younger children very effectively to stimulate pupils' engagement in their learning. For instance, the youngest pupils develop skills in collaboration and problem-solving as they recreate their own beach in the outdoors. Throughout the school, staff maximise the use of indoor spaces to promote pupil learning. For example, they use corridor space to create a role play doctor's surgery and provide breakout areas for pupils to work independently, with access to a wide range of useful resources that help them to develop their digital and communication skills.

Teachers' use of immersion days at the start of each curriculum topic has been a valuable tool in engaging pupils in their learning and developing a wide range of skills. For instance, after meeting with local employers, Year 5 pupils set up their own business to create and sell scented wax melts. This real-life context was effective in developing pupils' cross-curricular skills, as well as the skills of creativity, innovation, planning and organising, that underpin the four purposes. In addition, staff use visits successfully to support pupils' understanding of different areas of learning and experience, as well as the development of their entrepreneurial skills. After visiting the nearby cenotaph as part of their humanities topic, older pupils successfully applied for funding to create their own Georgetown World War One memorial garden, which is highly valued by the local community.

The school provides well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop their listening, speaking and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum. These build coherently on pupils' existing knowledge and skills. Provision for the development of their digital skills is particularly strong. For instance, older pupils have developed apps combining digital and literacy skills successfully to provide information on the history of the local area. The school has made positive steps in improving the teaching of reading so that pupils decode words accurately and read with expression and fluency. In general, provision for the development of pupils' advanced reading skills, and the creation of a culture of reading for enjoyment, is at an earlier stage of development. Currently, planning for the teaching of writing does not ensure that pupils develop their skills well enough.

Teachers use daily Welsh language lessons and informal situations to promote the benefits of being multilingual to pupils. In the best instances, Welsh lessons help pupils to become secure in using language patterns to talk about themselves. Teachers in Key Stage 2 recognise that pupils' confidence has diminished as a result of the pandemic and are taking suitable steps to consolidate previous language learning.

Nearly all teachers and support staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. All staff show care and respect for pupils which has a positive impact on their wellbeing and engagement in learning. In most cases, there is a clear focus for pupils' learning. Pupils benefit from the strong subject knowledge that most teachers have and, in a few instances, staff develop pupils' knowledge and understanding particularly well. For example, older pupils learn about acids and bases, and apply this knowledge as part of a challenge to create invisible ink within an imaginative scenario linked to a

picture book they are reading. Most staff make effective use of questioning to promote pupils' thinking and reasoning skills, such as when discussing the challenging issues of migration, xenophobia and human rights as part of their cross-curricular work. When pupils need extra help, they often benefit from learning assistants' high-quality support. However, teachers do not always plan to meet the needs of all pupils well enough. This means, on occasions, activities are either too easy or difficult for pupils, and this limits the progress that they make.

Teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to use success criteria to assess their own and others' work. They use suitable methods to provide feedback to pupils on their day-to-day learning and, in the best examples, they offer useful guidance on how pupils can improve the quality of their work. However, too often feedback does not focus well enough on helping pupils to move forward in their learning. Opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback are inconsistent and, as a result, pupils are unclear about their next steps.

Care, support and guidance

The quality of care, support and guidance of pupils is a strength of the school. It adapted sensitively to varying circumstances throughout the pandemic to provide highly effective support for children and their families. There remains a strong emphasis on securing high levels of well-being for pupils since their return to school, with leaders prioritising support for their emotional and physical health as part of the school's strategic plans.

There is high-quality provision to support pupils' social and emotional well-being. For instance, staff have developed calm spaces and support areas in classrooms and around the school, to help children experiencing personal challenges. They understand each pupil's needs and individual circumstances well. Skilful learning assistants use a range of well-designed intervention activities to provide effective enhanced support to meet pupils' needs. Teachers and leaders track the progress of these pupils effectively to ensure they engage successfully in all aspects of school life. The school has developed a specialist programme which provides outstanding support for young carers, allowing them time to support each other, while engaging in fun, enrichment activities that develop their confidence and resilience.

From a very early age pupils are taught how to make healthy food choices. They benefit from extensive opportunities to discuss healthy eating, handle fruit and vegetables, and prepare their own meals as part of carefully planned authentic learning experiences. The school's canteen staff take pride in the nutritious, well-balanced lunches they provide. Pupils have excellent opportunities to develop their physical skills. This includes younger children being able to access a wide range of apparatus to improve their balance, movement and co-ordination. Extra-curricular after-school and lunchtime clubs, including choir, basketball, mindfulness and photography, successfully enable pupils to develop a wide range of skills.

There are many opportunities for pupils to influence their own learning and to make decisions about the school's work. For example, teachers ask pupils to think about aspects of learning they would like to investigate further. Staff encourage parents to discuss these ideas with their children and invite them to share their own suggestions for pupils' topic work too. The pupil leadership groups make valuable contributions to

school improvement planning and help to review the school's progress. They provide purposeful feedback about recent initiatives in whole-school assemblies and present regular updates for governors on their work. Most recently, pupils led the organisation of celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and organised fundraising events for people affected by the war in Ukraine. This helps to develop all pupils' awareness of world events and supports them to become good citizens, who have empathy and are compassionate towards others.

The school's provision for developing pupils' understanding of Welsh heritage and culture is good. For instance, pupils create expressive art work linked to local places of interest, such as Bedwellty House. They carry out interesting research about the Cholera Cemetery in nearby Cefn Golau and consider the pioneering work of Aneurin Bevan, in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic. This helps them to reflect on the impact significant events and people, in the past and present, have had on their community. During daily acts of collective worship, staff provide pupils with valuable opportunities to think about the values that are important to them and how they apply them in their everyday actions and words. They share carefully-chosen children's books to explore issues of diversity and inclusion with pupils, which help to broaden their understanding of the needs and rights of others.

The school has effective strategies to identify and respond to pupils' additional learning needs. The additional learning needs co-ordinator and staff work closely with pupils and their parents to agree precise learning targets and match learning resources carefully to pupils' individual needs. There are rigorous systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school. Where appropriate, the school liaises well with specialist external agencies to provide effective support for pupils and their families.

There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Pupils and parents report that incidents of bullying are rare but, when they do occur, leaders and staff take swift action and resolve issues appropriately. The school monitors pupils' attendance effectively and systems to support and challenge low attendance are robust.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which prioritises pupils' well-being and achievement, to help all be successful in life. Working closely with her deputy, they provide effective and supportive leadership. The strong professional relationships between all staff help to create a happy school for pupils and their families. During the pandemic, leaders set clear expectations for the school community and established systems that supported the continuity of pupils' learning well and helped them to cope with any challenges that affected them. Communication and individualised practical support for families is very effective. Parents speak highly of the commitment leaders and staff have shown to helping them and their children during this difficult time. The partnership between the school and parents is a considerable strength.

Leaders model well the professional values and behaviours that contribute positively to effective collaboration among staff and to developing a whole-school culture of self-improvement. They support the professional learning of all staff effectively to ensure they have an increasingly positive influence on the school's work. For

example, in small teams, staff participate in research-based inquiry to consider further developments in teaching, linked to one of the school's priorities for improvement. Most recently, this has had a positive impact on pupils' learning in mathematics.

The school's professional learning website provides a wealth of useful information to help staff to audit their practice in line with the professional teaching standards, to reflect on their progress and to seek out their own professional learning opportunities. Leaders ensure that all staff, including supply teachers, are very well supported in following their personal career goals. For example, learning support assistants pursue relevant higher qualifications through employment-based study routes and aspiring leaders have opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, as part of the school's flexible leadership structure.

There is a varied calendar of self-evaluation activities that provide leaders with first-hand evidence about the school's work. This secure understanding of the school's strengths and most of its areas for development has helped leaders to improve important aspects of the school, such as the indoor and outdoor learning environment. This has had a notable impact on pupils' well-being and their communication, physical and independent learning skills. The school gathers the opinions of a wide range of stakeholders as part of its approach to self-evaluation and improvement. Since the headteacher's appointment, all staff are involved in monitoring activities. This ensures that everyone feels part of the improvement process. Staff work together well in curriculum teams to review what they have achieved and to consider where and how further developments to provision can be made. However, monitoring and review processes often focus too heavily on aspects of compliance, rather than identifying the impact actions have on pupils' learning, progress and skills' development. In a few cases, the school's evaluations are overly positive and do not identify the areas in greatest need of improvement, for example standards of writing in Key Stage 2.

Governors are supportive, experienced and knowledgeable about the school's work. Prior to the pandemic, they gathered first-hand evidence through activities, such as listening to learners and learning walks, to help them fulfil their role as critical friends. In place of this, they use 'showcase events', where staff and pupils present their recent work to them, online. This enables governors to question pupils and staff about the school's progress towards its improvement goals, including national priorities such as a Curriculum for Wales.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances well. They monitor expenditure closely and balance short-term and longer-term needs appropriately. They ensure that the pupil development grant is used effectively to benefit eligible pupils, for example by employing skilful support staff that deliver high-quality well-being support. Leaders and governors ensure that the school has robust safeguarding arrangements and they work successfully with the local authority to mitigate risks through careful risk assessment and control measures, for instance by managing safe routes for pupils moving between the school's two sites. Governors ensure that arrangements to promote pupils' healthy eating and drinking are highly effective.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Publication date: 08/08/2022

Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **18th October 2022**

Report Subject: **Financial Liabilities of the Regional Integration Fund**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Hayden Trollope – Executive Member Place & Social Services**

Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Interim Corporate Director 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)
	6.10.22	10.10.22			18.10.22		26.10.22	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of this report is for members to consider the financial liabilities and implications of the Regional Integration Fund and its tapered funding model.
 - 1.2 Members will need to consider and provide a response to the Gwent Regional Partnership Board via the Assistant Director of Partnership & Integration in Health, on the outcome of the consideration as to whether the council accepts or rejects the liabilities.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 Welsh Government has made a 5 year commitment of revenue funding for Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs). This revenue funding, now known as the Regional Integration Fund (RIF), brings together previous funding streams provided to RPBs into one source of strategic revenue funding, providing £26.8m for Gwent annually, from April 2022 to March 2027.
 - 2.2 The funding model comprises four key elements which involves a tapering approach during the course of the 5 year programme. The tapering approach is intended to promote sustainability, with the expectation that local authorities and partners in receipt of funding fund the services from their core budget by the end of the 5 yr programme The 4 tapering models outlined below have been applied to all the projects and programmes in receipt of the RIF across Gwent.
 1. Fully Funded National Priorities Fund (100% WG funded)
Ring fenced funding provided to Regional Partnership Boards at 100%, no tapering or resource match required for initiatives within this category. This includes Dementia ringfenced funding, and the Integrated Autism Service.
 2. Acceleration Change Fund (90% funded via RIF, 10% tapering).
Funding to test and develop new models of care, for a maximum period of 2 years. Following robust evaluation these models can be considered to move into the embedding fund

3. National Delivery Model Embedding Fund (70% funded via RIF, 30% tapering)
Projects successfully tested can move into the embedding fund with a clear business case for sustainability. Embedding funding can be received for a maximum of 3 years. If appropriate, projects can move into the mainstreaming fund at the end of this period.
4. 50/50 Integrated Mainstreaming Fund (50% funded via RIF, 50% tapering)
After a project has concluded its three years funding under the Embedding Fund it should now be ready to be mainstreamed. Partners must agree and commit resources to ensure that the project or model of care will be sustained long term. This fund will take the shape of a recurrent pooled fund with partners contributing 50% and Welsh Government contributing the remaining 50%.

2.3 In Blaenau Gwent The RIF has been used to develop a range of preventative services/ projects in children's and adult services. These have supported our statutory work in the implementation of the safe reduction of children looked after strategy and supported our adult population in Blaenau Gwent to maintain their independence and remain closer to home, avoiding admissions to hospital or indeed speeding up discharge from hospital.

Appendix 1 outlines the detail of all the RIF projects and funded posts in Blaenau Gwent and the positive impact they have had on its population.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1**

To recommend that the Council *accepts* the financial liabilities and implications of the new Regional Integration Fund and its tapered funding model.

Option 2

To recommend the Council *does not accept* the financial liabilities and implications of the new Regional Integration Fund and its tapered funding model.

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

4.1 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;

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1 Children's services have 4 project areas funded from the RIF. These include increased capacity in our Supporting Change Team which supports

families to stay together and prevent the need for children coming into care. It also supports those children placed with families under a special guardianship order again preventing these children returning to the care system.

- 5.1.2 Adult services have 7 projects funded from the RIF. These include dementia services, transition workers for people with disabilities, support for carers, assisted technology and advocacy.
- 5.1.3 **Appendix 2** shows which tapering funding model has been applied to each project and the resulting cost pressures we can expect over the next 5 yrs. Table 1 below brings the information outlined in Appendix 2 together to show the total cost pressures over the next 5 yrs for all Blaenau Gwent projects plus the regional contributions to support some of these projects.

Table 1

	Children's	Adults	Regional *	Total
23/24	111,873	163,536	54,184	329,593
24/25	111,873	247,143	116,865	475,881
25/26	186,455	328,298	132,094	646,847
26/27	186,445	328,298	132,094	646,847
27/28	186,445	411,905	194,776	793,136

*for illustration purposes regional allocation assumed to be 1/6th of budget requirement – further work will need to be undertaken to determine liability share

- 5.1.4 Since the introduction of the RIF tapering model by Welsh Government, Directors and Heads of service have lobbied Welsh Government hard to enable them to understand risks associated with this model.
- 5.1.5 Many authorities in Wales are forecasting significant overspends, plus we are in the throws of a cost of living crisis which will have an impact on every local authority maintaining sustainable services without the added pressure of this RIF funding being reduced at a time when the needs of our population will be escalating.
- 5.1.6 In an effort to mitigate against this risk a one off reserve of £600k has been earmarked for this cost pressure. However, in light of the information highlighted in table 1 this reserve will only allow the current RIF projects to run in full for the next 18 months before some of these services will have to be stopped. This could be further complicated by other pressures and the priority afforded to these areas by the Council.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

- 5.2.1 Option 1 – there is a risk that the Council will be unable to identify the financial resources available to contribute to the overall costs of these schemes in the medium / long term.

If these schemes are prioritised for funding other services may be disadvantaged and delivery of these may need to be reconsidered or stopped.

- 5.2.2 Option 2 – There is a risk that these schemes will be stopped due to lack of funding. Additionally, the RIF funding freed up by the tapering approach would not be available to test other models of care.

If the current Blaenau Gwent programmes are reduced or stopped the impact on the public will be:

- less support for families to prevent children coming into care, there will be less support for children subject to special guardianship orders and less support for our teenagers with complex needs to avoid the need for residential care
- less support available for people stepping down from a hospital bed or at risk of going into a hospital bed as the carried beds will be decommissioned, less support for unpaid carers and less support to advance assisted technology solutions to keep people out of hospital and in their own homes.

5.3 **Legal**

There are no legal risks attached this report

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are a number of risks attached to staffing, as a number of the post holders currently funded by the RIF have been in place for over 2 yrs and will therefore be entitled to redundancy costs which the council will be liable for should their posts have to be deleted due to decreased funding
Clearly all efforts would be made to redeploy staff across the social services directorate and wider council should this risk materialise

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information**

Appendix 1 provides detailed performance information which evidences the positive impact each of the projects is having on the people of Blaenau Gwent.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The impact on the public is outlined above in section 5.2.2

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

Those delivering the projects undertake significant engagement with those using the services not only in relation to the quality of service being offered but how services can be improved

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

The RIF projects were set up in thinking for the longer term in relation to presenting needs from escalating leading to the need for high cost service delivery which may not be within the local authority

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The RIF projects have prevention at the heart of its delivery which is outlined in detail in appendix 1

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The delivery of the RIF projects is underpinned by working in partnership with health and the third sector.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The RIF programme is monitored by the regional partnership board and the subgroup that sit underneath this board. Each project has to report progress on delivery on a quarterly basis and it this information that is captured in appendix 1

Background Documents / Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Blaenau Gwent Projects Funded by Gwent RPB RIF
- Appendix 2 – Blaenau Gwent Children Social Care Regional Integration Fund

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Appendix 1 : Blaenau Gwent Projects funded by Gwent RPB RIF

To provide context to the financial liabilities, this appendix provides an overview of the projects/services reliant on partnership funding. Data is included to identify the impact of the project should the activity need to cease.

Children's Social Care		
Project	Overview	Implication of Cessation
Enhanced Edge of Care (EOC) - £124,847	The programme consists of a series of projects listed here with a shared objective of <i>“Supporting Children & Families known to Social Services to mitigate, where possible, Children entering care and to support Family reunification.”</i> All projects within this programme aim to reduce the number of children entering the care system, reduce the number of those becoming “Children Looked After”, and help families stay together where possible.	Between April 2021- March 2022, 144 children and young people accessed EOC service. Of these 23 (16%) were supported to return or re-engage in education, 76 (53%) individuals were supported to engage in community activities and 126 (88%) were diverted from a Public Law Outline. With 133 (92%) supported to remain living within their family network and 4 (3%) supported to return to their family networks. If the project was to cease, this would inevitably increase the number of children becoming looked after, therefore increasing the number of ACES and life prospects for the child and YP. Further, this would also result in additional pressure on the Statutory system.
Family Group Conferences (FGC) - £77,694		Between April 2021- March 2022, the project received 89 referrals, and of these, 51 families accessed the FGC service. Of the 89; 10% were referred due to child protection and safeguarding concerns. 56 (63%) due to the risk of becoming looked after, and 4 (5%) for rehabilitation from Looked After. Cessation of this project would increase the prospect of families progressing to case conference.
Mediation Support (MS) - £34,847		A total of 120 individuals have accessed this project between April 2021- March 2022 Of these, 102 were supported to remain within their family home (85%). With 11% supported into independent living, 1% supported to return to their families and 3% were supported to become looked after. Closure of this service would result in more individuals entering statutory services and impact the opportunity to prevent escalation for issues such as parental conflict.

Special Guardianship Order Support (SGO) - £135,521		<p>Between April 2021- March 2022, a total of 43 individuals have accessed the project for training, peer, and psychological support.</p> <p>The project has managed to divert 1% of individuals from becoming 'Looked After'. If the project were to cease its delivery, the impact on statutory services would increase and more children & young people would become looked after entering the care of statutory services.</p>

Adult Social Care		
Project	Overview	Implication of Cessation
Early Intervention Dementia Reablement Services - £136,317	The service focuses on supporting people living with dementia with bespoke support. The service supports people with a diagnosis or, or displaying symptoms of, dementia to remain active and connected with their community.	Between April 2021- March 2022, the project in Blaenau Gwent has supported 152 individuals through the programme. 67 of those individuals with memory problems or dementia continue to remain independent of services following completion of a reablement programme. In absence of these services, it is anticipated that service users would look to access support from Social Services. Further, this could lead to an increase in hospital admission, decrease in hospital discharges, increased GP attendance, a rise in referrals to Social Services and therefore an increase in requests for packages of Care across all 5 Local Authorities.
(Previously Step Up/Down Beds & Cariad Intermediate Care Beds 0 Phase 2	CARIAD is the <i>Collaborative Assessment Reducing Interventions, Admissions and Delayed transfers of care</i> , an acronym to describe the Step Up/Step Down provision. The project provides Step up/Step down beds from a mixture of settings with dedicated beds available in a Care	Between April 2021- March 2022 40 individuals were referred and admitted to the step up/down beds within the team and 27 of these were able to be discharged from the step up/down beds. Of these twenty-seven, 19 were discharged to either back to their home or usual place of residence, with only 8 discharged to long

[Additional 4 Units]) - £347,536	Home, Sheltered Housing complexes and through Extra Care facilities.	term care, and 10 discharged with a Package of Care (POC). As of April 2022, bed occupancy levels were at 45%, with total bed days at 388. 13 admissions were avoided, and 21 discharges enabled, 7 of these were able to be discharged after becoming independent from services. 34 individuals were supported into the graduated care services. The average length of stay (LOS) for everyone admitted was 102 days.
Transition - Development of Integrated Working Across Adult And Childrens Services in Gwent - £70,500	<i>The Transition Programme</i> is made up of four projects which are delivered in Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire – through the third sector organisation (Building Bridges), and Newport. The transition from Children's Services to Adult Services can be a very challenging experience for adults with learning disabilities and their families/carers. Similarly, the transition to more independent living can be problematic for adults with learning disabilities. The provision of specialist knowledge helps to address these needs and will help ensure compliance to the Social Services and Well Being Act 2014. It is clearly identified that transition outcomes improve when there is a lead coordinator who facilitates the involvement of the right people at the right time.	Between April 2021 to March 2022, The Blaenau Gwent Team had a total caseload of 208 individuals who were receiving ongoing transition support. The Transition Project continues to have significant positive impact on how young people are supported through transition into adulthood. The Transition Project continues to support young people and their parents/carers with aspects of transition, including navigating health referral pathways to ensure they continue to have their health needs met and supporting them to gain voluntary and paid work and accessing leisure and social opportunities in line with their individual desired outcomes. If the transition project were to cease to exist, there would be no alternative organisation for them to find the support and guidance they need and therefore result in a decline in future prospects.
Carers Support - Blaenau Gwent - £102,272	The main objective of this project is to improve identification of unpaid carers, provide easy access to Carers Assessments, raise awareness of what support is available to carers within their community, assist with signposting, and refer on to other agencies where	Between April 2021- March 2022, the merged projects of carers coordinator and carers support in Blaenau Gwent engaged with 333 carers and supported 238 carers with information, assistance and advice (IAA). The project provided 128 drop-in sessions, with 132 individuals attending activities/events. If the services were not

	<p>appropriate. The project also aims to ensure that children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive, to enjoy positive childhoods and to optimise their abilities.</p>	<p>available, it is anticipated there would be a system-level impact on Social Care. Potential impacts could include an increase in packages of care, and an increase in adult referrals to Social Care. It is worth noting that this project aligns with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014).</p>
<p>GMS alignment & IAA Prevention Workstream - £142,471</p>	<p>Continuing the alignment of our referral processes and systems to embed a single point of access across Blaenau Gwent as an integral part of ensuring that Information, Advice and assistance is accessible and available for all our residents, avoiding the frustration of individually accessing a number of social care and health-based services and being signposted or re-directed from one service to another. IAA is the starting point to access and be supported in directing people and professionals towards community-based services.</p>	<p>This preventative system is able to identify people at risk at the earliest opportunity to provide health and wellbeing support ,underpinned by strength-based assessments and co-production principles, Building resilience through connections, increasing social prescribing and community development through the integrated wellbeing network and the collaborative working nature of the Compassionate Communities MDTs to maximise individual and collective skills, capacity and efficiency. The role of the link workers is to support our GP surgeries through this work stream to provide them with a more effective transition between the different services within the Borough. During 2021-22 4828 enquiries were received at the front door, with 2596 referrals then resolved by the IAA team, providing an outcome of 52% of enquiries being resolved by IAA during the reporting period.</p>
<p>Implementation of Better Care Project - £46,031</p>	<p>The Implementation of the Better Care Project commenced with winter funding during 2019-20, with the acquisition of specialist equipment. This equipment provided the opportunity to reduce the workforce requirements in supporting individuals with complex needs, where possible, reducing what is referred to as 'double handled calls' to 'single handed call'. To maximise regional opportunities, it was agreed to deliver this project</p>	<p>If the service ended, it is anticipated that service users would access support through Social Services, so therefore increasing referrals, and package of care requests. In addition, there would be an impact on patient flow through services resulting in an increase in hospital admissions and a decrease in hospital discharges.</p>

	in two phases. The first phase being the acquisition of equipment from winter funding, and more recently, the dedicated support to train staff in the use of the new equipment.	
Advocacy Access - £115,000	The project means giving a person support to have their voice heard. It is a service aimed at helping people understand their rights and express their views, enabling people to have more choice and control when decisions are made that affect them. A pilot helpline was recently designed to be an independent single point of access for adults across the partner authorities. This service assesses individuals need for advocacy and refers to appropriate generic and specialist advocacy services along with signposting to other community based preventative services where appropriate.	A snapshot of the Data provided between April 2021- March 2022, shows that 495 individuals have been engaged with the Access to Advocacy, and 192 individuals progressed to advocacy cases requiring either independent professional advocacy (IPA) or significant information signposting/ guidance. The number of Website hits in 2021-2022 was 2045. Calls to the GATA helpline have been noted as returning to return to pre pandemic levels. The project is fully aligned to the regional advocacy strategy 2019/2024 to meet statutory obligations under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. This is a Gwent wide scheme and not a Blaenau Gwent scheme, identifying a risk of Gwent wide impact for both Health and Social Care. If the project ceased, it is anticipated that individuals would seek advice and support from Social Services.

Regional Schemes		
Project	Overview	Implication of Cessation
Home First - £1,799,418	The service has been established for approximately 3 years, and commenced based on the learning of a pilot initiative within the Integrated Care Fund. The principle of this service is a trusted assessor model to enable turn around at the front door where appropriate. During the COVID-19 pandemic support was extended to the Grange University Hospital as well as the District General Hospitals. This	This project has become an essential front door service across all the acute hospital sites that ensures people who do not need admission are given the right advice, information and assistance to return home with a follow up reablement intervention as required. The regional project is critical for moving people in a safe and timely manner secondary care to community support. It is

	<p>initiative has been independently evaluated very positively, and consensus reached within the Gwent Adult Strategic Partnership on the need to sustain the service post March 2022.</p>	<p>considered a top priority to change conversations with the public and prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital.</p> <p>If this project closed, there would be an impact across Social Care and Health. For Health, these impacts include an increase in hospital admissions, increase in GP attendances, decrease in hospital discharges and an impact on patient flow through the system. Potential impacts on Social Care include an increase in adult referrals and increase in packages of care.</p>
<p>Shared Lives - £81,040</p>	<p>The project model supports people whose level of need means it is harder for them to live on their own, by matching them with a carer to share their family and lives giving care and support in the community.</p> <p>People using the scheme may be older, have mental health problems, dementia or learning disabilities or other needs which require short and long-term support. The Shared Lives Health Initiative project provides them with the opportunity to live with their matched carer or visit them regularly for day support or respite for their families.</p>	<p>Between April 2021 and March 2022, the project received 59 referrals and made 29 arrangements. The project has provided 520 hours of day support, 650 hours nights of respite and 2456 nights of long term provided. There have been 3 Shared Lives carers recruited and approved during this period and achieved 400% individual outcomes and an increase of 400% for family carer wellbeing.</p> <p>The model only receives funding from the RIF to support with the continuation of the project. Removal of the funding would mean the project would have to cease. The project has two employees, these employees would then have to begin the necessary redundancy procedures. Currently, there are twenty-seven active Shared Lives Health Initiative arrangements. All arrangements would cease and individuals and their families would need to secure the support lost through other care arrangements, such as nursing or residential homes, and step up or step down facilities. All this has the potential to add further strain to the individuals, their families and the system in place to support them.</p>

<p>MYST Leadership Costs - £295,890</p>	<p>The service provides responsive, flexible outreach support to carers, including families and carers, to keep children and young people at home or in their placement. Providing support to children, young people and their care providers through a presenting crisis or event, making sure ongoing support post crisis is available. Providing a core daytime service and enhanced out of hours service, with a structured, high quality, fit for purpose educational provision supported by therapeutic and risk management models, delivered in a holistic, multi-disciplinary assessment/formulation – either community based or through residential provision, offering emergency/crisis residential placements when necessary.</p>	<p>Between April 2021 to March 2022 56 young people were referred to the service. There were 233 consultations held with 26 training sessions delivered, and 14 non-intensive cases open. 106 young people who are looked after, were supported to ‘step down’ from residential to family-based care.</p> <p>If the MyST service was to cease its delivery, the impact would be seen across health and social care sectors, increasing pressure on other service areas, increasing waiting times and possibly an increase in children becoming looked after, increasing financial implications on statutory services.</p>
<p>My Mates - £160,960</p>	<p>The project supports individuals with a learning disability across Gwent are able to access a variety of social events as a means of forming friendships and, if requested, can be supported to develop a relationship by finding a date and being offered advice and information. My Mates support individuals with learning disabilities to live independently with access to early intervention services in the community, and greater public awareness and understanding of people with learning disabilities needs.</p>	<p>Between April 2021 and March 2022, 1132 people engaged with the project and in addition, received 190 virtual engagements. There were 7088 meetings with families/individuals held, and 3695 people attended events. The project also facilitated 50 training/workshops during this period.</p> <p>If the funding of the project was to cease, the project has identified that it is not sufficiently embedded to consider an exit stage.</p>

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Appendix 2

BLAENAU GWENT CBC CHILDREN SOCIAL CARE REGIONAL INTERGRATION FUND

Liability Commitments

				2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Programme	Project Name	Accelerate / Embed	Year 1 Indicative Allocation	Year 2 Actual Budget Required from BGCBC	Year 3 Actual Budget Required from BGCBC	Year 4 Actual Budget Required from BGCBC	Year 5 Actual Budget Required from BGCBC	Year 6 Actual Budget Required from BGCBC	
Early Intervention & Support: Edge of Care	Enhanced Edge Of Care (Bg)	Embed	£124,847	£37,454	£37,454	£62,424	£62,424	£62,424	
Early Intervention & Support: Edge of Care	Family Group Conferences (Bg)	Embed	£77,694	£23,308	£23,308	£38,847	£38,847	£38,847	
Early Intervention & Support: Edge of Care	Mediation Support (Bg)	Embed	£34,847	£10,454	£10,454	£17,424	£17,424	£17,424	
Early Intervention & Support: Edge of Care	Sgo Support (Bg)	Embed	£135,521	£40,656	£40,656	£67,761	£67,761	£67,761	
Grand Totals			£372,909	£111,873	£111,873	£186,455	£186,455	£186,455	

BLAENAU GWENT CBC CHILDREN SOCIAL CARE REGIONAL INTERGRATION FUND

Liability Commitments

		2022/23		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Programme	Project Name	Accelerate / Embed	Year 1 Indicative Allocation	Year 2 Actual Budget Required from BGCBC	Year 3 Actual Budget Required from BGCBC	Year 4 Actual Budget Required from BGCBC	Year 5 Actual Budget Required from BGCBC	Year 6 Actual Budget Required from BGCBC
Dementia: Living with Dementia	Early Intervention Dementia Reablement Services	Ringfenced	£136,317	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Place Based Graduated Care	(Previously Step Up/Down Beds & Cariad Intermediate Care Beds 0 Phase 2 [Additional 4 Units])	Accelerate	£347,536	£34,754	£104,261	£104,261	£104,261	£173,768
Transition	Transition - Development Of Integrated Working Across Adult And Childrens Services In Gwent	Accelerate	£70,500	£7,050	£21,150	£21,150	£21,150	£35,250
Support for Unpaid Carers	Carers Support - Blaenau Gwent	Embed	£102,272	£30,682	£30,682	£51,136	£51,136	£51,136
Connected Communities	GMS alignment & IAA Prevention Workstream	Embed	£142,471	£42,741	£42,741	£71,236	£71,236	£71,236
Assistive Technology	Implementation of Better Care Project	Embed	£46,031	£13,809	£13,809	£23,016	£23,016	£23,016
INDEPENDENT	Advocacy Access	Embed	£115,000	£34,500	£34,500	£57,500	£57,500	£57,500
Grand Totals			£960,127	£163,536	£247,143	£328,298	£328,298	£411,905

Notes:

Ringfenced - no budget contribution required from Lead Organisation

Accelerate - 10% budget contribution required from Lead Organisation for a maximum of 2 years, then 30% budget contribution as move into Embed Stage for a maximum of 3 years

Embed - 30% budget contribution required from Lead Organisation for a maximum of 3 years

Legacy Fund - 50% budget contribution required post Embed Stage

Although no organisational budgets have been released in Year 1 (2022/23) to contribute to the RIF, 2022/23 is still classed as Year 1, so for Example when we have two years of an “Accelerate Scheme”, that will be for financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24

REGIONAL INTERGRATION FUND – REGIONAL SCHEMES

			2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Programme	Project Name	Accelerate / Embed	Year 1 Indicative Allocation	Year 2 Actual Budget Required	Year 3 Actual Budget Required	Year 4 Actual Budget Required	Year 5 Actual Budget Required	Year 6 Actual Budget Required
Improving System Flow	Home First	Accelerate	£1,799,418	£179,942	£539,825	£539,825	£539,825	£899,709
Place Based Graduated Care	Shared Lives	Accelerate	£81,040	£8,104	£24,312	£24,312	£24,312	£40,520
Supporting Care Experienced Children	MYST Leadership Costs	Embed	£295,890	£88,767	£88,767	£147,945	£147,945	£147,945

LD Independence & Wellbeing	My Mates	Embed	£160,960	£48,288	£48,288	£80,480	£80,480	£80,480
Grand Totals			£2,337,308	£325,101	£701,192	£792,562	£792,562	£1,168,654

Agenda Item 9

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **18th October 2022**
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 29th November 2022**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sue Edmunds, Executive Member People and Education**
Cllr Haydn Trollope, Executive Member People and Social Services
Report Submitted by: **Scrutiny and Democratic Officer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	06.10.22			18.10.22			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the People Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 29th November 2022 for discussion and agreement.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's revised Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
 - 2.4 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in September 2022, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.
 - 2.5 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a 6 weekly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting 29th November 2022, and

- Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;
- Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2 **Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting 29th November 2022, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 29th November 2022

**People Scrutiny Committee
Forward Work Programme**

Dates	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council
Tuesday 29 th November 2022	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	Executive - 07.12.22
	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	Executive – 07.12.22

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