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**THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND**

Dydd Mawrth, 12 Medi 2023 Dydd Mawrth, 12 Medi 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

**PWYLLGOR CRAFFU POBL**

A meeting of the Pwyllgor Craffu Pobl will be held in Cyfarfod hybrid i'w gynnal yn rhithiol ar MS Teams yn Ystafell Syr William Firth, Swyddfeydd Cyffredinol, Glynebwy on Dydd Mawrth, 19eg Medi, 2023 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Damien McCann  
Interim Chief Executive

**AGENDA**

**Pages**

**1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD**

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

**2. YMDDIHEURIADAU**

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

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. **DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU**
- Derbyn datganiadau buddiant a goddefebau.
4. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU POBL** 5 - 8
- Derbyn penderfyniadau'r Pwyllgor Craffu Pobl a gynhaliwyd ar 18 Gorffennaf 2023.
- (Dylid nodi fod y penderfyniadau ar gyfer pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).
5. **DALEN WEITHREDU**
- Nid oedd unrhyw bwyntiau gweithredu yn deillio o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Pobl a gynhaliwyd ar 18 Gorffennaf 2023.
6. **TRAIS YN ERBYN MENYWOD, CAM-DRIN DOMESTIG A THRAIS RHYWIOL (VAWDASV): STRATEGAETH RHANBARTHOL GWENT 2023 – 2027** 9 - 58
- Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd, Llywodraethiant a Phartneriaethau a Chynghorydd Arweiniol Rhanbarthol – VAWDASV Gwent.
7. **ADRODDIAD BLYNYDDOL 2022/2023 Y CYFARWYDDWR GWASANAETHAU CYMDEITHASOL** 59 - 92
- Ystyried adroddiad Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Interim Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol.
8. **ADOLYGU POLISI RHWNG Y CARTREF A'R YSGOL AC ÔL-16 2024-2-2025** 93 - 118
- Ystyried adroddiad Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Interim Addysg.

9. **STRATEGAETH/POLISIÄU/CANLLAWIAU** 119 - 302  
**CYNHWYSIANT AC ADY (ADOLYGU A**  
**DIWYGIADAU)**

Ystyried adroddiad Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Interim  
Addysg.

10. **BLAENRAGLEN GWAITH: 7 TACHWEDD 2023** 303 - 306

Derbyn y flaenraglen gwaith.

To: T. Smith (Cadeirydd)  
J. Morgan, J.P. (Is-gadeirydd)  
C. Bainton  
D. Bevan  
J. Gardner  
G. Humphreys  
J. P. Morgan  
G. Thomas  
D. Wilkshire  
T. Pritchard

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 - 18<sup>th</sup> JULY, 2023**

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

**PRESENT:** Councillor T. Smith (Chair)

Councillors Jen Morgan, J.P.  
 C. Bainton  
 D. Bevan  
 J. Gardner  
 G. Thomas  
 D. Wilkshire  
 L. Parsons (*substituting for G. Humphreys*)

Mr. T. Baxter (Co-opted Member)

**WITH:** Interim Corporate Director of Education  
 Service Manger Education Transformation & Business Change  
 Service Manager Young People & Partnerships  
 Head of Children’s Services  
 Head of Adult Services  
 Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships  
 Service Manager Children’s Services

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

	Humphreys, J. Wilkins ( <i>invited for Item No. 7</i> ) and the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services.	
<b>No. 3</b>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
<b>No. 4</b>	<p><b><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></b></p> <p>The Committee AGREED that meetings be held at 10.00 a.m.</p>	
<b>No. 5</b>	<p><b><u>PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The decisions of the People Scrutiny Committee held on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the decisions be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<b>No. 6</b>	<p><b><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Scrutiny &amp; Democratic Officer.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Forward Work Programme for the People Scrutiny Committee be accepted (Option 1).</p>	
<b>No. 7</b>	<p><b><u>SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION (INCLUDING SOCIAL SERVICES 1ST JANUARY TO 31ST MARCH AND EDUCATION SPRING TERM-2023 AND CORPORATE SERVICES)</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services and the Interim Corporate Director of Education.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend (Option 1), namely:</p> <p>a) The approach and information detailed in the report (Appendix 1) be accepted as provided; and</p>	

	b) Recommend that Cabinet agree the revised Safeguarding in Education Policy as shown in Appendix 3.	
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# Agenda Item 6

*Cabinet 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: **19<sup>th</sup> September 2023**  
Report Subject: **Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV): Gwent Regional Strategy 2023 – 2027**  
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr H Trollope, Cabinet Member People and Social Services**  
Report Submitted by: **Sarah King, Head of Democratic Services Governance and Partnerships**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance and Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	x	07.09.23			19.09.23	04.10.23		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the People Scrutiny Committee with the '*Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV): Gwent Regional Strategy 2023 – 2027*' (Appendix 1).

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) is everybody's business. Individuals have a right to live, work and enjoy communities that are safe, and free from abuse and violence.
- 2.2 This Strategy will set out how we are looking at achieving this vision across Gwent, in the prevention of VAWDASV, protection from VAWDASV and support for those impacted by VAWDASV. It will show that across Gwent, partners, stakeholders and those with lived experience of VAWDASV are committed to collaborative working and joined up approaches to tackle issues of abuse and violence.
- 2.3 Due to regional movements in the period leading up to and in development of this Strategy, there has been a limited evidence base to truly understand local needs. Acknowledging the absence of quantitative and analytical data, this Strategy has been informed by the needs and demands of the sector through regional workshops and stakeholder meetings. Lived experience has also informed this Strategy through survivor engagement.
- 2.4 The six objectives outlined within the Strategy have been developed in the context of Welsh Government's National Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2022-2026. To achieve these objectives, priorities have been separated into two approaches:

### **Fundamentals** (areas integral to successful change)

1. Implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act, 2021 (Section 3)

2. Regional Structures Reform
3. Infrastructure for Regional Services and Delivery

**Focus Areas** (specifically reflecting the regional needs of the Gwent population)

1. Tackling Perpetration
  2. Children and Young People
  3. Misogyny and Harassment
  4. Multiple or Co-occurring Needs
- 2.5 The Strategic Plan outlines how we intend to achieve these priorities by 2027. Delivery of the priorities will be detailed within an Annual Delivery Plan, agreed each year through the governance structures in place for the region.

### **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 **Option 1**  
For the Committee to consider and recommend approval of the strategy by Cabinet.
- 3.2 **Option 2**  
To consider the strategy content and suggest any areas for improvement relating to the three Fundamentals outlined paragraph 2.4 above (and below), prior to approval by Cabinet:
1. Implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act, 2021 (Section 3)
  2. Regional Structures Reform
  3. Infrastructure for Regional Services and Delivery

Any suggested improvements to the Fundamentals will be considered under the respective VAWDASV sub-groups between September and November 2023.

### **4. Monitoring Arrangements**

The Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council strategic representative on the VAWDASV Board is Sarah King, Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships; supported by Helena Hunt, Professional Lead Community Safety.

#### **4.1**

### **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

*Appendix 1 – Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV): Gwent Regional Strategy 2023 – 2027*

# **Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV): Gwent Regional Strategy 2023 – 2027**

This document is available in Welsh  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

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## Executive Summary

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) is everybody's business. Individuals have a right to live, work and enjoy communities that are safe, and free from abuse and violence.

This Strategy will set out how we are looking at achieving this vision across Gwent, in the prevention of VAWDASV, protection from VAWDASV and support for those impacted by VAWDASV. It will show that across Gwent, partners, stakeholders and those with lived experience of VAWDASV are committed to collaborative working and joined up approaches to tackle issues of abuse and violence.

Due to regional movements in the period leading up to and in development of this Strategy, there has been a limited evidence base to truly understand local needs. Acknowledging the absence of quantitative and analytical data, this Strategy has been informed by the needs and demands of the sector through regional workshops and stakeholder meetings. Lived experience has also informed this Strategy through survivor engagement.

The six objectives outlined within the Strategy have been developed in the context of Welsh Government's National Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2022-2026. To achieve these objectives, priorities have been separated into two approaches:

### **Fundamentals** (areas integral to successful change)

1. Implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act, 2021 (Section 3)
2. Regional Structures Reform
3. Infrastructure for Regional Services and Delivery

### **Focus Areas** (specifically reflecting the regional needs of the Gwent population)

1. Tackling Perpetration
2. Children and Young People
3. Misogyny and Harassment
4. Multiple or Co-occurring Needs

The Strategic Plan outlines how we intend to achieve these priorities by 2027. Delivery of the priorities will be detailed within an Annual Delivery Plan, agreed each year through the governance structures in place for the region.

Although not specifically detailed within the Strategy, there will be definitive links across wider partners to embed VAWDASV as core business beyond the sector. These links include the regional Suicide and Self-Harm group, the IRIS programme in GP surgeries, Remote

Evidence Site under His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) and Local Criminal Justice Board to name a few.

Our Strategy is ambitious as challenges to tackling abuse and violence are becoming greater - strong leadership is required if we are going to achieve a whole system approach for VAWDASV to be everybody's business. For the next four years, the regional VAWDASV Board and Strategic Delivery Group are committed to ensuring that VAWDASV partners and stakeholders not only support the implementation and delivery of this Strategy, through contributing and developing evidence, but also take ownership and hold accountability under the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act, 2015. It is only in this way that we can support a Gwent population that is safe, healthy and free from abuse and violence.



## Statement of Intent

This Strategy builds on the Gwent VAWDASV Strategy 2018-2023 which set out the regional integrated approach to stop violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and families affected by abuse, whilst also holding to account those who perpetrate such abuse.

Our vision is for the region to be a safe place for all those impacted by VAWDASV - whether this be in the prevention of, protection from, or support to recover from VAWDASV. To achieve the vision, the Strategy creates a high level, single point of reference across the region for:

**“Relevant Authorities”** – a framework to support the requirements set out in the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

**Wider stakeholders** – a clear, co-produced and collectively agreed priorities and expectations to improve outcomes for all individuals and families experiencing any form of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

**Commissioners** - whilst recognising that this is not a commissioning strategy, the content and associated strategic delivery plan should inform and influence Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence commissioning decisions and investment of resources across the region

**Survivors** - a transparent way forward, defining how we tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence to be held accountable in our implementation of this Strategy

It will also detail how the existing partnerships and collaborative working arrangements between non-devolved and devolved public bodies, statutory services, specialist sector and the third sector will be further developed and strengthened, to move towards a society where everybody is able to live fear free from violence and abuse.

It is intended that this Strategy and the associated focus areas and activities detailed within the region’s annual delivery plan, will support the Welsh Government and UK Government legislative, strategic and delivery framework to achieve the prevention of violence and abuse, the protection of victims and support for all those affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

## Introduction

Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) is a complex landscape, but in Wales, the UK and across the world, VAWDASV is considered to be a violation of human rights and a cause and consequence of inequality between women and men. It happens to women because they are women, and women are disproportionately impacted by certain forms of violence.

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence includes domestic abuse (physical, financial and emotional), coercive or controlling behaviour, rape, sexual assault and sexual violence, stalking, harassment, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, crimes committed in the name of 'honour', modern day slavery and trafficking, and sexual exploitation (including commercially through the sex industry, and sexual harassment).

VAWDASV has far reaching consequences for families, children, communities, and society. The direct harm to the health and well-being of victims is clear, and at its most severe can, and does, result in death. However, impacts are wide-ranging - not just on health and wellbeing, but also on poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and the economy. It is also important to note that VAWDASV not only affects adults who experience abuse in the home, in intimate or family relationships but children also - for the first time, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children as victims in their own right. Wider family members can also be impacted by VAWDASV as well as the experience of abuse and violence often being perpetrated in public spaces impacting the wider community.

It is important to note that whilst this Strategy (as well as legislation and policy referred to), references violence against women and girls, it is because it is acknowledging the disproportionate experience of women and girls. It does not - in any way - negate violence and abuse directed towards men, boys and other genders, or violence and abuse perpetrated by women and other genders. This Strategy recognises that anyone (all genders, older people, young people and children) can experience and be affected by domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault, sexual abuse, forced marriage, child sexual abuse, stalking and harassment, sexual harassment and exploitation and this can happen in any relationship regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, religion or belief, income, geography or lifestyle.

Similarly, throughout this document, language will be used that readers may not identify or associate with. The Strategy uses commonly used language which is not defined by its term or wording. A Glossary is provided in the Appendix of this Strategy for further reference.

## Legislative Context

Welsh Government has led the way in their tackling of VAWDASV in Wales; starting with the Right To Be Safe Strategy (2010) which was updated in 2016, published as the National Strategy on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (2016-2021), following the enactment of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act'). The Act, which aims to improve:

- a) arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence
- b) arrangements for the protection of victims of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence and
- c) support for people affected by gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence;

places an emphasis on Relevant Authorities<sup>1</sup> responsibilities to achieve Welsh Government's vision to end violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence in Wales, and their ambition for zero VAWDASV.

This Strategy will also support the delivery of a number of key priorities across Welsh and UK Government. In considering this Strategy, context should also be given to the following legislation and its purpose:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – an Act that guarantees an independent Domestic Abuse Commissioner to be the voice that speaks on behalf of victims and survivors of domestic abuse. It also sets out the statutory powers available to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to raise public awareness and hold both agencies and government to account in tackling domestic abuse.
- The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of those in Wales, through an approach of seven wellbeing goals that ensures public bodies think about the long term, work better with people, communities, and each other; looking to prevent problems and taking a more joined-up approach.
- The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 – providing a framework for care and support in Wales; improving the wellbeing of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and for transforming the way in which services are commissioned.

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning of "relevant authority" - [Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/12/section/2)



- The Modern Slavery Act 2015 – providing the tools to fight modern slavery; ensuring perpetrators can receive suitably severe punishments for these appalling crimes and enhance support and protection for victims.
- Crime and Security Act 2010 – provides procedures for Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS).
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 – making it a criminal offence to force somebody to marry.
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 – underpinning Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Orders and an FGM mandatory reporting duty.
- Serious Crime Act 2015 – supports punishment of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship and strengthened measures to manage people who commit sexual offences or those who pose a risk of sexual harm.
- Housing (Wales) Act 2014 – enshrines local authorities in preventing and alleviating homelessness.
- Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 – improving how individuals rent, manage and live in rented homes in Wales, including support victims and survivors escaping VAWDASV and enabling perpetrators to be targeted for eviction.
- Equality Act 2010 – protecting individuals from discrimination in the workplace and wider society to strengthen protections and supports actions where there has been unlawful treatment of individuals.

## Policy Linkages

Successfully implementing this Strategy requires coordination across several areas of policy. This Strategy will hold links to, and with, the following policy areas:

- Health

VAWDASV recognisably has an impact on mental health, often presenting as depression and anxiety, PTSD, and poor wellbeing. There can also be direct effects on physical health and reproductive health, as well as wider family wellbeing and public health. Aligning VAWDASV with health policies and long-term collaboration with GP's, Hospitals and Community Health Services is key to successful outcomes for the population. This Strategy will be coordinated in line with Welsh Government's 'A Healthier Wales' Plan (2018), Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Strategy (Talk to Me 2) and Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010.

- Substance Use

Those who experience or perpetrate VAWDASV can often be entrenched in circumstances of harmful substance use. Links are therefore crucial on both a strategic and operational level, to ensure support for addressing presenting substance use needs, as well as looking to address underlying, long-term causality. Implementation of this Strategy will be approached with consideration of Welsh Government's Substance Misuse Delivery Plan and align with Gwent Substance use Area Planning Board policies.

- Housing and Homelessness

Preventing homelessness, protecting housing rights and provision of good quality, safe accommodation is vital to ensuring stability and safety for people experiencing VAWDASV. This Strategy will draw links with housing policy and implementation of local housing strategies to ensure housing support for all those who experience VAWDASV, including older people, individuals with protected characteristics and those with multiple or co-occurring needs.

- Social Services and Safeguarding

The Wales Safeguarding Procedures and All Wales Practice Guides provides a solid framework for safeguarding adults, children and young people who are at risk of harm, neglect, or abuse. Many people who experience or perpetrate VAWDASV often have historical or existing relationship with Social Services so this Strategy will be coordinated with the drivers within statutory services. As VAWDASV victims may require safeguarding arrangements, this Strategy will also demonstrate alignment with Gwent Safeguarding Board policies and procedures and robust multi-agency working through strategic leads and governance structures.

- Education

With the Curriculum for Wales guidance enabling each school to develop its own curriculum, education will be key to the prevention of future VAWDASV through ‘healthy relationship’ and early intervention work. This Strategy will link to Healthy Schools Coordinator provision and consider how the commissioning, planning and delivery of VAWDASV approaches in education can support the four purposes of curriculum design and skills that can be developed within learning.

- Equalities

The Gender Equality Plan; Framework for Action on Disability: The Right to Independent Living; Race Equality Action Plan; LGBTQ+ Action Plan; guidance from the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales and Welsh Government No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Guidance will all underpin the delivery of this Strategy. There will also be links to structures that champion intersectionality and allyship (such as networks and forums), to ensure that this Strategy delivers for all across the region in the pursuit of its objectives.

## UK Context

The success of this Strategy relies on acknowledging the UK context and how, non-devolved bodies<sup>2</sup> are key partners in tackling VAWDASV. To support a consistent approach between UK Government and local, devolved areas, this Strategy will be supported by the UK Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2021 and Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan 2022. Guidance that will also inform the implementation of this Strategy includes:

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<sup>2</sup> Police Forces, Police and Crime Commissioners and His Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service

- *Controlling or Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance (April 2022)* which provides information on controlling or coercive behaviour, to assist the police, criminal justice and other agencies in identifying, evidencing, charging, prosecuting and convicting the offence as well as providing information on how to reduce the risk of harm to the victim and their family; provide support for the victim and their family, including how other agencies and support services can assist; and manage the perpetrator
- *Violence Against Women and Girls National Statement of Expectations (December 2016)* which sets out what local commissioners (Police and Crime Commissioners, Local Authorities, or health commissioners) need to put in place to ensure their response to violence against women and girls is collaborative, robust and effective
- *Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Guidance (March 2014)* (often referred to as “Clare’s Law”) which sets out procedures that could be used by the police to disclose information about an individual’s previous violent and abusive offending, where this may help protect their partner, or ex-partner, from violence or abuse
- *Multi-agency Statutory Guidance on Female Genital Mutilation (July 2020)* issued under section 5C(1) of the Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003) and extends to England and Wales, setting out the responsibilities of agencies involved in safeguarding and supporting women and girls affected by FGM
- *Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews (December 2016)* which sets out the purpose of a domestic homicide review, conducting a review and involving family and friends
- *National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE): “Domestic violence and abuse: multi-agency working”* – guidance that covers planning and delivering multi-agency services for domestic violence and abuse; aiming to identify, prevent and reduce domestic violence and abuse among women and men in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, and among young people



## Global Context

There is acknowledgement that VAWDASV is a global issue. The UK is a member of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (‘Istanbul Convention’) and this Strategy will root itself in the minimum standards of the convention to prevent, protect and support victims and prosecute perpetrators and offenders. It will also align with the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993), enshrined within the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (2015).



## Regional Context

The Gwent region covers the five local authority areas of Blaenau Gwent (BGCBC), Caerphilly (CCBC), Monmouthshire (MCC), Newport (NCC) and Torfaen (TCBC). The region is culturally diverse and has socio-economically disadvantaged communities with 12% of Gwent defined as ‘most deprived’<sup>3</sup>. Across the five local authorities, there is an ethnic minority population of around 5.2%, rising to around 12.5% in Newport<sup>4</sup>. The geography of the region is also varied and includes rural countryside areas, urban centres and the most easterly of the South Wales Valleys.

	<b>Area</b> The total area of Gwent is <b>158,500 hectares</b> – approximately <b>7.6%</b> of the total area of Wales.				
	<b>Blaenau-Gwent</b>	<b>Caerphilly</b>	<b>Monmouthshire</b>	<b>Newport</b>	<b>Torfaen</b>
	10,900	28,000	88,000	19,000	12,600
	<b>Population</b> The estimated population of Gwent is <b>594,164</b> , approximately <b>19%</b> of the total population for Wales <sup>1</sup>				
	<b>Blaenau-Gwent</b>	<b>Caerphilly</b>	<b>Monmouthshire</b>	<b>Newport</b>	<b>Torfaen</b>
	69,862	181,075	94,590	154,676	93,961

*Source: Gwent Public Services Board Wellbeing Assessment (May 2022)*

The most recent Wellbeing Assessment for Gwent (May 2022) noted that violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence continues to be an issue across Gwent and there is a need for robust arrangements for the prevention, protection and support for individuals affected by such violence and abuse. The 2022 Population Needs Assessment confirmed the below priority outcomes for the region following engagement with citizens and partners<sup>5</sup>:

- Provide earlier intervention and safeguarding arrangements to potential victims through ‘Ask & Act’
- Safeguard victims, including men, through effective partnership support

Within the footprint of the region, there is also the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB), Heddllu Gwent Police, the Office of the Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner

<sup>3</sup> [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation \(full Index update with ranks\): 2019 | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>4</sup> [joint-strategic-equality-plan-2020.pdf \(gwent.police.uk\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence - Gwentprb](#)

(OPCC), His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. Under this footprint, Gwent has recently become a Marmot Region<sup>6</sup>, adopting the eight Marmot principles to reduce health inequalities across the region.

This Strategy acknowledges that the region's equality and diversity is not properly captured within its contents and there is a need to do more to understand equality and diversity in VAWDASV, as different and diverse communities will require varying responses and resources. As such, the VAWDASV Board are committing to understanding these needs and responding to them in the delivery of this Strategy.

Within the region there is also a range of existing activities, provision and support services in place to prevent, protect and support those affected by VAWDASV. Some of these include early intervention programmes, refuges, counselling services, multi-agency arrangements for the support and safety planning of high-risk victims and forums for identifying and disrupting perpetrators. This Strategy will continue to build on the good work that is being delivered in Gwent in pursuit of achieving the Strategy objectives.

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<sup>6</sup> [Gwent Marmot Region - Gwent Public Services Board Gwent Public Services Board \(gwentpsb.org\)](https://www.gwentpsb.org)

# Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Gwent

## Prevalence and Scale

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence are large scale, pervasive problems which, every year causes needless deaths and damage to thousands of lives across Wales. Whilst the incidence of VAWDASV is high, those who experience these forms of violence and abuse are known to under-report and official data therefore represents an under representation of the problem. Key data we have that confirms the prevalence and scale includes:

### Domestic Abuse

**21,558 Victims**

Incidents

Jan '20 to Dec '22 (Source: Gwent Police)

**16,342 Victims**

Crimes

### Honour Based Abuse (HBA)

**109 incidents**

Jan '20 to Dec '22 (Source: Gwent Police)

**81 HBA crimes**

### Serious Sexual Offences

**16,780**

Jan '20 to Dec '22  
(Source: Gwent Police)

### Initial MARAC Referrals

**864**

2020

**1,219**

2022

(Source: Gwent Police)

### Counselling for Sexual Violence & Abuse

**921 Individuals** (115 Children/Young People, 806 Adults)

Apr '21 to Mar '22 (Source: New Pathways and Cyfannol Women's Aid)

In the implementation of this Strategy, the prevalence and scale of VAWDASV across Gwent will be understood and monitored through ongoing cycles of needs assessments. In addition, recognising that there is a lack of data and statistics supporting prevalence and scale for the varying social constructs, consideration will be given during this Strategy as to how VAWDASV agencies and organisations can support improved data collection for more informed and accurate needs assessments.

# Strategy Development

## Methodology

To inform the development of this Strategy, information from the following sources were reviewed:

- Welsh Government Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence National Strategy (2022-2026)
- Gwent Wellbeing Assessment (published 5 May 2022)
- The most recent VAWDASV Needs Assessment (July 2020)
- Gwent Police Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Plan 2021-2024
- Needs mapping information submitted by Gwent VAWDASV sector providers (October 2022)
- Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Development Session (December 2022)
- Stakeholder Engagement Meetings (October to December 2022)
- Survivor Engagement Sessions (October to December 2022)

## Findings

The region, like the rest of Wales, the UK and the world has recently experienced a pandemic, and a resurgence and recovery from COVID-19 is still to be wholly experienced. This recovery has also been impacted by the current cost of living crisis thereby enabling a 'perfect storm' of economic and societal challenges that are facilitating further gender inequalities. During engagement with stakeholders and survivors, the increasing pressure on services and resources, together with the complexity of cases, economic challenges and workforce resilience issues have been clear.

*'We are seeing more people needing support, but our team are working on a reduced service offer because so many of us are unwell with Covid'*

Practitioner from the Specialist Sector

*'MARAC meetings have been occurring far more regularly in response to the increase in demand... on average, they are currently 140 MARAC referrals per month... in response to the influx in referrals, partners are feeling the pressure and are struggling to remain engaged in the MARAC process'*

Information provided at VAWDASV Subgroup, September 2022

Across the region, the strain on public and specialist services, and the complexities that are now being faced - that need supporting and adequately resourcing - has been recognised by all stakeholders. Emerging themes and priorities identified by stakeholders as part of the methodology for this Strategy, included:

### Violence Against Women

- There needs to be a better understanding of experiences of women and girls in relation to misogyny and workplace harassment
- Misogyny needs tackling – calling it out, challenging behaviour and attitudes, changing social norms, culture, and attitudes; treating misogyny as a hate crime
- Street harassment - uninvited attention from males where males do not see their behaviour as unacceptable, or as opportunistic chance to target vulnerable women
- No male accountability for behaviour – women have to protect themselves rather than males changing their behaviour or championing behaviour change across their peer groups, social circles etc.
- Stalking and associated risks needs more resource, especially where the Internet of Things (IoT)<sup>7</sup> is part of stalking, and in its continued development at pace, technology cannot be escaped. For example, targeting social media, sharing information and photos, revenge porn, young people not recognising the consequences of engaging in some social media activities (e.g., sharing pictures)
- Lack of trust in police – people having confidence to report, confidence of getting a response (criminal justice) and abuse of power
- Workplace harassment – supporting the response to build trust and prevent abuse of power
- A need for awareness of support available to prevent, protect and support victims of violence against women, aside from police and criminal justice processes
- Online abuse is becoming more prevalent and inappropriate behaviour being seen at younger ages (role modelling from reality TV, social media, music lyrics) – impacting on healthy relationships for young people at a peer and child-parent level
- Lack of understanding around Honour Based Abuse (HBA), forced marriage and FGM which is leading to difficulty in identification, response and understanding ‘what works’
- Coercion and control – double edge through technology as well as in person
- Huge demand on MARAC – number of referrals, complexity of cases, high level numbers
- Bystander/Allyship as a response to awareness raising, challenging attitudes and behaviours and support to report

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<sup>7</sup> Internet of Things include physical objects (or groups of such objects) that have sensors, processing ability, software and other technologies that connect and exchange data with other devices and systems remotely via the internet or other communication devices (e.g., smart speakers, home security cameras, smart devices, Hives, Air Tags)



## Domestic Abuse

- Needs to be a whole family approach to supporting domestic abuse – victim, perpetrator and child/young people; tackles perpetration as well as support for victim and wellbeing of family; prevents main parent/caregiver being viewed as incapable of, or having poor parenting skills trying to keep child(ren) safe
- Housing supply is an issue – move on options are limited and people are in refuge longer than they need to be which prevents access for those who need it
- Limited engagement with/from health in identification of support, response and collaboration with other agencies across the sector, outside of GP based IRIS<sup>8</sup> programme
- Coercion and control – awareness and information needed on controlling behaviours versus coercive behaviours and perceptions of these in relationships
- Consideration of links between domestic abuse, substance use and mental health (multiple or co-occurring needs) – services offer support on presenting need so can see demand on mental health, substance use, VAWDASV services and police but needs aligned approach
- Repeat victims of domestic abuse – not clear on what support is available or poor support is offered because professionals do not know individual is repeat victim so whole picture not understood to provide appropriate support
- DASH as a risk assessment tool – may flag other forms of VAWDASV but focus is on the reported issue; can often miss nuances of relationship issues or richness of information to be disclosed
- Strangulation (non-fatal) needs further learning to prevent and support
- MARAC demand – increase in referrals and under-resourced MARAC team
- Child/adolescent on parent violence – gap in services; delayed reporting; minimisation where child on parent or intrafamilial abuse or violence to protect perpetrator
- Perpetrators presenting as victims can lead to mistrust in services for actual victims

## Sexual Violence

- Women and girl's safety – at night (with a specific reference to training across the night-time economy (e.g., Taxi Drivers, Door Security Staff, Bar Staff) around identifying vulnerabilities); in communities; sexual harassment in public; inappropriate touching in street and schools; sex trafficking; street-based work; male misogyny and attitudes of 'entitlement to sex'; abuse of power within professions (e.g., sexual favours)
- Sexual exploitation – through peer relationships, intimate partner relationships, for commercial purposes or via dating sites
- Lack of widespread understanding of prevalence and type of sexual violence issues

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<sup>8</sup> [Iris Programme \(llamau.org.uk\)](http://Iris Programme (llamau.org.uk))

- Abuse through technology – threats to disclose messages or images, online sexual exploitation and radicalisation of young people who are particularly susceptible (leading to child sexual exploitation)
- Gateway offences (offences, or first-time offences, where consequence or punishment is light) offers to identify early indicators and progression of sexual violence (e.g., exposure)
- Social media contributing to ideologies and modelling of behaviours that are inappropriate and unacceptable, glorifying behaviours and putting pressure on young people – sexting; grooming; access to pornography; Only Fans content; a risk that social media behaviours are becoming normalised and accepted
- Lack of understanding and support for young people displaying problematic or harmful sexual behaviours
- Lack of understanding around choice in relationships (young people and adults) – consent versus coercion
- Lack of models or programmes available for perpetrators of sexual violence – no health services or support available for people who have, or might commit sexual offences
- Sexual offences viewed as police responsibility – rape team within police but lack of programmes or resource for perpetrators where there is no conviction
- Lack of acknowledgement around the complexity of trauma and support required for victims of sexual abuse or violence
- Increase in ‘incel’ ideology and cultures – moving away from ‘incel’ forums that are filled with self-pity towards grievances against women and girls, misogyny and advocating graphic sexual violence

### Intersectionality

- More male victims coming forward but still unconscious bias in response
- Data showing increase in older people now reporting they are victims
- Elder abuse - opportunities for older people to come forward to report controlling or abusive behaviours; can be experiencing abuse or violence from older child living at home; increase in domestic homicides in older people (50+ years old) in region
- Preventing VAWDASV perpetrated in care homes – psychiatric units, refugee centres, older persons care home (i.e., institutionalised settings)
- Rough Sleepers – support to escape exploitation in adolescence, street-based exploitation, street drinking if individuals are not able to access refuge
- Engagement with minority ethnic groups as well as those with protected characteristics (deaf, LGBTQ+, disability, Gypsy Roma Travellers accessing support or fleeing communities) needs to be properly considered
- Seeing more and more funding opportunities requiring services to be ‘by and for’ or led by individuals with lived experience
- Difficult to meet the needs of everybody in refuge – language, cultural sensitivity

- More resources to support same sex relationships where there is domestic abuse/violence and transgender victims – people and services often not knowing or being resourced to support as situations do not fit into ‘norms’
- Older people – wanting acknowledgement and support for historical incidences of sexual violence of abuse

#### Accessibility

- Resources do not match the scale and ambition of tackling issues
- Evidence of increase in older people being victims of domestic homicides and not all services being accessible for all ages (e.g., older people experiencing abuse or wanted to flee are considered for residential home when not suitable)
- Funding issues post pandemic, cost of living crisis and continued economic challenges being faced and sustainability of services
- Too much compartmentalisation within funding and political oversight (social care, health, justice) – need to be more collaborative with streamlined approaches and joined up support
- Impact of challenges and issues leads to increase in statutory services threshold
- Access to refuge if in full time work or no access to public funds – can prevent people from fleeing or leave them at risk of homelessness, being ‘bounced’ around services and agencies
- Need funding that supports flexibility to provide equal access to resourced services – currently not equal across rural areas
- Implementation of Domestic Abuse Act and resource requirements – extending time period for domestic abuse related common assault; children and young people identified as victims in their own right; non-fatal strangulation offence

#### Workforce Resilience

- Recruitment and retention of sector staff is a huge issue – combination of Covid burnout, salary offers (lack of value on roles and salaries), impact of cost of living and mental demands of role
- Time required to familiarise and implement training undertaken, knowledge and skills developed (i.e., dedicated time post training to research, shadow, experience and implement to strengthen response and support continuous service improvement)
- Cultural competence is needed to be able to identify, respond to and support Gwent’s diverse cultures
- Requirement for public health approach, trauma informed approach, equalities approach and being led by lived experience but no capacity to become trained and no resource to implement these approaches successfully and meaningfully



- Professionals are passionate and committed to their delivery and making a difference, but challenges make it difficult to create environments that better support staff

### *Specific Considerations*

Proposed legislation that was also heavily referred to throughout this Strategy development, which will require specific consideration for Strategy and policy alignment, governance, action, and resource implications in addressing VAWDASV across the region included:

#### Serious Violence Duty

The Duty covers the requirements set out in Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (2022) for specified authorities<sup>9</sup> within a local government area, to work together and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence<sup>10</sup>; including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the area.

The Duty does not require the creation of new multi-agency structures as existing local structures can be used to comply with the requirements of the Duty, but essentially, specified authorities must work together to prevent and reduce serious violence in their local areas and, ultimately, improve community safety and safeguarding.

#### Online Safety Bill

The Bill introduces new rules for firms which host user-generated content, i.e., those which will allow users to post their own content online or interact with each other, and for search engines, which will have tailored duties focused on minimising the presentation of harmful search results to the users. Platforms that fail to protect people will need to answer to the regulator and can face heavy fines or in serious cases, be blocked. All platforms in scope will need to tackle and remove illegal material online, particularly material relating to child sexual exploitation and abuse. The new online safety laws will make the internet a safer place for everyone in the UK, especially children.

#### Victims Bill

Published in May 2022, this draft bill when legislated will affect all victims of crime, but it is anticipated those most affected will be victims of serious crime, including VAWDASV. The draft Victims Bill includes measures that will:

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<sup>9</sup> Specified Authorities include Police, Justice (Probation services and Youth Offending Teams), Fire and Rescue, Health and Local Authorities

<sup>10</sup> Whilst the Duty does not specifically have to include domestic abuse and sexual violence, the region's partners will look to see how this can be included within the Strategic Needs Assessment

- amplify victims' voices and make sure victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system
- improve support for victims to cope and recover from the impact of crime and enable them to engage with the criminal justice system
- strengthen transparency and oversight of criminal justice agencies at local and national level so that victims' experiences support them to engage, and remain engaged with, the criminal justice system

These measures will help victims to have confidence that there is the right support available and that if they report crime, the criminal justice system will treat them in the way they should rightly expect.

### Public Sexual Harassment

In 2022 the Home Office consulted on the option of creating a new public sexual harassment criminal offence. With the vast majority of respondents considering public sexual harassment to be a widespread problem (despite already being illegal), it will now be made a specific offence with a maximum sentence of two years. This commits the government to pursuing new legislation which builds on the intentional 'harass, alarm, distress' definition first established in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 as well as setting out new guidance for Police and Prosecutors on sexual harassment.

## Survivors As Experts

In understanding the emerging themes and priorities for VAWDASV across the region, stakeholders acknowledged the importance of survivors as experts. Survivors' voices are central to providing a perspective that no agency can realise unless they have mechanisms within their organisations for the development and delivery of services led by people with lived experience. In the development of this Strategy, survivors have told us what works well across the region, as well as the challenges they experience.

The responding officers were absolutely fantastic. Even though I was hysterical and all responding officers were male, when trying to calm me down no one was condescending. They listened to what I had to say, answered any questions I had and told me what would happen next

*Victim who had been assaulted by her partner  
and locked herself in a different part of the house until help arrived*

When I left my abuser I was housed in a temporary flat but this left me isolated. I was nervous, on my own and had been brainwashed. I'd lost my independence. I started to talk to neighbours but later learned that there was a perpetrator upstairs in my block after he committed a really serious offence. It frightened and retraumatised me. Was there any thought or consideration given to my circumstances and who I would be living around when I was housed there? If you are a victim of domestic abuse housing should consider this

*Survivor Voice, October 2022*

Survivor engagement as part of this Strategy development has been rich and insightful. The voices of those with lived experience has been reflected throughout and will continue to influence regional delivery plans, developments and focus areas.

It is important to note that there was no consultation with male survivors as part of this process. The reason for this was twofold. Firstly, there are limited services that are supporting male survivors and secondly, those identified did not want to participate. Similarly, survivors of sexual violence are under-represented due to the barriers they face in engagement activities (e.g., risk of re-traumatisation and higher levels of support needed). This means there are significant gaps in knowledge; however, in the delivery of this Strategy and regional work, there will be a commitment to supporting engagement and participation by all survivors, with an emphasis on creating suitable opportunities for engagement where they do not already exist.

Survivor engagement will primarily be achieved through existing structures, including the Gwent Police Survivor Engagement Network, the National Strategy workstreams for Survivor Engagement and groups and forums that exist within specialist sector organisations. In addition to these forums, this Strategy will prioritise on-going engagement, participation – and where possible – co-production with survivors and individuals with lived experience through the following commitments:

- supporting organisations and providers to **embed a culture** of engagement and participation for ongoing development of services or response to VAWDASV
- facilitating support to **overcome structural barriers** that can exclude or hinder participation
- **welcoming different practices** and models of participation; especially those that support participation from seldom heard communities, black and minority ethnic groups and individuals with protected characteristics or communication difficulties
- **supporting reviews** on the effects and impact of participation to increase accountability to survivors, supporting outcome focused approaches

Noting the ambition to embed equality and diversity within the delivery of the Strategy across the region, survivor engagement in the coming years will consciously uphold principles of inclusivity to support survivor voice by individuals with protected characteristics. Links will also be made with existing forums (e.g., Children’s Commissioner, Domestic Abuse Commissioner’s Office and Welsh Government Children & Young People Blueprint workstream) to ensure the voices of children and young people are also reflected in our work.

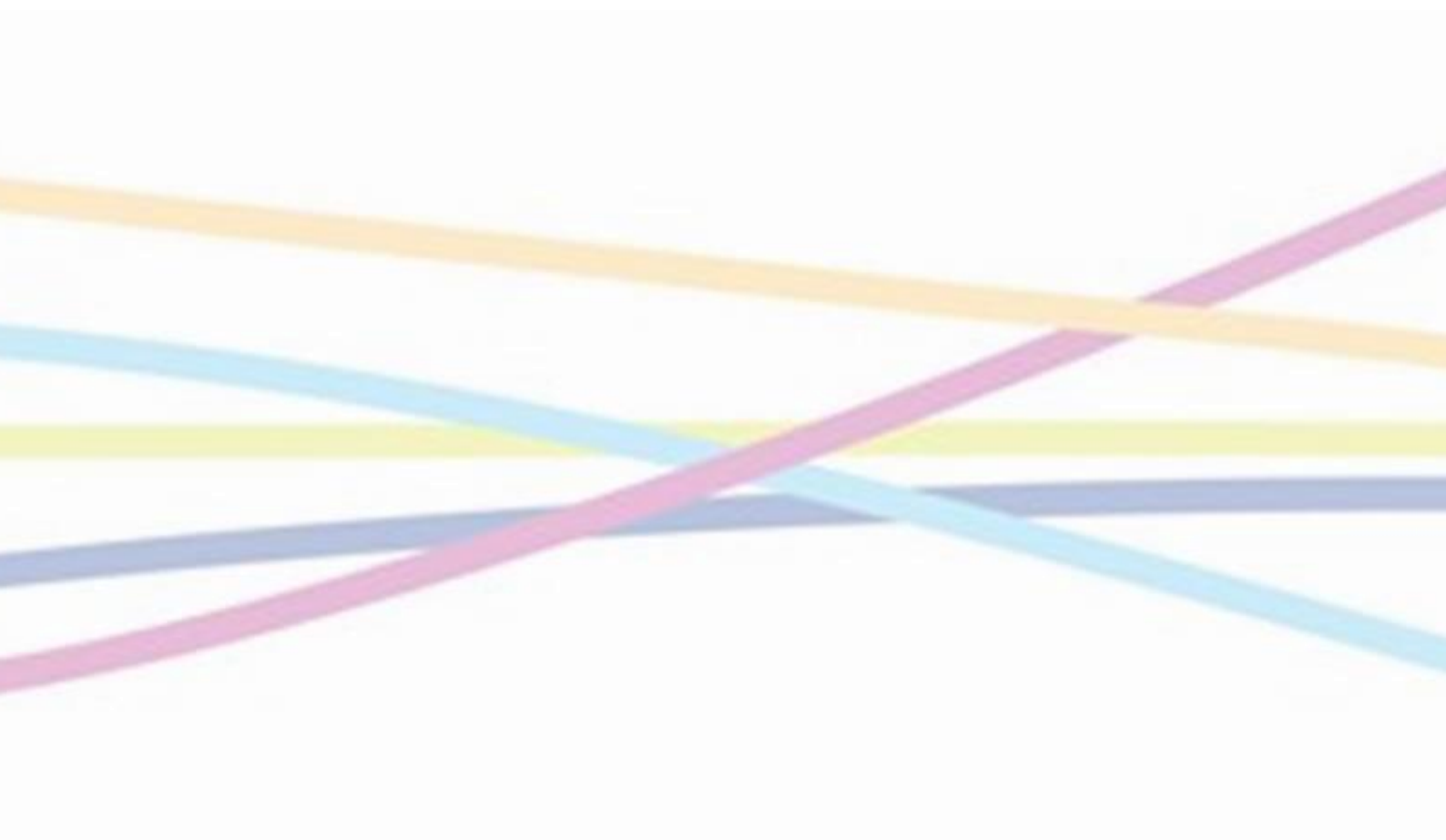
This Strategy acknowledges the vital importance of collaborating with survivors who are ‘experts by experience’ in terms of what has worked for them, their pathways through services and how easy (or difficult) it has been to find the right service and move towards independence and freedom from abuse. Key issues, challenges and concerns raised by survivors are essential for continuous improvement of services.



Survivor Engagement Session, October 2022

Survivor engagement success will be determined by the following measures:

- there has been engagement from the outset
- survivors were well represented and more than just one or two 'token' members
- there has been a real say in decisions
- opportunities exist to meet regularly and receive updates on actions and progress
- activities are safe, inclusive, and meaningful
- recognition is provided for subject matter/lived experience *and* contribution to results



## How We Will Tackle VAWDASV

Aligned to the National Strategy, Gwent will adopt the following six objectives, mapped to the three aims of the Act:

### *Prevention*

#### Objective 1

Challenge the public attitude to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh population through awareness raising and space for public discussion with the aim to decrease its occurrence.

#### Objective 2

Increase awareness in children, young people and adults of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and empowering them to positive personal choices.

### *Protection*

#### Objective 3

Increase the focus on holding those who commit abuse to account and supporting those who may carry out abusive or violent behaviour to change their behaviour and avoid offending.

#### Objective 4

Make early intervention and prevention a priority.

### *Provision of Support*

#### Objective 5

Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors.

#### Objective 6

Provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs-led, strength-based, inter-sectional, and responsive services across Wales.

These objectives will be pursued in an approach separated into:

- three 'Fundamentals' (i.e., areas integral to successful change in achievement of the vision and Objectives) and
- four Focus Areas, that specifically reflect the regional needs of the Gwent population.



## 1. Implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Section 3)

The Domestic Abuse Act became law in England and Wales on 30 April 2021. Whilst the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 will continue to hold precedence in Wales, the legislating of the Domestic Abuse Act has an impact on the core business and service delivery of statutory VAWDASV agencies across the region. Under the Act, there is now:

- A legal definition of domestic abuse which recognises children as victims in their own right
- A legal duty on councils to fund support for survivors in 'safe accommodation'
- A guarantee that all survivors will be in priority need for housing
- New criminal offences including coercive control, non-fatal strangulation, threats to disclose private sexual images

This has an impact for Relevant Authorities (i.e., local authorities) as defined under the VAWDASV Act as well as public bodies who deal with VAWDASV (e.g., Police) and the third sector who are often grant funded to provide specialist, high quality, expert support to victims and survivors.

Acknowledging the resource required to initiate changes across statutory agencies to successfully implement the Domestic Abuse Act, this Strategy will prioritise supporting Relevant Authorities to fulfil the legal requirements of domestic abuse which recognises children as victims in their own right. In pursuing this Fundamental, the following will be progressed:

- An evidence-based needs assessment on children and young people impacted by VAWDASV, to link with Marmot principles and include:
  - an analysis and understanding of services to support children, young people and families
  - the identification of gaps and areas for specialist service development to further inform the Strategy direction and act as a baseline
- Raising awareness of services, pathways of support and interventions for children and young people impacted by VAWDASV
- Collaborative commissioning and/or grant funding of services, pathways of support and interventions where gaps are identified
- A review of the role of public services for the further development of partnership working (e.g., Operation Encompass, multi-agency safeguarding hubs) to meet the needs of, and support children and young people impacted by VAWDASV

The above will be enabled through close working between the regional Safeguarding Board, existing regional partnership working arrangements and further expanding joint and inter agency working to ensure effective protection and support of child victims.

## 2. Regional Structures Reform

In December 2021 the Gwent Public Services Board agreed a comprehensive governance review of Community Safety, incorporating Substance use Area Planning Board delivery and VAWDASV delivery across Gwent. Alongside this review, the region has also reviewed and consulted on its Wellbeing Plan, become a Marmot Region<sup>11</sup> and also begun planning for the implementation of the Serious Violence Duty and subsequent Strategic Needs Assessment. On a national level, the roll out of the Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR) will also commence in 2023.

The development of this Strategy has been a timely parallel to these changes. It has been recognised that these wider regional reforms offer an opportunity to effectively implement a VAWDASV structure and landscape that co-exists and intersects with other regional structures, to enable true sustainable and collaborative working in the pursuit and achievement of the aims of the VAWDASV Act. In-line with these regional reforms, the following will be pursued in the achievement of this Fundamental:

- Building VAWDASV into governance arrangements within wider strategic areas currently subject to reform, to effectuate robust and well-grounded infrastructure for supporting victims and survivors and tackling perpetration
- Reviewing the new regional structures for partnership delivery of sustainable services (both core and commissioned)

## 3. Infrastructure for Regional Services and Delivery

The region benefits from a range of services and support for victims, survivors, and perpetrators of VAWDASV, with the specialist and third sector delivering the majority of these. This delivery includes community provision, safety planning, counselling services, wellbeing projects, refuges, educative interventions as well as evidence-based programmes. Services available are funded through prescriptive parameters that prevent connectedness, flexible approaches and collaboration. The funding is often of a short-term nature and this can hinder the ability of organisations in their efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

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<sup>11</sup> [Gwent Marmot Region Launch Event - Gwent Public Services Board Gwent Public Services Board](#)



Under the VAWDASV Act, Relevant Authorities have statutory obligations to prevent, protect and support victims of VAWDASV. This Fundamental will therefore focus on:

- Establishing 'benchmark' needs assessments that outline problem profiles, prevalence, scale, good practice and resource deficits
- Regularly reviewing and updating needs assessments to support responses to 'live' priorities
- Establishing a VAWDASV Commissioning Group with Relevant Authority and commissioning cross-sector representation, for a focus on maintaining, sustaining and developing VAWDASV services
- How the region can move towards VAWDASV services and delivery embedded in a whole system approach

## Focus Areas

The following Focus Areas have been identified in the development of this Strategy:

### 1. Tackling Perpetration

Currently, there are limited programmes available across the region to tackle perpetration and challenge those who perpetrate in changing their behaviours. This is primarily because of funding as well as a lack of evidence-based programmes for domestic abuse and sexual violence perpetration for both adults and children/adolescents/young people.

Working with perpetrators is fundamental to successfully tackling VAWDASV and reducing the number of VAWDASV victims. However, it requires a whole system approach to achieve true early and effective intervention and opportunities to divert perpetrators. To tackle perpetration across Gwent, this Focus Area will prioritise:

- Undertaking a regional needs assessment that will inform a whole system approach to tackling perpetration, which includes:
  - Collaborative working arrangements to enable the disruption of perpetrators
  - Identification and response to serious and serial perpetrators
  - Evidence-based adults and children/young person VAWDASV perpetrator programmes (i.e., 'What Works' in tackling perpetration)
  - Mapping of perpetrator services and programmes to inform commissioning arrangements and sustainable funding influencing
- Understanding victim data from perpetration of VAWDASV, for commissioning of perpetrator services and programmes

Through collaborative working with partners and providers across the criminal justice system, social care, third sector and within communities, we will ensure that perpetrators of VAWDASV in Gwent are dealt with appropriately, provided the opportunity to break cycles of perpetration through behaviour change and that survivors and their children are given protection against further abuse. These priority areas will meet strategy Objectives 3 and 4.

## 2. Children and Young People

Key to breaking generational cycles and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) is understanding the needs of children and young people. This includes acknowledging the impact on them as witnesses (they are now recognised as victims in their own right under the Domestic Abuse Act 2022), supporting a response when they have experienced VAWDASV, or recognising and challenging societal ‘norms’ that lead them to engage in unhealthy attitudes, behaviours and relationships. Wales has long been committed to children’s rights and the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Children’s rights are already enshrined in Welsh law (Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011) with the measure placing a duty on Ministers to have due regard to the UNCRC when developing or reviewing legislation and policy.

Prevention of VAWDASV can be initiated in school-age children and young people through education. Hafan Cymru’s Spectrum Project<sup>12</sup> supports a whole school approach to healthy relationship education with the new Curriculum for Wales Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Code providing the mandatory elements for RSE learning in schools. However, development of this Strategy has informed that the needs of children and young people are significant; they are being exposed to abuse at home, they are perpetrating abuse against their parent(s)/caregiver(s), they are experiencing abuse and harassment in schools and they are engaging in controlling and harmful peer relationships, not recognising such due to social media, online content, and lack of positive modelling. Therefore, more needs to be done in the region to protect and support children and young people from becoming victims of VAWDASV. To better prevent, protect and support VAWDASV in children and young people, this Focus Area will prioritise:

- Empowering and educating young people to support VAWDASV prevention and early intervention; especially for young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), those in education other than at school (EOTAS) provision or those with additional learning needs
- Challenging unhealthy attitudes and behaviours through education and empowerment
- Encouraging reporting to understand causes and prevalence to support actions towards prevention and early intervention

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<sup>12</sup> [Spectrum Project - Educating schools in Wales about Domestic Abuse and Healthy Relationships.](#)

- Developing a 'Knowledge Hub' of evidence-based programmes and interventions for children and young people
- Ensuring the voice and experience of children and young people impacted by VAWDASV in the development of planning and delivery of services
- Grant funding programmes for children and young people aged between 3 and 21 years old

Working closely with professionals in education, social care, police and youth/community-based services, we can challenge perceptions, increase awareness and empower personal choice to promote sustainable wellbeing and safety in the next generation. These priority areas will meet strategy Objectives 2, 4 and 6.

### 3. Misogyny and Harassment

Misogyny is rife within society with attitudes of toxic masculinity, victim blaming, and inequalities linked to protected characteristics (i.e., race, disability etc.), contributing to negative behaviours increasing the existence of VAWDASV; for example, casual misogyny permeating the workplace and harassment in public spaces.

Challenging misogyny is a huge feat demanding whole society education, awareness raising and public discussion. It requires 'calling out' and directly challenging those who perpetrate misogyny and misogynistic behaviours in order to make women feel safe. Currently, expectations are placed on female victims to 'protect themselves' from misogyny or harassment, both within the workplace and public spaces. To start the fundamental shift required and begin to tackle misogyny and harassment, this Focus Area will prioritise:

- Communication and campaign activities that raise awareness of misogyny and harassment, creating a stigmatisation to decrease occurrences
- Encouraging reporting of harassment to understand causes and prevalence
- Learning from culture reviews within other charitable, public and private bodies; building on the work that is being done more widely outside the region
- Supporting Relevant Authorities to identify and implement a response for instances of workplace harassment
- Supporting identification and reporting of abuse of power, position or perpetration by public bodies

Central to successfully achieving the above priorities will be a clearly communicated and effective response by public bodies and Relevant Authorities to disclosures. This Strategy, through its partnership and governance arrangements, will ensure that all victims who take the step to report their experience, can be confident and trust public bodies in their

commitment to end misogyny and harassment. These priority areas will meet strategy Objectives 1.

#### 4. Multiple or Co-occurring Needs

VAWDASV can impact on many areas of life. It can introduce or affect additional challenges (e.g., mental health) as well as contribute to further issues (e.g., homelessness, poverty). Currently, VAWDASV is primarily responded to via a compartmentalised approach, supporting the presenting needs of victims and current behaviours of perpetrators.

To successfully tackle VAWDASV, a contextual approach is needed that considers support needs inter-linked with, or those that compound VAWDASV. These needs include mental health, substance use, homelessness/housing, exploitation (included those exploited through sex work), employment, poverty and access to finances or financial support. Across the region, services are seeing an increase in individuals with multiple or co-occurring needs, so addressing VAWDASV alongside the multiple needs that exist is going to need multi agency intervention. However, the systems, pathways and solutions are not currently established to provide this level of support effectively. To begin to address this gap, this Focus Area will prioritise:

- Training the sector to understand trauma informed approaches to respond appropriately to VAWDASV
- Exploring cross-specialism roles that support a ‘No Wrong Door’ approach
- Strengthening collaboration between agencies and providers to enable effective and responsive services
- Facilitating networks, communication pathways and resources to address and support solution focused approaches to barriers encountered

VAWDASV is “everybody’s business” and so it should not be the responsibility of a single organisation to support or address VAWDASV. It requires multi-agency commitment and collaborative working to achieve long-term, sustainable change for individuals and society. These priority areas will meet strategy Objectives 4, 5 and 6.

In addition to the Fundamentals and Focus Areas, the foundations of this Strategy will be rooted in ensuring that professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims, survivors, and perpetrators. This will be achieved through the National Training Framework and Specialist Syllabus training offer.

## National Training Framework

The National Training Framework (NTF)<sup>13</sup> outlines Welsh Government’s requirements for training on VAWDASV across public services and specialist third sector. Under the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015, Relevant Authorities have a legislative duty to ensure that all their employees complete this training to fulfil their statutory obligations. Consisting of six groups, the Framework provides minimum mandatory training of professionals aligned to their roles:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Audience</b>
1	E-learning	All Public Service Professionals
2	Ask & Act	Professionals who are likely to be in jobs where VAWDASV is an issue for their client group
3	Ask & Act Champions	Individuals in roles which require them to do more than “Ask and Act” and those who perform a “Champion” role
4	Specialist Sector	Professionals whose client group is specifically those affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence
5	Managers of Specialist Sector	Service managers working in the violence against women, domestic abuse & sexual violence sector
6	Public Service Leaders	Strategic Leaders who have a responsibility to foster a culture and infrastructure in which violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence are acknowledged as issues which may affect the workforce, the client group and friends and family

### *Specialist Syllabus*

This Strategy will also support the delivery of Specialist Syllabus training that is mapped to the Framework and additional training commissioned by Welsh Government. Training will be reviewed on an annual basis but will consist of an offer that supports the development of skills, knowledge and experience needed of professionals, to identify and deliver support that meets regional needs.

### Cross Cutting Themes

Appreciating that VAWDASV traverses a number of themes, there are key areas that will also cut across the success of this Strategy. These are:

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<sup>13</sup> [National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence | GOV.WALES](#)



## Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

The region's MARAC's have seen a huge increase in referrals recently. The meetings, which share information on the highest risk domestic abuse cases, have seen additional pressures on police, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors who sit in MARAC's. MARAC is a crucial area of business for protecting and supporting victims of VAWDASV.

## Safeguarding

The region currently benefits from strong working relationships and robust arrangements with the Gwent Safeguarding Board. Aligning safeguarding and VAWDASV processes, this Strategy will focus on the following areas to strengthen responses to VAWDASV across the region:

- Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR)<sup>14</sup>
- Elder Abuse and VAWDASV in Older People
- Transitional Safeguarding
- Suicide and Self Harm Prevention

## Multiculturalism and Intersectionality

Gwent has a diverse population and crucial to understanding and addressing VAWDASV across communities, is acknowledging cultural beliefs and recognising the impact of discrimination and disadvantage that intersectionality can bring. To fully support victims and survivors of VAWDASV, this Strategy will establish the structures to clearly understand the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic people, disabled people, children, older people and LGBTQ+ communities to support more responsive services.

## Strategic Planning

Effective strategic planning is key in tackling VAWDASV as part of a whole systems approach. Through existing regional platforms, this Strategy will seek to influence policies and strategies across safeguarding, community safety, substance use, housing, health, police and probation to improve the planning, integration and collaboration in response to VAWDASV. This will be achieved through enacting a clear vision and working across these fields to share knowledge to influence thinking.

## Commissioning

Welsh Government's Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services in Wales will provide the parameters and principles for commissioning of VAWDASV services

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<sup>14</sup> [Single Unified Safeguarding Review | GOV.WALES](#)

that are funded via the Welsh Government VAWDASV regional grant. However, it should be recognised that VAWDASV services across the region are enabled through a range of funding streams. Relevant Authorities and public bodies commit a significant amount of funding to mitigate the effects of VAWDASV across the region, with funding also coming from Supporting People; Housing; Social Care; Police; Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC); Home Office; Ministry of Justice; and grants or contracts specialist or third sector organisations can secure. Whilst funding services, programmes, support or interventions in this way can lead to a lack of sustainability, inequity and inconsistency in delivery, it also brings much needed funding and support to the region to tackle VAWDASV through specific expertise (e.g., IDVA and ISVA services).

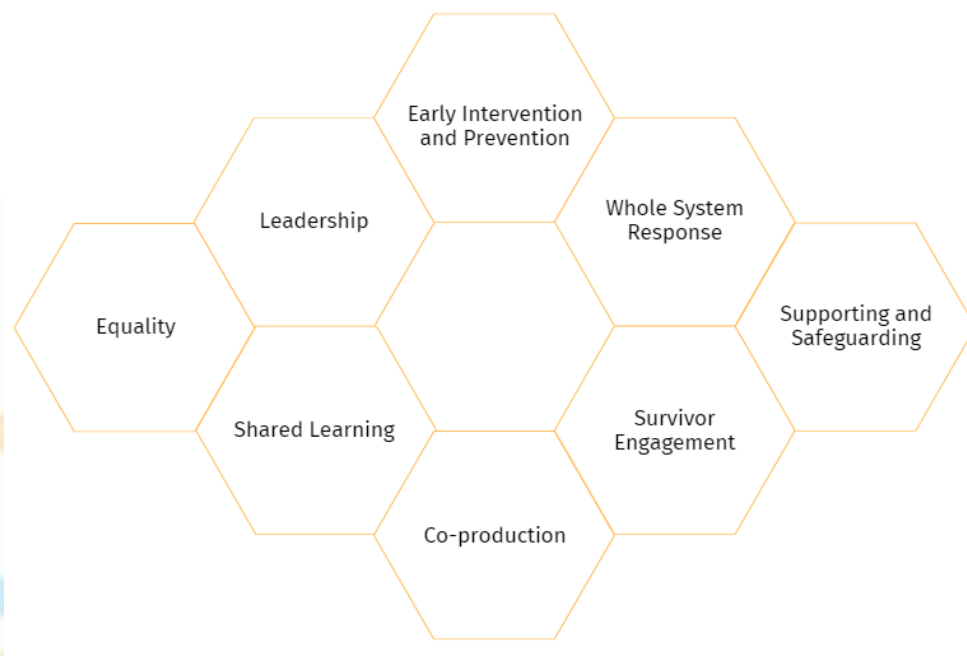
This Strategy will ensure that across the sector and beyond, Commissioners are informed about VAWDASV, where the links are to their area of work and understand their responsibilities for better investment. This will be achieved through the following commitments under the governance arrangements for the region:

- Strengthening collaboration and working arrangements with key Commissioners in health, housing and substance use to inform planning and budgeting to ensure VAWDASV is complemented in other areas
- Collaboration and equal partnership across appropriate agencies to ensure the effective investment in responses to VAWDASV and enable integrated pathways of support that promote prevention and earlier intervention
- Not undertaking commissioning activities in silos to support specialist provision linking with mainstream provision and services
- Providing all survivors, including children and young people, equal access to holistic appropriately resourced, high quality, needs-led, strength based, and trauma informed, gender responsive services across the region
- Engaging with and be informed by survivors, including children and young people, to inform needs analysis, service design and whole system responses
- Understanding the expertise of the specialist sector to inform needs analysis, service design and whole system responses
- Understanding where good services are already being delivered, in accordance with recognised standards and consider how best to facilitate service
- Where possible, providing stability to the sector in terms of duration of contracts or agreements

## How Will We Deliver This Strategy?

### Strategy Principles

The implementation of this Strategy and achievement of its objectives will be underpinned by the following principles:



- **Early Intervention and Prevention** – the foundation for the effectiveness of the strategy as part of a public health approach to violence
- **A whole system response** – recognition of the different and distinct elements and responses required to meet needs of survivors for all forms of violence against women, sexual violence and domestic abuse
- **Supporting and Safeguarding** - ensuring that all individuals who are safeguarded from violence and abuse, receive an efficient, effective and coordinated response and are supported to access a range of services to meet their needs
- **Survivor Engagement** – where survivors are involved, heard and are central to why we are making the changes needed
- A commitment to **Co-production** - solution focused approaches where people are given equal status and are meaningfully involved at all stages
- **Shared Learning** - promoting a culture of continuous improvement, reflection and review to improve outcomes for victims and survivors
- **Equality** – a positive approach to diversity, ensuring this Strategy is responsive to all; as well as equally accessible provision across the region to meet needs
- **Leadership** - a need to ensure regional to local continuum, accountability and clarity of direction



## Multi-Agency Working, Partnerships and Collaboration

Collaborative work in relation to VAWDASV is often focused on multi-agency fora which bring organisations together to support and case manage those at risk of harm or abuse, as well as those who are at risk, or are perpetrating abuse or harm. The region has benefited from strong collaboration and partnership working arrangements for many years. Across the region, partners are committed to tackling VAWDASV and as such, there is commitment at strategic leadership level and operationally to drive forward work plans, progress and enable effectiveness in the response to VAWDASV and delivery of services. In the implementation of this Strategy, collaboration, partnership arrangements and multi-agency working will continue to include the following, to improve services for victims and survivors:

- Representation within the regional governance structure and arrangements from all Relevant Authorities and public bodies; devolved and non-devolved
- Commitment by all partners at a strategic level to ensure resources are utilised according to the needs of the local communities
- Supporting innovative practices and ideas to provide a complete package of support for those who need it
- Acknowledging and further facilitating the expertise and knowledge that the specialist services and sector brings

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence impacts upon all services, not least adult and children's social services, housing, criminal justice, education, the police, health services, and voluntary and community organisations. This strategy will further enable a coordinated community response within Gwent to reduce the prevalence and impact of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and increase the awareness and ability to act swiftly and effectively within communities and professionals. Specifically, collaboration will support mechanisms to remain dynamic, continuously enabling seamless and integrated provisions, for example:

### Police and Office for Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

Strategically, collaboration will focus on alignment of strategies to achieve greater impact and lobbying Relevant Authorities and wider partners in improving their response to VAWDASV using data and trend information to influence and attract commitment. It will also support joint funding and commissioning arrangements supporting value for money processes and avoiding duplication of services. Operationally, multi-agency working will facilitate links between the Public Protection Unit, Rape and Serious Sexual Assault, Management of Serious or Violent Offenders (MOSOVO) and Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding Team to support information sharing, risk assessment approaches and effective pathways for those requiring support for VAWDASV.

One of the historic challenges of the region has always been the difficulty of defining and agreeing across partners and agencies, the definition or meaning of early intervention and prevention. A shared understanding of prevention is required across the sector to properly determine where and how partners, services and implementation of this Strategy fits within the prevention of VAWDASV agenda. The Violence Prevention Unit (VPU) adopts a public health lens across three tiers of intervention that supports a systematic, whole society approach to the prevention of VAWDASV. Therefore, this Strategy will hold alignment with this approach and interpretation of prevention as follows:



Source: Violence Prevention Unit website

## National Programmes

There are also national programmes in existence that further support collaboration across the region and strengthen partnership working for on-going contribution to achieving the aims of the Act:

### Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Preventing ACEs and breaking generational cycles of ACEs can have significant benefits for individuals and families as well as wider communities. This Strategy will support the focus and emphasis of mitigating and preventing ACEs. This will be achieved through partnership working structures that support learning and commitment that enables partners to become more ACE informed in their responses to VAWDASV.

### Violence Prevention Unit (VPU)

The VPU in Wales works with partners and service providers to deliver programmes and projects that ensure violence prevention activity in Wales is effective and sustainable. The VPU take a public health approach to preventing violence, seeking to understand the causes of violence based on evidence and using this evidence to develop interventions focused on the underlying causes of violence. As the VPU also evaluate these interventions before they consider scaling up each one to help more people and communities across Wales, they support the capacity building required to develop a whole system response to the prevention of violence.

### Criminal Justice in Wales Remote Evidence Sites (RES)

The region benefits from one Remote Evidence Site that supports alternative settings for victims of VAWDASV, including children, to give evidence to Magistrates and Crown Court hearings. Under the partnership arrangements of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), VAWDASV partners will implement the national RES Protocol to support the operational processes', principles and responsibilities to continue enabling survivors of VAWDASV to access justice and achieve best evidence.

### Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse. Operation Encompass ensures that there is a simple telephone call or notification to a school's trained Designated Safeguarding Lead /Officer prior to the start of the next school day after an incident of police attended domestic abuse where there are children related to either of the adult parties involved. This sharing of information enables appropriate support to be given, dependent upon the needs and wishes of the child.

Children are negatively impacted by experiencing domestic abuse and without early intervention and support this negative impact can last through a child's life course. Domestic abuse can impact upon social, psychological, physical, emotional and behavioural outcomes with an often-negative impact upon a child's academic success. This Strategy will continue to support Operation Encompass aims across Gwent, by directly connecting police and schools, to:

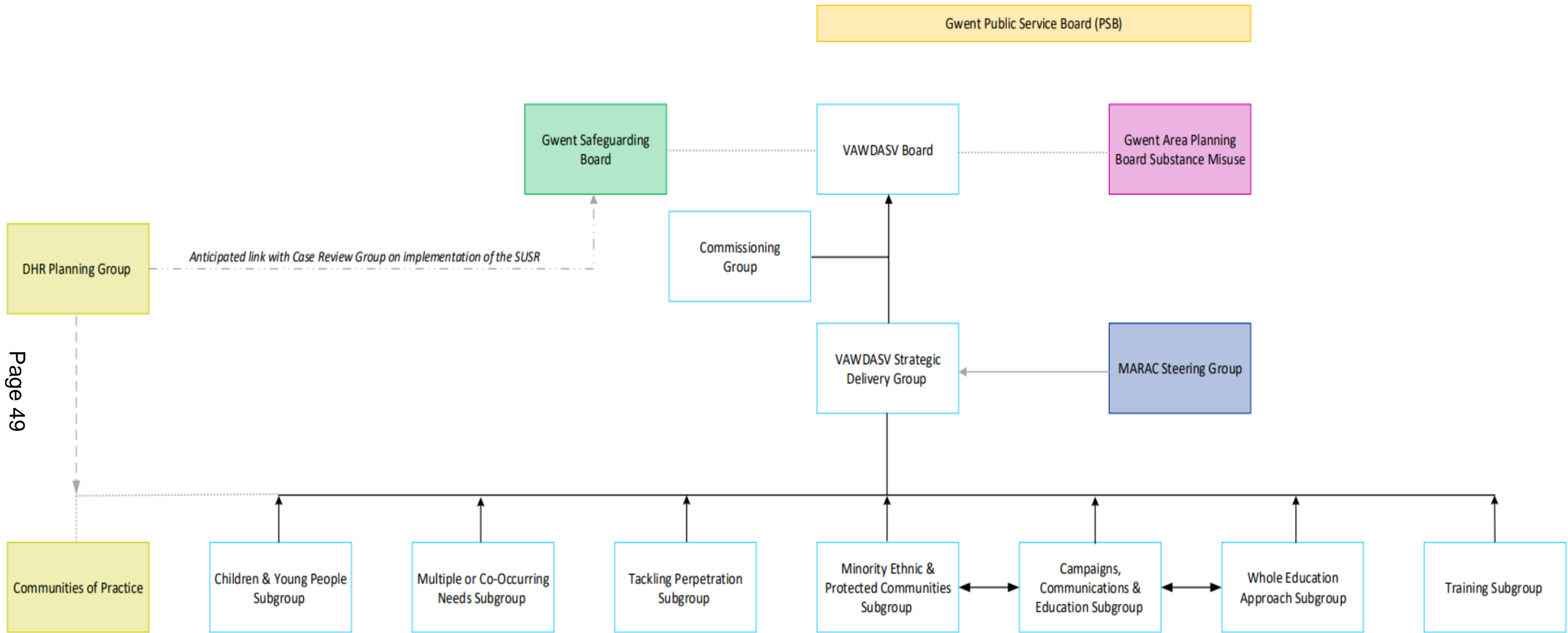
- secure better outcomes for children
- enable schools to better understand the impact living with domestic abuse has upon children
- help schools to better understand a child's lived experience and to therefore be able to support and nurture each child, making a child's day better and giving them a better tomorrow

## Governance Arrangements

Strong leadership is required to embed violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence as “everyone’s business” that requires all areas of public policy to address. Subsequently, ownership of this Strategy must sit at the highest level to secure robust strategic buy in from partners and ensure a significant contribution to shape and improve the delivery of services for those affected. The direction and oversight of this Strategy sits within the structure outlined below. However, in progressing the actions under Fundamental 2 (regional structures reform), the governance for VAWDASV will continue to evolve beyond the arrangements below to intersect with Community Safety, Substance use, Safeguarding, Criminal Justice and Gwent Public Services Board structures to achieve a strong public service approach.



Gwent Regional VAWDASV Governance and Reporting Structures





### VAWDASV Board

The VAWDASV Board will hold representation of Relevant Authorities and statutory bodies directly responsible for upholding and implementing the statutory obligations and guidance under the VAWDASV Act. Collectively, members of the Board will ensure that the relevant functions of the Act are upheld across the region, ensuring the need to remove or minimise any factors which increase the risk of violence against women and girls, or exacerbate the impact of such violence on victims. A key role of the Board will be the implementation of the Strategy, which is a statutory requirement placed on Local Authorities and Local Health Boards under Section 5 the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

In recognition that effective implementation of the Act and its statutory guidance must, by necessity, involve all Relevant Authorities, the membership of the Board will include representation from the five Gwent local authorities, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and Welsh Ambulance Service (as an NHS Trust). Local authority representation will include social care, education, community safety, safeguarding, substance use and housing. To enable whole system change and support a public health approach, senior leaders from VAWDASV related statutory bodies (i.e., Police, Probation and Office for Police and Crime Commissioner) will also hold Board membership.

Linked to the regional reforms, it is anticipated that the VAWDASV Board will become accountable to the Gwent Public Services Board.

### VAWDASV Strategic Delivery Group

The VAWDASV Strategic Delivery Group (SDG) will be the key driver in the delivery of this Strategy and the implementation of the annual delivery plans. As a senior group, the SDG will directly coordinate the work of the subgroups that report to it and oversee the progress and outputs of the relevant work plans across the region. SDG membership will consist of senior managers across Relevant Authorities, specialist and third sector and public bodies who will have the ability to raise any issues, contribute to discussion (offering challenge where appropriate), ensure dissemination of information, commit to partnership working and collaboration and hold authority and decision-making powers to act upon requirements of their individual organisation.

### Commissioning Group

The Commissioning Group will be an integral function to the long-term and sustainable commissioning of high quality, collaborative services in the prevention, protection and support for victims affected by VAWDASV. The Commissioning Group will comprise of multi-sector representation where VAWDASV is present (e.g., social care, health, preventative services, substance use). The purpose of the Commissioning Group will be twofold:

1. To collectively plan for the design and delivery of sustainable VAWDASV services across the region, embedding the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services in Wales Statutory Guidance<sup>15</sup>
2. Decision making in respect of grant funding and allocation of grants providing to the region by Welsh Government.

The Commissioning Group will typically report into the VAWDASV Board but will have close links with SDG and the subgroups as these will inform the evidence-base and provide the work direction for the Commissioning Group.

### *Subgroups*

Acting as enablers to this Strategy and reporting to the VAWDASV Strategic Delivery Group will be several subgroups. These subgroups will exist for the duration of this Strategy with their workstreams dictated by the Focus Areas and subsequent annual implementation plan. Across the three-year period, there will be flexibility to review purpose and/or change the considerations of subgroups to remain dynamic in their focus but as a brief overview, subgroups parameters will cover:

**Children & Young People** – whole system approaches to supporting children and young people affected by VAWDASV, whole system approaches to addressing abusive behaviours and perpetration by children and young people and development of a regional ‘Knowledge Hub’; capturing best practice, gaps in delivery and areas for influencing regional policy considerations

**Multiple or Co-occurring Needs** – identifying and addressing the gaps to meet the needs of those that experience multiple barriers to accessing services. As a minimum, this subgroup will have representation from health, substance use, housing and third sector providers

**Tackling Perpetration** – providing the structure, focus and direction for identifying and disrupting perpetration and understanding ‘what works’ with perpetrators

**Minority Ethnic and Protected Communities** – to improve the recognition, reporting and response to VAWDASV in relation to minority ethnic groups and protected characteristics (e.g., honour-based abuse, disability) to strengthen multi agency response as well as providing scrutiny and challenge to embed equality, diversity, and inclusion in services across the region

**Campaigns, Communication & Engagement** – the development, planning and implementation of campaigns, awareness raising and engagement of the public on VAWDASV

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<sup>15</sup> [statutory-guidance-for-the-commissioning-of-vawdasv-services-in-wales.pdf \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/statutory-guidance-for-the-commissioning-of-vawdasv-services-in-wales.pdf)



**Whole Education Approach** – holding oversight of the regional response to the Whole Education Approach Guidance from Welsh Government, ensuring the recommend elements are considered and monitored as well as co-working with the Children & Young People Subgroup to address national areas of concern around children and young people (e.g., peer on peer sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviours<sup>16</sup>)

**Training** – holding the oversight of the National Training Framework in Gwent, advising and arranging training plans and assessing need and solutions for Specialist Syllabus training requirements

In addition to the above subgroups, the regional structure will also include a:

**Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Planning Group** – taking learning from DHR findings and looking at what information and at what level needs to be disseminated, how and to whom in light of the review and developing an action plan to implement this. In the context of changes afoot with the introduction of the Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR), this group will also consider how the learning can be shared with the Wales Safeguarding Repository for the learning to be incorporated beyond the region

**Communities of Practice** forum – a new, more focused way of working, providing opportunities for Practitioner’s to build confidence, skills and knowledge, collaborate and network across the sector. Communities of Practice will support engagement with providers, survivors, voices from seldom heard communities and experts to share experiences, problem solve and enable better visibility of and access to available support; ultimately facilitating a more joined-up experience to deliver prevention, protection and support for VAWDASV within the community

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-report/we-dont-tell-our-teachers-experiences-peer-peer-sexual-harassment-among-secondary>

## Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan below outlines how the Fundamentals and Focus Areas will be prioritised across the region for the next three years. A Delivery Plan will be produced on an annual basis to reflect the actions required, expertise needed and establish how progress will be measured to achieve the goals under each year of the Strategic Plan.

### Fundamentals

		Goals		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Page 53 Implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Section 3)	Undertake an Evidence-Based Needs Assessment on Children and Young People impact by VAWDASV			Collaborative Commissioning of Services to Address Gaps
	Raising Awareness of Services, Pathways of Support and Interventions for Children and Young People Impacted by VAWDASV		Collaborative Commissioning of Services to Address Gaps	Reviewing the Role of Public Services for Further Development of Partnership Working to Meet the Needs of Children and Young People
Regional Structures Reform	Embedding VAWDASV into Governance Arrangements in Community Safety		Reviewing Structures for Partnership Delivery of Sustainable Services	
	Embedding VAWDASV into Governance Arrangements in Gwent Public Services Board			
	Supporting the implementation of the Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR)			
Infrastructure for Regional Services and Delivery	Establishing 'Benchmark' Needs Assessments that Outline Prevalence, Scale, Good Practice and Resource Deficits		Reviewing and Updating Needs Assessments to Support 'Live' Priorities	
	Establishing a VAWDASV Commissioning Group		Focus on Maintaining, Sustaining and Developing Services	Planning and Methodology for Whole System Approach VAWDASV Services

Focus Areas

	Goals		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>Tackling Perpetration</b>	Undertaking a Regional Needs Assessment That Will Inform a Whole System Approach to Tackling Perpetration	Planning Solutions in Response to Regional Needs Assessment	Commissioning of Perpetrator Programmes and Interventions
		Supporting Identification and Response to Perpetration Identified in Education Based Settings	
<b>Children and Young People</b>	Empowering and Educating Young People to Support VAWDASV Prevention and Early Intervention		
	Developing a 'Knowledge Hub' of Evidence-Based Programmes and Interventions for Children and Young People	Developing a 'Knowledge Hub' of Evidence-Based Programmes and Interventions for Children and Young People	Commissioning of Programmes and Interventions for Children and Young People
	Developing a Framework for Participation and Child/Young Person Voice for the Planning and Delivery of Services		Influencing and Planning for Sustainable Funding of Children/Young Person Programmes and Interventions
<b>Misogyny and Harassment</b>	Delivering Campaign and Communication Activities that Raise Awareness of Misogyny and Harassment		
	Supporting Identification and Reporting of Workplace Harassment		
	Supporting Identification and Reporting of Abuse of Power, Position or Perpetration by Public Bodies		
<b>Multiple or Co-Occurring Needs</b>	Developing Collaboration Arrangements between Agencies and Providers to Establish and Support Cross Specialism Trained Practitioners	Establishing Pathways and Resources to Support Solution Focused Approaches to Challenges that Exist	Influencing and Planning for Continued Sustainability of Collaboration Support Services
	Understanding Trauma Informed Approaches Required to Appropriately Respond to VAWDASV Issues Where There are Co-existing Support Needs		

## Annex A: Definitions and Glossary

### Definitions

#### Violence Against Women

Violence against women is defined by the United Nations and others as acts of violence which are suffered disproportionately by women that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Violence against women shall be understood to encompass but not be limited to:

- a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

#### Domestic Abuse

The UK Government definition of domestic abuse is 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.'

#### Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is any unwanted sexual act or activity. According to the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 sexual violence means sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or threats of violence of a sexual nature. The act further defines sexual exploitation as something that is done to or in respect of a person which warrants an offence under Part 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. This includes the following definitions:

- a) Rape - when a person intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person with his penis when that other person does not consent to the penetration, and/or he does not reasonably believe that the other person consents.
- b) Assault by penetration - the intentional sexual penetration of the vagina or anus of another person with a part of the person's body or anything else, when that other person does not consent to the penetration, and/or he does not reasonably believe that the other person consents.
- c) Sexual assault - a person intentionally touching another person sexually in a manner to which the other person does not consent to the touching, and/or the person does not reasonably believe that the other person consents.

- d) Child sex offences - rape or any sexual activity with a child, familial child sex offences and meeting a child following sexual grooming.

### Sexual Harassment

The legal definition of sexual harassment is when someone carries out unwanted sexual behaviour towards another person that makes them feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated. It is also when someone carries out this behaviour with the intention of making someone else feel that way.

### Harassment

Harassment is used to cover the 'causing alarm or distress' offences under section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and 'putting people in fear of violence'.

### Forced Marriage

Forcing a person (whether by physical force or coercion by threats or other psychological means) to enter into a religious or civil ceremony of marriage (whether or not legally binding). The pressure put on people to marry against their will can be physical (including threats, actual physical violence and sexual violence) or emotional and psychological (for example, when someone is made to feel like they're bringing shame on their family).

### Honour Based Abuse (HBA)

Honour-based abuse is a crime or incident committed to protect or defend the 'honour' of a family or community.

### Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM also known as female circumcision or female genital cutting, is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons". Female genital mutilation is an act that is an offence under sections 1, 2 or 3 of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

### Gender Based Violence

Gender-based Violence is violence, threats of violence or harassment arising directly or indirectly from values, beliefs or customs relating to gender or sexual orientation.

## Glossary

### Ask and Act

A process of targeted enquiry across the Welsh Public Service in relation to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

### BME

Black and Minority Ethnic or Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic is the terminology used to describe people of non-white descent.



### Incel<sup>17</sup>

Incel is short for Involuntary Celibate. People who define themselves as incels say they cannot get a sex life despite the fact they want to be in a relationship.

### Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA)

Trained specialist worker who provides short to medium-term casework support for high-risk victims of domestic abuse.

### Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA)

Trained specialist worker who provides support to victims/survivors of rape and sexual assault.

### MARAC

A MARAC is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

### Victim/Survivor

The term used to describe the person who is potentially experiencing Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. Other terms encompassed may include; 'service user' 'client' and 'patient' and reflect the terms used by different organisations to define their relationship to the person at risk. In practical terms it is suggested that the person experiencing these issues selects the term they prefer, where a term is required.

### Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Specialist Sector

Third sector organisations whose core business is Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

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<sup>17</sup> [Incels: Inside a dark world of online hate - BBC News](#)

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# Agenda Item 7

*Cabinet 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: **19<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

Report Subject: **Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2022/2023**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Hayden Trollope, Cabinet Member People and Social Services**

Report Written by: **Tanya Evans, Interim Corporate Director of Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
22.8.23	24.8.23	07.09.23			19.9.23		21.9.23	

## 1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the People Scrutiny Committee with the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2022/2023 (Appendix 1).

## 2. Scope and Background

2.1 The performance of the department is monitored throughout the financial year from April to March, with a six-month report presented to People Scrutiny Committee during 2022-23. At the end of the year a comprehensive self-evaluation of performance is undertaken to inform the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services

2.2 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) places a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions.

## 3. Options for Recommendation

### Option 1

To support the publication of the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2022/2023 and recommend approval by Council.

### Option 2

Consider the detail contained in the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2022/2023 and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate comments and or recommendations for amendment prior to approval and publication.

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

It is a statutory responsibility of the Director of Social Services to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Social Services and produce an Annual Report. The Annual Report contributes and forms part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF).

## 5. Implications Against Each Option

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

The Director's Annual Report identifies the pressures and budgetary implications for 2022/2023.

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

Social Services maintain a directorate risk register which is aligned to both service level and corporate risk. The risk register is reviewed as part of the business planning process and included within the performance reporting of the Director of Social Services.

### 5.3 **Legal**

There are no legal implications with this report.

### 5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no staffing implications related in this report.

## 6. Supporting Evidence

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

Detail is provided within the Director's Annual Report 2022/2023 (Appendix 1).

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

The key theme of the Social Services and Well-being Act is to promote the well-being of people who need care and support. Within the annual report it is highlighted where the Directorate has worked closely with the public to improve service delivery and user outcomes. Reporting provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the Directorate and ensure accountability.

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

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.

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

The Annual report enables the department to plan for the future as spend, risk and performance is continuously reported on and provides a baseline of where the department is currently and where it needs to be in the future.

### 6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The work undertaken by the department 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 and not spending as much on services in the future.

### 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Social Services work collaboratively across boundaries to benefit citizens requiring health and social care services across Gwent.

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

The purpose of the SSWBA is to foster integration between Health and Social Services.

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

The workforce who deliver the functions of the SSWBA 2014 have adopted the agile working policy of the council which will have a positive impact on car emissions as staff are now able to work from home to undertake paperwork and do not have to travel to the office.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

All service provision and functions that sit under social services are subject to socio economic disadvantages for example, low income, material and area deprivation. All programmes work towards addressing these disadvantages.

The overarching vision is to support the needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. With the aim of building resilient individuals, resilient families and resilient communities.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Monitoring of the performance of the Social Services Directorate will be reported through the People Scrutiny Committee as per the forward work programme.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

Appendix 1 – Annual Report of the Director of Social Services

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# Director Social Services

Annual Report

2022/23



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# Introduction

**Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Social Services Annual Report 2022/2023. Over the past few years the Department has been developing this annual report to highlight the key areas of improvements and challenges that have been faced.**

This report has been developed in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, referred to as 'the Act' throughout this document. The Act aims to provide the most radical change to the way in which Social Services is provided since 1948. It focuses on improving the well-being of people who come to Social Services for support. It is person centred and focuses on prevention and reducing the need for care and support. It recognises that responsibility lies not only within Social Services Departments, but also within the wider Local Authority and with partners (particularly Health and the Third Sector).

The Act shares similar principles with a number of key national/regional strategies that are being implemented throughout the Council, in particular the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Director of Social Services has a statutory requirement to publish an annual report in relation to the delivery of its functions, to evaluate its performance and also include lessons learned. A key aspect of the report is showing how the six Quality Standards have been implemented in relation to well-being outcomes.

This report provides a strategic overview of the work undertaken throughout 2022/2023 and what plans are in place to move forward. Further supporting information can be found from page 30 of the report.

The report includes evidence of where Social Services have worked collaboratively with partners.

Experiences and learning from service users has been considered as part of the development of the report. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) findings, Audit Wales (AW) findings, case studies, complaints and compliments and quarterly reporting have all been considered as part of the development of this report and evidence from these has been used to inform future learning.

The annual report is used to demonstrate accountability to citizens and service users. As part of this process, the report will be presented to full Council for ratification before it is published on the Council's website and will then be sent to Welsh Ministers. The report will be available on line bilingually and will be shared with partner agencies in order to share good practice, learning and experiences.



## Director's Summary of Performance

22/23 saw a great deal of change for the Council and the Social Services Directorate. The council has a new political administration which in turn has led to a change in the executive member for social services. Councillor Trollope is now our Executive Member bringing with him a sound knowledge of the Social Services agenda, having previously held this position, and having sat on the Social Services scrutiny committee for many years. We have seen a change in the way scrutiny committees have been designed. Social Services now report to the PEOPLE scrutiny committee to which our Education Directorate also report.

A new Corporate Plan has been developed to take us through to 2027. The plan has the following 4 priorities which the Social Services Directorate will be working to

- Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent
- Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities.
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place
- Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent, and resilient

The change has also extended to the senior leadership of the Social Services Directorate, with myself Tanya Evans taking up the role of Interim Director and Alison Ramshaw stepping up as Interim Head of Children's services. These interim arrangements have remained in place throughout the whole of 22/23.

As a Directorate we have reviewed our priorities alongside the priorities for both children's and adult services. It is no surprise to see that both children's and adult services have very similar priorities in relation to safeguarding, workforce, the preventative agenda, plus the sustainability of services.

Budget pressures have been a significant factor during this year due to the increase in demand and complexity of need we have been dealing with. That said the outturn for the end of the financial year was better than expected, all be it still an overspend position. This directorate is heavily dependent on grants from Welsh Government to deliver its core services. If these grants stop in the coming years, it will have a negative impact on our ability to provide our statutory responsibilities.

The Directorate has a clear workforce strategy in place, which has had a positive impact on recruitment to hard to fill vacancies in provider services and our front-line children's social work teams. It has led to a reduction in sickness rates in provider services which had been a hot spot for some time. The workforce has been working as hard as ever this year to meet the needs and provide quality service to the people of Blaenau Gwent. We have much to be proud of in relation to what has been achieved in the last 12 months.

Some of the achievements include: -

- Cwrt Mytton our residential home for people with dementia has been able to open back up to visitors following the pandemic and have held numerous successful social events which have been shared on social media
- Successful staff recruitment to areas we have been struggling to recruit to for some time
- The adult services new IAA structure went live in April 22 and is no longer reliant on grant funding
- The Commissioning Team have continued to support the external sector by passporting the numerous grants received from Welsh Government to support them to continue to deliver services
- We have opened our new SMART flat and progressing the use of technology to support people in Blaenau Gwent to remain independent and living at home for as long as possible.
- Community Meals take up is increasing including our 'tea time trays'

- We have maintained a strong outcomes based approach to the way in which we deliver practice ensuring we hear about “What Matters” to the people we serve balancing their rights and responsibilities
- Augusta House respite provision has been extended to include Children
- The 14 plus Team won a social care accolade for building brighter futures for children and families.
- The child care and play sufficiency assessments have successfully been completed with 5-year action plan in place
- We have seen the launch of our own BG MyST which works intensively with children with complex needs to prevent them entering residential care and working with those in residential care to support their return to foster care or their families.
- The joint Youth Offending Services we have with Caerphilly had a positive inspection.
- Our Children Looked After numbers continue to remain stable.
- We have successfully placed all our children allocated seeking asylum Seeking under the National Transfer Scheme
- The opening of the Augusta House reablement PODS which will give people with learning difficulties the opportunity to develop their independence skills in a purpose-built supported environment.
- The purchase of electric vehicles for Community Meals and home care to support the climate crisis agenda.
- Implementation of the new operating model for the children locality teams to manage the workload and demand for services.
- Successfully used the Regional Integrated capital fund to purchase our first residential home for children looked after.
- Our Families First Young Carers group are finalists in this year’s Social Care Accolade awards



**Tanya Evans**  
**Interim Corporate Director**  
**Social Services 2022/23**



**Cllr Haydn Trollope**  
**Cabinet Member for People and**  
**Social Services**

# How People are shaping our Services

## Engagement

The Social Services Directorate is committed to providing high quality services to its citizens and uses various engagement methodologies in order to understand if the service is achieving the intended outcomes or if amendments to service delivery needs to be considered. The service ensures that the voice of people is used to inform and improve the service moving forward.

The staff ensure that people's voices are heard and listened to by having the 'what matters; conversation to establish the personal outcomes each individual wants to achieve and the support networks they may already have in place to rely on to meet those outcomes.

Throughout April 2022 to March 2023 a variety of engagement events have taken place and include the following:

- **Summer of Fun activities**
- **National Play Day**
- **Men's Health Week**
- **Child Safety Week**
- **Summer Platinum Jubilee events in Cwrt Mytton Residential Care Home**
- **A Gwent regional stakeholder consultation**
- **National Children's Day - promoting the importance of a healthy childhood and the rights of a child**
- **National Smile Month**
- **Involvement with Individuals, children and families occurs on a daily basis and is recorded as part of care planning**
- **Unpaid adult and young carers sessions.**

## Complaints and Compliments

The Social Services Department is committed to providing high quality services to its users; however, despite best intentions, it is recognised that sometimes things can go wrong and the Social Services complaints procedure provides people with the opportunity to voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied with a service. The service uses learning from these complaints to improve services moving forward. The service also welcomes positive feedback and compliments and also uses this information to further improve services.

**From 1st April 2022 to 30th April 2023 in children's services there were 5 stage 1 complaints and 6 stage 2 complaints (1 stage 2 complaint is currently being investigated).**

Some examples of the complaints received are shown below:

- Lack of communication between social services and childcare setting
- Quality in the recording of information
- Not sharing information with parents in respect of safeguarding concerns and actions taken between care settings

- Unhappy with the conduct and communication of a staff member
- Information omitted from minutes during a professionals meeting

Some examples of learning identified and actioned within Childrens services throughout the period were:

- Processes to be reviewed and staff reminded via supervision and training sessions of the importance of communication between professionals
- Staff to receive refresher training focusing on recording factually accurate information in the appropriate language and that is not subjective
- Staff to receive training on how to have 'uncomfortable conversations' in order to be honest and open with parents when keeping observations at the request of social services
- Discussions to take place in 1: 1 supervision session in respect of professional presentation and communication skills
- Minutes to be amended to reflect the full dialogue of the meeting and training and development sessions to be arranged for staff

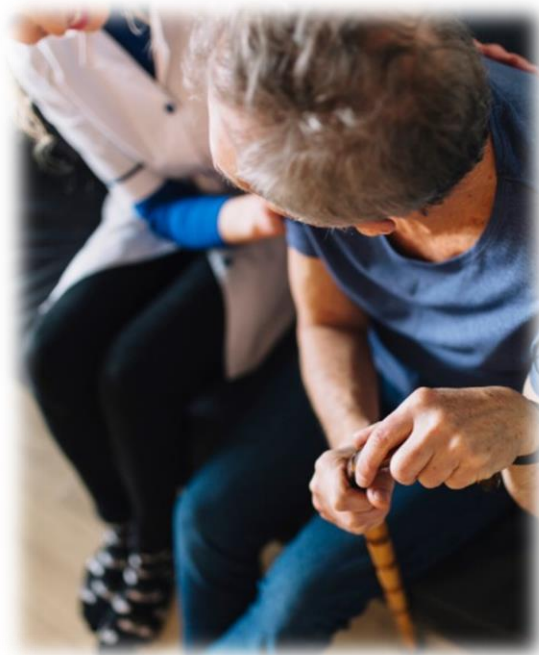
**From 1st April 2022 to 30th April 2023 in adults' services there were 2 stage 2 complaints, 1 completed and 1 complaint is currently being investigated.**

Some examples of the complaints received are shown below:

- The recording of information in formal documents and the quality of communication shared between professionals and complainants

Some examples of learning identified and actioned within Adults services throughout the period were:

- Staff will be reminded of the importance of recording accurate information in the appropriate language, and to include service users and families as part of this process.



# Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help

## Priorities

The Corporate Plan 2022/27 is the Council's roadmap setting out the vision, values and priorities of the Council and the business plans within Social Services are aligned directly to the Corporate Plan. The Social Services priorities are shown below and the Quality Standards demonstrate where improvement has been made, challenges have been addressed and where outcomes have been achieved.

### Departmental Priorities

- To improve accessibility, provision of information and advice to enable people to support their own well-being
- To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them
- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater
- To work with our communities and partners including Aneurin Bevan Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support
- Ensure we have an appropriately skilled, motivated and supported workforce with clear career development pathways in place that support our service delivery
- To have effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm
- To develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of poverty

### Children's Services Priorities

- Ensure all children are safeguarded
- Ensure we have an appropriately skilled, motivated and supported workforce with clear career development pathways in place that support our service delivery
- Ensure all teams deliver an outcomes based approach to practice and service delivery
- Ensure that we provide / commission modern, flexible, cost effective high quality support services that meet both current and future well-being needs of children
- Ensure that preventative support is available for children and their families, that promote early intervention and prevents needs from escalating.
- Manage the Children's Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget
- Ensure the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020 – 2025 actions are regularly monitored and reviewed
- Ensure outcomes for children looked after continue to improve through the implementation of the Corporate Parenting action plan
- Review the way in which children's services operates and decide if a change is necessary in order to manage demand and workload.
- Children's Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles

### Adult Services Priorities

- Ensure all adults are safeguarded
- Ensure we have an appropriately skilled, motivated and supported workforce with clear career development pathways in place that support our service delivery
- Ensure all teams deliver an outcomes based approach to practice and service delivery
- Ensure that we provide / commission modern, flexible, cost effective high quality support services that meet both current and future well-being needs of vulnerable adults and their unpaid family carers
- Ensure that preventative support is available for adults and their unpaid carers, that promote and maintain personal independence
- Manage the Adults Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget
- Undertake a review of the current model of Community Options
- Adult Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles



## Progress of Quality Standards

During a comprehensive assessment of performance at the end of 2022/23, the following achievements and challenges were identified as part of the Council's Performance Management Framework.

### Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

The dedicated **Information Advice and Assistance (IAA)** Teams are the first point of contact for the public who wish to access advice and support and for contacts and referrals for both adult and children services. In relation to adult services this also includes contacts for some health functions. A range of other professionals work within these teams. The teams take a **preventative approach** to ensure needs are met at the earliest opportunity, by the right service, to prevent needs from escalating. Contacts into IAA remain high and have been increasing throughout the period of this report. The Children's IAA Team is funded by a mixture of core and grant funding which is a risk if future grant funding is removed. However, the new Adult Services IAA structure went live in April 2022 and is no longer reliant on grant funding creating a more sustainable service.

Preventative service delivery continues to be a priority across all services. Children's Service's IAA teams have seen a significant rise in referrals, but, despite this, all referrals have been dealt with within statutory timescales. All contacts across both adult and children's services take an outcomes strength based approach by establishing **'what matters'** to the customer and the number of referrals being allocated continues to be stable, evidencing that the preventative work, undertaken at the 'front door', continues to be successful.

Staff are supported with access to training on 'what matters'. New staff have also attended training sessions on **Collaborative Communication** and accessed other learning opportunities available in order to support outcome focused practice, and deliver interventions based on an outcomes/strengths based approach. **Monthly reflective practice sessions** continue in each of the service areas and refresher training is available to all staff through Workforce Development.

Adult Service staff have been undertaking **learning and development opportunities in collaboration with colleagues from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB)** as part of a project facilitated by Social Care Wales (SCW) and there has been a strong emphasis on focussing on changing the conversation with patients during our assessments within our acute and community settings. This work was evaluated by Social Care Wales in the Autumn of 2022. The outcome of the Social Care Wales work will be presented to the Gwent Adult Strategic Partnership Board as part of showcasing across the Regional Partnership Board (RPB). An evaluation report on Balancing Rights and Responsibilities Programme Evaluation can be found at the end of the document under 'useful documents'.

**Regional partnership arrangements** continue and Blaenau Gwent has a strong voice in the development of these arrangements. Joint Service Manager supervision takes place between the Heads of Service from Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Children Services regarding the Youth Offending Service (YOS) delivery, this ensures the children and young people of Blaenau Gwent, in receipt of services from YOS, have their continued needs met.



Across Adult Services we continue to provide opportunities for wider case discussion and problem solving. We have weekly 'fish bowl' meetings which focus on:

- **The presentation of complex cases**
- **Peer support**
- **Quality assurance**
- **General opportunities for creative problem solving**
- **Case discussions**
- **New ways of working**
- **How to best support people who access our services.**

Adult Services are also looking at meeting structures on how best to streamline the 'fish bowl' approach with Balancing Rights and Responsibilities and Systems Review. This to be agreed and finalised in Quarter 1 of 2023/24.

Performance measures reported during 2022/23 are showing: -

**Adults Services Information Advice and Assistance (IAA)** - The number of **enquires received at 'front door' was 4610** compared to **2931 in 21/22 (Aug 21 – March 22)**. Number of **referrals resolved at IAA was 2767** (made up of those enquiries signposted, closed down before progressing to assessment and those that led to an IAA) **compared to 1562 in 21/22 (Aug 21 – March 22)**. The remainder **1843 went onto the Long term teams, Safeguarding, Community Resource Team (CRT) and The Local Authority unpaid carers team compared to 1369 in 21/22 (Aug 21 – March 22)**.

**Children's Services IAA**- there were a total of **6,755 referrals** with **772 of them being referred to preventative services (Families First) compared to 5781 referrals in 21/22 with 546 of them being referred to preventative services (Families First)**.

Support to our unpaid carers including our Young Carers, have benefited from the development of a new scheme that supports them with the impact of the cost of living crisis. The department has implemented a series of information opportunities along with a carers small grant scheme with funding provided by Welsh Government and the Carers Trust for 2022/23 and 2023/24. The coordination of this project has been led by officers from both Children and Adult Services to ensure that we provide equitable opportunities to both our young and adult carers.

Across both Adult and Children's Services we continually monitor and review the way in which services operate and decide if a change is necessary in order to manage demand and workload. As a result of this, as of January 2023, a new pilot commenced with the Children Services **Locality Teams** which will run over a 12-month period. Within this pilot, three new operational care planning teams were established with the 4<sup>th</sup> becoming the **Statutory Assessment Team**. Early indications are that the change is impacting positively on capacity and outcomes for the child and family. The Statutory Assessment Team has also eased the work pressure on the Locality Teams. The pilot is reviewed regularly to ensure that the staff complement is appropriate and that the new model is working well. Caseloads continue to be monitored and all staff and team managers are ensuring caseloads are accurate to ensure they are manageable.



## Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

Within Adult Services we have introduced a new post of Social Work Senior Practitioner with responsibility for the Mental Capacity Act and the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). We continue to work in partnership with the Gwent DOLS team which is hosted by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB). The numbers of people waiting for a DOLS assessment within Blaenau Gwent has reduced considerably during 2022/23 as a direct result of the local monitoring and as a result of coordinated resource to address the back log via both the Gwent DoLS team and externally commissioned assessments.

A **Gwent Dementia Action Plan** has been developed and aligns to the 20 All Wales Dementia Pathway Standards which will also include performance measures. Work stream subgroups have been developed to take forward this programme of work which includes:

- **Engagement**
- **Memory Assessment Service**
- **Dementia Connector role**
- **Dementia Friendly Hospital Charter**
- **Education/Workforce**
- **Measurement/Performance**

Discussions continue with the Alzheimer's society regarding dementia advisors for the dementia reablement programme in line with the Dementia action plan and this new service is due to commence in April 2023.

We continue to aim for the delivery of modern flexible and responsive services that enable older people to maximise their independence and live with appropriate support within their communities. We have developed a new assistive technology SMART flat. Our reablement service within our integrated Community Resource team continues to deliver person centred reablement support.

We have continued to see **increasing demands placed on the Health and Social Care system including at our community and acute hospital sites**. We have been working with our Gwent Local Authority colleagues and ABUHB to revise current models of support to enable patients who are ready for discharge to either safely return back to their own homes or to utilise alternative accommodation, on a temporary basis, whilst waiting for support to enable them to return home. We are using current partnership Regional Integrated Fund (RIF) grant funding to develop a menu of support services including, increasing the use of **Step Closer to Home beds to reduce the dependency on hospital stays and reduce length of stays**, providing additional care home capacity as well as additional capacity within our assessment teams in order to address both the current and future demand.

A Gwent wide 'whole-system' approach is in operation to support people who are experiencing a mental health crisis and includes:

- **Mental Health 111- point of contact live 28th November, this provides a point of contact that is accessible for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis or emotional distress within Gwent - also for family/friends and carers**
- **Emergency Department support service has been introduced at Grange University Hospital Emergency Department, peer support workers provide support to those in emotional distress, preventing escalation and improve quality of mental health support services. Alternatives to hospital**
- **Mental Health Shared Lives service continues to be successful in minimising those in crisis being admitted to psychiatric units and also supporting earlier discharge. Citizens report improved satisfaction.**
- **Crisis Support House, Ty Cynol for those who meet requirements of a safe stay**

Within Children Services, the **South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS)** have entered into the early alert process whereby children are referred to a link worker within one month of a placement order to ensure all potential links to potential adoptive families are explored in a timely manner.

The **Life Journey Work Coordinator** is rolling out training to childcare social workers. Improvements have been made to the quality of materials provided to **adoptive parents**. Understanding the child days and trauma nurture timelines are completed for children aged 18 months + and this provides adoptive families with enhanced information of the impact a child's early life experiences.

The SEWAS Contact Worker continues to promote sibling contact which involves speaking to child care social workers at an earlier date with regards to **sibling contact arrangements** and reviewing existing arrangements. One off birth parent meetings are increasing.

Referrals to **advocacy** are closely monitored by the service manager and good performance is reported across the teams. All staff within preventative services are training in **Collaborative Communication** and new staff entered onto training as part of their induction.

Work has taken place to ensure that **mandatory safeguarding training for foster carers** is being delivered on a face-to-face basis rather than virtually. The training needs of foster carers continue to be monitored and promoted during annual reviews, appraisals and supervision sessions, a programme of training/reflective sessions for foster carers commenced in January 2023 and is being delivered by the **MyST (My Support Team)**.

A **Circle of Security Parenting Programme** has been delivered to a small number of parents with young children, in collaboration with the Psychologist and Support Worker. Additionally, Circle of Security has been delivered to a cohort of foster carers, helping to **stabilise children in care** and preventing a risk of breakdown in placement. Feedback is that they have found the parenting programme to be very beneficial and are adapting their parenting styles accordingly.

In April 2022, Blaenau Gwent established its own MyST to provide greater capacity within the service. Since this time, staff from MyST have been attending News and Networking events and meeting mentors in order to embed the service fully within Blaenau Gwent. Positively, the service is now working with children, under each of the operational teams, suggesting that the service is being utilised by all. MyST are operating at full capacity **providing support to 15 children and young people** as well as some additional bespoke pieces of work. The MyST service also continues to work with a number of young people in residential care on a 'step-down' basis as well as working with a number of **young people who are at risk of entering residential care** on a preventative basis.

Challenges remain regarding the availability of **'step down' accommodation** from residential care into foster care which is largely dependent on the availability of 'step-down' foster placements. **With the demand on placements and the difficulties with recruitment of foster carers the reduction of children in residential care is slower than we would have hoped for, however 22/23 progressed numbers were reducing mainly due to the current cohort of young people reaching 18 and moving into independent accommodation.**

A **Worcester University Evaluation of the 0 -25 Disability Service** has been undertaken. The Evaluation evidences good use of the **disability index and the disability Facebook page** and these services continue to be offered within the team.

Work is underway in respect of supporting partners, to support young people. As part of this, the **Supporting Change Team has been working collaboratively with the Youth Service** to run a small trauma informed, activity based group for some of the hardest to reach young people open to the team. This includes the establishment of a sports session and the continuation of the **Carers Support Group**. The team has also concluded a group work project working in partnership and alongside a targeted group of **young girls looking at raising aspirations/self-esteem and self-worth**. The project has been very well evaluated and the team are looking into how they can run further projects.

This year, Augusta House requested registration from our regulator Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to provide **respite support** to young children in addition to adults which was agreed. This has now enabled the **Disability Team** to have access to a residential respite provision which is proving successful for children with a disability and supporting the needs of their parents and carers, as well as outcomes for the young people.



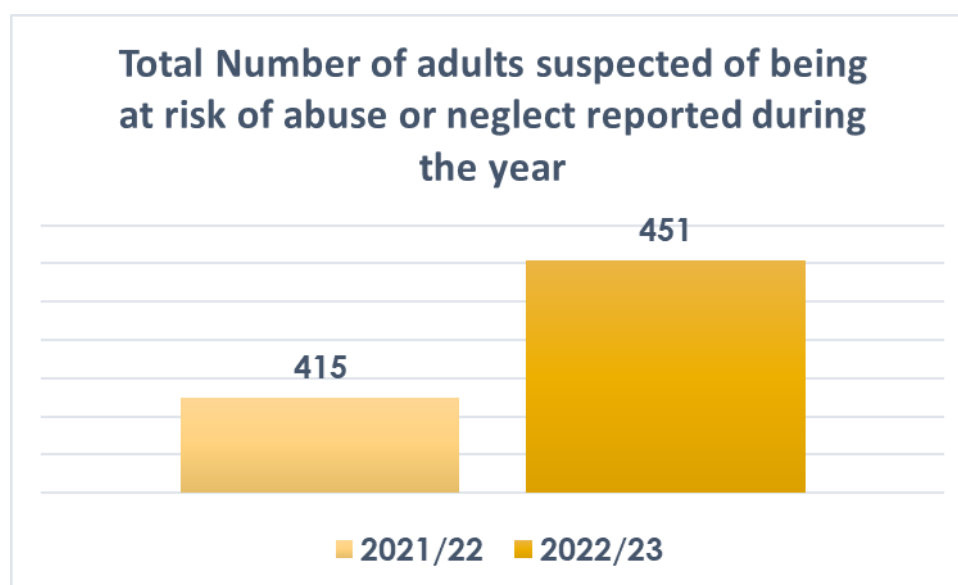


## Protecting and safeguarding people from abuse, neglect or harm

The Department recognises the importance of having robust and sustainable **Safeguarding Teams across both Adult and Children Services** to ensure we not only meet our legislative requirements, but that we are also able to protect our most vulnerable citizens.

Adult Services has implemented a new **adult safeguarding staffing structure** which is now operational and working effectively. An additional senior practitioner for safeguarding has been created to create additional capacity and also provide decision making resilience.

We have seen an increase in numbers of referrals of safeguarding referrals during 2022/23 compared to 2021/22.



**Staff safeguarding training** is ongoing with different models of learning offered to different staff groups. Refresher training has been provided to Provider Services which has included commissioned sessions from the Workforce Development Team and also bespoke learning sessions provided by our Safeguarding Team.

All safeguarding referrals continue to be managed in line with the **Wales Safeguarding Procedures** and statutory requirements. An internal audit has taken place in relation to safeguarding processes across the directorate and reasonable assurance was given.

Despite good progress being made, the **low Social Worker vacancy rates in the Children's Locality Teams needs to be sustained**, plus there are savings attributed to the workforce which could impact on the ability to safeguard.

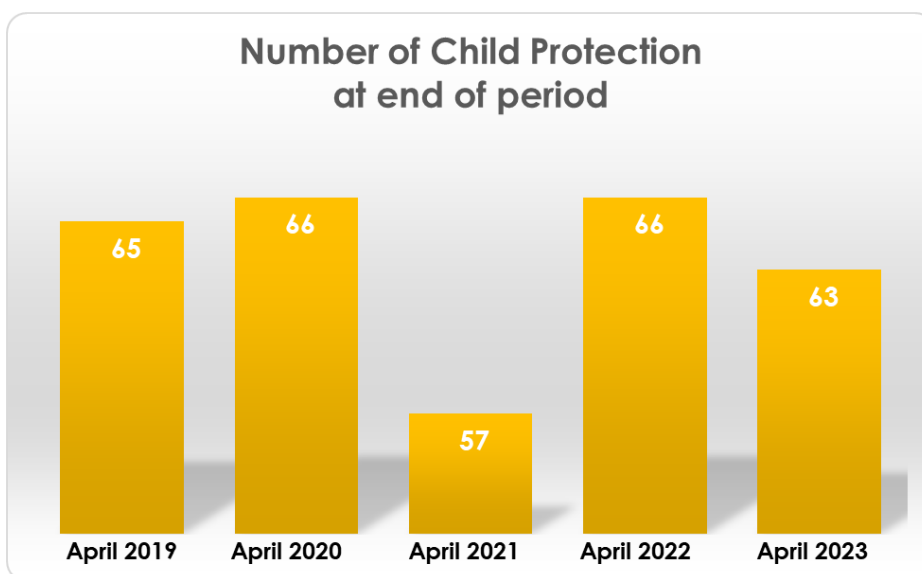
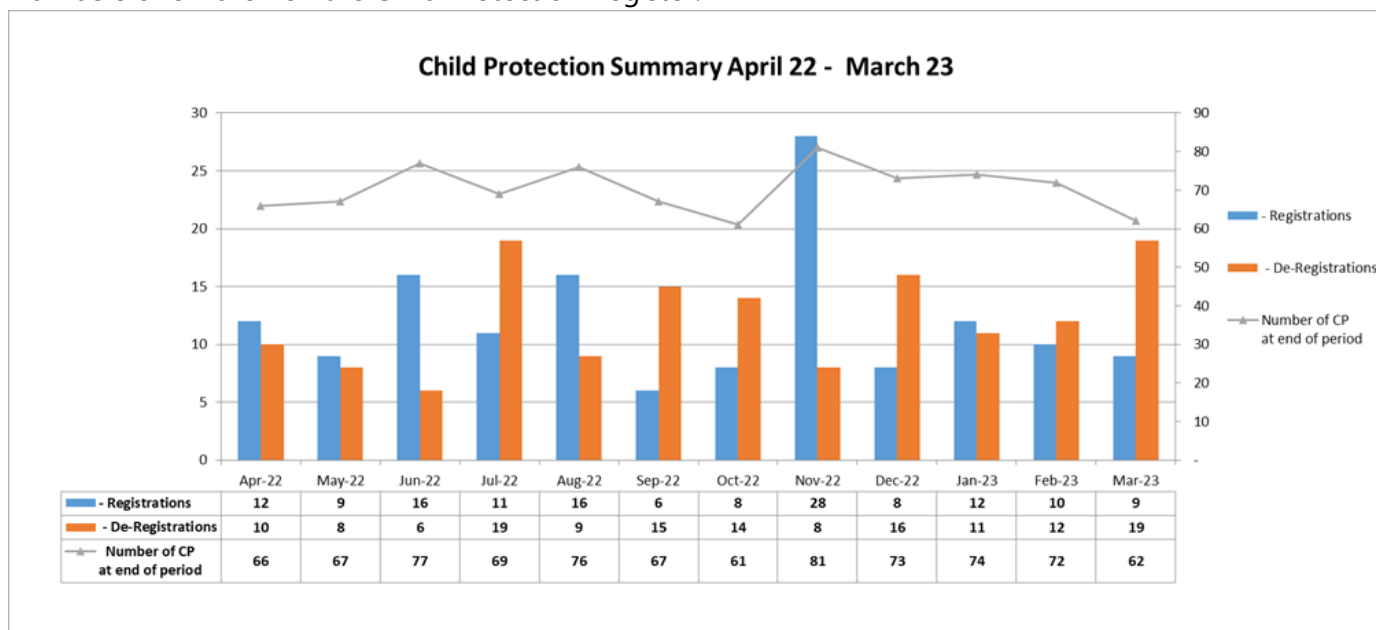
The **Audit Wales Safeguarding report** was presented to Governance and Audit Committee on 8th March 2023. The Corporate **Safeguarding Leads Group**, chaired by the Interim Head of Children's Services, with representation from each directorate across the Council, will implement the recommendations identified by Audit Wales Report. The Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been amended to reflect the recommendations made, and a new Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework has been approved and compliance across the council will be monitored by the Corporate Safeguarding Leads Group.

All new Council staff are informed of the Council’s safeguarding arrangements as part of their induction programme. All staff within teams have completed the relevant level of safeguarding training. Within the Children’s IAA team all Safeguarding referrals must be responded to within 24 hours and we are continuing to respond accordingly. All safeguarding concerns are responded to with appropriate decision making and all strategy discussions are usually held within 24 hours. The issue with Police meeting this timescale remains an issue when they deem it 'non-urgent' they will arrange for this to be held out of this time scale.

**Safeguarding performance** is good, **Child Protection** conferences have been held within statutory timescales as have all Child Protection statutory visiting for children on the register.

Currently the Child Protection Conference process is operating as a Hybrid model of face to face meetings and meetings on TEAMS. Indications are that this model is proving popular with partner agencies and families. The Safeguarding Team Manager continues to review models of facilitating conferences ensuring that the child’s safeguarding needs remains paramount to any future decisions made.

Numbers of children on the Child Protection Register: -



**‘What Matters’** meetings have been implemented and used regularly in practice with multi-agency participation and high scrutiny of all **Child Protection plans**.

The **Early Years, Child Protection Training programme** is created annually and checked monthly to ensure that it is up to date. Safeguarding is always a standing item in the Network Meetings and six monthly meetings are held with Safeguarding Lead and the Early Years, Child Protection Manager.

We continue to be a key partner of the **Gwent Safeguarding Strategic Board** and relevant operational sub groups. As a partner of the Gwent DoLS Board we continue to prepare for the implementation of the **Liberty Protection Safeguards legislation (LPS)** and during the year have contributed to the consultation on the long-awaited codes of practice.

There have been ongoing reviews of the care management waiting lists due to capacity demands and **reduced availability of domiciliary care** to support people safely at home. We have proactively utilised the DASH emergency domiciliary care service to cover unplaced packages of care and this has ensured that no citizens have been without their domiciliary care packages and that they are safely supported at home. All people are safely supported within available capacity.

Work has commenced on the reviewing of all Adult Services policies and procedures. As part of this work **our Provider services medication policy has been revised and fully implemented, along with a comprehensive training package to all Provider front line care staff.**

Having a suitably qualified and skilled workforce is paramount when ensuring that vulnerable people are safeguarded. The department has developed a workforce strategy that not only ensures that we recruit and retain staff across Adult Services, Children Services and our Provider teams but that we also support their development, progression and wellbeing. To assist in the delivery of the workforce strategy the department has successfully recruited a lead officer to support managers in progressing and promoting the opportunities that we can offer staff in Blaenau Gwent.

As a partnership, we have submitted a **Welsh Government Regional (Gwent) bid to support capacity for the development of Liberty Protection Safeguards** in order to provide important rights and protections for people who lack the mental capacity to agree to care, support or treatment arrangements, where these arrangements amount to a deprivation of liberty. In addition to this, a new **Social Work senior practitioner with responsibility for Mental Capacity Act support and DoLS** has been recruited and due to start in July 2023.

There continues to be a slow but steady reduction of **Children Looked After**. New children are still coming into care but we are also progressing with discharging Care Orders for children living at home or with kinship carers.





## Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society

Work-based services within our **Community Options and Day Activities teams** have continued throughout the year with students returning to placements within our catering enterprise in partnership with Vison 21. As part of our employment and training opportunities for people with a Learning Disability or living with poor mental health, we continue to scope new opportunities for development including the development of additional catering enterprises including a new community café

Our community meals and afternoon tea tray options offer continues to grow and we are working in partnership with learners from **Abertillery Learning Community** to re-brand the service as part of the implementation of our new electric delivery vans

Our Adult Service Community Options Service continues to provide day activities for vulnerable adults in their own communities. This includes supporting people to access training and development courses, activity sessions, exercise classes, gym sessions etc.

Provider managers have commenced engagement with **Coleg Gwent (Ebbw Vale Campus) Health and Social Care students** and will be offering work based placements to approximately 15 students during the 2022/23 academic year. This will enable our tenants / residents to engage with the students and in addition we are planning for students from the Hair and Beauty courses to provide sessions at our Care Homes.

The reduction in COVID restrictions has enabled our residential care homes, supported living services and Augusta Respite Centre to re-engage with the wider community activities and welcome visitors back into support our residents. Cwrt Mytton has welcomed learners from a number of our school as part of our intergenerational work streams and our resident and friends' associations are coordinating regular activities that bring the community back in to residents.

Our new Promoting Independence pods at Augusta Respite Centre have been completed following an allocation of funding from the Welsh Government Regional Integration Fund (RIF) grant. They are due to open in the Summer of 2023 and will provide opportunities for people with a learning disability to experience independent living, in a safe environment.

A cost of living Welsh Government funded grant scheme delivered over the winter proved a huge success with many **unpaid carers supported with food vouchers** and items to help them maintain their wellbeing including:

- **Gym membership**
- **iPads**
- **Laptops**
- **Driving lessons.**

**Flying Start** services were involved in the Estyn inspection that was undertaken in November 2022 on Blaenau Gwent Education Services and came out as an **area of excellence** in verbal feedback.

**Families First** continue to work intensively to prevent cases escalation into statutory services with:

- **330 cases active at the end of March 2023**
- **237 cases being discussed at Wellbeing panels in the last quarter**
- **A variety of group, community work and events being delivered throughout the year**

At the end of academic year 2021-2022 the following related to our children looked after

- **142 children of statutory school age were looked after by Blaenau Gwent local authority.**
- **This is a decrease compared with the previous academic year when there were 154 children**
- **The majority continue to be educated within Blaenau Gwent and attend mainstream schools.**
- **A small proportion attend more specialist education settings**
- **Almost all learners achieved recognised qualifications at the end of their statutory school studies**
- **The majority now engaged in post 16 educational and/ or training opportunities**
- **A total of 11 plans were not initiated within 10 days:**
  - **Eight were as a result of delay in the Children Looked After education team being notified at the point that the children became looked after; and**
  - **Three were as a result of the learners being unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who were not in school at the point of becoming looked after.**
- **Incidents of exclusions issued in respect of children looked after increased.**
- **The number who received fixed term exclusions during the year increased compared with the previous year**
- **The primary reason why exclusions are issued continues to be for persistent disruptive behaviour The majority of exclusions continue to be issued in respect of secondary aged pupils.**
- **The number of exclusions being issued for primary aged children remains low.**
- **54% of Personal Education Plans for newly accommodated children were initiated within statutory timescales.**

A small proportion of children looked after **experienced a change of school** during the course of the year. This is an increase when compared with the previous year. Consistency of schooling continues to be considered as part of the matching process when a child looked after moves placement. Transport is provided where necessary to ensure the stability of schooling. When a child does have to move school, processes are in place to ensure that delays in admissions are avoided, wherever possible.

The Welsh Government has continued to provide funding for a set number of children to participate in the Letterbox Club each year. The **Letterbox Club encourages reading for pleasure and learning at home**. It helps to improve the educational outlook for children who are looked after. Parcels have continued to be distributed to our children on a monthly basis between October and May, with an additional festive parcel provided in December.



## Supporting people to develop safely and to maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

A pathway for **Antenatal support supported by Families First** has been developed, which will mean every pregnant woman in Blaenau Gwent will be able to access the appropriate Antenatal support until the child is 1-year-old.

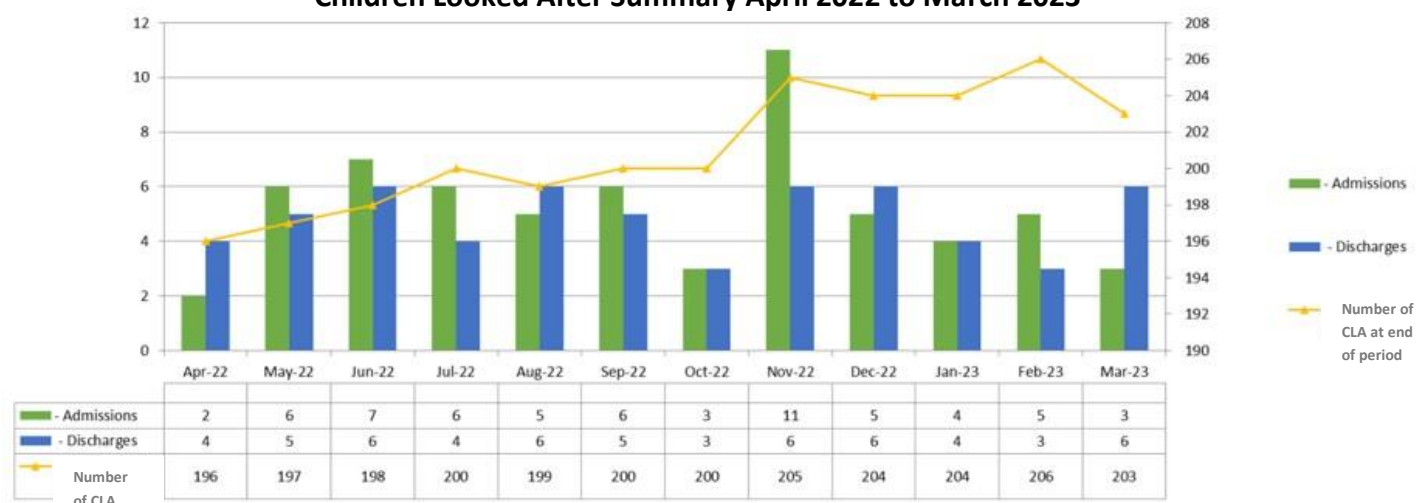
A **special guardianship order (SGO)** is a way of providing stability for a child who cannot return to live with their birth parent and for whom adoption is not appropriate. It is a legal way of giving the person caring for the child, clear, long-term responsibilities for the child's upbringing. **As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 there were 145 children subject of SGO living in 107 families open to the service.**

A **formal consultation process for foster carers** has been implemented with the deadline for submission of the survey by 31st March 2023, the outcome of the consultation will be processed and reported going forward.

It has proven to be **extremely difficult to recruit foster carers** and interest in fostering at this current time is very low, despite efforts to increase awareness via social media and recruitment activity. Close working relationships with the Foster Wales Manager and the promotion of the Foster Wales brand continues. **Demand for foster placements has increased** and there has been a **greater reliance on Independent Fostering Agency placements (IFA).**

Teams continue to practice in an **outcome focused** way where we identify family options early in the intervention process, which we prioritise if children have to be admitted into the care of the Local Authority. However, there are situations when appropriate placements are not available locally leading to having to access **Independent Fostering Agency placements and residential care for young children.** Supervision is used consistently to review the plans of Children Looked After and consider opportunities for discharging the Care Orders. Regular review of care planning for these children is a priority and for those with a high level of needs referrals to MyST are considered and prioritised.

**Children Looked After Summary April 2022 to March 2023**



In order to help mitigate the limited placement availability, **Foster Wales** delivered local and regional campaigns as follows:

- **New Purpose**
- **Right time to foster**
- **Make a difference in 2023**
- **Become a foster carer in your local area**

A '**Men Who Care**' **Regional Support Group** has been established with four meetings being held over a year. 15 male foster carers attended the first group.

Adult Services has reviewed its Hospital Social work team and it has created additional capacity to support patients and their families and carers to avoid unnecessary lengthy stays in hospital. This team works closely with the hospital ward staff, discharge assistants and therapists to ensure that patients can return home as quickly as possible. The team also supports family unpaid carers through the discharge process and provides statutory carers assessments to enable carers to maintain their caring role alongside their work, health, leisure and family commitments.

Respite is an important part of maintaining caring responsibilities. The department is currently working with our neighbouring authorities to develop enhanced respite offers alongside the more traditional offers of care home placements, Augusta House Respite Centre and Day Opportunities. The new scheme is due to be launched in Summer 2023 and is a partnership arrangement with NEWCIS, a large North Wales provider of carer services.





## Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

Work continues to support a **reduction in the impact of poverty and homelessness** by providing innovative and effective Housing Support Grant (HSG) services and a new hybrid model of support is now fully embedded across Provider Services. However, **the future of the HSG funding remains a significant concern**. Support Providers are indicating their costs are rising considerably and their current contractual value no longer covers the costs of providing the service. This will impact not only on current services but also the future commissioning of services. This is being closely monitored by the Supporting People Team.

**Stability and sustainability of our domiciliary care and care home market is a significant priority** for our teams due to the impact of COVID 19, early indications of the impact of the rise in fuel and utility costs, and severe staffing pressures. Many providers, including our own in house services, have during 2022/23 reported **high levels of staff vacancies** which impact on their ability to provide support. Our commissioning team has continued to work with Providers in relation to the introduction to the **real living wage** and also by scoping the potential support that can be given to our domiciliary care workers to increase wages to compensate them for the increased costs of fuel. The rapidly increasing fuel prices caused concern amongst the domiciliary care market. To address this, **the Council acted swiftly and provided additional funding to staff to support the increase in fuel costs during the early part of the year**.

Due to the cost of Living Crisis the Supporting People Team were able to **fund additional Home Sustainment Packs** to support people when moving into their own accommodation to assist with the cost of living.

A cultural change is needed to consider **assistive technology as a solution** that enables people to achieve their outcomes and live independently and helps prevent/delay costly health and social care interventions. The development of our **SMART flat** will assist this by further promoting assistive technology to professionals, individuals, and their families/carers. We continue to receive requests from partners to visit the SMART flat [innovative-assistive-technology/ SMART flat](#). This to be further promoted in 2023/24. The Service Manager for Preventative Services and the Supporting People Team Manager have delivered presentations on the SMART flat to a number of organisations. We are continuing to add to the TEC equipment at the Smart Flat to ensure we continue to broaden awareness and knowledge of TEC services.

### IMAGES OF SMART FLAT



Sitting Room (virtual tour screenshot)



Sitting Room (virtual tour screenshot)



Kitchen (virtual tour screenshot)



Sensory Room (virtual tour screenshot)

The Augusta PODS were completed in March 2023 and will give people with **learning difficulties** the opportunity to **develop their independence skills** in a purpose built supported environment.

We have reviewed the use of the **CARIAD** (Collaborative Assessment Reducing Interventions, Admissions and Delayed transfers of care) **reablement units** and are re-branding them with our colleagues in ABUHB so that they are maximised to support hospital flow. We have worked with colleagues in ABUHB to develop step down beds across our Blaenau Gwent care homes.

Our **Better Care / Single Handed care project** continues to promote people's independence and reduce their reliance on staff for manual handling and personal care tasks. The Better Care Team have developed a comprehensive training and support package for all staff across the Blaenau Gwent Health and Social Care community who provide frontline care.

The Local Authority has utilised equipment purchased as part of the **Welsh Government Promoting Independence Grant** to provide the latest equipment (beds / hoists/ standing aids) to support the ethos of single handed care. CARIAD bariatric flat was completed in September 2022 and now forms part of the Blaenau Gwent CARIAD offer. The coordination and monitoring will be facilitated by our Community Resource Team as part of the review of the functions and to ensure that we have a reablement and **promote independence for our most vulnerable people.**

The Better care team have been 'in-reaching' into the hospital's, working with individuals whilst undergoing assessments and were able to work with individuals to reach their potential in hospital thus eliminating the need for reablement package of care on discharge

During 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22, **the Council incurred costs of around £2m per annum** (£2.5M, £2M & £1.8M) respectively) on residential placements for Children Looked After. **Costs have been reducing as a result of lower numbers of children requiring residential provision**, however, the local authority will always need to provide residential care for some children. To address these high costs, in September 2022, it was agreed to proceed with the development of a business case to deliver local authority residential placements for children looked after. This will:

- **Reduce our reliance on private childcare providers**
- **Provide care closer to home**
- **Remove the profit element included within the current charges made by private providers.**

The **development of our own children's home** will take place over two stages. The first stage will include the acquisition of a suitable property. A **grant of £1.2 million** has recently been approved, and the process that will need to be followed are progressing such as working with CIW to ensure the home meets the regulatory requirements, following the 'change of use' processes and completing the refurbishment. The second stage will be the refurbishment and a second grant application to meet the costs of this has been submitted.

A resident's engagement group has been set up chaired by the Interim Head of Childrens Services. These meetings are proving very beneficial in ensuring local residents are kept fully informed of developments and are able to voice any views as they arise.

**SEWAS are working with the National Adoption service central team** and other regions to ensure marketing is targeted to increase the number of adopters for more complex children. We have been able to provide in house adopters for a number of siblings in a timelier manner. At present, the number of children



waiting for placements is decreasing as is the rate of referrals from prospective adopters. This could be linked to the cost of living crisis and will need to be monitored more closely moving forward.

During the period, the Placement Team prioritised matching meetings for placements outside of the framework, and consistently delivered monthly foster carer supervisions where this level of involvement has been required with annual appraisals also being maintained.

Work is ongoing in all areas and all teams continue to be invested in its corporate responsibilities. An accolade has been received by the 14+ team due to the work they are committed to in the young people they work with. We are now part of the **National Transfer Scheme** and responsible for a cohort of **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who are CLA**. We currently have 8 children placed mostly in England. The team is learning to develop their skills in working with this group as this is very new to Blaenau Gwent.



# How We Do What We Do

## Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles

Having a skilled and motivated workforce is essential in order to provide high quality services. As part of this, the Council has a Joint Workforce Development Team with Caerphilly County Borough Council with responsibility for delivering a training and development strategy that supports development opportunities for staff at all levels in Social Services.

A full programme of learning is provided for the whole social care sector. All statutory, legislative, and registration linked requirements are planned and accounted for. The offer includes developmental opportunities for the workforce and support for resilience and well-being.

The challenges for the workforce to fully embrace learning opportunities remain high. The current recruitment environment has a major impact on the sector and forces harsh choices that without doubt impact on the capacity available to fully embrace development opportunities beyond the essentials.

The first half of the year continued its support for the registration of residential workers ahead of October. The Social Work Strategy continues to deliver qualified professionals, and at a rate above the national norm.

The way the workforce wants to learn has changed, they expect choice and flexibility. Various initiatives within the organisation are in place to support improving digital confidence and access to digital learning. The authority underpins its approach with the recognition of barriers that exist for parts of the social care workforce, so the offer includes the traditional classroom route.

Classroom activities use digital devices to provide safe space learning with facilitator and peer support:

- **The authority has co led the All-Wales project on securing an organisational level, fit for purpose, future proof, digital learning platform that will meet the needs of the whole sector, communities and volunteers. The authority, one of four in the first phase, are demonstrating nationally to others the benefits to the workforce of sharing across boundaries**
- **The power of social media is used to engage and communicate with the sector**
- **The learning delivery model, currently blended learning approaches and a choice of digital or face to face, will shortly include hybrid delivery – the required investment in technology having been funded by a successful bid to Social Care Wales**

The engagement from the workforce with new ways of learning is exceptional and they continue to reward the community with their ongoing resilience and determination.

Benefits continue to be realised for and by the workforce through the scale of opportunity possible due to the joint workforce development service model hosted by us in partnership with Caerphilly.

Workforce stability is a key consideration within Social Services as some teams are facing staffing shortages, however, it is acknowledged that this is a Wales wide position and there is no simple solution. The department as a whole has been working hard to look at innovative ways of managing the workload within teams as well as developing recruitment and retention strategies to address workforce pressures. Despite these significant pressures the existing staff and providers of services have continued to ensure children and adults needs are met, risks are managed, and safeguarding issues dealt with.

Social Services are working closely with Organisational Development to establish a Strategic Workforce Plan to support capacity concerns in the short, medium and longer-term as well as considering the opportunity to collaborate on a regional basis. The workforce in Social Services has been identified as a critical risk and has therefore been included on the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

### **Local Political Leadership, Governance and Accountability**

The structure of the Social Services Directorate provides clear levels of management and accountability. The Council has a clear governance and accountability framework in place which all directorates are signed up to. This framework identifies how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create a 'golden thread'. This framework is complied with by Social Services who also have additional monitoring requirements as part of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The Corporate Director of Social Services is a member of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team, whereby all Council Directors meet on a weekly basis to consider and make strategic and operational decisions, although some decisions need to be considered by Scrutiny and then ratified by Cabinet or Council.

In 2022/23 the Directorate had one Executive Member with Portfolio responsibility for People and Social Services and was scrutinised by the People Scrutiny Committee, with safeguarding information also reported to this Committee. Regular liaison meetings were held with the Directorate, the Cabinet Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Social Services Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). On a quarterly basis the Director of Social Services and/or Heads of Adult and Children's Services meet with CIW to discuss achievements, performance and key challenges. CIW also undertake an annual review and evaluation of the Directorate's performance.

### **Audit and Inspection Progress**

#### **Audit Wales**

Following on from an initial Audit in 2019 'Corporate Arrangements for Safeguarding of Children', Audit Wales, in February 2022, commenced a follow-up review. The focus of the review was to determine the extent to which the Council had addressed the eight outstanding recommendations and proposals for improvement to strengthen its corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children. Seeking to answer the following question: Can the Council provide assurance that it has made effective progress since 2019 in addressing the outstanding recommendations / proposals for improvements? The overall summary outcome was positive, Audit Wales made recommendations for improvement which have been monitored as part of the corporate business planning process.

### Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Children's Services

In 2018 CIW reported on their inspection undertaken on Children's Social Services in Blaenau Gwent. Despite the overall summary being positive, the CIW made recommendations for improvement which have been monitored as part of the corporate business planning process.

### Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Fostering Services

In 2018 CIW reported on their inspection of the Fostering Service in Blaenau Gwent. Despite the overall summary being positive the CIW made recommendations for improvement which have been monitored as part of the corporate business planning process.

### Working in Partnership

Part 9 of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act places a key emphasis on partnership working including a statutory requirement for the development of **Regional Partnership Boards**. The Boards have been established on current local health board footprints. The Gwent Board includes ABUHB and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen local authorities. The Cabinet Member in each local authority, with responsibility for health and social care, sits on the Regional Partnership Board. It is an advisory body which provides oversight and direction for areas of integrated working across health and social care.

Blaenau Gwent Council supports partnership and collaborative working and the Social Services Department continues to work with a wide range of partners where partnership opportunities provide better outcomes for local residents than the Council could achieve if working on its own. Social Services work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including staff, residents and businesses. In addition, Social Services fully participates in the sharing of knowledge, good practice and information, which can result in improved services. Social Services partnership arrangements include:

- **Joint Partnership and Workforce Development Service with Caerphilly**
- **Greater Gwent Workforce Development Board**
- **Regional Adoption Service**
- **South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS)**
- **South East Wales Emergency Duty Team**
- **South East Wales Adult Placement Scheme**
- **Gwent Frailty Programme Integrated Health and Social Care Teams**
- **South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB)**
- **Gwent Wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GWASB)**
- **Regional Safeguarding Board covering all partners across Gwent**
- **Shared Lives scheme run on behalf of six Local Authorities and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board**
- **Gwent Mental Health & Learning Disabilities Partnership Team**
- **South East Wales Improvement Collaboration -4C's (SEWIC)**
- **Gwent Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Team**
- **Gwent Regional Collaborative (RCC) - Supporting People**
- **Gwent wide agreement with National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide children's advocacy services**

### 'Mwy na geiriau/ More than just words

As a department we continue to monitor compliance with our responsibilities within **More Than Just Words** and the Active Offer. We continue to ensure that when citizens contact both our Adult and Children Services Departments, that they are offered the opportunity to communicate in the language of their choice. Our assessment tools within our Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) system specifically asks the question "Do you require this conversation / assessment to be carried out in Welsh?" The form is then attached to the person's referral.

The More Than Just Words action plan has progressed, there is liaison with the local Welsh language champions and promoting the wide resources and opportunities available is now standard. Our commissioned providers work in partnership with us to promote the Welsh Language and this is reflected in our contracts and service level agreements.

### Our Financial Resources and How We Plan for the Future

The total budget allocation for Social Services for 2022/23 was £49.9m. This is an increase from the previous year of £3.290m. At the end of 2022/23 Social Services had an overspend of £240,608 and this is due to the increased demand within the Looked after Children service area.

The provision of regular financial forecasting reports in line with the budget monitoring and reporting framework has enabled the Social Services Senior Management Team to make informed decisions on service delivery.

In setting the 2023/24 budget, Council agreed a number of savings proposals totalling £0.690m, and awarded additional cost pressures funding of £0.861m. For 2022/23 the department achieved £153,000 of savings.

The allocated budget and outturn for 2022/23 is provided in the table below:

Service Area	Budget	Outturn	Variance (Adverse)/Favourable
Children's Services	£14,288,800	£15,327,638	(1,038,838)
Adult Services	£29,231,440	£28,464,957	766,483
Business Management / Staff Support	£6,421,310	£6,389,563	31,747
<b>Total</b>	<b>£49,941,550</b>	<b>£50,182,158</b>	<b>(£240,608)</b>



The budget for 2023/24 is provided in the table below and includes Financial Efficiency Project savings of £0.690m.

Social Services Budget 2023/24		£
1	Commissioning & Social Work	4,247,760
2	Children Looked After	7,349,740
3	Family Support Services	203,070
4	Youth Justice	276,080
5	Other Children's and Family Services	2,523,810
7	Older People Aged 65 and Over	8,011,920
8	Adults aged under 65 with a Physical Disability or Sensory Impairment	18,290
9	Adults aged under 65 with Learning Disabilities	3,801,990
10	Adults aged under 65 with Mental Health Needs	532,560
11	Older Adult Services	434,760
12	Community Care	20,292,770
13	Support Services and Management Costs	906,020
14	Corporate Recharges	5,803,660
	<b>Total</b>	<b>54,402,430</b>





## Conclusion

**This annual report outlines how we have delivered and developed services in line with the** six quality standards in relation to well-being outcomes under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014. It also highlights some of the challenges we have faced over the past 12 months.

23/24 will present even greater challenges due to the need to generate further savings to ensure the council can deliver its functions within the budget set by Welsh Government. We cannot deal with these challenges in isolation, so the need to work as one council and with our partners across the region and nationally is of huge importance to enable us to continue to deliver our statutory responsibilities. We will be looking to engage with those who use our service and staff to look for ideas on how we can achieve efficiencies and look at ways in which we can generate income now and into the future.

**This Annual Report of the Director of Social Services provides a snapshot of service activity undertaken throughout 2022/23. Details of Further supporting information and links can be found on the following page:**



# Accessing Further Information and Key Documents

## Useful Documents

Reports to Social Services Scrutiny Committee - <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1157&Year=0&LLL=0>

Council Corporate Plan – [https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies\\_Strategies\\_Plans/Corporate\\_Plan\\_2018-22.pdf](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies_Strategies_Plans/Corporate_Plan_2018-22.pdf)

Blaenau Gwent Council Budget Monitoring - <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1148&Year=0&LLL=0>

Social Services Website – <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/health-wellbeing-social-care/>

Workforce Development - <http://socialservicesblaenau-gwent.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Balancing Rights and Responsibilities Programme Evaluation, October 2022



Appendix B.docx

Internal Audit Corporate Safeguarding Report

Audit Wales Safeguarding Report <https://www.audit.wales/publication/blaenau-gwent-county-borough-council-corporate-safeguarding-follow>

Safeguarding Performance Report April 2022 – June 2022 <https://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/documents/s12813/Appendix%201.pdf?LLL=0>

## Useful Websites

Social Care Wales - <https://socialcare.wales>

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) - <https://careinspectorate.wales/>

Data Cymru - [www.data.cymru](http://www.data.cymru)

Dewis Wales - <https://www.dewis.wales>

Gwent Safeguarding - <https://www.gwentsafeguarding.org.uk/en/Home.aspx>

Public Service Board - <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/council/partnerships/partnership-working/>

South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board - [www.sewsc.org.uk](http://www.sewsc.org.uk)

## Providing Feedback

Social Services welcomes feedback on the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services. Your views are important to us. Please contact us if you would like to give feedback on the plan or if you require this document in a different format e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc.

## Fersiwn Gymraeg

Yn unol â Chynllun Iaith Gymraeg y Cyngor, bydd fersiwn Gymraeg o Adroddiad Blynyddol y Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol ar gael ar wefan y Cyngor.

## Write to us:

Director of Social Services  
Anvil Court  
Church Street, Abertillery, NP13 1DB

**Call us:** (01495) 355 006

**Email us:** [info@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:info@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

**Visit our website:** [www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)



# Home to School & Post 16 Transport Policy **2024/2025**

Reviewed: **August 2023**  
Adopted:

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

Education Transformation Team  
Anvil Court  
Abertillery  
NP13 1DB

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

Telephone Number: 01495 355132 / 01495 355470

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

Transport Team  
Anvil Court  
Abertillery  
NP13 1DB

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

Telephone Number: 01495 311556

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

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

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## 1.0 Introduction

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

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

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

- [School Travel - Code of Good Practice \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

## 2.0 Background

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

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

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

## 3.0 Who Qualifies: The Main Criteria

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

- more than 1.5 miles from home for children aged under 8 years (at the commencement of the academic year) but of statutory school age. Any transport awarded will remain in place for the whole of the academic year
- more than 2 miles from home for children aged 8 years and over (at the commencement of the academic year).

Distances are measured by using the Council's Digital Information Mapping System, to determine the shortest available safe walking route between the home address and the main gate of the school to be attended. **The Local Authority can use discretion on approving transport within approximately 0.1 mile of the above distances**, based on the existing Home to School Transport distance criteria identified above - Transport will only be approved where there is already an existing provision with capacity in place.



Parents are able to choose an English-medium, Welsh-medium or a denominational school for their child. The child will qualify for home to school transport to the appropriate catchment area of the school. When the catchment area school is full and unable to admit a pupil, free transport will be provided to the next nearest available school that has room to take the child, as long as the home is 1.5 miles or more away from the school for pupils under the age of 8 years, or 2 miles for pupils aged 8 and over.

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

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

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

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

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

**In line with the ALNET, the LA will need to consider supplying transport for all pupils with ALN to the end of the academic year following their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Council will provide transport assistance for pupils with ALN in line with the following eligibility criteria:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Transport can be provided for residential placements as follows:

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

#### **5.0 Transportation of Children Looked After (CLA)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **6.0 How to Apply for Home to School Transport**

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

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

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

## **7.0 Discretionary Welsh- medium Nursery Transport**

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

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

## **8.0 Transport Considerations**

### **8.1 Change of Address - Transport Arrangements**

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

### **8.2 Schools with Multiple Campuses/Sites**

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

### **8.3 Permanently Excluded & Managed Move Pupils**

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

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

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

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

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

### **8.5 School Trips**

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

### **8.6 Escorts**

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

The transport provider may change throughout the time a pupil receives Council transport – meaning that drivers and escorts may change; however, where possible, continuity of drivers and escorts will be provided by contracted providers of transport.

### **8.7 Travel Assistance Reimbursement**

Fuel expenses can be claimed in circumstances where appropriate transport cannot be provided, and the need of the pupil is such that the parent/carer may be required to transport their child. For pupils with ALN, this will be assessed via the ALN team in partnership with the Transport Officer and agreed in writing in advance of finalising arrangements.

### **8.8 Pupils on Exchange Visits**

The Council does not provide transport assistance to pupils on exchange visits.

### **8.9 Pupil Attendance**

In circumstances where a pupil is in receipt of free home to school transport and is not attending school regularly, the Council can withdraw the travel offer. This will be determined on a case by case basis. Parents/carers of those found to be in breach of the travel offer due to attendance issues; will resume responsibility for ensuring the travel arrangements of pupils to and from school. This process will be overseen by the Education Welfare Service.

At the end of each term, the transport team will provide the Education Welfare Service with a list of pupils that fall into the above category and attendance will be reviewed against the pupil's records. Where pupils are identified the following process will be followed:

- Contact made with parents to discuss transport issues
- Warning issued to parents of the intention to withdraw transport if no improvement
- Attendance reviewed at the end of the following half term.
- If there has been improvement transport continues but if not transport offer withdrawn

## **8.10 Preferred Schools/Parental Choice**

Parents/carers who choose a school other than the nearest suitable catchment school are responsible for getting their child to and from the school throughout the time that their child attends the school. This is also applicable for pupils with additional learning needs; please refer to section 4.3 for more information.

## **8.11 Pupils Under 16 years Attending Vocational Training Provision**

Blaenau Gwent Council does not provide transport for pupils of compulsory school age attending a training provision **unless placed by ALN or VLP panels, at those panels the decision will be made with regards to the form of transport.**

## **8.12 Dual Residency**

Where parents have shared responsibility for a child and the child is permanently resident at more than one address, the Council will provide transport from both addresses, as long as they are both in the catchment area for the school concerned and are located over the required qualifying walking distance.

## **8.13 Rural Areas/Transport Links**

Where appropriate, the Council will use its discretion in determining whether or not a taxi link will need to be provided to an existing bus service for those pupils living in rural locations.

## **8.14 Temporary Medical Conditions**

The Council understands that in some circumstances the health of a mainstream pupil may restrict use of mainstream transport, due to a temporary medical condition. In these instances, individual assessments will be undertaken to determine associated transportation need and risk.

If an ALN pupil has a temporary medical condition, transport may be provided on request from either the ALN team or the Education Welfare team. Transport arrangements provided on medical grounds will be reviewed regularly.

Requests for long-term transport due to a medical condition must be made to the Council's transport team and accompanied by a letter from the pupil's consultant. The request must outline the pupil's medical condition and health risks encountered should they be required to walk to and from school.

The Council will not accept requests directly from GPs.

## **8.15 School Organisation Proposals**



The Council will provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age, where the closure of a school results in a learner being transferred to another school. Learners already on the register of the closed school will be provided with free transport to the new catchment school or the nearest school, subject to meeting the policy's distance criteria - until the learner finishes education at that school. If the learner leaves this school, entitlement to this discretionary provision will end.

## 9.0 Post 16 Travel

### 9.1 Transport Entitlement

All students living in Blaenau Gwent will be provided with a discounted bus ticket or travel grant to the Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone, Ebbw Vale Campus as their designated Post 16 provider; or, the nearest institution where their course is available depending on the following criteria:

- students must be between the ages of 16 to 19 (under 19 prior to the 1st September of the commencement of their course) to qualify;
- students shall reside in the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent;
- students must reside 2 miles or over (nearest walking distance) from their nearest college campus; and, the students should attend a full time course which requires attendance of 16 or more hours per week or a minimum 4 days' attendance per week at the institution.

Students and pupils aged 19 or over at the commencement of the course are not eligible for travel assistance from the Council and in these circumstances, they are advised to contact their respective college for details of any available transport provision.

All transport for Post 16 pupils including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), is agreed on a case by case basis by the ALN team in consultation with the Transport Officer. The Council may provide transport up to a maximum of three years.

The criteria for Post 16 ALN transport is as follows:

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

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

### 9.2 Travel Grant

The Council's present policy is to provide travel assistance to those who meet the criteria up to a maximum of £150 per academic session. This will be paid termly as follows: £50 autumn, £50 spring and £50 summer.

### 9.3 Welsh Medium/Faith Education

Pupils who wish to undertake their Post 16 studies via the medium of Welsh or attend a Faith school are required to travel further distances for their education, with no direct public service bus routes. These students have the opportunity to utilise the existing contracted bus provision in lieu of the Travel Grant, if appropriate.

### 9.4 How to Apply

Applications for transport assistance are available on Blaenau Gwent's website. Parents/Students can submit an application for transport assistance at any time, however, there is always an increase in demand prior to the start of an academic year and parents are advised to allow additional time. The Council sets a target to process all applications received within 10 school/college days, unless specialised provision is required.

Further information can be found on the following website [www.coeggwent.gov.uk](http://www.coeggwent.gov.uk) and <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/resident/schools-learning/school-transport/>

## 10.0 Procedures

### 10.1 Safe Walking Routes to School/Learner Travel Arrangements

Safe Walking Routes to school are assessed individually by the Transport Division in line with Welsh Government Learner Travel Measure (2014). A route is considered to be **suitable** if it is safe for a child/young person to walk alone or with an accompanying adult, where appropriate. It is recognised that occasions may arise when routes may become hazardous. In these circumstances, the Council reserves the right to provide free home to school transport for distances below the discretionary limits in the interests of the safety of the relevant learners. The Council will assess route safety through using clear Council criteria and a determination will be made on a risk assessment basis, where necessary.

### 10.2 Extreme Weather and COVID-19 Emergency Response

**Extreme** weather **conditions** may impact on Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's ability to provide Home to School Transport safely. In such circumstances, the safety and wellbeing of the children and transport providers remains our key priority. Where **extreme** weather results in the requirement to cancel transportation, the school will **attempt to** notify parents at the earliest **opportunity** to avoid unnecessary disruption.

Up to date **school closure** information is posted on the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's website during periods of **extreme** weather conditions.

If the Home to School Transport provision is cancelled, the Education Transformation team and Transport Officer will advise schools, as best they can, when transport services are likely to resume. During these periods, **if the school is closed, the Local Authority/School** will aim to keep parents/carers informed of developments.

If transport is cancelled due to extreme weather, the following is applicable:

- where a route is cancelled and a parent/carer takes the decision to transport the child themselves, the parent/carer remains responsible for the return journey or any subsequent costs should a return journey not be possible;
- if a child is unable to attend school due to **extreme** weather, the parent/carer remains responsible for their child; and,
- out of hours' emergency contact can be made with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council through the main contact centre – 01495 311556

In line with the COVID-19 Pandemic, any changes to the provision of home to school and post 16 transport will be communicated with schools, colleges and families of pupils/students accessing transport provision. Changes will be reflective of the latest Welsh Government Guidance.

### **10.3 Exclusions from Home to School Transport**

The Council has an approved travel behaviour code that covers all home to school transport provision. All parties will be required to sign the Blaenau Gwent Transport Behaviour Contract prior to approval of transport provision.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council reserves the right to refuse travel assistance where a child/young person's behaviour is such that, it is unacceptable in line with the travel code and/or presents a significant health and safety risk, or whereby excessive and purposeful damage to vehicles has been identified. In these instances, the **School or** Transport team will issue warning letters and parents will receive no more than four letters. The behaviour management process is as follows:

- **Stage 1** - Initially raising the concerns/issues
- **Stage 2** - Informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of transport removal
- **Stage 3** - Final warning indicating that transport will be removed.
- **Stage 4** - The school jointly with the Transport team will issue the final letter confirming the removal of transport, citing the reasons for the removal, the date of the proposed removal and the parental route of appeal.

If a pupil is refused/ excluded from transport due to behavioural issues, parents/carers then become responsible for their child's attendance at school and any transport required.

Any wilful damage that incurs cost to the transport provider for either repair or cleaning remains the responsibility of the parent/carer of the pupil concerned. Continued or repeat behaviour that result in wilful damage can result in exclusion from home to school transport.

Please note should a situation arise during transportation, which constitutes a health and safety hazard, pupils can be removed from the vehicle with a police presence **if deemed necessary**, and further transport provision withdrawn with immediate effect pending investigation.

#### **10.4 ALN Transport Issues & Exclusions**

The Transport team will monitor and review issues and incidents relating to ALN transport, and determine with relevant professionals i.e. the school and ALN team, any reasonable adjustments required to accommodate the pupil(s).

In cases whereby there are recurrent issues behavioural or other, which mean that:

- the planned transport arrangements no longer meet the needs of the pupil; and/or,
- there are health and safety risks to both the pupil and contractor

The Transport team will look to work with the school in first instance. Where there are behavioural issues which present health and safety concerns, letters will be issued parents informing them of the issues concerns and Council's intention regarding the management or removal of transport, and/or employing suitable alternative solutions. No more than four letters will be issued prior to the removal/refusal of transport. The behaviour management process is as follows:

- **Stage 1** - Initially raising the concerns/issues
- **Stage 2** - Informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of transport review/removal
- **Stage 3** - Final warning indicating that transport will be removed.
- **Stage 4** - Transport will be suspended and parents notified in writing, pending detailed assessment of the risks and transportation needs of the pupil. A Review Group will then be coordinated by the Transport Officer, with representation from relevant services and professionals, in order to determine a suitable solution.

If a pupil is refused or excluded from transport due to behavioural and/or other issues, parents/carers then become responsible for their child's home to school transport requirements, until a suitable solution has been found.

Any wilful damage that incurs cost to the transport provider for either repair or cleaning remains the responsibility of the parent/carer of the pupil concerned. Continued or repeat behaviour that result in wilful damage can result in exclusion from home to school transport.

#### **10.5 Safeguarding**

The safety of children and young people on home to school and/or post 16 transport is Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's first priority. In particular, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will ensure that:

- all providers are contracted for the provision and must ensure to comply with the terms and conditions set out within their contract

- should the Council identify any safeguarding concerns relating to a particular provider or associated member of staff, the process will be managed in accordance with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures;
- all drivers and escorts have been checked and cleared by the DBS;
- all drivers and escorts will have access to safeguarding training and **must** report any concerns that they may identify to the Transport team, the school and where appropriate, the Police and/ or Social Services without delay;
- all drivers and escorts carry a form of identity;
- lap and diagonal seat belts are provided on all contract vehicles;
- car seats/booster seats are provided in accordance with current Government legislation - this is the responsibility of the parent/carer;
- the Council will provide specialist equipment only when pre-agreed upon or as identified as part of a review;
- parents/carers of primary pupils are responsible for ensuring that there is a responsible adult to collect their child/children upon drop-off each day;
- parents/carers of pupils in receipt of ALN transport, are responsible for ensuring that there is a responsible adult within the home at pick-up and upon drop-off each day;
- drivers and escorts receive appropriate training and are familiar with safety and emergency equipment;
- drivers, escorts and operators are aware of their duties, particularly in emergency situations; and,
- wheelchair occupants must be correctly restrained. Wheelchairs will need to meet specific authorised crash test requirements (this specification can be confirmed directly by the user in conjunction with our Transport team).

## 10.6 Home to School/College Transport - Code of Good Practice

Across all of home to school transport provision and post 16 learning, the Council operates a **Code of Practice** for pupils, students, parents, schools and transport operators. The code of practice can be found on the link below;

[http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Resident/Schools\\_and\\_Learning/SchoolTransport\\_CodeofGoodPractice.pdf](http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Resident/Schools_and_Learning/SchoolTransport_CodeofGoodPractice.pdf)

## 10.7 Free Transport - Right to Withdraw

The Council reserve the right to withdraw awarded transport, if an error is made or where legislation has changed which affects the entitlement of a pupil or pupils using school transport. The Council will honour the transport provision for that pupil(s) for the remainder of the academic half-term, during which the awarding error was identified, or that legislation became effective.

All awarded transport is reviewed periodically.

## 10.8 Appeals Procedure

Where the one of the following circumstances apply:

- a child or young person is not eligible for travel assistance;

- a change in transport arrangements has been made and the parent/carer notified; and,
- transport has not been agreed.

Parents/carers may ask for the decision to be reconsidered whereby an appeals form will then be issued. Parents/carers may then highlight exceptional circumstances they wish to be considered in relation to their entitlement.

Appeals should be made in writing to the Education Transformation team, and wherever possible forwarded by recorded post to ensure delivery/tracking. All appeal related correspondence should be addressed to:

Education Transformation Manager  
Anvil Court  
Abertillery  
Blaenau Gwent  
NP13 1DB

Appeals will then be considered by the Appeals Panel, who look to determine the level of prejudice to the child should they not be granted transport. The prejudice will be considered in relation to the impact in terms of:

- distance
- disability; and/ or,
- medical considerations on the advice of a consultant. **Medical notes from GP's will not be accepted.**

Parents will have 10 working days to submit an appeal from the date that the refusal letter was issued. Their appeal will then be heard within 30 working days from the specific closing date indicated within the refusal letter.

### **10.9 Monitoring Procedure**

All vehicles will be made available for random checks by Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and/ or another appropriate body, when required. Any complaints received by the Council concerning services or vehicles will be investigated in line with the Council's complaints policy. In the event of the complaint being upheld, the necessary and appropriate steps will be taken in accordance with the contract or as a matter of urgency and will be reported in a timely manner to the Education Directorate's Management Team (DMT).

The Council will undertake random checks to contracts, to ensure that they are being operated in accordance with the Council's terms and conditions. As part of this monitoring exercise, the following checks will also be made:

- punctuality;
- adherence to route;
- size of vehicle;
- licences; and,
- staff DBS checks are in place.

All of the above are designed to ensure safe and stress free travel.



## 11.0 Glossary of Terms

<b>Additional Learning Needs (ALN)</b>	A pupil who has an identified additional learning need
<b>Catchment Area</b>	A marked out geographical area made up of the streets around a school.
<b>Catchment Area School</b>	A school within the catchment area
<b>Children Looked After</b>	Children who are in the care of, or 'accommodated by', a Local Authority.
<b>Child Protection</b>	Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.
<b>Designated Area</b>	A geographical area, which is usually made up of Parishes served by a voluntary aided school (see section 2.2 for Faith/voluntary aided schools).
<b>Nearest Suitable School</b>	For transport purposes, the nearest suitable school may not be the catchment area school.
<b>Officer Review</b>	The process of someone within the Council looking again at an application for transport assistance.
<b>Parent/Carer</b>	Anyone who is responsible for the care of a child. We use the same definition as stated in the Education Act 1996.
<b>Preferred School</b>	Parents have a right to say they prefer a school other than the catchment area school. This is known as 'a preferred school'. This school will remain a preferred school when parents apply for help with transport, throughout the pupil's attendance.
<b>Pupil</b>	A young person who is of compulsory school age, which is the term after the child's fifth birth day and before the last Friday in June in Year 11.
<b>Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children</b>	Protecting children from abuse and neglect, preventing impairment of their health or development and ensuring that they receive safe and effective care to enable them to have optimum life chances.
<b>Shortest Walking Distance</b>	The shortest safe walkable route between the main access to and from your private property, such as your front gate or the top of your drive and the nearest school gate.
<b>Special Transport Needs</b>	Some pupils may have special transport needs that come from a disability or an <b>additional learning</b> need.
<b>Statutory Walking Distance</b>	As set out in section 2, in accordance with the definition provided in the Education Act 1996.
<b>Student</b>	A young person who attends a sixth form or college beyond the statutory school age, which is the last Friday in June in Year 11.
<b>Suitable Walkable Route</b>	A route where a child can walk to and from school safe from traffic – with the parent or another 'responsible adult' if the parent decides this is needed. If a parent cannot do this, the Council is <b>not</b> responsible for escorting your child to school.

## 11.1 Blaenau Gwent Schools

Blaenau Gwent has the following schools and provision for pupils:

- **Community Maintained Schools** – schools managed by the head teacher and governors, in partnership with the Council. The Council arranges admissions.
- **Voluntary-aided Schools** – schools supported by the relevant Religious Board and the Council jointly. The governors will normally employ all staff and manage admissions. These schools are sometimes called ‘faith’ or ‘denominational’ schools.
- **Foundation Schools** – schools maintained by the Council but the governors are responsible for admissions. For transport assistance purposes, all pupils attending Foundation schools are treated in the same way as pupils attending community schools.
- **Resource Bases** – some mainstream schools have Resource Bases which are Council funded provisions that meet the additional learning needs of pupils whose needs cannot be met in mainstream classes. Resource Bases have a higher level of staffing providing more specialist support to meet pupil need. Pupils access mainstream classes where appropriate and placement into a Resource Base is determined by the Council’s ALN Panel
- **Special School** – a school which caters for pupils with additional learning needs whose needs cannot be appropriately met in a mainstream or Resource Base setting. Special schools receive pupils with a degree of disability and placement is agreed through the Council’s ALN Panel. The Council arranges admissions for all special schools.
- **Pupil Referral Units** - cater for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural Difficulties and provides short term, as well as longer term placements. The Council arranges admission through the Council’s ALN Panel.
- **All Through School 3-16 model** – where there are more than one campus or site associated with the school. The school is responsible for admissions for all site allocation.
- **Welsh Medium School** – caters for children who are being taught through the medium of Welsh as their first language.

For more information on Blaenau Gwent Schools, please refer to the Blaenau Gwent Starting Schools Booklet, which can be found on the Councils website, via School Admissions.

## Socio-economic Duty (Strategic Decisions Only)

Welsh Government's [Socio-economic Duty](#) provides a framework to ensure tackling inequality of outcome is at the forefront of decision making.

Please consider how your proposal could affect the following groups:

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

Socio Economic Disadvantages	Will the proposal have a positive, negative, or neutral impact?	How could you mitigate the negative impacts outlined?	Please highlight any evidence that has been considered (quantitative or qualitative)
<b>Low Income / Income Poverty</b> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>	Neutral	N/A	
<b>Low and/or No Wealth</b> <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i>	Neutral	N/A	
<b>Material Deprivation</b> <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e., financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i>	Neutral	N/A	
<b>Area Deprivation</b> <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport) Impact on the environment?</i>	Neutral	N/A	
<b>Socio-economic Background</b> <i>(social class i.e., parents' education, employment and income)</i>	Neutral	N/A	

<b>Socio-economic Disadvantage</b> <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>N/A</b>	
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Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**  
 Date of meeting: **19<sup>th</sup> September 2023**  
 Report Subject: **Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy Review 2024 - 2025**  
 Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**  
 Report Submitted by: **Interim Corporate Director of Education – Luisa Munro Morris**  
**Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business Change – Joanne Watts**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
✓	31.8.23	07.10.23			19.09.23	04.10.23		

**1. Purpose of the Report**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek the views of People Scrutiny Committee, in relation to the review of Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy for the 2024/25 academic session. The Council is required to adopt and publish the policy document by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

**2. Scope and Background**

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

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

2.2 The current policy was published on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022, for implementation from September 2023 for the 2023/24 academic session. Blaenau Gwent Council provide free transport for children attending their nearest suitable school, where the distance from home to school is over the specified walking distance detailed below:

- more than 1.5 miles from home for children aged under 8 years
- more than 2 miles from home for children aged 8 years and over

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is more generous in respect of home to school transport entitlement than the Welsh Government statutory limits. The recommended Learner travel Measure guidance is 3 miles for secondary school age pupils and 2 miles for primary school pupils, this costs the Authority approximately an additional £385,000 annually. The Council also offers a non-statutory travel grant for Post 16 learners of £150, this costs the Authority approximately £68,000 annually.

- 2.3 The policy has been reviewed by the Education Transformation, Inclusion and Transport teams (please refer to **Appendix 1** for the revised draft document). The changes and additions are detailed in red within the appended policy document. A summary of the changes/additions is as follows:
- 2.4
- The date has been amended to reflect the academic year to which the policy applies (the academic year proceeding the year within which the policy is published);
  - Section 3.0 'Who qualifies: The Main Criteria – has been updated to allow an element of LA discretion on distance limits up to approximately 0.1mile in exceptional circumstances and when would be considered to be in the learner's best interests;
  - Section 4.0 'Additional Learning Needs' - has been updated in line with the latest ALN reform developments and learning from the current policy year;
  - Section 7 'Discretionary Welsh Medium Nursery Transport' has been amended to accommodate the further primary provision at Ysgol Gymraeg Tredegar
  - Section 8.11 'Pupils Under 16 years Attending Vocational Training Provision' has been updated to clarify the policy in relation to ALN pupils
  - Section 9.0 'Post 16 Travel' has been updated to clarify the policy in relation to ALN pupils
  - Section 10.2 has been amended to 'Extreme Weather' from its previous categorisation of 'Severe weather'
  - Section 11 'Glossary of Terms' has been updated to incorporate the Vulnerable Learner Panel
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 **Option 1:** The People Scrutiny Committee considers the Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2024/25 (**Appendix 1**), and recommends it to Cabinet for approval.
- 3.2 **Option 2:** The People Scrutiny Committee considers the Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2024/25 (**Appendix 1**) and provides any comments or amendments to be incorporated prior to recommending it to Cabinet for approval.
4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 Education is a strategic priority for the Council and key to achieving the outcomes within the Council's Corporate Plan. Home to School Post 16



Transport Policy is an essential component of Education and seeks to ensure equality of access to education settings throughout the borough. In addition, implementation of the policy will contribute to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

- 4.2 The revised policy is fully compliant with section 12(5) of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 ("the Measure"), and the Learner Travel Information (Wales) Regulations 2009 (the "Regulations").
- 4.3 The Welsh Government's Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014 (the "Guidance") requires that the Council's policy must be made available by the 1st October, the year preceding the academic year to which the policy applies.

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

5.0.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility to determine and publish the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023, for the 2024/25 academic session. Any changes made to the policy should take account of the following:

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

5.0.2 Therefore, if the policy does not progress within the programmed timeframe, the Council will not be compliant with section 12(5) of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 ("the Measure"), and the Learner Travel Information (Wales) Regulations 2009 (the "Regulations"). In addition, the Council would fail to take account of recent developments relating to key areas of dependency on a local, regional and national basis; i.e. developments aligned to the Welsh Government Additional Learning Needs Act, Code and associated regulations, along with the Blaenau Gwent admission policy developments. The results of which may negatively impact upon both service users in terms of service and satisfaction and services in terms of operational issues and budgetary constraints.

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

5.1.1 The policy seeks to ensure that there is an appropriate framework to aid delivery of the services. The Home to School Transport budget out-turn position for 2022/23 was £2.7m (after the use of £450,000 of funding from reserves) against a budget of £2.2m.

5.1.2 The Home to School Transport budget is approximately £3.3m for 2023/24, this is following the award of a £682,000 cost pressure in the budget setting

process in relation to the uplift in contract prices awarded to contractors as a result of the fuel crisis. The Council received a number of requests from operators for an increase in the historical contractual rates as a result of the fuel crisis. This was agreed to ensure continuity of the home to school transport service.

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

5.2.1 If the policy is not taken forward within the specified timeframe, there is a risk that the Council will not be compliant with their statutory duty in respect of home to school transport. Therefore, the policy has been reviewed and is being taken via the Council's political processes within the required timeframe, to ensure that the publication date of 1.10.23 can be met.

## 5.3 ***Legal***

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

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

## 5.4 ***Human Resources***

5.4.1 The policy document and associated procedures have been developed by the Education and Environment Directorates, in partnership with Social Services. The Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business Change and Transport Officer monitor implementation of the policy and undertake annual reviews in order to inform future policy development.

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

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

## 5.5 ***Health and Safety***

5.5.1 There are no direct implications of this report, all health and safety issues raised as part of the operation of the Home to School Transport service are discussed with Corporate Health and Safety colleagues as and when they arise.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

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

- 6.1.1 The Council currently operates home to school transport provision for both mainstream pupils, and pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) attending special schools and resource bases, via contracted providers. There are currently 30 providers contracted to deliver home school transport for 1,594 pupils, across 96 established routes.

We procure and monitor 30 operators providing transport for 94 contracts. This includes mainstream, Welsh-medium, faith education and specialist provision for ALN

We transport to: 19 schools within Blaenau Gwent, Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone (Ebbw Vale Campus - Post 16) and 8 out of county schools  
Over 1600 school pupils use Home to School transport:

Over 270 ALN pupils

Over 1300 mainstream pupils

We provide support for over 550 Post 16 students living in Blaenau Gwent, they are provided with a discounted bus ticket or travel grant.

The provision of home to school transport changes on a frequent basis in line with demand and new applicants especially in respect of Additional Learning Needs pupils.

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

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

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

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

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

- 6.4.1 The policy will cover home to school and post 16 transport provisions for the 2024/25 academic session. The document takes account of key policy and legislative requirements, and annual reviews will continue to be programmed for the foreseeable future taking on learning from previous years.

### 6.5 ***Preventative focus***

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

## 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

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

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

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

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

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

## 6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

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

## 7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

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

### **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- **Appendix 1 – Revised Policy 2024/25**
- **Appendix 2 – Socio-economic Duty Impact Assessment**

# Agenda Item 9

*Cabinet 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: **19<sup>th</sup> September 2023**  
Report Subject: **Inclusion and ALN Strategy/Policies/Guidance (review and amendments)**  
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member for People and Education**  
Report Submitted by: **Luisa Munro-Morris – Interim Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Leadership Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
√	√	07.09.23			19.09.23	04.10.23		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the reviewed Inclusion and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) strategies, policies, and guidance (documentation), appended to this report, in order to provide the opportunity for members to feedback. The ALN Strategy and subsequent policies and guidance documents have been reviewed in line with the ongoing ALN implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) legislation, new Welsh Government guidance for Elective Home Education (EHE), and to further support in areas of EOTAS/Exclusion and Attendance. The updates will support the Local Authority in utilising their statutory powers where necessary.
- 1.2 The strategy, policies and guidance documents are being presented for consideration, prior to re issuing to school Governing Bodies for adoption.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Members will be aware that some of the included documents were presented last Autumn (2022). Moving on from the previous adoption of policies, the Welsh Government has now further updated some of its own guidance and legislation and ALN implementation has been underway. The attached strategy, policies and guidance documents have been reviewed and amended in line with those updates. This ensures that Blaenau Gwent Council's documentation is up to date and is reflective of the Welsh Government's guidance and legislation.

- 2.2 During the November 2022 Estyn inspection of the Education Directorate (LGES), it was suggested that the Local Authority engage with key stakeholders when reviewing and amending policies as they are of direct interest to them. Following the suggestion by Estyn several sessions were set up commencing January 2023 for the purpose of reviewing policies to which key stakeholders were subsequently invited. However, given the initiation of Action Short of Strike (ASOS) the sessions have not been attended by key stakeholders (Headteachers) across Blaenau Gwent; this has resulted in documentation related to Inclusion and ALN being reviewed only by Local Authority Staff. However, these staff have been from cross directorate so as not to limit to education officers only – education and social services have been engaged across the service areas.

The Local Authority, in line with the ALNET legislation and implementation, are currently developing the Post 16 ALN Guidance and Process Documentation. This is currently work in progress, which is reflective of all SEWC local authorities.

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

- 3.1 **Option 1** – to consider and recommend approval by Cabinet, the reviewed and amended documents giving consideration that only Local Authority officers have been involved and engaged in the process. This will ensure that the documents are re distributed to key stakeholders with the inclusion of the most up to date changes to national guidance and legislation; this will allow LA processes and statutory functions to align.

**Option 2** – to reject and not recommend approval by Cabinet, the reviewed and amended documents and continue with them in Draft with the option of setting up further sessions for engagement with stakeholders. However, the impact of this will be that the LA and our schools will not be obligated to follow the draft versions and may revert to the older versions of documentation. This may impact on learners and the LA processes being negatively affected as they will not be aligned with Welsh Government guidance. The LA and schools would also be lagging behind other authority areas.

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

- 4.1 The local authority's Education Directorate has a vision of schools becoming self-led and self-improving with a purpose of creating better schools, better citizens for better communities. In order to meet these objectives, the local authority has a duty to support its schools, to carry out the statutory functions in regard to ALN and Inclusion; the ALN (ET) Wales 2018 and the ALN Code of Practice (2021) is the legal framework by which the local authority and schools must execute their duties. The Inclusion Service contributes to the Blaenau Gwent wellbeing plan through supporting learners to overcome barriers. The local authority will also align its support work to



schools and learners within Welsh Government national guidance around areas including absences, exclusions, and elective home education.

## 5. Implications Against Each Option

- 5.1 *Impact on Budget-* N/A – all recent and additional support posts within inclusion (to support the changes in policy/legislation) are fixed term and funded via grants.
- 5.2 *Risk-* If the local authority does not adopt the new reviewed and updated policies and guidance there is a risk that BG Council will not be working in alignment with Welsh Government guidance and other neighbouring local authorities.
- 5.3 *Legal* – The council has statutory functions to execute, and this is supported by the new reviewed and updated policies and guidance.
- 5.4 Human Resources – N/A

## 6. Supporting Evidence

- 6.1 *Performance Information and Data-*  
There are 25 schools across Blaenau Gwent and of these, 7 schools have resource base provision attached and 2 are special schools. There are 22 early years settings to which the EY ALN Policy relates. ALN implementation work is ongoing and via forums and staff survey it is apparent that ongoing support is needed to ensure the local authority is ALNET compliant. There is also ongoing support across all of our schools and for learners who are EOTAS or EHE in regard to attendance and exclusion – all of which are priority areas for the LA in 23/24.
- 6.2 *Expected outcome for the public-* Should the reviewed and amended documents be re distributed to schools; it will have a direct positive effect on the learners of Blaenau Gwent. As a result of this in turn the learners and their families should experience positive outcomes. The documentation is directed related to supporting schools and providing advice and guidance on the most appropriate way to support our learners, promotion of inclusion across all settings and executing the ALN legislation where necessary.
- 6.3 *Involvement (Consultation, engagement, participation)-*  
Feedback from ALN forum meetings, Cluster meetings and ALN 'readiness' questionnaire. Discussions with head teachers earlier in the academic year 22/23.
- 6.4 *Thinking for the long term-* Appropriate intervention, support and guidance to schools and settings is crucial in ensuring smooth implementation of the ALN Legislation and to enable our learners to attend school/receive an education and reach their full potential.

- 6.5 *Preventative Focus*- Prevention of learner's needs not being met or the initiation of the Inclusive Practices/ALN processes.
- 6.6 *Collaboration/Partnership Working*- Blaenau Gwent Local Authority Inclusion Service works in collaboration with a range of stakeholders concerned with learners and their families. The attached documentation will support our Early Years settings (maintained and non-maintained), schools and staff with an anticipated outcome of indirect positive impact on the learners going forward.
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***  
All of the attached policies and guidance link across service areas i.e. Education Welfare Service, Gypsy Roma Traveller, Additional Learning Needs and Early Years Additional Learning Needs.
- 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***  
***N/A***
- 6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***

## 7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 The School Improvement and Inclusion Team have a joint Business Plan which includes ALN, EWS and GRT services as key priorities. The work streams will be measured against the business plan priorities and reporting for the end of each quarter will be undertaken to monitor the progress.

### **Background Documents / Electronic Links**

[Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act | GOV.WALES](#)

[The Additional Learning Needs Code | GOV.WALES](#)

[https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-06/consultation-document-belonging-engaging-and-participating-guidance\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-06/consultation-document-belonging-engaging-and-participating-guidance_0.pdf)

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-05/elective-home-education-guidance-may-2023.pdf>

### **Appendices:**

1. Inclusion Strategy 2023
2. ALN Policy 2023
3. ALN Early Years Guidance and Process 2023
4. Elective Home Education (EHE) Policy 2023
5. Educated Other Than at School (EOTAS) Policy 2023

6. Exclusion Guidance 2023
7. Attendance Policy 2023
8. Integrated Impact Assessment

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# INCLUSION STRATEGY

**August 2023 - 2025**



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

**Blaenau Gwent**

County Borough Council

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## Introduction

*“Inclusion requires the active involvement from all concerned. It places the onus on schools to adapt their organisation and their ways of responding to the needs of all children and young people and to value their development in all areas of school life.”* (Inclusion and Pupil Support, WG 2016)

The Local Authority (LA) is committed to an approach of social inclusion of which inclusive education is a key dimension. This approach is aligned with the strategic direction of the Education Directorate and other linked strategies and policies and provides definitions for inclusion and the underpinning principles and values.

The LA recognises that there are a number of factors to consider in further developing a truly inclusive ethos across schools and education providers and has considered the direction of travel for Welsh Government (Curriculum for Wales reform, ALN reform, CAMHS transformation, support for vulnerable learners, thematic reviews by Estyn, research, school inspections, case studies, stakeholder views and the voice of the child in developing this approach).

The aim of this overarching strategy is to support the further development of our collective view of inclusion as being central to underpinning a high-quality local - based education, promoting good attendance and minimising the use of exclusion, wherever possible.

**Participation** is concerned with the quality of learners’ educational experiences and the extent to which they are accepted and feel that they belong. BG believe that all learners have a right to express their views about educational matters that affect them. We have a responsibility to listen to and learn from those views.

**Achievement** is concerned with learning outcomes. It is about what learners learn both inside and outside the classroom. Achievement, therefore, includes academic attainment, but it is a much broader concept that cannot be measured by tests alone.

## Policy and Legislation

In recent years, the Welsh Government have issued a range of guidance, some of which has statutory status, which require LAs, schools, and other educational settings to:

- promote equality of opportunity for different groups of learners;
- review their policies and practice to ensure they do not discriminate against particular groups of learners; and,
- pro-actively promote equality in relation to disability, race, gender, religious belief and sexuality.

The LA considers that inclusion is a fundamental principle that underpins all our practice and procedures, and the LA is committed to an effective and inclusive education system in which all children and young people are:

- valued equally;
- treated with respect;
- given equal opportunities.

All children and young people should have access to an appropriate and high-quality education, which will inspire them to participate in lifelong learning. The LA, EAS, schools, early years and other educational settings will:

- work collaboratively to promote equality of opportunity for different groups of learners;
- review policies and practices to ensure they do not discriminate against groups of learners; and,
- pro-actively promote equality in all areas in relation to disability, race equality, gender, religious belief and sexuality.

## **Context**

The Inclusion Strategy is supported by key policies and practices, which support the development of best practice in all schools and settings. The core guidance in relation to inclusion in Wales is found in Welsh Government's guidance document '*Inclusion and Pupils Support*' (2016). This guidance identifies a number of vulnerable groups of children and young people who may have additional learning needs (ALN) as identified in the ALNET (Wales) Act 2018.

The LA is committed to the seven core aims identified by the Welsh Government, which summarise the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The LA believes in celebrating diversity as a source of richness and potential that benefits all. The LA's commitment is to act in accordance with relevant equality legislation, and the LA and Inclusion Service's various policies, a number of which have been created or updated in line with the ALNET (Wales) Act 2018 and its associated reforms including:

- ALN Policy
- Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviours Policy
- Attendance Policy & Guidance
- Well Being Strategy
- Safeguarding in Education Policy
- Traveller School Attendance Guidance
- Policy for the Education of Pregnant School Girls and School Age Parents
- Policy and Guidance for Schools on the Use of Reduced Timetables
- Hard to Place Protocol
- Exclusion Guidance
- Reducing Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPI)
- Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) Guidance
- Blaenau Gwent Policy for the Education of CYP with Medical Needs
- Admission Guidance

## **Aims**

The aim of this strategy is to set out the commitment of the LA to the principles of inclusive education and its responsibilities to implement this across all relevant service areas and activities.

Inclusive principles will inform the work of the LA within the context of Blaenau Gwent's support for lifelong learning with the following as a focus:

- review and further develop a holistic education approach to inclusion, wellbeing, behaviour and relationships;
- support and empower schools to further develop their coherent whole school approach to wellbeing, relationships and behaviour; support schools to reduce exclusions and improve attendance;
- provide a framework for associated guidance;
- promote effective partnerships and cluster working with and across schools; and,
- support effective working between schools and other education providers to share good practice.

## **Principles**

Inclusion involves celebrating, not just tolerating, diversity and the creative use of resources to support all children and young people to learn effectively. The LA, EAS, schools and other educational settings will show good practice in relation to inclusion by:

- adopting a person centred approach to planning and delivery of services in order to meet individual needs;
- providing dynamic leadership and effective management to promote social and emotional well-being through inclusive and non-discriminatory practices;
- facilitating a multi-agency focus to provide early intervention through a team around the family approach;
- targeting resources, interventions and training through positive actions in accordance with identified need;
- improving educational access and participation, and promoting achievement for all, particularly those in vulnerable groups;
- providing high quality learning and teaching experiences which are flexible and respond to the changing needs of individuals and the community;
- reviewing policies and practices to facilitate the change process and improve and develop culture and ethos;
- communicating effectively with and supporting schools, education settings, parents/ carers, children and young people.

## DEFINITIONS

### a) **Inclusion**

*“Inclusion requires the active involvement from all concerned. It places the onus on schools to adapt their organisation and their ways of responding to the needs of all children and young people and to value their development in all areas of school life.”* (Inclusion and Pupil Support, WG 2016)

[https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-05/guidance-inclusion-and-pupil-support\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-05/guidance-inclusion-and-pupil-support_0.pdf)

Welsh Government has, in recent years, issued a range of legislation and guidance which requires local authorities, schools, and other educational settings to:

- promote equality of opportunity for different groups of learners;
- review their policies and practice to ensure they do not discriminate against particular groups of learners, including those with characteristics protected by the Equalities Act 2010;
- pro-actively promote equality in relation to disability, race, gender, religious belief and sexuality;
- ensure the needs of vulnerable groups including those with additional learning needs are identified and met in a timely fashion;
- adopt person centred approaches.

### b) **Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners**

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/guidance-supporting-vulnerable-disadvantaged-learners.pdf>

In its ‘Guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners’, Welsh Government stress that children may be seen as vulnerable for a number of reasons. In accordance with WG, Estyn also state that vulnerable children may be defined as those who may be more likely to experience emotional, social, and developmental barriers to learning. This may be as a result of their life experiences and disadvantage. A wide definition of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners has been adopted. It includes, but is not limited to, learners who are in one or more of the following groups:

- children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
- care-experienced children, including Children Looked After (CLA)
- those at risk of exclusion
- Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (MEGRT) learners who have English or Welsh as an additional language (EAL/WAL)
- young carers
- young offenders
- learners educated other than at school (EOTAS)
- children of refugees and asylum seekers
- learners from outside of the UK
- learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM)
- children at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.

Not all learners from these groups will face barriers to learning or be vulnerable to underachieving. Learners from these groups **may** face a range of barriers to achieving their potential and will, therefore, require different solutions and support targeted towards meeting each of their individual needs. In addition, learners may belong to several of the above groups at the same time, depending on their individual circumstances. *The list of groups is not exhaustive.* Learners not in these groups may be considered vulnerable or disadvantaged, including specifically as a result of COVID-19. For example, some learners who would not have been considered vulnerable or disadvantaged pre-COVID-19 may require additional support because of their experience during lockdown.

Learners educated through the medium of Welsh from homes where Welsh is not spoken may also require additional support, especially where they also face other barriers to learning. This may also be the case for those learners where English or Welsh is not their first language.

The role of the LA is to ensure that schools and providers are supported to identify the vulnerable learners in a broader context, and that there are clear links for support for schools from EAS and LA officers. It is often the most vulnerable learners for whom education other than at school (EOTAS) is considered. The LA has a clear EOTAS Policy which aligns with the principles outlined in this strategy.

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

The LA has an ALN Policy which defines Blaenau Gwent's Local Authority's (LAs) approach, objectives and plans (within the context of current legislative changes) to support schools to meet the needs of children with additional learning needs (ALN) to overcome barriers and challenges to enable them to reach their full potential. The principles underpinning the additional learning needs system are to support the creation of a fully inclusive, person-centred education system where all learners are given the opportunity to succeed and have access to an education that meets their needs and enable them to participate in, benefit from, and enjoy learning.

#### **Children Looked After (CLA)**

The LA has a policy for children looked after (CLA), which outlines the LA approach, supports the development of schools' policies, implementation and monitoring of a consistent approach, working in partnership with children's services and the EAS.

#### **c) Wellbeing**

There has been significant focus from Welsh Government, Public Health Wales and Estyn for a number of years on ensuring a collective focus on improving children's wellbeing. Locally, in Blaenau Gwent, there is a significant focus on children's wellbeing and mental health, particularly in relation to the Whole School Approach (WSA), early help and enhanced support, CAMHS in-reach project and EAS strategy for wellbeing and equity. Blaenau Gwent makes a significant contribution to the WSA agenda at both a national and regional level.

The LA has a Wellbeing Strategy and Good Practice Guide, which defines Blaenau Gwent's Local Authority's (LAs) approach, objectives and plans (within the context of current legislative changes) to support schools to support learners' well-being and mental health. The Blaenau Gwent aspiration for well-being is that all children and young people are purposefully engaged in education which is appropriate to their needs and age. We want our children and young people to flourish and achieve positive outcomes for themselves, their families and our community. We want our children and young people to be healthy, confident, capable and independent as far as possible and ready to learn throughout their lives. We want our children and young people to be enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work.

The Wellbeing Strategy and Good Practice Guide recognises the multi-dimensional nature of well-being and the critical importance of promoting good well-being for all. The mechanism for achieving this will be through the co-ordination of the curriculum in schools and how extra and co-curricular activities can be designed to enhance and complement learning experiences to improve well-being. This strategy aims to establish a framework where it is possible to map how aspects of learner well-being are explicitly promoted through the curriculum and how the community, outside agencies and partners can help augment school provision to provide comprehensive and meaningful experiences to promote well-being.

Schools and other education settings should strive to have an inclusive culture that fosters schools' ability to provide protective factors that develop resilience and promote wellbeing. The LA, working together with partners, aims to support schools to develop a coherent whole school approach to wellbeing, focusing on the Welsh Government 'whole school approach' and to develop a coherent whole education approach to wellbeing across a range of dimensions. These aims are consistent with the recommendations outlined in Estyn's (2019) report: Healthy and happy: school impact on pupils' health and wellbeing and with the 'Mind Over Matter' (2018) report.

#### **d) Behaviour / Relationships**

The Local Authority has recently produced a draft version of the 'Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviours Policy and Guidance' document, to support schools in promoting inclusion and preventing exclusion amongst its community.

In addition, there is a range of policy and guidance documentation from the Welsh Government including:

- [Welsh Government Inclusion & Pupil Support Document](#)
- [Exclusion from schools and pupil referral units 225/2019](#)
- [Practical approaches to behaviour management in the classroom. A handbook for classroom teachers in primary schools 117/2012](#)
- [Practical approaches to behaviour management in the classroom. A handbook for classroom teachers in secondary schools 086/2010](#)
- [Effective managed moves: A fresh start at school for children and young people 096/2011](#)



- [Rights, respect, equality: Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools 2019](#)
- The Children Act 1989 and The Social Services and Wellbeing act (2014),
- Curriculum for Wales 2022 and
- Challenging Bullying: Rights, Respect Equality statutory guidance (2019)

#### **e) Exclusions**

Our vision is for all children and young people in Blaenau Gwent is to be purposefully engaged in an educational programme appropriate to their needs and age. We want our children and young people to flourish and to achieve positive outcomes for themselves, their families, and our community and for society at large. We want our children and our adults to be happy, healthy, capable and engaged with school and the wider community. Minimal school exclusions will be a key indicator of our collective success.

Welsh Government recognises and promotes the importance of wellbeing in schools as a key factor in achieving this ambition. Blaenau Gwent is aware that improving the all-round wellbeing of pupils and staff is important in and of itself, as well as crucial in lifting performance and attainment levels.

In most cases, fixed-term exclusions are only given after exhausting all the available options for internal interventions and exclusions from the classroom. However, research demonstrates the clear need to consider what additional external support can be provided to children to prevent exclusion when internal school-based interventions do not succeed.

The Local Authority has produced a guidance document to support schools in promoting inclusion and preventing exclusion amongst its community. There are regular exclusion monitoring arrangements in place e.g., DLT (Directorate Leadership Team) and school levels.

#### **f) Roles and Responsibilities**

The Education Directorate and Inclusion Service, in collaboration with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) and local and regional partnerships, will:

- provide leadership to promote successful inclusion in schools, early years, youth and adult learning settings and have regard to stakeholder views;
- develop strategies and policies that are inclusive and non-discriminatory;
- monitor educational outcomes of vulnerable groups and target resources appropriately and transparently aim to challenge and monitor outcomes, provision and the quality of leadership in order to secure the best possible quality of education for vulnerable groups;
- promote effective and coordinated transition for children and young people between phases and settings;
- celebrate and disseminate good practice that has been identified across LA.

Schools and other educational settings will:

- develop an organisational culture and ethos that is inclusive, non-discriminatory and responds to diversity;
- personalise learning so that all children and young people achieve and reach their full potential;
- celebrate and publicise the achievements of all learners;
- monitor educational outcomes for all potentially vulnerable groups work to remove barriers and build bridges for inclusion;
- work with local communities to promote inclusion and continued access to education and lifelong learning.

## **Partnerships**

Working in partnership is a key priority for the LA. Effective collaboration will be secured through active involvement with:

- the Wellbeing Partnership.
- Multi-agency forums with Children's Services and Health;
- voluntary organisations and other key stakeholders;
- schools and other educational settings;
- children, young people, parents and carers.

### **Learner Voice**

The LA recognises the importance that all agencies involved in the education and support of children and young people should seek their views. Their views will be sought through relevant person centred practice reviews and pupil participation forums and taken into consideration when decisions about their educational experience are made.

## **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The Inclusion Strategy will be reviewed annually. The LA will monitor progress towards inclusive practice both at school and other educational settings through:

- Reviewing performance indicators at local and national level on a regular basis;
- Analysis and effective use of relevant data at a corporate, directorate and school level;
- Education and EAS Officer visits and reports;
- Estyn inspection findings and independent reviews;
- The range of self-evaluation processes.

# Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Policy

September

2023 - 2025



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

**Blaenau Gwent**

County Borough Council

**Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Policy**

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### **1. Executive Summary**

The Education Directorate's agreed purpose is to deliver 'Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities' and the work of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Policy is fundamental in supporting our learners with identified needs. The ALN Policy

defines Blaenau Gwent Local Authority's approach, objectives and plans, within the context of current legislative change, to support schools to meet the needs of children and young people with additional learning needs to overcome barriers and challenges to enable them to reach their full potential. Blaenau Gwent has a proportionately high-level of learners experiencing ALN, therefore, this strategic approach is of high importance.

This overarching policy for ALN should be read in conjunction with the additional guidance and process information relating to Early Years ALN and Post 16 ALN.

The policy sets out the Welsh national context for meeting the needs of all learners, as outlined by the Education in Wales: Our National Mission Action Plan 2017-21 and the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act. Both the plan and the Act advocate the need to work in partnership to ensure that all learners are inspired, motivated and supported to reach their potential and that every learner has access to an education that meets their needs and enables them to participate in, benefit from, and enjoy learning. The duties placed on Local Authorities by the Act and the new Additional Learning Needs Code (2021) are highlighted.

The local context demonstrates how Blaenau Gwent's ALN Policy is supported by the aims and objectives identified in wider local authority strategies. The holistic view that Blaenau Gwent Local Authority (LA) has taken to understand how key issues in children's early years, such as poverty and exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), can affect attainment is outlined. Within this context, the LA focus is on: improving the provision and outcomes for vulnerable groups of learners; early intervention; reducing the rates of exclusions (as these impact upon pupil attainment and outcomes); securing excellence in learner well-being; and ensuring that the LA is fully compliant with the Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act 2018.

Definitions of ALN and disability are provided. The principles underpinning the ALN system are discussed and the importance of including children and young people in decisions which affect them are highlighted, as this contributes to better outcomes for them.

The key partnerships with the Education Achievement Service (EAS), local and regional services, schools and other educational settings are set out to emphasise the importance in facilitating high quality support and provision and developing the knowledge and skills of school staff to effectively support children with additional learning needs.

The roles and responsibilities of schools and early years settings (including the governing body, senior leadership team, additional learning needs coordinator and teachers) and the local authority with respect to the duty outlined in the Additional Learning Needs Act and Code to: identify whether a child or young person has additional learning needs, prepare, maintain and transfer an IDP, Partnership/Dispute resolution, Safeguarding and Monitoring, Evaluation and Review are highlighted.

## 2. Strategic Context

### National Context

All learners must be supported to be emotionally and physically ready to learn in a safe and supportive environment. Equity requires that we ensure that the system, at settings, local and national level takes account of and responds to the unique challenges that present themselves to individuals or groups of learners. We will strengthen partnership working to improve the early childhood experiences of children and ensure a widespread understanding of the importance of the first thousand days in a child's life. The reformed twenty-first century curriculum will help schools focus effectively on learner well-being, equity and excellence. Each learner must be respected and challenged to achieve the best that they are capable of, including our most able learners, while being supported to overcome barriers that inhibit their learning. Children and young people who have strong relationships and a positive sense of self – and who can understand and manage their own health and emotions – are in a better position to reach their full potential in the future.

Working in partnership, Welsh Government are determined that no challenge should prevent any learner from reaching their potential, including those learners who experience several Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

*(Education in Wales: Our National Mission Action Plan 2017 – 21)*

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) legislation was passed by the National Assembly for Wales on 12 December 2017 and became an Act on 24 January 2018 after receiving Royal Assent.

There is a clear duty on local authorities to secure education at mainstream, maintained schools, where possible:

- The power of local authorities to secure additional learning provision (ALP) at independent schools will be limited.

The Welsh Government is committed to ensure that all learners are inspired, motivated and supported to reach their potential. Every learner should have access to an education that meets their needs and enables them to participate in, benefit from, and enjoy learning.

The Act places a range of duties on the local authorities in relation to additional learning needs (ALN) which can be grouped as follows;

- Specific duties in relation to individual learners (usually those in their area) such as duties to maintain Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for some learners (including learners who are dual registered and those with more complex needs).

- General duties – to support the functioning and effectiveness of the additional learning needs system – including the duty to provide information and advice and the duty to keep additional learning provision under review.
- Local authorities will be directly responsible for meeting the needs of children and young people with the most complex and/or severe needs, those who do not attend a maintained school or further education providers in Wales (including those below school age - \* see Early Years ALN Guidance).
- To have due regard to the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a child or young person. (It provides guidance on actions local authorities and NHS bodies might consider taking when discharging these duties).

The new ALN Code imposes a duty on local authorities, early years settings, schools, providers and further education providers to determine whether children and young people aged 0-25 have additional learning needs (ALN), which calls for additional learning provision (ALP). Once a school or setting has decided that a child has additional learning needs (ALN), it must prepare an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for that child. Where emerging needs are identified particularly in very young children this does not necessarily require an identification of an additional learning need but may require early intervention.

The Code sets out the general principles underpinning the additional learning needs system which are reflected in the 2018 Act.

- A rights-based approach where the views, wishes and feelings of the child or the child's parent(s)/carers are central to the planning and provision of support; and the child, child's parent are enabled to participate as fully as possible in the decision-making process.
- Early identification intervention and effective transition planning where needs are identified and provision put in place at the earliest opportunity, and transitions are planned in advance.
- Collaboration where all those involved in planning and providing support to children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN) should work in the best interests of the child or young person.
- Inclusive education where children and young people are supported to participate fully in mainstream education, wherever feasible, and a whole setting approach is taken to meeting the needs of learners with additional learning needs (ALN).
- A bilingual system where all reasonable steps are taken to deliver additional learning provision (ALP) in Welsh for children and young people who require support through the medium of Welsh, with scope for increasing the delivery of additional learning provision (ALP) in Welsh over time.



In following the additional learning needs legislation and guidance, the Local Authority will also be mindful of other relevant legislation and guidance such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, The Social Services and Wellbeing Act and The Equalities Act.

### **Blaenau Gwent - Local Context**

This policy is supported by the aims and objectives identified in wider local authority policies and strategies including, amongst others, the BGCBC Education Improvement Plan, Corporate Plan, Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan, BG Council Well-being Objectives, Inclusion Equity and Diversity Policy, Wellbeing Policy, Education Other than at School (EOTAS) and Elective Home Education (EHE) Policies and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS) policy.

Objectives that relate to this includes those which aims to:

- Raise the standards of attainment;
- Support those who are not able to follow a traditional attainment path;
- Improve the learning environment;
- Improve skills for a digital age;
- Support learning that enables young and adult employment opportunities;
- Safeguard all children and young people in order to create a climate for learning, particularly for those most vulnerable.

Blaenau Gwent Local Authority takes a holistic view of education such as understanding issues in children's early years and aspects like poverty and how they can affect attainment. Much has been done to develop a multi-agency approach and learn and adapt approaches from relevant research, such as work on 'Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and Trauma Informed Schools (TIS).

The Local Authority is committed to the delivery of statutory education for children and young people, alongside providing support and guidance to families to provide opportunities for those children and young people to achieve within their schools and communities. It provides opportunities for adults and young people to improve their life chances by gaining qualifications and supports them into sustainable employment.

The Education Directorate will focus on:

- Improving the provision and outcomes for vulnerable groups of learners.
- Early identification and intervention.
- Reducing the rates of exclusions, therefore impacting upon pupil attainment and outcomes.
- Securing excellence in learner well-being.
- Ensuring that the Local Authority is fully compliant with the Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act 2018.

Exceptionally, it is recognised that for a small minority of children and young people with severe and complex needs, alternative provision arrangements will need to be identified. Within the Local Authority (LA) there is a continuum of specialist provision that includes Pen-y-Cwm School and the River Centre 3 -16 Learning Community, and specialist resource bases attached to mainstream schools. These facilities are appropriately resourced to meet the needs of children and young people with more significant additional learning needs. The allocation of a place within such settings is decided by the Local Authority ALN Panel, and in order to promote inclusion, such settings may only be required by a learner for a period of time with a return to a mainstream setting when appropriate.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council believes that for many children and young people the best place to undertake their education is in their local mainstream school. It is recognised that schools must respond to a diverse range of pupil need and they may require help and support from other agencies, including the Local Authority. There will be a small but significant group of children and young people who may be unable to be educated in school at a given point in their life. Where a child is not electively home educated, a key priority for the Local Authority is returning these children to school as soon as they are able to do so; therefore, Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) provision is not to be considered as a long term solution. The Local Authority's EOTAS policy and guidance provide further detail regarding the approach taken by the Local Authority in this area.

*(A full list of specialist provision within the Blaenau Gwent County Borough is attached – Appendix 1)*

### **3. Definitions**

#### **Additional Learning Needs**

A child/young person is said to have 'additional support needs' if they need more, or different, support to what is normally provided in schools or pre-schools to children of the same age. Children might need extra help to be able to take part in school or get the most from their education.

Key questions:

- Does the child have significantly greater difficulty in learning than many others of the same age?
- Does the child have a disability (within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010) which prevents or hinders the child from making use of facilities for education or training of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream maintained school or mainstream further education providers?

In the early years, providers will focus on early intervention to support emerging needs thus supporting children where possible to have their needs met in a mainstream school alongside their peers on transition. In some instances, it may be appropriate for a child in the early years to have an Individual Development Plan. In Early Years settings (non-maintained) the IDP would be held by the Local Authority. In nearly all cases the maintained school will be responsible for deciding whether a child has

additional learning needs (ALN) and for preparing and maintaining an Individual Development Plan (IDP).

Identifying whether a child may have additional learning needs (ALN) and the subsequent decision as to whether the child has additional learning needs and if so, what those additional learning needs are, needs to be based on evidence; this evidence might come from staff within the early years setting, school or further education provider, other services which have been involved with the child or young person such as health or social services, it might also come from the child, their parents or the young person themselves.

## **Disability**

According to legislation, children and young people are considered to be disabled if they are

*"blind, deaf or dumb or suffer[s] from a mental disorder of any kind or is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed. Section 17 (11), Children Act 1989.*

*A person has a disability for the purposes of this Act if he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Section 1(1), Disability Discrimination Act 1995."*<sup>3</sup>

## **4. Blaenau Gwent's Principles and Aims**

The principles underpinning the additional learning needs system are to support the creation of a fully inclusive education system where all learners are given the opportunity to succeed and have access to an education that meets their needs and enable them to participate in, benefit from, and enjoy learning.

Blaenau Gwent include the participation of children and young people and families in decisions which affect them, which ultimately may contribute to better outcomes for them.

This will ensure that:

- Families are supported with their child's development
- Practitioners supporting children and young people with additional learning needs having a better understanding of the child or young person, including who they are and what is important to them.
- Increased expectations of children and young people based on an understanding of the child or young person's strengths and potential.
- The development of personalised learning based on the identification of targets that build on the strengths of children and young people with additional learning needs.

- More effective planning and delivery of ALP which supports children and young people to work towards achieving positive outcomes based on their ambitions and aspirations.
- The empowerment of children and young people and their families through celebrating their achievements and abilities and focusing upon the possibilities, rather than the problems they face.

The Local Authority's objective is to achieve high quality support and provision by working in partnership with the Education Achievement Service (EAS), local and regional services and school and other educational settings. The LA is committed to supporting schools and other educational settings to raise attainment levels and achievements, celebrating progress towards realistic goals which are motivating and jointly developed with children and young people.

The Local Authority in collaboration with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) will provide a range of training and professional development programmes and information sharing forums for schools and other agencies in order to maintain and develop knowledge and skills to effectively support children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN). Further details can be found in section 10.

The aim is to ensure that the Local Authority:

- Incorporates processes and practice that adheres to the stipulations set out in the ALN Code of practice and the ALNET legislation.
- Works together to deliver the best outcomes for children with additional learning needs.
- Support schools and settings to develop an inclusive and highly skilled universal provision.
- Support schools and settings to improve educational and inclusion opportunities.
- Attempts to raise achievement and attainment by removing barriers to learning.
- Ensures early identification and intervention for children and young people who have additional learning needs and establish coordinated approaches across services and settings that work.
- Increases physical and curricular access for all children and young people with additional learning needs.
- Promotes inclusive education in all educational and early years settings and colleges.
- Develops a fair and equitable system for providing resources and support to schools and settings to meet an array of additional learning needs.
- Builds on existing expertise and enhance the professional development of all staff working with children and young people with additional learning needs.

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

Person centred practice puts the child, child's parents or **young person** at the centre of decisions. The Local Authority, schools and settings will use a range of resources to gather

relevant information and to inform actions to support learners with an additional learning need. The Local Authority has developed person centred templates in readiness for the move to Individual Development Plans.

\*NB A **young person** can give consent from the statutory education official leaving date (end of Year 11) providing that they have full capacity.

### **Identifying ALN and ALP Needs and Provision**

Additional learning needs processes are based on the premise that:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child and the child's parent or the young person are central to the process
- the child and the child's parent or the young person should be enabled to participate as fully as possible in decisions
- appropriate information and support are provided to enable participation in decision making

Local Authority and school / settings paperwork reflects person centred approaches and information collated through person centred reviews forms the focus of decisions about additional learning needs.

### **Schools, Early Years Settings and LA Responsibilities**

Schools and Early Years settings are responsible for operating in accordance with legislation and adhering to the ALN Code, recognising and responding to the diverse needs of their learners, while also offering a continuum of support and services to match those needs.

When it is brought to the attention of, or appears to, a maintained or non-maintained early years setting or school that one of its pupils (who does not have an Individual Development Plan (IDP) or Education Health Care (EHC) Plan) may have additional learning needs, these settings must follow the process outlined below: (different arrangements apply if pupils are dual registered, looked after, detained, an English resident without an EHC plan):

- Obtain child (or parents) consent to decide about whether the child has additional learning needs.
- Prepare an Individual Development Plan when the school considers the child has additional learning needs.

Where the setting has determined that the child has additional learning needs, which calls for Additional Learning Provision (ALP) and it would not be reasonable for the setting to secure, they can refer the matter to the Local Authority responsible for the child or young person for support and consideration.

### **The Governing Body**

The Governing Body must have regard to relevant guidance in the ALN Code when exercising functions under Part 2 of the Additional Learning Needs Act. The Governing Body, with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), will maintain Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and ensure appropriate Additional Learning Provision (ALP) for learners with Additional Learning Needs.

### **Senior Leadership Team (Schools)**

The SLT will advise, support and challenge the systems and processes to identify and meet the needs of the learners. The SLT and Governors will work strategically to ensure the education setting is meeting its responsibilities under the additional learning needs Act, the additional learning needs Code and Act.

### **Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo)**

The additional learning needs coordinator, at a strategic/operational level, ensures the needs of all learners with additional learning needs are met within the education setting. The additional learning needs coordinator will either form part of the Senior Leadership Team or have a clear line of communication to the SLT in accordance with the ALN Code. The additional learning needs coordinator has responsibility for deploying and supporting staff and will be involved in decisions around budgets and resources to plan appropriate provision. The additional learning needs coordinator will ensure IDPs and other associated records are maintained and kept up to date and will have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child, the child's parent or the young person.

The additional learning needs coordinator will secure relevant services that will support the learner's ALP as required and this may involve liaising with specialist external services. The additional learning needs coordinator must also prepare, and review information required to be published by the governing body pursuant to the additional learning needs Code.

### **Teachers**

Teachers are responsible for the day-to-day process of supporting every learner with additional learning needs. The class teacher will work closely with the additional learning needs coordinator to assess the child and to track child's progress in order to provide a differentiated learning programme. The class teacher will also make effective use of teaching assistants deployed to support learners.

### **Local Authority**

Where it appears that a child or young person may have additional learning needs the LA **will** decide whether the child or young person has additional learning needs unless:

- an IDP is already being maintained for the learner;
- the LA has previously decided the issue and is satisfied that the child's needs have not changed materially since that decision and there is no new information which materially affects that decision;

- the LA is satisfied that the question of whether or not the child has additional learning needs is being decided by a Governing Body; and/or,
- the child is a young person who does not consent to the decision being made.

If the LA decides that a child or young person has additional learning needs the LA **will**:

- prepare and maintain an IDP,
- or
- prepare an IDP and direct a Governing Body to maintain it,
- or
- direct the Governing Body to prepare and maintain the plan.

Following such a direction the Governing Body **must** prepare and/or maintain the plan unless the young person does not give consent.

The circumstances in which the LA duty to maintain an IDP ceases; in the case of an IDP maintained by the LA for a child or young person, the local authority's duty to maintain the IDP ceases to apply in the following circumstances:

- the LA decides that the child or young person no longer has additional learning needs, and that decision has not been successfully challenged
- in the case of a young person, the young person no longer consents to the IDP being maintained or, in the case of a child becoming a young person, does not consent to the IDP being maintained
- the LA ceases to be responsible for the child (provided the child is not looked after) or young person - that is, if the child or young person ceases to be in the Blaenau Gwent Borough.
- in the case of a child who is looked after by Blaenau Gwent LA, the person ceases to be a looked after child (for whatever reason, including because the child has become a young person) and the LA is not responsible for the person (i.e., the child is not in its area). Where another LA is responsible for the child or young person, the duty to maintain the IDP transfers to that LA.
- in the case of a child or young person who is a registered pupil at a maintained school in Wales, the LA will direct the school to maintain the plan;
- in the case of a young person who is enrolled as a student at an FEI in Wales, the FEI agrees to a request from the LA to become responsible for



maintaining the IDP or the Welsh Ministers have determined that the FEI should maintain the plan;

- the child or young person becomes subject to a detention
- in the case of a young person, the young person attains the age of 25, in which case the duty to maintain the IDP will cease at the end of the academic year in which the person attains that age;
- in the case of a young person who is neither a registered pupil at a maintained school in Wales nor enrolled as a student at an FEI in Wales, the LA decides that it is no longer necessary to maintain the IDP to meet the young person's reasonable needs for education or training.

### **Transferring an IDP Responsibilities:**

Where a child or young person with an IDP maintained by a school transfer to another maintained school in Wales or to an FEI in Wales, responsibility for maintaining their IDP will usually transfer at the same time. Similarly, where a child or young person with an IDP maintained by Blaenau Gwent LA moves to another local authority's area, responsibility for maintaining the IDP will normally transfer between the local authorities.

Where a child or young person with additional learning needs becomes the responsibility of Blaenau Gwent LA, that the LA will maintain the IDP if immediately before the child or young person became its responsibility, an IDP was being maintained for the child or young person by another local authority.

The LA will provide children, young people and others with information and advice about additional learning needs and the new system and ensure that it is accessible for all who need it.

### **Decision-Making Processes:**

Currently, the LA use multi-agency panels to moderate decisions in a consistent and robust manner. Evidence based decisions could include;

- Whether a child or young person has ALN
- Whether a child or young person requires access to a specialist placement (both in/out of the Blaenau Gwent Borough).
- Equipment requests – for the child or young person to be able to access education

- To allocate Additional Learning Needs specialist transport. Edibility criteria can be found in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy.

The decisions are based on the written evidence and information received by the panel.

## **6. Partnership / Dispute Resolution**

The LA is committed to working in partnership with parents /carers and values the contribution they can make to enable children and young people with additional learning needs achieve their potential. An Independent Advocacy Service is currently provided by SNAP Cymru.

SNAP Cymru's aim is to ensure families have access to information, advice and guidance in relation to the Additional Learning Needs of their children and young people so they can make appropriate, informed decisions. SNAP Cymru make sure that the views and wishes of children and young people are listened to and taken into consideration and that, along with parent's views, can inform and influence the development of local additional learning needs policy and practice. This service also has in place processes for avoiding and resolving disagreements (Dispute Resolution).

The LA also provides information and advice about additional learning needs and the additional learning needs system. The information and advice is provided in an impartial manner. In addition to working with parents / carers and SNAP, effective collaboration will be secured through active involvement with;

- **LA teams including:**
  - The ALN Statutory Team
  - The Educational Psychology Service (EPS)
  - The Education Welfare Service (EWS)
  - The commissioned Inclusive Practice Service (IPS)
  - Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (EYALNLo)
  - CLA Education Officers
  - Safeguarding in Education Lead
  - Youth Service
- Education Achievement Service (EAS)
- Gwent-wide Sensory and Communication Support Service (SENCom)
- Gwent Education Minority Ethnic Service (GEMS)
- Careers Wales
- Local Health Board and DECLO (Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer)
- Social Services

## **7. Safeguarding Children**

Children and young people with ALN may be more vulnerable to issues such as bullying, emotional, sexual and physical abuse and neglect. All those working with children must be alert to these issues and their responsibilities in accordance with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and Safeguarding in Education guidance.

Children and young people who have behavioural, emotional or social difficulties or who are at risk of disaffection or exclusion or who have physical medical difficulties may require a risk assessment to ensure their health, safety and well-being.

## **8. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The LA has a statutory duty to ensure the quality of educational provision, and as part of this to ensure that the needs of individual children / young people are met. In carrying out its responsibilities towards children with additional learning needs the LA will monitor how effectively schools and governing bodies fulfil their duties via:

- the Monitor, Challenge, Intervention and Support process undertaken by the Education Achievement Service (EAS) including scrutiny of school development plans in relation to ALN;
- Local Authority ALN QA (Additional Learning Needs Quality Assurance) Panel meetings (termly)
- Professional Discussions with all schools on an annual basis;
- Team Around the School (TAS) meetings;
- Progress against Estyn recommendations;
- Annual review of individual service areas, provision and the effective use of its resources through the evaluation of Service Improvement Plans and against service standards and national & local performance indicators as well as impact evaluation of specialist staff visits;
- Self-evaluation; and,
- use of relevant data.

Through termly analysis of data, the LA will:

- track vulnerable learners;
- monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions for an individual child, groups of children and at school level;
- monitor trends and identify emerging areas of need;
- monitor and evaluate the impact of additional funding, both delegated and centrally held on outcomes for children with ALN; and,
- target additional funding appropriately and identify future funding and resource needs.

The LA will collate and share information in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018). The LA will keep Additional Learning Needs provision under review and will link their activity to action linked wider strategic duties including:

- The Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013
- The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

## **9. Training**

### Support / Training for Schools

The LA has developed a range of training / resources which have been designed to support schools and the early years settings. Schools are also made aware of other training opportunities through signposting to relevant training opportunities. These include Communication and Intervention Service (ComIT), Gwent Education Minority Ethnic Service (GEMS), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), In Reach School Support, and Sensory Communication Service (SenCom).

# APPENDICES

<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>Specialist Provision Details</b>
<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>The Education Directorate - Additional Learning Needs Services</b>
<b>Appendix 3</b>	<b>Sources of Information</b>

## 1. Specialist Provision Guide – Special Schools and Resource Bases

Provision	Contact Details
Pen y Cwm Special School (PMLD)	Strand Annealing Lane Ebbw Vale NP23 6AN Tel: 01495 357755
The River Centre 3-16 Learning Community (SEBD)	River Centre 3-16 Learning Community Pontygof, Ebbw Vale Blaenau Gwent NP23 5AZ
Abertillery Learning Community - Six Bells Primary Campus	Bryngwyn Road Six Bells Abertillery NP13 2PD Tel: 01495 212678
Coed y Garn Primary School	Parrot Row Blaina NP13 3AH Tel: 01495 290044
Glanhowy Primary School (ASD)	Coach Bach Tredegar NP22 4RW Tel: 01495 722312
Willowtown Primary School	Brynheulog Street Ebbw Vale NP23 6NJ Tel: 01495 302436
Ystruth Primary School (ASD)	East Pentwyn Blaina NP13 3XG Tel: 01495 290955
Abertillery Learning Community - Secondary Campus	Alma Street Abertillery NP13 1YL Tel: 01495 217121
Ebbw Fawr Learning Community (ASD)	Lime Avenue Ebbw Vale NP23 6GL Tel: 01495 354690

## 2. List of Additional Learning Needs Services within Blaenau Gwent LA

Service	Contact
The Inclusion Service – Service Manager	<a href="mailto:Julie.Sambook@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk">Julie.Sambook@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk</a>
ALN Team (Statutory Assessment)	<a href="mailto:ALNEnquiries@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk">ALNEnquiries@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk</a>
Early Years ALN Lead Officer	<a href="mailto:Sara.Thomas-Gough@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk">Sara.Thomas-Gough@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk</a>
Educational Psychology Service	<a href="mailto:Robert.smith@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk">Robert.smith@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk</a>
Education Safeguarding	<a href="mailto:Sarah.Dixon@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk">Sarah.Dixon@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk</a>
Education Welfare Service	<a href="mailto:Lisa.Adams@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk">Lisa.Adams@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk</a>
GRT (Gypsy Roma Traveller) Family Liaison Officer	<a href="mailto:Rebecca.Bevan@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk">Rebecca.Bevan@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk</a>
School Admissions Officer	<a href="mailto:Eleri.griffiths@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk">Eleri.griffiths@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk</a>
IPS Inclusive Practice Service	<a href="mailto:carmichaeljulia@penycwm.com">carmichaeljulia@penycwm.com</a>
GEMS (Gwent Ethnic Minority Service)	<a href="mailto:Serina.Gifford@newport.gov.uk">Serina.Gifford@newport.gov.uk</a>
SenCom (Sensory and Communication Support)	<a href="mailto:Roger.Thurlbeck@torfaen.gov.uk">Roger.Thurlbeck@torfaen.gov.uk</a>
SNAP Cymru website	<a href="http://www.snapcymru.org">www.snapcymru.org</a>



### 3. Sources of Information

Hyperlinks

<https://gov.wales/additional-learning-needs>

<https://gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-and-education-tribunal-wales-act>

<https://gov.wales/the-additional-learning-needs-code-and-regulations>

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(1989\)](#)

[Estyn Thematic Report \(2020\). Knowing Your Children - Supporting Pupils with Adverse Childhood Experiences](#)

[Welsh Government \(2020\). Education in Wales: Our National Mission](#)

[Estyn Thematic Report \(2020\). 'Effective School Support for Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Pupils' – Case Studies of Good Practice](#)

[Welsh Government \(2018\). Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act](#)

[DfE \(2010\). The Equality Act](#)

[Welsh Government \(2015\). Inclusion and Pupil Support](#)

[Rights, Respect, Equality Statutory Guidance for Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools \(2019\).](#)

[New Curriculum for Wales 2022](#)

[www.snapcymru.org](http://www.snapcymru.org) – Independent Advocacy

# Early Years Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Guidance and Process

**September**

**2023 - 2025**



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## Introduction

This Early Years Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Guidance and Process document outlines the Blaenau Gwent Local Authority approach to supporting Early Years settings (maintained and non-maintained) with their responsibilities under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (ALNET) 2018 and the corresponding ALN Code of Practice. The approach within this guidance intends to meet the needs of our young learners with additional needs (AN) and/ or Additional Learning Needs (ALN), to overcome barriers and challenges to enable those learners to reach their full potential.

This guidance is inclusive of the Early Years 0-5 age range and the ALN Act 2018. The pathways to support learners with Additional Needs and/or with Additional Learning Needs are included as appendices within this guidance.

The authority has a designated Early Years ALN Lead Officer in post and this role works in partnership with health and social care colleagues.

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## **Definition of Additional Learning Needs (ALN)**

The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021, provides a clear definition of what constitutes an **Additional Learning Need**:

### *2.3. Definition of additional learning needs:*

*(1) A person has additional learning needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability (whether the learning difficulty or disability arises from a medical condition or otherwise) which calls for additional learning provision.*

*(2) A learner of compulsory school age or person over that age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she —*

*(a) has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or*

*(b) has a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities for education or training of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream maintained schools or mainstream institutions in the further education sector.*

*(3) A learner under compulsory school age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she is, or would be if no additional learning provision were made, likely to be within subsection (2) when of compulsory school age.*

*(4) A person does not have a learning difficulty or disability solely because the language (or form of language) in which he or she is or will be taught is different from a language (or form of language) which is or has been used at home.*

Just because a learner or young person has a disability or a medical condition, this doesn't automatically mean that they have ALN. It is only if their disability or medical condition prevents them from accessing mainstream provision and they need ALP that they are considered to have ALN.

*2.18. Those learners and young people who are considered 'more able and talented' do not have a difficulty in learning on the basis of their enhanced ability or talent. These learners and young people may require enhanced opportunities and challenge in order to reach their full potential, but this ought to be provided as part of differentiated teaching.*

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## Definition of Additional Learning Provision (ALP)

The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021, provides a clear definition of what constitutes an **Additional Learning Provision**:

2.4. *Definition of additional learning provision:*

(1) “Additional learning provision” for a **person aged three or over** means educational or training provision that is additional to, or different from, that made generally for others of the same age in—

(a) *mainstream maintained schools in Wales,*

(b) *mainstream institutions in the further education sector in Wales, or*

(c) *places in Wales at which nursery education is provided.*

(2) “Additional learning provision” for a learner aged under three means educational provision of any kind.

(3) In subsection (1), “nursery education” means education suitable for a learner who has attained the age of three but is under compulsory school age.

2.15. *ALP for those aged under three can take many forms; for instance, group work or individual support - where it is educational provision of any kind. This might include, for example, educational provision in Flying Start or specialist health, physical, communication or sensory support. This can take place in an education setting or elsewhere.*

2.42. *In the case of young learners, learning ought to provide the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of the world through exploratory play and experiences. Learners with ALN might require ALP in the form of exploratory play, or other ALP to enable them to access appropriate play opportunities/activities.*

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## **The Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 states that we must promote equality of opportunity and must not discriminate against, harass or victimise learners with a disability. Maintained and non-maintained settings have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that learners with a disability are not at a substantial disadvantage compared with their peers. This duty is anticipatory: setting must look ahead and anticipate what disabled learners might need and what adjustments might need to be made to prevent any disadvantage.

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### **Definition of Disability**

The Act defines that a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

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### **Discrimination**

The law prohibits 'direct discrimination', for example if a setting refused to offer a learner a place because the learner has a disability; and 'indirect discrimination' where policies or practices within a setting may particularly disadvantage learners who share a particular 'protected characteristic' including, race/ethnicity, gender, disability, religion and belief. This means that all learners and adults should be treated with equal concern and respect and that the setting complies with relevant anti-discriminatory legislation and good practice in all areas, including employment, training, and admission to settings and access to the resources, activities and facilities available. The setting is responsible for ensuring that there is an equal opportunities policy, which is consistent with current legislation and guidance and is regularly reviewed. All practitioners and volunteers understand and implement this policy and it is available to parents.

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### **Vision**

The vision of the Welsh Government is to deliver a fully inclusive education system for the learners of Wales; Blaenau Gwent Local Authority is in full support of this approach. Planning should be flexible and responsive, and professionals should be skilled and confident in identifying needs. The learner should be at the centre of everything we do, and they and their parents or carers seen as equal partners in their learning; this is known as Person Centred Practice (PCP).



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## Inclusion For All

The vision for Wales is to have strong and inclusive setting committed to excellence, equality and wellbeing. All learners should have their needs met enabling them to participate, benefit from, and enjoy learning and play in a diverse growing and changing world.

All learners will be welcomed and included in all settings across Blaenau Gwent. Where learners require additional or particular support to meet their needs, care will be taken by practitioners to identify and implement this both inclusively and sensitively.

Successful inclusive practice happens primarily when practitioners accept, understand, and attend to learners physical, social, cognitive, emotional and academic differences and diversity. In its simplest form, inclusive practice means that every learner, no matter what their barrier is to learning or play, has equal access to learning and opportunities to succeed.

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## The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act 2018 (ALNET)

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act 2018 (ALNET) was implemented in Wales from September 2021.

The principles underpinning the ALN system are:

- A rights-based approach
- Early identification, intervention, and prevention
- Collaboration and integration
- Inclusive education

- A bilingual system

## There are 11 key changes from the previous legislation.

### The core Principles are:

1. **The Introduction of the term Additional Learning Needs (ALN)** - Replacing the term 'Special Educational Needs' with 'Additional Learning Needs' (ALN) and 'Special Educational Provision' with 'Additional Learning Provision' (ALP)
  2. **0–25 age range** - Improved transition between early years education providers and schools
  3. **A unified plan** - Individual Development Plans (IDP) will replace Statements of Special Educational Needs and other non-statutory SEN plans for learners.
  4. **Increased participation of learners and young people** - The Act requires that learners' views should always be considered as part of the planning process, along with those of their parents.
  5. **High aspirations and improved outcomes** - The emphasis of IDPs will be on identifying ALP that delivers appropriate positive outcomes for all
  6. **Clear and consistent rights of appeal** - Learners and their parents will have the right to appeal to the Education Tribunal against decisions made by a Local Authority (LA) in relation to their ALN or their ALP.
  7. **Increased collaboration** - Improved collaboration and information sharing between agencies including education, health and social services, which will be essential to ensuring that needs are identified early and the right support is put in place to enable learners and young people to achieve positive outcomes.
  8. **Avoiding disagreements and earlier disagreement resolution** - Where disagreements occur about an IDP or the provision it contains, the matter is considered and resolved at the most local level possible.
  9. **Clear and consistent rights of appeal** - When disagreements about an IDP cannot be resolved at a local level, parents and young people will have the right to appeal to Tribunal.
  10. **ALN Code** - The ALN code will impose mandatory requirements in respect of decisions about ALN; preparation, content, form, review and revision of IDPs and ceasing IDPs.
  11. **A bilingual system** - The Act requires that services must consider whether a learner or young person needs ALP in Welsh. If they do, this must be documented in the IDP and 'all reasonable steps' must be taken to secure the provision in Welsh.
-

## **The Early Years Additional Learning Needs**

### **Lead Officer (EYALNLO)**

It is the duty on Local Authorities to designate an Early Years ALN Lead Officer. This statutory role has responsibility for coordinating the Local Authority's functions under the 2018 Act.

The EYALNLO will:

- Hold the register of all AN and ALN learners in the Early Years sector in Blaenau Gwent.
- Have a role in the strategic planning for and allocation of any budget and/or the funding the authority provides for learners under compulsory school age.
- Be directly involved with the development of the authority's policy on AN and ALN provision for learners under compulsory school age.
- Develop and deliver training to settings on matters related to ALN, engaging other professionals where appropriate for specialist input.
- Maintain their own continuing professional development in the field of ALN to remain an authoritative and expert source of knowledge.

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#### **The Local Authority Duties Include:**

- Deciding whether a learner has an ALN and the designation of an officer to be responsible for coordinating the actions required to make that decision and if an IDP is required, to be responsible for preparing it.
- Preparation of a Local Authority Individual Development Plan (IDP) in line with a statutory 12-week timeline.
- Maintaining a LA IDP and securing the Additional Learning Provision (ALP) described in it.
- Reviewing and revising an IDP.
- Reviewing the ALP arrangements.
- Making arrangements to provide advice and information and taking reasonable steps to make the arrangements known to parents and case friends of learners in its area.
- Making arrangements for the avoidance and resolution of disagreements and promoting the use of them to parents.
- Making arrangements for the provision of independent advocacy services.
- Outline any action the Local Authority will undertake in light of its consideration to ensure the learner's needs are met if ALN is not agreed at this time.

## Person Centred Practice (PCP)

Person Centred Practice (PCP) means focusing on the learner and keeping them at the centre of everything we do.

A person-centred approach is all about:

- Understanding the learner's needs and wishes.
- Thinking about what is important **to** them and **for** them.
- Thinking about what **is** working and **not** working.
- Making sure that the learner gets the best support from everyone involved.

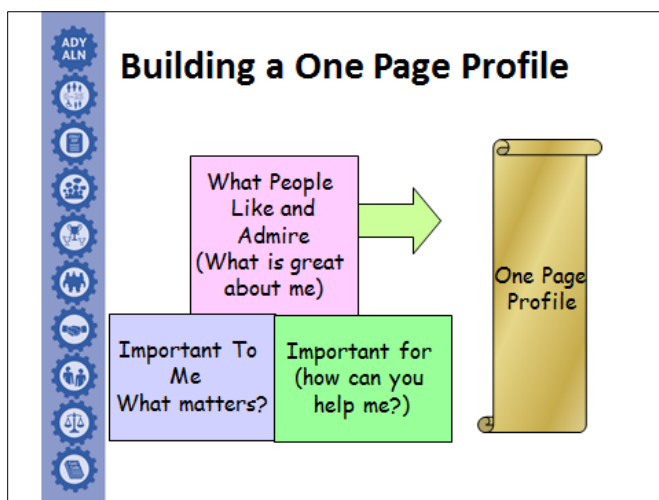
All meetings that are held in relation to learners should be person centred.

If there are concerns that a learner may have Additional Learning Needs, a PCP meeting will be arranged to gather and share information. It is an opportunity for parents and any professionals involved with supporting the learner to meet to celebrate the learner's achievements and to discuss the way forward. It will have an informal atmosphere, and everyone will contribute to develop a realistic action plan for the future of the learner.

The areas that will be covered during an entry planning meeting are:

- Relevant background information
- What is unique about your learner?
- What is important to your learner?
- What is important for your learner?
- Parents / carers views
- Learner's view
- What currently works well?
- What is not working so well?
- Details of agreed next steps.

## One Page Profile



A one-page profile is a simple summary of what is important to a learner or young person and how they want to be supported.

This information will be gathered during the PCP review meeting with learners with an Additional Need (AN) or with identified learners with an Additional Learning Need (ALN).

### All About Me

Blasau Gwent

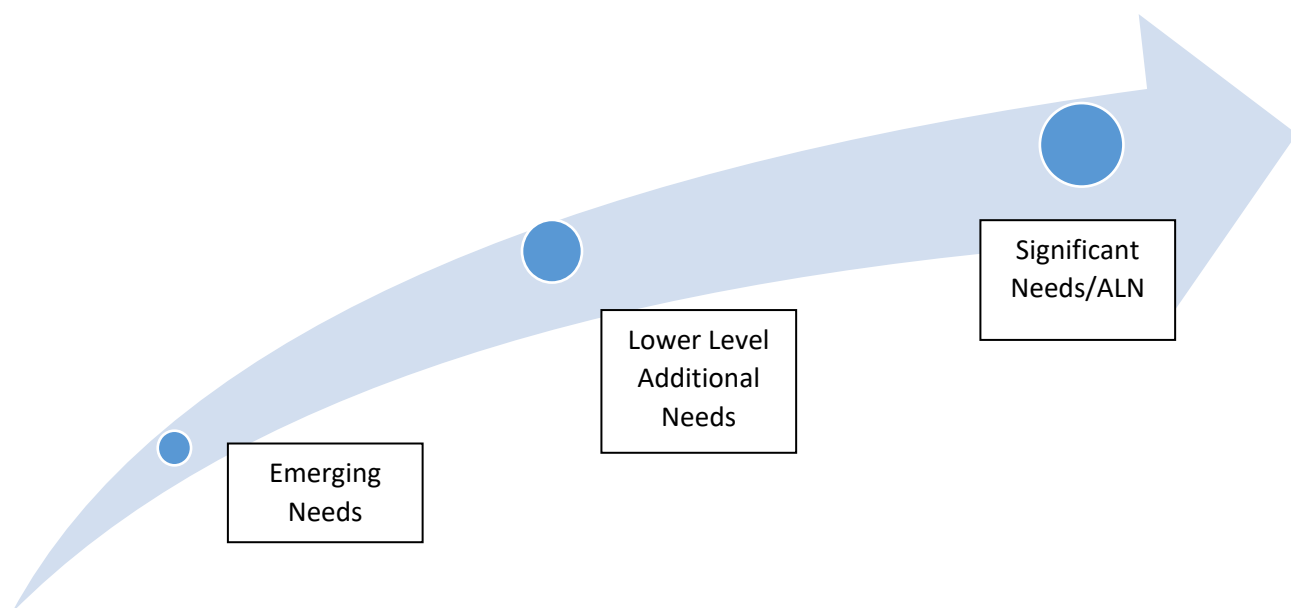
Name:		D.O.B:	
Entry date:	Photo here		
Exit date:			
What is great about me?		Who are in my family?	
What and who is important to me?		What is unique about me?	
What do I need a little help with? How can you help me?			
Parent/Guardian Signature:		Date:	

The information that is included on a One Page Profile / All About Me is as follows:

- **What is great about me?** – What do people like and admire about the learner? This can include personal attributes such as ‘I am always happy’.
- **What and who is important to me?** – What and who really matters to the learner from their perspective? What is needed for them to have a good day?
- **What is unique about me?** – Is there anything specific people might need to know about the learner? This might include allergies or additional needs.
- **What do I need a little help with? How can you help me?** – What is needed to keep the learner safe, healthy and to help them develop?

## Graduated Response

Early intervention is key in Early Years and we apply a graduated response. Support and strategies are put in place when learners are exhibiting emerging or lower level needs. This may prevent them from developing significant needs and reduce the need for identification of ALN later on by the Local Authority.

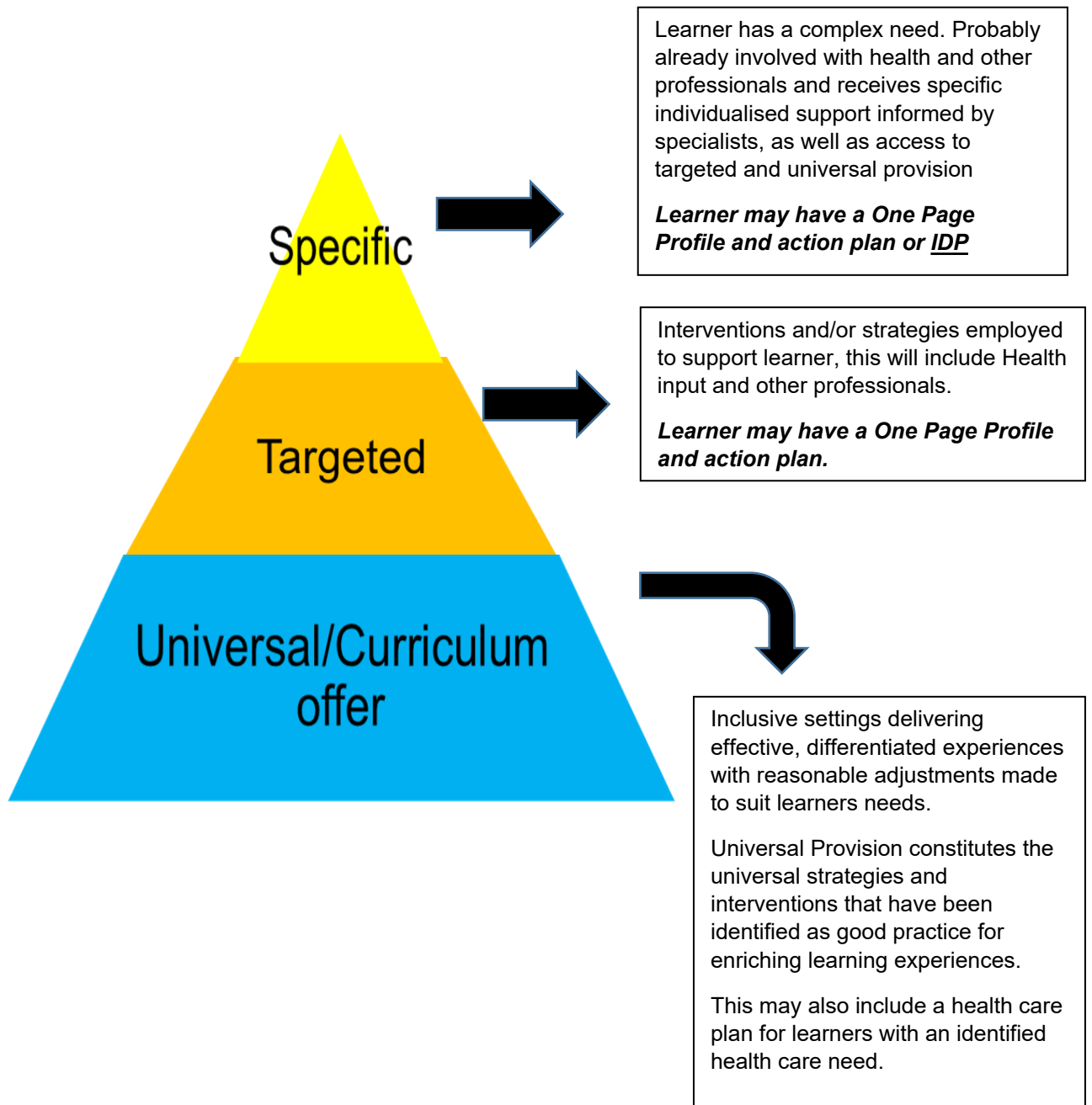


## Graduated Response - Levels of Support

Provision for a learner with Additional Learning needs will differ depending on the individual needs of the learner but should fall into one of three categories;

1. **Universal Offer** - Learning environments are tailored to meet the needs of all learners and young people, so they are able to make progress in learning and wellbeing.
2. **Targeted Support** - Professionals working with the learner or young person have appropriate knowledge and skills to monitor the specific needs. They can act accordingly if additional help is needed.
3. **Specific Support** - The learner or young person has a complex need which means that specialised/specific individualised provision is required in order to meet the learner's needs and enable them to make progress.

As the triangle suggests, the majority of learners will only need to access the universal offer, some will be receiving targeted support and a relatively small number of learners will require specific support (ALP).

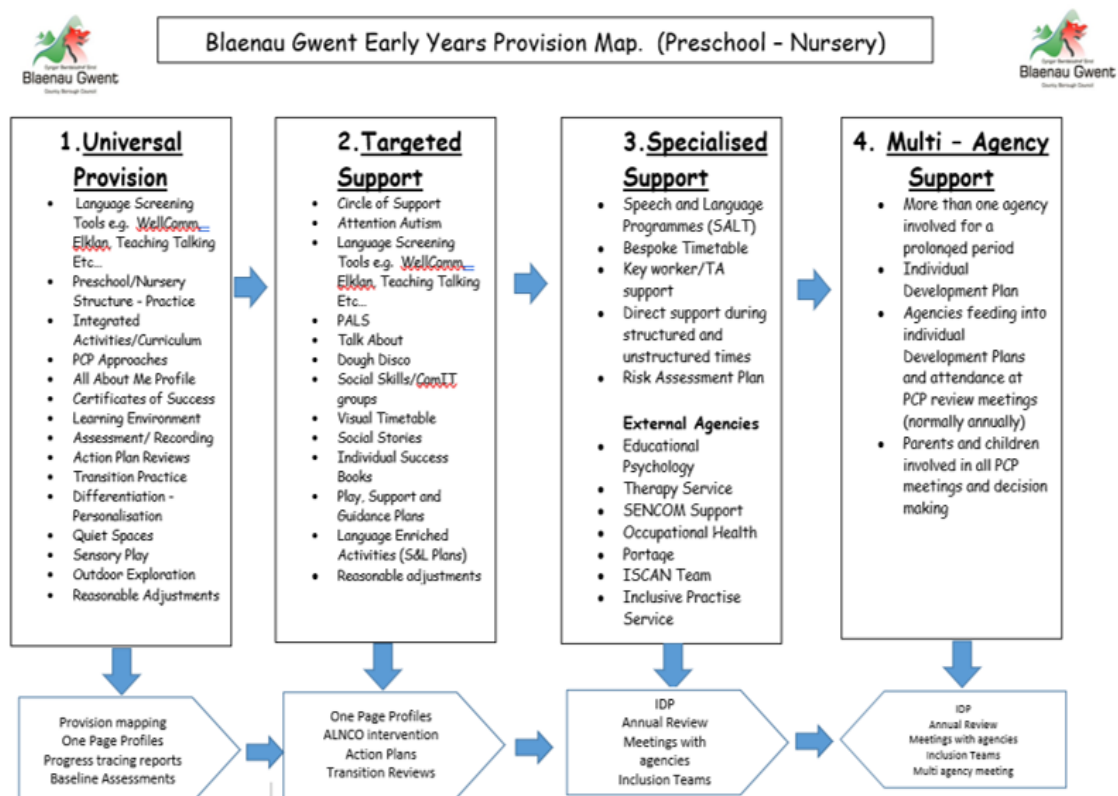


## Early Years Provision Map



Below is the Early Years Provision Map for Blaenau Gwent. This map has been put together with a comprehensive overview of what is available in our authority. This is a guide to what provision maps could look like.

An individual setting or school provision map will capture what they are offering and unique to their setting or school.



## Early Years Funding & Local Authority Early Years Panels

There are two Early Years funding panels in Blaenau Gwent.

1. **Early Years Additional Needs Support Panel (EY AN Panel). This panel is co-ordinated by social care.**

The purpose of this panel is to...

- To coordinate the identification of early years/pre-school learners with Additional Needs (AN) and to ensure learners are supported to have high quality early years support.
- To identify needs early and offer support and advice as appropriate to ensure needs are met, potentially mitigating the need for ongoing support/more intervention at a later age.
- To ensure the early years workforce are supported and their training needs are identified and provided for.

2. **Early Years Additional Learning Needs Panel – (EY ALN Panel). This panel is co-ordinated by ALN Education.**

- The purpose of the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Panel is to support learners in regard to their identified additional needs and is chaired by the EY ALNLO.

Additional funding to settings and/or schools is allocated to support AN/ALN where this has been identified via either of the above panels and will require evidence.

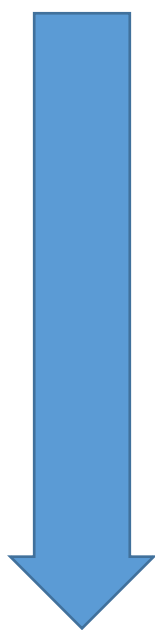


## Notification of an ALN

When a notification is made to the local authority regarding a learner who **may** have ALN the following process is initiated:

1. If the learner is **under statutory school age** (under 5 years old) and **NOT** attending a maintained school, the co-ordination of the statutory process will be the responsibility of Blaenau Gwent's Early Years Additional Learning Needs Officer.
2. If the learner is over three years old and **is** attending a maintained school setting, the co-ordination of the IDP process will be the responsibility of the school, as this will be a school based IDP.
3. If the learner is **over statutory school age** (The term after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday), the co-ordination of the IDP process will be the responsibility of the school or the Local authority's ALN statutory team.



The pathway below is a step by step guide of the twelve week statutory process. This pathway is a clear timeline that will follow from a notification to the local authority of a learner who may have ALN.




## Statutory Process for an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for Early Years.

Reference:




1. EYALNLO - Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer.
2. Local Authority - LA

<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Event /Action taken</b>	<b>Actioned by?</b>	<b>Correspondence to Learners/parents/others</b>  <b>Steps to be taken</b>
<b>12 week statutory process begins</b>	Local authority is notified that a learner is considered to have significant Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and may need an IDP with an Additional Learning Provision (ALP)	ISCAN partners  Health Professionals  Parents	
<b>Day 1 To Day 5</b>	Day 1 - LA acknowledges notification and requests consent from parents	LA ALN panel  EYALNLO	LA to send the following correspondence to parents. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consent Letter</li> <li>2. PCP guide for parents</li> <li>3. ALN Act – Information for parents.</li> </ol>
<b>Day 6</b>	Has consent been received from parents? NO – End process  YES 		If no consent is received, LA ALN panel will send a letter to end process.
<b>Day 6 to Day 10</b>	YES, consent received.  Day 6 to Day 10 EYALNLO will ensure that a graduated response has been implemented by all professionals.	EY Setting  LA EYALNLO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One page Profile (If applicable)</li> <li>• Barriers to Learning Matrix – (If applicable)</li> <li>• Targets/strategies must be in place and progress</li> </ul>

			<p>evaluated for at least 2 terms / 12 weeks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools will follow the Graduated Response Workflow.</li> </ul>
<b>Day 10.</b>	Day 10 – Arrange a PCP meeting	School LA EYALNLO	<p>Letters to be sent to all professionals and parents.</p> <p><a href="#">Appendix 2 - Parent Carer.</a></p> <p><a href="#">Appendix 2a Parent Carer Report Dec 21</a></p> <p><a href="#">Appendix 4 Professional Guidance Dec 21.</a></p> <p><a href="#">Appendix 4a Professional Report Dec 21</a></p> <p>If professionals are not able to attend, an up to date report is required.</p>
<b>Day 19</b>	Day 19 - PCP meeting is held to gather information	School LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PCP meeting held with all professionals and parents.</li> <li>All information will be gathered and all reports to be considered to be submitted to ALN panel for a consideration of an IDP.</li> </ul>
<b>Day 20</b>	Submission to LA for consideration of IDP to panel	<p>School to email LA ALN Panel with the following documents</p> <p>or LA EYALNLO to email all paperwork to LA panel.</p>	<p>Consideration of an IDP document to be completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PCP Review document</li> <li>One page profile</li> <li>Target plan</li> <li>Risk assessment (if applicable)</li> <li>EP reports</li> <li>Agency reports</li> <li>Parents written report</li> <li>Views of the learner This will be reviewed at next available LA panel</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">LA have 6 weeks to request professional reports</a></li> </ul>

<p><b>Local Authority now has 6 weeks – 30 days to draft and finalise an IDP</b></p>	<p>LA ALN Panel – From paperwork received, panel agrees that learner does not have ALN.</p> <p>Learner will continue to be monitored through targets set through universal and targeted provisions, in the school of placement.</p>	<p>LA ALN Panel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written confirmation to be sent to parents from the Local authority regarding the decision given, with right of appeal/dispute resolution</li> </ul>
	<p>LA ALN Panel agrees that learner does have ALN – A draft IDP is to be written</p>	<p>LA ALN Panel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LA ALN panel to inform parents / settings / health that an IDP has been agreed and a draft IDP is in the process.</li> </ul>
	<p>EYALNLO drafts IDP – LA Panel to agree the written draft IDP</p>	<p>LA ALN Panel EYALNLO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blaenau Gwent ALN team to send out agreed draft IDP to parents and school.</li> </ul>
	<p>Do parents agree of draft IDP – Yes</p> <p>Parents do not agree </p>	<p>LA EYALNLO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If parents agree - LA will issue final IDP</li> <li>Parents and EYALNLO to discuss changes and make amendments.</li> </ul>
	<p>LA issue final IDP. Review in 12 months</p>	<p>LA ALN Panel EYALNLO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents and school to receive final IDP.</li> </ul>

## Appendices

Appendix 1	Pathway 0 – 7 Years	 Pathway 0-7 Years
Appendix 2	Pathway – Early Years Additional Needs Panel 0-3 Years	 Pathway into Early Years Additional Neec
Appendix 3	Pathway - Early Years learner arriving in a maintained setting from Preschool	 Pathway - learners arriving in a maintaine
Appendix 4	Pathway - Early Years learner arriving in a maintained setting <b>without</b> Preschool Experience	 Pathway learners arriving in a maintaine

For any queries regarding this guidance and/or the processes please email: [ALNEnquiries@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:ALNEnquiries@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

# ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION POLICY

Education Inclusion Service

**ELECTIVE HOME  
EDUCATION POLICY**

**Revised September  
2023**



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

**Blaenau Gwent**

County Borough Council



# Elective Home Education Policy

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## Introduction

Elective home education is when parents decide to provide home-based education for their child rather than sending them to school. Home educated children are therefore not registered at mainstream or special schools.

The decision to home educate should never be taken lightly. Before parents decide to make such a commitment, they need to talk and listen to their child and also consider the time and energy they will need to invest. Parents should be aware that if they choose to home educate, they assume financial responsibility for their child's education, including the costs for equipment, visits, books and tutors, as well as the cost of any public examinations.

Parents should also be aware that children must continue to receive education until the end of compulsory education (i.e. the last Friday in June in the academic year the child reaches the age of 16).

It would not be in the child or parents' best interests if the parents chose to educate their child at home as a response to a disagreement with a teacher or the school. It would therefore be advisable to try and talk through any issues with the Head teacher or Governors if this is the case.

On no account should parents be encouraged to remove their child from the school register to avoid exclusion or prosecution for failing to ensure that their child has attended school or to improve school performance results.

Another aspect to take into consideration is the social side of school life, such as contact with other children, joint activities and the stimulus of seeing the work of other children. Parents will need to plan how the child's social development can be maintained or extended.

## The rights of the child

Article 28 of the (UNCRC) declares the right of all children to receive an education.

Article 29 of the UNCRC declares that education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full and should encourage children to respect their own and other cultures.

Article 12 of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides a right for children to express their views and for due weight to be given to those views, in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. This does not, however, give children authority over parents. Local authorities, through their services supporting the participation of children, should consider how the individual and collective voices of home educated children can be heard.

Article 3 of the UNCRC requires all adults to think about how their decisions will affect children and to do what is best for the child.

## The rights and responsibilities of the parents

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 sets out the duty placed on parents to secure a full time, suitable and efficient education for children of compulsory school age, either by sending the child to school or through other means.

Parents, therefore, have a right to educate their child at home providing they fulfil their duty to ensure that their child, of compulsory school age, receives full-time education that is efficient and suitable for their age, aptitude, ability, and any special educational needs they may have.

Education can be said to be **efficient** if it achieves what it sets out to achieve.

A **suitable** education is defined as one which prepares a child for life in modern civilised society and enables him or her to achieve his or her potential. It is suitable if it equips a child for life within the community to which he or she belongs, as long as this does not reduce the child's chance to adopt some other form of life in later years, should he or she wish to do so. This is important where a family have religious or cultural beliefs.

In *Harrison & Harrison V Stevenson*, the judge defined the outcomes of a suitable education as:

‘In our judgement education’ demands at least an element of supervision; merely to allow a child to follow its own devices in the hope that it will acquire knowledge by imitation, experiment or experience in its own way and in its own good time is neither systematic nor instructive ... such a course would not be education but, at best, child-minding. We should not, in the ordinary case, regard a system of education as

suitable for any child capable of learning such skills, if it failed to instil in the child the ability to read, write or cope with arithmetical problems, leaving it to time, chance, and the inclination of the child to determine whether – if ever – the child eventually achieved even elementary proficiency in those skills’.

(Harrison & Harrison v Stevenson [1982] (QB (DC) 729/81)

Parents do not need to ask the permission of the Local Authority (LA) to begin home educating. If their child has been attending school, the parents will however need to notify the governing body of the school, normally through the Head teacher, of their intention to home educate. This must be in writing. It is then the responsibility of the school to notify the LA within ten days.

The name of the pupil is only removed from the school register when the school has received the written notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education other than at school.

If a child has not attended school then the parent should inform the LA directly although there is no legal requirement for them to do so.

Parents seeking to home educate a child registered at a special school must obtain the consent of the LA to withdraw their child from the school. These requests will be discussed at ALN panel to determine if the parent can provide evidence to demonstrate that they are able to meet the requirement of the statement of SEN or the Local Authority IDP.

## **The responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA)**

Section 436A of the Education Act 1996, places a duty on local authorities to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age who are not registered learners at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Local authorities must have regard to this statutory guidance in exercising their functions.

The LA needs to be satisfied that a child is receiving an effective and suitable education at home, appropriate for the child’s age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs. The evidence provided by parents should demonstrate that the education being provided is suitable and not simply a statement of intent.

Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996 states: ‘If it appears to the local authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing to the parent requiring them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.’

Section 437(1) goes on to state that if the parent fails to satisfy the LA within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving suitable education, the LA should serve a school attendance order requiring the parent to register the child in the school named in the order.

For a local authority to satisfy itself of the suitability of education provided by the parents, the local authority should see and communicate with the child. In the absence of seeing and communicating with the child, it will be questionable whether the local authority can reasonably assess suitability of education and to know if evidence of the suitability of the education provided by the parent relates to that child. For example, whether the evidence provided can reasonably be said to have been produced by that child or be about that child. Seeing and communicating with the child will provide an opportunity for the local authority to better understand how the child learns and what areas of learning they are interested in. Parents and Gillick competent children are not, however, obliged to meet with the local authority and are free to decline a meeting if they so wish.

While parents are under no legal obligation to meet with a representative of the LA or engage in discussing their child’s education, Lord Donaldson has stated that:

‘...it would be sensible for them to do so. If parents give no information or adopt the course.... of merely stating that they are discharging their duty without giving any details of how they are doing so, the LA will have to consider and decide whether it ‘appears’ to it that the parents are in breach of Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996’

Legal precedent has established that local authorities can make informal enquiries of parents for details of the educational provision for their child. *Goodred v Portsmouth City Council* states “There is nothing remotely problematic in the defendant approaching a home-schooling parent...to request evidence that, if satisfactory, would enable the defendant to discharge its duty under section 436A without the need to serve a [notice to satisfy under section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996] R. (on the application of *Goodred*) v Portsmouth City Council<sup>16</sup> November 2021

**Remember:** If it appears that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, the LA is able to serve a notice in writing requiring the parent to provide evidence that the child is receiving a suitable education. If no response is received within 15 days the LA is able to issue a school attendance order (SAO) to ensure a suitable education.

Under section 447, Education Act 1996, if a parent fails to comply with an SAO a local authority must consider whether it would be appropriate (instead of or as well as instituting proceedings for the offence of failing to comply) to apply for an education supervision order (ESO) in respect of the child. Failure to comply with an SAO could lead to either a criminal conviction or the imposition of an ESO or both.

## Initial contact

Once the LA has received notification of a parent's intent to withdraw their child and home educate, the LA will apply the following procedure within 10 working days:

- i. Update our records accordingly.
- ii. Contact the parent/carers to request an initial meeting and information about the education they are providing or are intending to provide and request they complete the Elective Home Education Parent Information form.
- iii. Contact the school to confirm that the child's name has been removed from the school's register and ensure the school completes the Elective Home Education School Information form.
- iv. Contact other agencies to seek clarification of any involvement with the child:
  - Education Welfare Service
  - Additional Learning Needs Team
  - Educational Psychology Service
  - Traveller Education Service
  - Children's Social Services
  - Youth Offending Team

Any information provided will be gathered by the LA Officer (LAO) who will contact the family and request an initial meeting within four weeks.

## **Initial meeting**

At the initial meeting, parents are able to discuss any concerns or queries they may have. The LAO will explain that parents who home educate assume financial responsibility for their child's education, including the cost of public examinations, and that their child must continue to receive suitable education until the end of compulsory education. Also at the initial meeting, parents and the LAO should consider and agree what future contact there will be and the contact details of the LAO should be made available.

It is important that the child attends this meeting and any subsequent meeting so that they have an opportunity to provide their views. Seeing the child to discuss their education provision and access to resources accords with a number of articles in the UNCRC such as a child's right to an education and to fulfil their potential, including their rights to express their views and to receive appropriate information in order to make informed choices, to support and provision, to play and leisure activities and to be kept safe.

Following the meeting, a report will be prepared within 10 days by the LAO setting out any recommendations that were discussed and agreed, and the reasons for them, and a copy will be sent to the parents.

## **Alternatives to a meeting**

Parents may wish to decline a meeting in their home or alternative venue. Where this is the case, it should be possible to discuss and evaluate the parents' educational provision by alternative means. Parents might prefer:

- to write a report;
- provide samples of work;
- have the provision endorsed by a recognised third party;
- provide evidence in some other appropriate form of the education being provided.



Where parents decline a meeting, the LA should provide the same information that would be communicated at a meeting in letter form.

Therefore, when the LA is made aware of a child's withdrawal from school, the LA will:

- acknowledge the withdrawal in writing;
- invite the parents to meet with an LAO, as a named contact within the LA, to discuss the suitability of their proposed education programme;
- provide information if requested;
- consider and decide whether it appears that a child is not receiving a suitable education if the parents do not engage with the LA.

## Suitability

Where the LA is not satisfied that a child is receiving a suitable education, the LA will:

- contact the parents in writing, explaining the concerns and reasons for concluding that provision is unsuitable, and serving the parents a notice requiring them to provide evidence of suitable education within 15 days;
- if there is no reply or an unsatisfactory response, a further letter will be delivered. The letter will include a notice stating which school the LA will name in a school attendance order and giving the parents, within 7 days, the opportunity to choose an alternative school or provide evidence of a suitable education.
- If there is no response, a School Attendance Order naming the school where the child should be registered will be issued.

**Remember:** If a parent on whom a School Attendance Order has been served fails to comply with the requirements of the Order they are guilty of an offence under Section 443 of the Education Act 1996.

If at any stage the parents provide information which satisfies the LA that a suitable education is being provided then no further action would be taken.

To achieve the aim of ensuring that every compulsory school age pupil who is home educated receives an effective and suitable education we know that the LA and parents will need to work together and communicate on a reasonably regular basis. You may need some help and support and we need to give you the opportunity to present evidence of the learning experience which a child is receiving.

## Ongoing monitoring

The LA will contact parents on an annual basis, or more frequently if needed. Contact will normally be made in writing with a request for a meeting or an updated report.

Where a meeting or updated report leads to concerns about the efficiency or suitability of the education being provided for the child, further clarification may be needed. If, after further investigation the LAO is not satisfied that the child is receiving a suitable education then a copy of the written report will be forwarded to the Education Welfare Service to apply for a School Attendance Order.

## What about flexi-schooling?

'Flexi-schooling' is an arrangement between the parents and the school where the child is registered. The child would attend school on a part time basis and be home educated for the rest of the time.

Instances where flexi-schooling would be beneficial to the child can include (but are not limited to):

- where the child is transitioning back into school
- where the child is transitioning into school for the first time
- the child has an autism spectrum condition (ASC) and finds school challenging
- the child is suffering from school phobia or anxiety
- the child has an illness.

This arrangement is only possible provided that:

- the school has given permission, authorised by its Governing Body;

- Evidence for the arrangements for education can be provided and are judged suitable.

It is important to note that a school does not have to agree to this arrangement or give reasons for not agreeing to such a request from parents.

## **Informing other Services**

Schools have a very important role in monitoring the wellbeing of their pupils and sharing concerns with, or making referrals to, Social Services when a child is believed to be 'in need', or when abuse or neglect is suspected. When schools are no longer able to fulfil this responsibility because a child is receiving their education at home, the LA will inform Social Services of this if the LA has wellbeing concerns for the child or if the parent gives consent for information to be shared.

If there are child protection concerns when a child is removed from roll the school will follow existing child protection procedures. If, following a visit, the child is not seen and has not previously been seen, or there is no reasonable explanation for the child's absence, the LAO will assess whether to alert Children's Social Services.

If the Local Authority is notified that there have previously been child protection concerns regarding the child but there is no immediate cause for concern this should be communicated to Children's Social Services to check whether they have been involved and if so to enable them to update their file.

Where there are concerns about a vulnerable child or young person including bullying, the impact of anti-social behaviour, the impact of domestic violence, the impact of drugs and alcohol in the parental household or child protection concerns then the LAO should consider whether a common assessment application would assist the child/young person or whether a referral is required to Children's Social Services.

## **Returning to mainstream school**

Following a period of elective home education, if a parent wishes their child to return to school then an application should be made through the Schools Admission Team. It should be noted that

re-admission is not automatic and is dependent on places being available in the specific year group.

### **Children with additional learning needs**

Where it is brought to its attention or otherwise appears to a local authority that a home educated child (other than a looked after child) for whom it is responsible, may have ALN, the local authority must decide whether or not the child has ALN and, if it decides that the child has ALN, prepare and maintain an IDP and secure the additional learning provision (ALP) described in that plan (section 18.21 of the Additional Learning Needs Code (ALN Code)<sup>9</sup> ).

### **Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Individual Development Plan (IDP)**

Current legislation allows for any parent of any child to educate their child at home if they wish to do so, regardless of any identified special educational needs. The only legal right the LA has to refuse a request from parents is if the child has a Statement of SEN or an IDP and is attending a special school.

When a child has a Statement of SEN or an IDP which names a special school in Part 4 of the Statement/Plan, parents must obtain the consent of the LA before removing their child to home educate, and the child's name may not be removed from the school register until the agreement of the LA has been given.

It remains the LA's duty to ensure that the education provided by the parents for their child with a Statement of SEN/IDP is efficient, suitable and that the child's additional learning needs are being met.

The LA will therefore continue to hold an Annual Review of the Statement of SEN/IDP and this will include assessing whether the Statement/IDP remains appropriate.

The Annual Review meeting should take place in the most appropriate location, usually either the home or LA offices and should normally be chaired by the LA.

If parents wish their child with a Statement of SEN/IDP to return to school, then an Annual Review should be held and consideration of school roll should be given. The LAO should then liaise with the ALN Team regarding placement.

### **Suggested characteristics of a suitable and efficient education**

A suitable education would include provision in numeracy, literacy, and language skills, suitable to the child's age, ability, and aptitude and to any SEN/ALN the child may have. Suitable education is not simply a matter of academic learning but should also involve socialisation. These are essential in preparing the child to participate and function in society.

Literacy and language skills should correspond with the child's general ability.

(Including any SEN/ALN they have) and enable the child to:

- Acquire listening and speaking skills
- Acquire reading skills which include vocabulary and comprehension
- Acquire writing skills which include grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Numeracy skills should correspond with the child's general ability (including any SEN/ALN they have) and reflect the stage of development the child is at.

In their consideration of parents' provision of home education, local authorities should reasonably expect it to include the following features:

- consistent involvement of parents or other significant carers
- respond to the needs and the best interest of the child, taking into account areas of learning that interest the child, and should enhance the child's potential
- ensure the child has opportunities to engage in a reasonably broad range of learning experiences
- provide opportunities to develop personal and social skills to help prepare them for later life and become engaged citizens
- ensure the child has opportunities to develop basic skills (taking into consideration any SEN/ALN they have)
- presence of a philosophy or ethos with parents showing commitment, enthusiasm, and recognition of the child's needs, attitudes, and aspirations
- opportunities for the child to be stimulated by their learning experiences

- involvement in a broad spectrum of learning opportunities and activities appropriate to the child's stage of development
- access to appropriate resources and materials
- the opportunity to develop digital literacy

# EHE Referral Form

## ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION REFERRAL FORM (School de-registration form)

Please do not remove pupil from school role until the LA has undertaken further investigations.

### Pupil Details

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Date of birth</b>	
<b>School</b>	
<b>Year group</b>	
<b>ALN</b>	
<b>FSM</b>	
<b>Exclusions</b>	
<b>PSP</b>	
<b>Attendance for 2021 / 22</b>	
<b>Attendance for 2022 / 23</b>	

### Parent / Carer Details

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Address</b> (Including postcode)	
<b>Email address</b>	
<b>Telephone number</b>	
<b>Relationship to pupil</b>	

### Reason for Elective Home Education<sup>1</sup>

	School	Parent / guardian	Child or Young Person
Attendance / prosecution			
School cannot provide appropriate language provision			
School / parent / child relationship breakdown			
School cannot provide appropriate SEN / ALN provision			
Awaiting a place in school of choice			
Preferred school place refused			
Religious beliefs			
Lifestyle / ideology / philosophy			

Anxious / phobic			
Racism			
Homophobia			
Bullying			
Child medical need			
Parent / carer medical need			
COVID-19			
Other (please specify)			

**3. Please give details of any interventions, referrals or work carried out with pupil, parents', or guardian prior to the notification of decision to educate at home**

**4. Please give details of discussion with the parents / carers prior to the notification of the decision to educate at home**

**5. Please give details of the involvement of the Education Welfare Service**

**6. Please provide names and contact details of any outside agencies currently involved with the pupil. For example, Social Worker, CAHMS**

**7. Has the school or any other service spoken to the pupil regarding parent / guardian decision to home educate? Please record details**

--

**Please attach a copy of the written notification from the parents / carers informing you of the decision to home educate (if been issued) and email to [educationwelfareservice@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:educationwelfareservice@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)**

**The EWS will contact you with a decision within 5 working days of receipt of this referral form; please do not remove the pupil off role in line with WG guidance.**

**Headteacher Signature**

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	



## **Annex 2a: Initial EHE letter**

Name

Address

Date

Dear [name of parent or guardian]

### **Home education of [name of child/ren]**

My name is **[insert name]** and I am writing to introduce myself as the home education contact in **[name of local authority]**.

Local authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to **make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities of children in their area who**

**are of compulsory school age but who are not a registered pupil at a school and who are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school.**

I would like to arrange to meet you and **[name of child/ren]** on **[date]** at **[time]** to discuss the education you are providing and to explore whether the local authority can support you in providing that education, such as providing details about online resources and details about home educating groups in your area. I could arrange for the visit to take place at your home or, if you would prefer, at [LA venue] or another venue of your choice.

If the date/time is inconvenient, please contact me to arrange a mutually convenient time/date/place to meet.

It would be useful if you and **[name of child/ren]** could complete the attached forms **[Annex 3, Annex 4a/4b]** before our meeting as this will help inform the discussion.

If you have any questions before our meeting, please contact me on the email address/telephone number **[below]**.

I look forward to meeting you and **[name of child/ren]**

Yours sincerely

Home education officer

Email:

Telephone:

## **Annex 2b: Follow up letter to initial EHE letter**

Name

Address

Date

Dear [name of parent or guardian],

### **Home education of [name of child/ren]**

Further to my letter of **(Insert date)** in which I requested a meeting with you to discuss the education you are providing and to explore whether the local authority can support you in providing that education. The local authority must make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school but are not a

registered pupil at a school and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than at school. This meeting is an opportunity for you to provide information about the education you are providing for your child(ren).

You have not responded to my letter or

We arranged to meet and discuss your child's education on (Insert date) but you **were not available / you informed me by text / email to say that you would not be available.**

I am now proposing that we meet on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_am/pm at [LA venue]. If this time and date is not convenient or if you would rather meet at an alternative place, please contact me by email address/ telephone number below.

It would be useful if you and **[name of child/ren]** could complete the attached forms **[Annex 3, Annex 4a/4b]** before our meeting as this will help inform the discussion.

I look forward to meeting you and **[name of child/ren]**

If you have any questions before our meeting, please contact me using the email address/telephone number **[below]**.

Yours sincerely,

Home Education Officer

Email:

Telephone:

## **Annex 2c: Second follow up letter to initial EHE letter**

Name

Address

Date

Dear [name of parent or guardian]

### **Home education of [name of child/ren]**

With reference to my letters of (**Insert date**) and (**Insert date**) in which I requested with you to discuss the education you are providing as you are now home educating your child. You have not responded to either my initial letter or my follow up letter **or**

We arranged to meet on (Insert date) and then rearranged to meet on (insert date) but you **were not available / you informed me by text / email to say that you would not be available.**

The local authority has a legal obligation to ensure that all learners are receiving a suitable and full-time education, which is why we request a meeting and information about the education you are providing.

To enable the local authority to fulfil its statutory duties, I am proposing that I now meet with you at your home/ County Hall or at a neutral place on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm.

If this time and date is not convenient or if you would rather meet at an alternative place, please contact me using the email address/ telephone number below.

Without information about the education you are providing, the local authority may need to seek a School Attendance Order under the 1996 Education Act.

Yours sincerely,

Home Education Officer

Email:

Telephone:

### Annex 3: Template for parents

The information you provide in this form will help us understand the reasons why you chose to educate [name of child here] and the type of education you have decided is suitable for [name of child here]. If you are unsure about how to answer any of the questions, please call [NAME] on [number] or via email [address]. **If you are home educating more than one child, a separate template will be required for each child.**

<b>Your name</b>	
<b>How would you like to be contacted? Please provide details</b>	
<b>Name of your child</b>	
<b>Their date of birth</b>	
<b>Gender of learner</b>	
<b>Did [name of child] previously attend a school(s)?</b>  <b>If yes, please provide the name(s) of the school and the location(s) of the school(s)</b>	
<b>Why did you decide to home educate [name of child]?</b>	
<b>How long have you been home educating [name of child]?</b>	
<b>What is [name of child] learning about or taking part in?</b>  <b>Please list these– this could include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• activities such as being involved in sports, music or other activities</li> <li>• learning about things of interest</li> <li>• areas of learning experience being covered</li> </ul>	
<b>Do you feel you need support in providing education for [name of child]?</b>  <b>If yes, what type of help do you feel you need?</b>	

<p><b>Additional Learning Needs</b></p> <p><i>Do you think your child has an additional learning need?</i></p> <p><i>If yes, why do you think this?</i></p> <p><i>Have you contacted [name of local authority] to request the local authority decides if [name of child] has an additional learning need?</i></p>	
<p><i>Has the local authority decided your child has additional learning needs?</i></p>	<p><b>(Yes/No)</b></p>
<p><i>Does your child have a local authority maintained individual development plan (IDP)?</i></p>	<p><b>(Yes/No)</b></p>
<p><i>If yes, what additional learning provision (ALP) is the local authority providing?</i></p>	
<p><i>Is the local authority preparing an IDP for your child?</i></p>	<p><b>(Yes/No)</b></p>
<p><b>How well do you think [name] is progressing with their learning?</b></p> <p><i>What do you think [name] is doing well?</i></p> <p><i>What are they able to do now that you feel they couldn't do before they were home educated?</i></p>	
<p><b>What are your child's hopes for the future?</b></p> <p><i>What are they aiming to learn next?</i></p> <p><i>Have they any areas of interest that they want to know more about?</i></p> <p><i>Do they know what they would like to do when they are older?</i></p>	
<p><b>Where does your child receive their education? Please tick all that apply</b></p> <p>At home</p> <p>Home educator groups</p> <p>In libraries</p> <p>Educational trips e.g., museums, castles, theatre etc.</p> <p>Other</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>Who provides the education/sessions for your child? Please tick all that apply</b></p>	

Parent/Carer Other family member(s) Friends of the family Home education groups Privately employed tutor Online tutor(s ) Other  <b>If you employ a tutor, have you enquired whether they have a Disclosure and Barring Service (D.B.S.) check?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>(Yes/No)</b>
<b>Experiences</b>  <i>Please outline the opportunities for your child to:</i>  <i>Learn from real-life experiences</i>  <i>Discuss personal, social, wellbeing and health issues</i>  <i>Experience a broad range of activities such as music and art</i>	
<b>Physical activity and play</b>  <i>How do you ensure that your child has opportunities to participate in physical activity and play?</i>	
<b>Meeting with other children</b>  <i>Please outline the opportunities for your child to socialise with other children and make friends.</i>	
<b>Resources</b>  <i>Please list some of the resources or facilities you use to facilitate your child's learning e.g., online resources, educational workbooks, libraries or community facilities.</i>  <i>Are there any additional resources you feel could benefit your child?</i>	

<b>Links with other organisations</b>  <i>Does your child belong to any clubs, associations or organisations?</i>	

<b>Access to local services</b>  <i>Are you aware of the local services available to home educated children? e.g., health nurse, careers advice, ALN advice, youth support service etc</i>  <i>Would you like further information about any of these services?</i>	<b>Yes/No</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Advice from local Health Nurse, access to health initiatives e.g., period dignity grant</i></li> <li>• <i>Careers advice</i></li> <li>• <i>ALN Advice</i></li> <li>• <i>Youth Support Services</i></li> <li>• <i>Counselling</i></li> </ul>	<b>Yes/No</b>  <b>Yes/No</b> <b>Yes/No</b> <b>Yes/No</b>
<i>Would you like us to share your details with any of these services if you would like more information?</i>	<b>Yes/No</b>

**This information, together with other evidence, such as any planning, records of visits/activities, examples of your child’s work will enable the local authority to determine whether your child is receiving a full-time efficient and suitable education. Once we have taken into consideration the evidence you have provided, we will be contacting you:**

(i) *If we have concerns about the suitability of education provided for your child or*

(ii) *To arrange the next year’s discussion where you will again be required to provide evidence of how you are delivering a suitable and efficient education in line with your child’s age and ability and how you are providing for any ALN that they may have.*



## Annex 4(a): Template to secure child's view (aged 5-10)

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>What do you enjoy learning about?</b> <i>What do you enjoy doing?</i>  <i>What kind of things are you interested in?</i>  <i>Are you enjoying home learning?</i>  <i>What do you enjoy about home learning?</i>  <i>Are you learning well at home?</i>  <i>What are you good at?</i>  <i>What do you find difficult?</i>  <i>Is there something you like to do but haven't been able to?</i>	
<b>What are you proud of?</b> <i>What work are proud of?</i>  <i>Are there any things you have enjoyed learning that you would like to show me?</i>  <i>Do you belong to any clubs?</i>  <i>Do you have any talents? e.g., are you able to play any musical instruments?</i>	
<b>What is the favourite thing you have learned recently?</b>  <i>Have you been learning about things that interest you?</i>	

<i>How have you been learning about this?</i>	
<p><b>What are you learning about next?</b></p> <p><i>Is there something you want to learn about next?</i></p> <p><i>How are you going to learn about this?</i></p>	
<p><b><u>Meeting other children?</u></b></p> <p><i>Do you play with other children?</i></p> <p><i>Where do you play with them?</i></p>	

## Annex 4(b): Template to secure child's view (aged 11-16)

<b>Name:</b>	
<p><b>What do you enjoy learning about?</b></p> <p><i>What do you enjoy doing?</i></p> <p><i>What kind of things are you interested in?</i></p> <p><i>Are you enjoying home learning?</i></p> <p><i>What do you enjoy about home learning?</i></p> <p><i>Are you learning well at home?</i></p> <p><i>What are you good at?</i></p> <p><i>What do you find difficult?</i></p> <p><i>Is there something you like to do but haven't been able to?</i></p>	
<p><b>What are you proud of?</b></p> <p><i>Is there any work that you are really proud of?</i></p> <p><i>Is there any of your work you would like to share with me?</i></p> <p><i>Have you received any awards from clubs that you belong to?</i></p> <p><i>Do you have any talents? e.g., are you able to play any musical instruments?</i></p>	
<p><b>What is your favourite thing you have learnt recently?</b></p>	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Youth Support Services</i></li> <li>• <i>Counselling</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>YES/NO</b> <b>YES/NO</b></p>
<p><i>Would you like us to share your details with them if you would like more information?</i></p>	<p><b>YES/NO</b></p>
<p><i>Are you going to be sitting examinations?</i></p>	<p><b>YES/NO</b></p>
<p><i>Would you like some advice on where you could sit your examinations?</i></p>	<p><b>YES/NO</b></p>

## Annex 5: local authority report

<b>Date of discussion/information provided by parent</b>	
<b>Parent/carer name*</b>	
<b>Preferred contact method and contact details</b>	
<b>Name of learner</b>	
<b>D.O.B. of learner</b>	
<b>Gender of learner</b>	
<b>School(s) and town(s) that child previously attended (if any)</b>	
<p>Seeing the child</p> <p><i>Was/were the child/ren seen?</i></p> <p><i>Were they spoken with and asked about their views on home education?</i></p> <p><i>Is there any follow up required following discussion with the child?</i></p>	<p>YES/NO</p> <p>YES/NO</p> <p>YES/NO (If YES, what was this, who is following up and when?)</p>
<b>Reasons given by parent for home educating their child</b>	
<b>Date that parent withdrew child from school and commenced home education</b>	
<b>What evidence of planning have parents shared to demonstrate how they are going to home educate their child?</b>	
<b>Child's Current Knowledge and Skills</b>	

<p><i>What are they learning in relation to: -</i></p> <p><i>(i) Numeracy</i> <i>(ii) Literacy</i></p> <p><i>Have they any specific areas of interest, e.g., humanities, expressive arts, science and technology</i></p>	
<p><b>Additional Learning Needs</b></p> <p>(i) Does the child have an additional learning need?</p> <p>(ii) Have parents brought it to the attention of the local authority the child may have an additional learning need?</p> <p>(iii) Has the local authority decided the child has additional learning needs?</p> <p>(iv) Does the child have an IDP?</p> <p>(v) If yes, what ALP is the local authority providing?</p> <p>(vi) is the local authority preparing an IDP?</p>	<p><b>YES/NO</b></p> <p><b>YES/NO</b></p> <p><b>YES/NO</b></p> <p><b>YES/NO</b></p> <p><b>YES/NO</b></p> <p><b>YES/NO</b></p>
<p><b>Child's development and progress</b></p> <p><i>What has the child done well in the past year?</i></p> <p><i>Is the parent able to articulate what their plans are for the next year and what they see as the next steps in their child's educational development and what next steps have they identified?</i></p>	<p><b>YES/NO</b></p>

<p><b>Does the child have clear hopes and aspirations for their future?</b></p> <p><i>What are they aiming to learn next?</i></p> <p><i>Have they any areas of interest that they want to know more about?</i></p> <p><i>Do they know what they would like to do when they are older?</i></p>	
<p><b>Where does the child receive their education?</b></p> <p>At home</p> <p>Home educator groups</p> <p>In libraries</p> <p>Educational trips e.g., museums, castles etc.</p> <p>On-line tuition</p> <p>Other</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Who provides the education/lessons for the child?</b></p> <p>Parent/Carer</p> <p>Other family member(s)</p> <p>Friends of the family</p> <p>Home education groups</p> <p>Privately employed tutor</p> <p>Virtual tutor tuition</p> <p>Other</p> <p><b>If the parent employs a tutor, have they enquired whether the tutor has had a Disclosure and Barring Service (D.B.S.) check?</b></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <p><b>(YES/NO)</b></p>
<p><b>Experiences</b></p> <p><i>Is it possible to determine from the evidence provided that the child is benefiting from:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Learning from real-life experiences</i></li> <li>• <i>Being supported with personal, social, wellbeing and health issues</i></li> <li>• <i>A broad range of activities such as music and art.</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>YES*/NO</b></p> <p><b>YES*/NO</b></p> <p><b>YES*/NO</b></p>



	<b>*if Yes give brief example</b>
<p><b>Physical activity and play</b></p> <p><i>Is it possible to determine from the evidence provided that the child is benefiting from participation in physical activity and play?</i></p>	<p><b>YES* / NO</b></p> <p><b>*if Yes give brief example</b></p>
<p><b>Meeting with other children</b></p> <p><i>Is it possible to determine from the evidence provided that the child is benefiting from:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>social experiences with other children</i></li> <li><i>having opportunities to make friends.</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>YES* / NO</b></p> <p><b>YES* / NO</b></p> <p><b>*if Yes give brief example</b></p>
<p><b>Resources</b></p> <p><i>Is it possible to determine from the evidence provided what resources and facilities the parent is using to facilitate their child's learning e.g., online resources, educational workbooks, arts and craft materials, libraries or community facilities.</i></p> <p><i>Did the parents identify whether there were any additional resources that could benefit their child?</i></p>	<p><b>YES/NO</b></p> <p><b>YES* / NO</b></p> <p><b>*if Yes give brief example</b></p>
<p><b>Links with other organisations</b></p> <p><i>Does the child belong to any clubs, associations, organisations?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Careers advice</i></li> </ul>
<b>Access to local services</b>	

<p><i>Is the parent aware of the availability of local services?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>e.g., health nurse, access to health initiatives (e.g., period dignity grant), careers advice, ALN advice, youth support service etc.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Would the parent like us to share their details with these services to enable the parent to have more information?</i></p> <p><i>*(If YES, this will be actioned by LA EHE Officer)</i></p>	<p><b>YES/NO</b></p>       <p><b>YES*/NO</b></p>
<p><b>Is the local authority able to determine whether the child is in receipt of a suitable and efficient education?</b></p> <p><b>Does the local authority believe the education provided is suitable and efficient?</b></p> <p><i>Please outline why the local authority has arrived at the above decision.</i></p>	<p><b>YES/NO?</b></p>       <p><b>YES/NO?</b></p>
<p><b>Any further action required?</b></p> <p><i>If yes define action, by whom and when</i></p>	<p><b>YES/NO</b></p>
<p><b>Next discussion with parents</b></p> <p>To follow up on actions identified above <span style="float: right;">Date--/--/----</span></p> <p>Annual discussion to determine suitability of education provision <span style="float: right;">Date--/--/----</span></p>	

Home education Officer Name:

Signature:

Date:

Final report shared with parents on --/--/----

**Child's view of report**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Child's signature</b>
<b>Parental view of report</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Parent's signature</b>

## Annex 6: annual EHE discussion contact letter

Name  
Address  
Date

Dear [name of parent/guardian]

### Home education for [name of child/ren]

You will recall when we met on **[insert date]**, I explained the local authority has a duty to establish that children in their area who are of compulsory school age are receiving a suitable education.

Suitable education means full-time efficient education suitable to the child's age, ability, and aptitude and any additional learning needs the child may have.

To enable the local authority to determine whether your child is receiving suitable education, the local authority would like to discuss the education that you are providing.

We would like to discuss **[name of child's]** education and progress, any plans and aspirations that you or your child may have. We propose that we meet with you and **[name of child]** at your home/ the County Hall or a neutral place on **(Date)** at **(Time)** and anything else that you would like to discuss, such as support that may be available to you from the local authority or from other local home educating groups.

If this time and date is not convenient or if you would rather meet at an alternative place, please contact me using the email address/ telephone number below.

If you have any queries prior to our discussion, please contact me on the number [below].

I look forward to seeing you and **[name of child]**.

Yours sincerely

Home Education Officer  
Email:  
Telephone:

## Annex 7: initial school attendance order notice template

Dear [parents' name]

### Re: home education for [child's name]

It appears to [name of the local authority] that you are the parent\* of [name & DOB of child] (the child) of compulsory school age living at [address of child] within the local authority area.

[Name of local authority] recognises and respects the rights of parents to educate their children at home and is committed to working with those parents.

[Section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#) states that: 'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive an efficient full-time education suitable

a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

b) to any special educational needs [(in the case of a child who is in the area of a local authority in England) or additional learning needs (in the case of a child who is in the area of a local authority in Wales)] he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A suitable education would include provision in numeracy, literacy and language skills, appropriate to the child's age, ability and aptitude and any additional learning needs/special educational needs they may have. These are essential in preparing the child to participate in, and function in, society.

I refer to ..... letters issued to you recently offering to meet with you to discuss the education you are providing and to share advice and support for your provision of home education for your son/daughter. As I received **[no response/ a refusal to attend a meeting]**, the local authority cannot be satisfied that your child/ren are receiving an efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any additional learning needs which he or she may have.

**OR** (delete as appropriate)

I refer to .... letters issued to you recently expressing concern about the provision of home education for your son/daughter. The local authority is not satisfied that your child/ren are receiving an efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any additional learning needs which he or she may have.

In accordance with section [437\(1\) of the Education Act 1996](#), the authority requires you, within 15 days from the service of this notice, to satisfy **[name of local authority]** that your child is receiving a suitable education.

I look forward to hearing from you in relation to my request within the above-mentioned timescale.

Yours sincerely

Home education officer

Email:

Telephone:

## Annex 8: School attendance order notice template (child without an IDP which names a school)

Dear **[name of parent]**,

I wrote to you on **[date]** requiring you to satisfy the local authority that within 15 days that **[name of child]** is receiving suitable education. More than 15 days have now elapsed. On behalf of the local authority, I consider that **[name of child/ren]** should attend school and I intend to serve on you a school attendance order.

In the school attendance order, the authority intends to name **[name of school]** in the order and to name the following school(s) which they regard as (a) suitable alternative(s)

- 
- 
- 

If you select one of the schools named above within 15 days from the date of service of this notice on you, the authority will name that school in the order.

Alternatively, if one of the following occurs within 15 days from the date of service of notice on you, the relevant school will be named in the Order accordingly:

**1** You apply for admission to a maintained school, and inform me if the school is in another local authority's area, and *[name of child]* is offered a place at the school as a result of the application

**2** You ask this authority to provide a place for *[name of child]* at a school which is not maintained by a local authority, and *[name of child]* is offered a place at such a school under arrangements made by this authority for us to pay the fees under section 517 Education Act 1996.

**3** You apply for a place for *[name of child]* at a school which is not maintained by a local authority and notify us of your application without asking us to pay the fees; and *[name of child]* is offered a place; and the school is suitable to *[name of child]*'s age, ability and aptitude and to any additional learning needs *[name of child]* may have.

**OR** (delete as appropriate)

Having considered **[name of child]** needs, I do **not** consider there are suitable alternative schools in [name of local authority]. Unless you provide a suitable alternative school, the local authority will name **[name of school]** in the order.

Unless you provide information that confirms that you are delivering a suitable efficient full-time education suitable to the age(s), ability(abilities) and aptitude(s) of your child(ren) and any additional learning needs your child(ren) may have the local authority will issue the school attendance order after a further 15 days from the date of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Home education officer  
Email / Telephone:

## Annex 9: School attendance order template

Dear **[parents' name]**

[name of local authority] ("the Authority")

As you, **[name of parent]**, of **[address of parent]**, being the parent\* of a child of compulsory school age in the area of the Authority, have failed to satisfy the Authority in accordance with the requirements of the notice served on you under section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996 by the Authority on **[date of notice]** that [name of child] is receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

And as, in the opinion of the Authority, **[name of child]** should attend school.

You are required to cause **[name of child]** to become a registered pupil at the following school:

**[Insert full name and address of the school and omit the whole or part of the following words as the case requires]**

being the school [specified by the Authority] [selected by you] [determined by a direction of the Welsh Ministers] [as the school to be named in this Order] [specified in the statement for the child under section 324 of the Education Act 1996] [specified in the individual development plan for the child under Part 2 of the [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#)].

Failure to comply with the requirements of this order is an offence unless you can prove that **[name of child]** is receiving suitable education otherwise than at school.

Yours sincerely,

[Name of local authority officer] of [name of local authority]

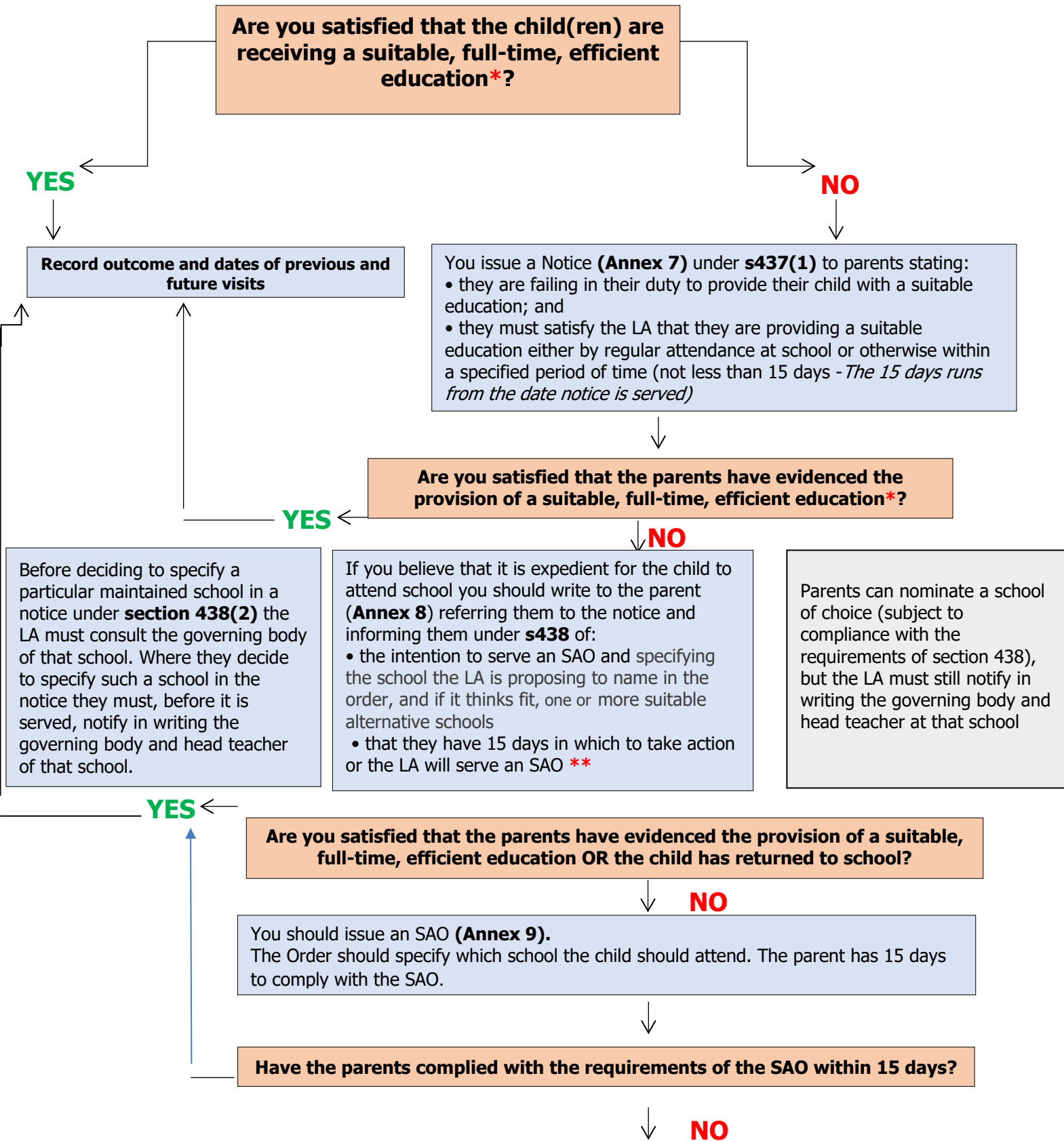
Email:

Telephone:

*\*The expression 'parent' in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent of the child but has parental responsibility for him or her, or who care of the child.*



# Annex 10: school attendance order and education supervision order flowchart



Continue to next page

If you do decide not to apply for an ESO, then you should record reasons that it was felt not to be appropriate.

You can:

- Prosecute parents for failure to comply with an SAO; and/or
- Apply for an Education Supervision Order (ESO)

You **must** consider applying for an ESO under **s36(9) Children Act 1989** before a decision to prosecute parents for failure to comply with an SAO is made

**LA prosecutes parents**

**AND/OR**

**LA applies for an ESO**

Court decides education is suitable and, therefore, does not convict

Court decides education is not suitable and convicts parents.

**Parents do not send child to school despite conviction**

Court decides education is suitable and refuses ESO.

Court makes ESO and you implement it.

You can:

- Restart the s437 process again.
- Apply for an Education Supervision Order (ESO).

**Parents do not comply with ESO**

You can prosecute for breach of an ESO and/or consider using safeguarding powers under the Children Act 1989 if local authority believes relevant threshold is met.

\*In the absence of seeing the child, has the parent provided evidence they are providing an efficient full-time education which is suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child and any additional learning needs the child may have.

\*\*Where a local authority indicates that an SAO will be issued, and the family is working with the local authority to re-engage child with an agreed school, the expectation is that the child attends their new school within 20 days.

**Welsh Government [Elective home education guidance](#) (7.15) states that local authorities should approach all cases where the suitability of home education is in doubt using their powers in the Education Act 1996 but they should also be prepared, if a lack of suitable education appears likely to impair a child's development, to fully exercise their safeguarding powers and duties to protect the child's well-being, which includes their suitable education.**

# Education Other than at School (EOTAS) Policy

September 2023



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol  
**Blaenau Gwent**  
County Borough Council

## **Contents**

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Links to other key strategies/key documents

Appendix 1 Placement Review Form

## **Introduction and Context**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council believes that for most children in Blaenau Gwent the best place to undertake their education is in their local mainstream school. It is recognised that schools have to respond to a diverse range of pupil need and they do require help and support from other agencies, including the Local Authority. There will, however, be a small but significant group of children who cannot be educated in school. Children sometimes require education outside school because of illness, injury or clinically defined mental health issues. In addition, there are a number of children with behavioural issues. The situations of these children and young people will vary widely but they all run the risk of a reduction in self-confidence and educational achievement.

Where a child is not electively home educated, a key priority for the Local Authority is returning these children to school as soon as they are able to do so, therefore EOTAS provision should not be seen as a long-term solution.

This policy details the arrangements through which the Local Authority meets these requirements.

It should be noted that children and young people with statements of Special Educational Needs/Individual Development Plans are overrepresented in EOTAS provision.

## **Legal Background**

The Education Act 1996: Section 19 states that. "Each local education authority shall make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusions from school, or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them".

## **Excluded Pupils**

For a fixed-period exclusion of more than fifteen school days, the governing body must arrange suitable full-time education for any pupil of compulsory school age. This provision must begin no later than the sixteenth day of the exclusion. Schools will need to contact the local authority to start discussions as soon as possible so that suitable education can be considered.

For permanent exclusions, in compliance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Local Authority must arrange suitable full-time education for the pupil to begin no later than the sixteenth day of the exclusion.

In addition, where a pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), or a Local Authority Individual Development Plan (IDP) plan the Local Authority needs to ensure that an appropriate full-time placement is identified in consultation with the parents who retain their right to express a preference for a

maintained school that they wish their child to attend or make representations for a placement in any other school.

Excluded learners should only be educated outside mainstream schools where there are significant problems that are better addressed in a different environment. Where this is the case, the Vulnerable Pupil Panel will discuss the learner and consider the most appropriate provision. This could be a turn-around placement at the River Centre, or a bespoke package where cost-effectiveness, quality and provision is appropriate to the learner's needs.

## **Full-time and Appropriate Provision**

Part-time provision is often inadequate to meet the educational needs of excluded learners and to ensure continuity of education. It also leaves some of these learners unsupervised for significant periods of a normal school day. The LA, therefore, aims for all learners to receive full-time education 15 days after being excluded, either at another school or, where necessary an alternative provision. Where learners may have become so disengaged from education, or their current circumstances may be such, that a rapid reintroduction to full-time education is unlikely to prove successful a plan will be drawn up specifying how the move to full-time education is to be achieved.

Full-time means that the amount of supervised education should mirror that provided by mainstream schools in the area. An average school week might amount to some 25 hours; so excluded learners should receive around five hours of supervised education or other activity a day. A full timetable for an excluded learner may, however, look significantly different from that provided in a mainstream school.

## **Supporting Learners with Healthcare Needs**

In 2018 Welsh Government published statutory Guidance – 'Supporting Learners with Healthcare Needs'. It provides comprehensive guidance to local authorities and related services. Roles and responsibilities, including those of the local authority and school, are outlined in detail. This policy should be read alongside this guidance and any future relevant guidance.

The LA is responsible for ensuring that pupils with health needs are not at home or in hospital for more than 15 working days without access to education: this may be consecutive or cumulative with the same medical condition. If the pupil is a patient at hospital, they will usually receive education on the ward from the onsite Hospital Teacher as soon as they are fit enough to do so. Effective liaison with medical professionals will ensure that there is a minimum of delay in starting appropriate support for those pupils not admitted to hospital.

The LA will arrange suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, would otherwise not receive suitable education.

The LA is responsible for ensuring that there is a named senior officer with responsibility for the provision of education for children who are unable to attend

school because of medical needs. In this Local Authority the officer is the Service Manager - Inclusion.

Educational provision for pupils who are physically ill or injured is the responsibility of all schools and education services. Provision for tuition is made through Smart Education. Where the child has a mental health condition, which requires a small group setting this will be provided at Ty Afon if the entry criteria is met. It is important to note that Ty Afon is not a dedicated EOTAS provision.

The current entitlement of medical tuition is as follows:

- Pupils who have not yet reached statutory school age i.e., the beginning of the term after the 5th birthday is achieved - no provision is made
- Pupils, from the beginning of the term after the 5th birthday is achieved, to the end of Year 10, 1 hour per day (up to 5 hours per week)
- Pupils in Years 11, 2 hours per day (up to 10 hours per week)

The provision may include use of more than one teacher and will be delivered on-line, either 1-1 or on small groups. Clear lines of communication operate to ensure that a pupil absent from school due to medical needs for more than 15 school days consecutively is not left without education.

Parents and pupils will be consulted before teaching begins. To support reintegration back into school at the earliest opportunity and reduce isolation, tuition may be supplemented with an offer of wellbeing or youth service support.

Children receiving education outside of school should do so in the most appropriate setting to their needs. Pupils will be taught in groups wherever possible according to their medical needs to provide a more rounded education and social experience.

Wellbeing support at home will only be carried out if there is an agreed "named adult" also in attendance and the appropriate risk assessment identifies safe practice for all. On-line tuition will be provided where appropriate, including the establishment of on-line links to the pupil's school to support social inclusion and maintain friendship groups. The pupil's experience will be an extension of their school experience and will seek to maintain their studies and social contacts with the schools (as their medical condition allows).

Close liaison and sharing of information will be maintained by the pupil's school and other key professionals, which will include some or all the following, medical professional, Educational Psychologists, Education Welfare Officers, Smart Education and Careers Wales.

Provision will be reviewed every 6 weeks and will be integral for long term planning for the education provision for the child. Where the child has a mental health condition and a pupil has been offered a place at Ty Afon, the provision will be a full-time placement, initially for 6 weeks with 6 weekly reviews.

Transport will be provided to the educational setting if outside of the home in line with the LA's Home to School Transport Policy.



The pupil's experience will be an extension of their school experience and will seek to maintain their studies and social contacts with the schools (as their medical condition allows).

It is recognised that, whenever possible, pupils should receive their education within their mainstream school and the aim of the provision will be to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream education at the earliest opportunity as soon as they are well enough. Arrangements for reintegration will be discussed with school staff and each child will have a personalised reintegration plan.

Smart Education and Ty Afon should make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage faced by children with disabilities, and plan to increase the children's access to their school and their curriculum. They will also maintain good links with the child's home school and, through regular reviewing, involve them in decisions concerning the educational programme and pupil progress. This should also include social and emotional needs, for example ensuring that learners feel fully part of their school community, are able to stay in contact with classmates, and have access to the opportunities enjoyed by their peers.

The pupil's school should be aware of its continuing role in the child's education whilst they are not attending. For example, through providing relevant assessment information and liaising with the relevant tutors or Ty Afon staff over planning and examination course requirements where appropriate and ensuring that there is a named teacher within school who can co-ordinate and support these links.

The pupil's school must also work closely with the provider to prepare Key Stage 4 pupils for their transition into post 16 education, employment, or training – this would be under the umbrella of careers guidance.

All pupils will remain on roll of their home school and the prime responsibility for their education lies with that school. The process to refer to Ty Afon or tuition is via the Vulnerable Pupil Panel.

The panel paperwork is sent to the Senior Education Welfare Officer by the school with the attached medical advice. The advice confirming that a pupil is medically unfit for school must be completed by a Community Paediatrician, Consultant or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Consultant. Once the referral has been received the Local Authority will work with the pupil's school to put appropriate education in place within the 15 days as stated in the WG guidance.

As soon as educational support via the relevant route has been agreed, schools are required to provide baseline assessment information and curriculum plans to inform the planning of educational provision. This information, along with advice from medical professionals, will ensure that the education provided is effectively matched to the child or young person's unique needs.

The education provided should be tailored to the learner's individual educational needs and the impact of their medical condition on their ability to access education. Use of baseline assessment information from the home school will inform individual education plans, which should be suitable and flexible enough to be appropriate to the learner's needs. The nature of the provision should also reflect the demands of what can be a changing or fluctuating medical condition.

Schools are responsible for monitoring the quality of the provision for the individual learner e.g., through regular reviewing. The learner should, where available, have access to IT equipment and to the school's intranet and internet. However, this will not be used in isolation and should complement face to face education.

## **Pupils who are Hard to Place**

Sometimes children can find themselves without a school place during the year, for example, because their personal circumstances are such that they have had to move into the local authority or are looked after children. In some cases, these children may also exhibit challenging behaviour. (Please refer to Blaenau Gwent's Admission Guidance and Hard to Place protocol for further information). Where children meet the criteria, they will be referred into the Vulnerable Pupil Panel for further discussion. Where it is deemed that a mainstream placement is not the most appropriate provision for the child tuition will be provided, whilst further assessments are completed.

## **Areas of Responsibility**

### **Schools**

Notifying the Education Welfare Officer if a pupil is likely to be away from school due to medical needs for longer than 15 school days: making an appropriate referral to the Vulnerable Pupil Panel and remaining responsible for:

- producing a plan with clear targets for each half terms learning incorporated in half termly work programmes in core curriculum subjects which the pupil would normally be studying in accordance with statutory requirements
- schemes of work in each subject
- setting and marking work
- resources
- examination entry fees
- planning for National Tests
- assessment of course work
- career interviews
- work experience placements
- informing all other agencies of any alterations to the agreed plan
- providing appropriate support for reintegration at the earliest opportunity.

### **Tuition responsibility**

- supports schools in producing a medical plan which will include arrangements for the delivery of a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum, homework and marking.
- ensures clear lines of communication between all agencies and particularly ensures parents are informed about whom to contact in respect of education provision
- sends a half termly report to the pupil's school and the LA, outlining the pupil's progress and achievements

- works with the Education Welfare Service to ensure good attendance whilst receiving teaching outside of school and if necessary, making the appropriate referral requesting a home visit
- completes attendance records which will be sent to the pupil's school
- attends review and reintegration meetings.
- ensures that teachers receive appropriate continuing professional development.
- liaises with appropriate agencies.

## **Partnership Working**

It is essential that, for pupils with medical needs, there is effective partnership working between education, health and other agencies. Medical / Healthcare Plans are an effective tool to ensure that the pupil's education is not compromised by interim arrangements because of the pupil's medical needs.

## **Funding**

While the pupil remains on roll at the school, the LA will withdraw from the school the funding linked to that pupil, on a daily basis, consistent with the number of days that the pupil is in receipt of medical tuition and that funding is then passed to the tuition service.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

For pupils on the roll of a school, the school is responsible for monitoring the progress of the pupil's education through regular liaison with the tutor. Schools should also review their provision for vulnerable pupils through their own school self-evaluation.

In the case of children on bespoke packages, the LA will be responsible for quality assuring the quality of the provision. The LA should ensure an appropriate level of insurance is in place to cover the setting's activities in supporting learners with healthcare needs. The level of insurance should appropriately reflect the level of risk. Additional cover may need to be arranged for some activities, e.g. off-site activities for learners with particular needs.

Where EOTAS services are commissioned from private providers the LA will have a set of guidelines regarding the education, safeguarding and wellbeing responsibilities they will be expected to fulfil. The LA reporting will be responsible for undertaking all necessary checks to ensure they are satisfied that the organisation has met their requirements. Once the local authority has undertaken these checks, the Vulnerable Pupil Panel can agree the organisation's 'approved' status. A database should be made available to all maintained schools within the local area.

Once an EOTAS provider has been entered onto the LA's database as 'approved', the local authority will have a responsibility to regularly monitor the

provision available to ensure that the quality of the provision available, and all necessary safeguarding precautions, remain suitable.

## **Re-integration back into school**

It is recognised that, whenever possible, pupils should receive their education within a mainstream school and the aim of the provision will be to reintegrate pupils back into mainstream education at the earliest opportunity and when it is appropriate for the individual learner. Reviews are carried out on a 6-weekly basis. Arrangements for reintegration will be discussed with school staff and each child will have a personalised reintegration plan.

## **Links to other strategies / key documents**

- Welsh Government - Inclusion and Pupil Support 203/2016
- Public Health Wales – Report 1 ACES
- Estyn – Happy and Healthy (2019)
- Estyn – Education other than at school (2016)
- Public Policy Institute for Wales: Promoting Emotional Health, Well-being, and
- Resilience in Primary Schools 2016
- Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
- Additional Learning Needs Act (ALNET) (2018)
- Shared Ambitions (2019)
- Positive Relationships and Behaviour Strategy (2022)
- Wellbeing Strategy (2020)
- Inclusion and ALN Strategies (2022)
- Managed Moves Policy (2022)
- Elective Home Education Protocol (2022)
- Safeguarding – BG Keeping Learners Safe Policy (2022)
- Appendix 1 – Placement Review Form

# Appendix 1

## Placement Review Form

### Monitoring and review form

<b>Name of Pupil</b>				
<b>Date of Birth</b>				
<b>Year Group</b>				
<b>Gender</b>				
<b>Home Address</b>				
<b>Parents/Carers Contact No.</b>				
<b>Original School</b>				
<b>Current provision</b>				
<b>Has the placement been successful?</b>	YES		NO	
<b>Initial Period of placement</b>	From:		To:	
<b>What was the reason for placement and the desired outcomes</b>				
<b>Have the outcomes been met?</b>				
<b>Is the pupil ready to reintegrate back into school?</b>				
<b>If yes, what does the transition plan look like?</b>				
<b>If no, what are the next steps?</b>				
<b>Please state reasons why placement was / was not successful?</b>				

Signed..... Date.....  
Pupil

**Signed .....** **Date.....**  
**Parent/Carer**

**Signed.....** **Date.....**  
**Original School**

**Signed.....** **Date.....**  
**Current Provision**

**Signed.....** **Date.....**  
**LA representative**

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# EXCLUSION GUIDANCE

## September 2023



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

**Blaenau Gwent**

County Borough Council



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## Exclusion Guidance for Schools

This guidance is supplementary to and should be read in conjunction with the Welsh Government (WG) Guidance “Exclusion from schools and pupil referral units” – which was revised in November 2019. All decisions about exclusion must be made with reference to the guidance which outlines statutory responsibilities. In this BG guidance document, the term ‘schools’ refers to Primary, Middle, Secondary and Special schools.

Schools should note that the WG guidance is statutory guidance and is available via the link below:

<https://gov.wales/exclusion-schools-and-pupil-referral-units-pru>

Contact details for queries relating to exclusions:

Statemented pupils/IDP – ALN Manager

[ALNEnquiries@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:ALNEnquiries@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) or 01495 355443

Non statemented pupils – Senior Education Welfare Officer

[lisa.adams@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.adams@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) or 07870 998947

## Introduction

Blaenau Gwent's aim is for all children and young people is to be purposefully engaged in an educational programme appropriate to their needs and age. We want our children and young people to flourish and to achieve positive outcomes for themselves, their families, and our community and for society at large. We want our children and our adults to be happy, healthy, capable and engaged with school and the wider community. Minimal school exclusions will be a key indicator of our collective success.

National government recognises and promotes the importance of wellbeing in schools as a key factor in achieving this ambition. Blaenau Gwent is aware that improving the all-round wellbeing of pupils and staff is important in and of itself, as well as crucial in lifting performance and attainment levels.

The latest published data from Welsh Government in October 2020 highlighted the fact that children with free school meals were consistently (at least 3 times higher) more likely to be excluded and overall children with additional learning needs (ALN) have higher rates of exclusion than those without.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales report, 'Building Blocks – Inclusion in the Foundation Phase', highlighted concerns about repeat exclusions, reduced timetables and children being taught in isolation.

The Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) has also recently written a report considering growing national concern regarding the correlation between school exclusions and children's subsequent involvement in crime. The research indicated that school exclusions were not necessarily a causal factor for criminality, but rather an indicator of a series of vulnerabilities that increase both exposure to crime and exploitation. More specifically, the research suggested that children excluded or at risk of exclusion from school sit within a network of vulnerability, including adverse childhood experiences, additional learning needs and care experience.

In most cases, fixed-term exclusions are only given after exhausting all the available options for internal interventions and exclusions from the classroom. However, the research also demonstrated the clear need to consider what additional external support can be provided to children to prevent exclusion when internal school-based interventions fail.

Considering the recent reports, the increased focus on the emotional well-being needs of children, and the fact that Blaenau Gwent has relatively high number of fixed term exclusions in Wales, the guidance has been revised as part of Blaenau Gwent's strategy to reduce exclusions

In addition, the Managed Move policy has also been revised and we would encourage head teachers to use this as a supportive intervention.

## About This Guidance

This supplementary guidance updates and replaces all previous guidance regarding exclusion from maintained schools, including special schools, published by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, herein after referred to as the Local Authority (LA). It applies equally to children with and without statements of special educational needs or individual development plans (IDPs).

This guidance differs to previous guidance as it now contains a checklist for schools to reflect on provision for learners presenting with challenging behaviour to reduce the risk of exclusion. This guidance is also intended to be of assistance to all parties involved in the exclusion process including head teachers, governing bodies and local authority officers.

The requirements of the guidance apply in relation to all pupils, including those who may be below or above compulsory school age, such as those attending nursery classes.

The term “parents” in this guidance include any person who has parental responsibility (which includes the LA where it has a care order in respect of the child) and any person (for example, a foster carer) with whom the child lives. Where practicable it is expected that all those with parental responsibility should be engaged with the exclusion process. The Education Welfare Service should be the first point of contact for any queries that head teachers, governors, parents, pupils or others may have regarding exclusions.

### 3 stage approach to supporting inclusion of learners presenting with challenging behaviour

<p>1. Monitor Behaviour – report card – contact home</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the school relationship/behaviour policy and monitor behaviour, attendance, and attainment regularly.</li> <li>• Work with ALNCO to ensure repeated behaviours resulting in sanctions are not a result of unmet need.</li> <li>• Ensure work is being planned for at the right level of challenge.</li> <li>• Work with parents, to ensure home-school partnership towards improved engagement with school and learning.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Inclusion Support Plan ISP The ISP is a helpful alternative to an individual behaviour plan or Pastoral Support Plan. Try to establish what the child is trying to communicate through their behaviour by reflecting on triggers for disengagement and developing strategies to re-engage the learner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce following internal exclusions or a serious behaviour incident.</li> <li>• Review weekly with key adults in school. Work towards agreed outcomes (rather than set targets) to ensure the pupil makes progress from where they are currently.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Pastoral Support Plan PSP - The PSP continues to run as the main framework for supporting school settings to reduce permanent exclusions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce if the pupil is at risk of exclusion/PEX. Outline the support offered.</li> <li>• Frequently meet with parents to review progress.</li> <li>• Set achievable goals towards an acceptable outcome in a period.</li> </ul>

When thinking about next steps for the learner – consider the following questions

- Check the data (attendance / exclusions / behaviour points)
- Are there any themes?
- Can you identify any triggers for behaviour through the patterns?
- Does the pupil file highlight a history of need?
- Has the pupil been identified with any ALN?
- Has Blaenau Gwent ALN guidance been used to check what the key barriers to engaging in learning are for the pupil?
- Have any diagnostic assessments been used to identify any needs or areas for development?
- Is the pupil in a group vulnerable to underachievement? (CLA/ALN/EAL/CASP)
- Is there an IDP/statement in place / Has there ever been a CAF or IDP/statement for this child?

- Does the pupil have a one-page profile?
- Is the school relationship/behaviour policy being used consistently to support the learner (including any identified reasonable adjustments?)
- Is the school reward system being used in a way that is equitable to the pupil's needs?
- What external issues may be affecting the learner at this time? (e.g., significant family events).
- Are there any historic issues that may now be affecting the pupil?

Provision for the learner. Have you engaged with or considered the following?

- Team Teach training and de-escalation strategies.
- Behaviour assessment to identify inclusion strategies.
- Is there a Risk Assessment in place for staff, other pupils, the pupil themselves?
- Have you considered an Ed Psych referral and assessment?
- Have you tried a bespoke timetable working with the pupil to avoid 'behaviour hotspots'?
- Work with the pupil to RAG rate their timetable and put in support to eliminate red and reduce amber.
- What incentives are meaningful and relevant to the pupil?
- Is a reduced timetable a useful tool currently? (Ensure all guidelines are followed for safeguarding reasons)
- What nurture interventions are available that would benefit the pupil?
- Would the CYP benefit from seeing a counsellor at this time?
- Some form of therapy?
- Is support needed for the family?
- Consider referral to external agencies / partners.
- Is there a key adult for the pupil – to advocate and support them each day, rewarding where success and progress has been made and communicate with home and other adults in school?
- Is there a need for restorative justice to move a relationship forward?
- Is there a timeline of incidents that supports the pupil to begin to understand and manage their behaviours?
- How are staff being supported?
- How is the pupil developing independence in managing their emotions?
- Support for developing emotional literacy and self-regulation strategies.

At each meeting / review point

- What is the data telling us now?
- What are the views of the child?
- What are the views of the Parents / staff / support team / external agencies?
- How will I ensure the meeting is professional and managed well so all views can be heard, and it is a positive process for all moving the situation forward?

At each significant incident

- Ensure the paperwork is completed and a clear record is maintained. Avoid emotional language and keep it factual.
- Ensure all parties share what happened so that an accurate account is recorded in an impartial manner.
- Ensure the pupil has supported time to reflect and learn from what went wrong using appropriate tools when they are calm, ready and able to do so.
- Ensure the pupil learns from the behaviour incident and has opportunities to mend relationships and 'put right' the situation when they are calm, ready and able to do so.
- Ensure staff who were involved have time to follow up with the pupil to move on from the incident when the time is appropriate.
- Ensure students who were involved in the incident have the appropriate follow up.
- For all CYPs involved communicate clearly with parents / carers what happened and the follow up

## **Decision to Exclude**

Only the Headteacher or teacher in charge of a setting can exclude a learner. They cannot delegate the power to exclude to another teacher. In their absence, the most senior teacher may exercise the power of exclusion though they should make clear they are working in the Headteacher's absence.

If a pupil is deemed to be at risk of exclusion it is appropriate to have a Pastoral Support Programme and support from Families First to enable a range of strategies and support to be implemented.

Schools should, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding any pupil with a statement, an individual development plan or any pupil who is a child looked after.

## **Key Considerations Before Excluding – Safeguarding**

Where a pupil receives support from a Families First worker, is a child in need of care and support or subject to child protection planning, the school must inform the relevant professionals within social care if they feel the child is at risk of exclusion and in advance of any decision to exclude.

If you are concerned about the risk of exclusion of a looked after child, please contact the pupil's social worker and the child looked after co-ordinator.

For pupils where there is concern around sexual, drug or gang exploitation, for those who self-harm or demonstrate behaviours that could cause them significant harm, an exclusion can result in increased risks to the pupil's immediate safety, health and wellbeing.

Proactive planning with professional partners and family/carers about what to do in the event of a serious breach of school relationship/behaviour policy where the conditions for exclusion are met is the ideal, but in an unforeseen situation, contact the relevant involved professionals at the earliest opportunity and before sending a pupil home.



## Headteacher' s Checklist

Any decision to exclude a pupil must be:

In response to serious breach of the school's behaviour policy; and, if allowing the learner to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the learner or others in the school.

In deciding to exclude a pupil, the Headteacher must be able to demonstrate that the exclusion has been carefully considered and is being used as a last resort. The checklist below is designed to assist head teachers in these deliberations.

<b>The circumstances of the case</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Has there been a serious breach or breaches of the school behaviour policy?		
Does the pupil's presence seriously harm or threaten to harm the education/welfare of pupils/ others?		
Is exclusion a last resort following a wide range of other strategies that have been unsuccessful? Is this a serious 'one off' offence?		
Is exclusion the appropriate response? Factors to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a thorough investigation been conducted?</li> <li>• Has the pupil's version of events been sought / encouraged / recorded?</li> <li>• Has the evidence been considered in the light of school policies and possible discrimination?</li> <li>• Are there any mitigating circumstances or any provocation which may be relevant (bullying, harassment etc.)?</li> </ul>		
Has a pastoral support programme been used?		
Is this pupil at school action or school action plus? and if so; Has the possibility of additional support from the LA been explored?		
Have alternatives to exclusion been considered (e.g. restorative approach, mediation, internal exclusion)?		
Standard of proof – "on the balance of probabilities" is it more probable than not that the pupil did what he/she is alleged to have done?		
<b>Special considerations</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>ALN</b> Does this pupil have a statement of special educational needs or an individual development plan? Has the ALN team been contacted? Has an emergency review been arranged?		
<b>CLA</b> Is this pupil looked after? Has the CLA Co-ordinator been contacted?		
<b>SAFEGUARDING</b> Is this pupil subject to a child protection or a child in need plan? Has the social worker been contacted?		
Is there a JAFF for this pupil? What other agencies/services are involved?		

<b>The circumstances of the case</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Have issues of ALN or disability been taken into account and reasonable adjustments put in place?		

## Notification of Exclusions

When a Headteacher has decided to exclude a pupil he/she must:

- immediately inform the parent(s) by telephone.
- draft the appropriate letter (see model letters in appendices)
- ensure that this letter is sent by first class post to arrive the following day or is hand delivered;
- ensure that the letter contains the following information:
  - the reasons for the exclusion.
  - the period of fixed term exclusion or, for a permanent exclusion, the fact that it is permanent and the date it takes effect;
  - parents' and learner's right to make representation about the exclusion to the governing body's discipline committee; \*
  - how any representation should be made including the person for the parent/carer and/or learner should contact;
  - when there is a legal requirement for the governing body to consider the exclusion, that the parents and/or learner have a right to attend a meeting, be represented at this meeting (at their own expense) and to bring a friend;

Headteachers should ensure an exclusion form is completed **within 24 hours** after all exclusions and forwarded to the LA via [BSInclusionSupport@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:BSInclusionSupport@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) so that the LA database can be kept up to date (see Appendix A for exclusion form). Full details of notification requirement to the school's governing body can be found in section 8.4 of this guidance and in Appendix B 'Summary of Main Processes and Time Limits for Fixed Term Exclusion'.

For a permanent exclusion, if the pupil lives outside the LA in which the school is located, the head teacher must also advise the pupil's 'home authority' of the exclusion without delay.

## Unofficial / Illegal Exclusions

The procedures described above and in the WG guidance must always be applied when a pupil is excluded. Sending a pupil home informally for a "cooling-off period" or asking parents to take a pupil home to avoid an exclusion are illegal acts which could be subject to challenge. This also applies to lunchtimes; if a pupil is asked by the school to go home at lunchtimes this must also be treated as one quarter of a day exclusion for each lunchtime.

It is also unlawful to exclude for a non-disciplinary reason. For example, it would be unlawful to exclude a pupil simply because they have additional needs or a disability that the school feels it is unable to meet, or for a reason such as: academic attainment/ability; the action of a pupil's parents; or the failure of a pupil to meet specific conditions before they are reinstated, such as to attend a reintegration meeting.

At no time should a school encourage a parent to electively home educate (EHE) in order to avoid a permanent exclusion. Such children will either not have access to

the provision that they need or will transfer to a new school without appropriate support thereby placing additional pressures on both schools and families. Schools should, therefore, not promote the use of EHE to remove a child with challenging behaviour or poor attendance from their roll.

## **Reduced Timetables**

It is illegal for a school to impose a reduced or partial timetable.

In some cases a reduced timetable may be used as a short-term measure towards achieving full reintegration, building back up to full time hours if the parents agree and a written agreement, signed by all parties with stated review dates where appropriate, put in place via a PSP.

Full Blaenau Gwent Guidance on the use of reduced timetables is available from the Education Directorate.

## **Procedures Following Exclusion**

Following a permanent exclusion, staff are available within the LA to assist with the reintegration and support of excluded learners.

Statemented pupils – ALN Manager

Non statemented pupils – Senior Education Welfare Officer

The Education (Reintegration Interview) (Wales) Regulations 2010, require Headteachers of schools to request in specified circumstances parents/carers of learners excluded for a fixed term to attend a reintegration interview at the school. The request for interview applies to all fixed-term exclusions for primary-aged learners but only fixed-term exclusions of six or more days for secondary-aged learners. Reintegration interviews need to take place within 15 school days of the last day of the exclusion period.

Headteachers should note, however, that neither parents nor a pupil can be required to meet specific conditions, such as attending a reintegration meeting, before reinstatement.

## **ALN / Disability / Vulnerable Group Considerations**

Other than in the most exceptional circumstances, schools should avoid permanently excluding any pupil with a statement of SEN or an IDP. The 2010 Equality Act does not prohibit schools from excluding learners with a protected characteristic but does prohibit schools from excluding learners because of their protected characteristic (e.g. excluding a disabled learner because of their disability or because of their racial group) or discriminating unlawfully during the exclusions process. This applies to permanent and fixed-term exclusions.

Where a pupil is 'Looked After' (CLA), schools should try every practicable means to maintain the learner in school and should seek LA and other professional advice as appropriate prior to any exclusion decision.

## **The Governing Body's Duty to Consider an Exclusion – Key Points**

The responsibility of the governing body to consider exclusions is usually delegated to a sub-committee of at least three governors. This committee is known as the Discipline Committee. The Discipline Committee has a clear set of responsibilities.

Where required or requested, the governing body must hold a Governors Discipline Committee (GDC) within the required timescale. (In the case of a permanent exclusion, the GDC must meet within 15 school days of being notified of the exclusion).

For all fixed term exclusions of 5 days or fewer within a term, the Headteacher must notify the governing body discipline committee once a term. For fixed term exclusion of 6 to 15 days or more than 20 lunchtimes in a school term and/or where a public exam or national test will be missed, the Headteacher must notify the governing body discipline committee within one day. For all fixed term exclusions of more than 15 days in a school term and following any exclusion in the same term after 15 days has been reached the Headteacher must notify the governing body discipline committee within one day.

Full advice and support is available to school and governing bodies on the role and responsibilities of the GDC from the Governor Support and Development Section of the EAS (where the school has entered into the SLA agreement).

South East Wales Education Achievement Service  
[Statutory Committees <statutory.committees@sewaleseas.org.uk>](mailto:statutory.committees@sewaleseas.org.uk)

# NOTIFICATION OF SCHOOL EXCLUSION

Please send completed form within 24 hours to:  
[BSinclusionsupport@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:BSinclusionsupport@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)



**SCHOOL**

**TYPE OF EXCLUSION** Permanent  Fixed Term  Lunchtime

Name of Pupil  DOB

Gender  NC Year

Is Pupil CLA?  Yes / No      If Yes, please state LA and status

ALNN Status    SA     SA+     Statement /IDP     Ethnicity

Name of Parent/ Carer

Address

Contact Telephone Number/s

## EXCLUSION DETAILS:

Start date of exclusion:  \*AM / PM      (*\*please delete as appropriate*)

End date of exclusion:  \*AM / PM      (*\*please delete as appropriate*)

No of days excluded:

Return date:  #INSET dates:

# please indicate if there are any INSET / school closure days during the period of the exclusion

**REASON(S) FOR EXCLUSION: ONE primary reason must be marked with a “P” for reporting to the Welsh Government. Supplementary reasons may also be marked with S.**

Physical Assault against pupil (PP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual misconduct (SM)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical assault against adult (PA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drug and alcohol related (DA)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil (VP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Damage (DM)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against an adult (VA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Theft (TH)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Persistent disruptive behaviour (DB)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bullying (BU)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Racial abuse (RA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (OT)	<input type="checkbox"/>

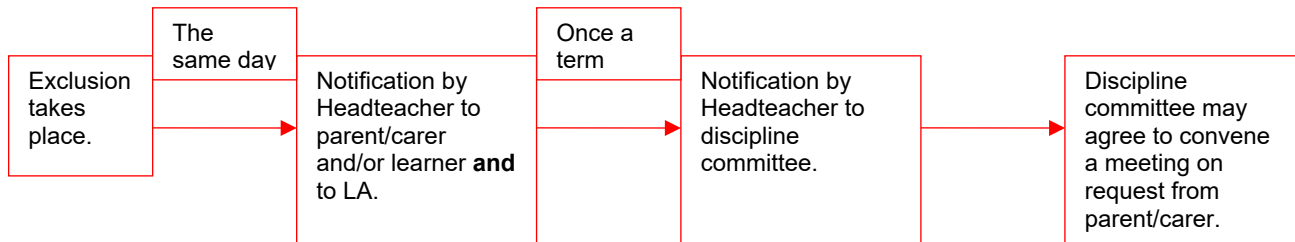
Signed: .....(Headteacher)      Date:.....

**You MUST attach a copy of the notification letter sent to parents/guardian**

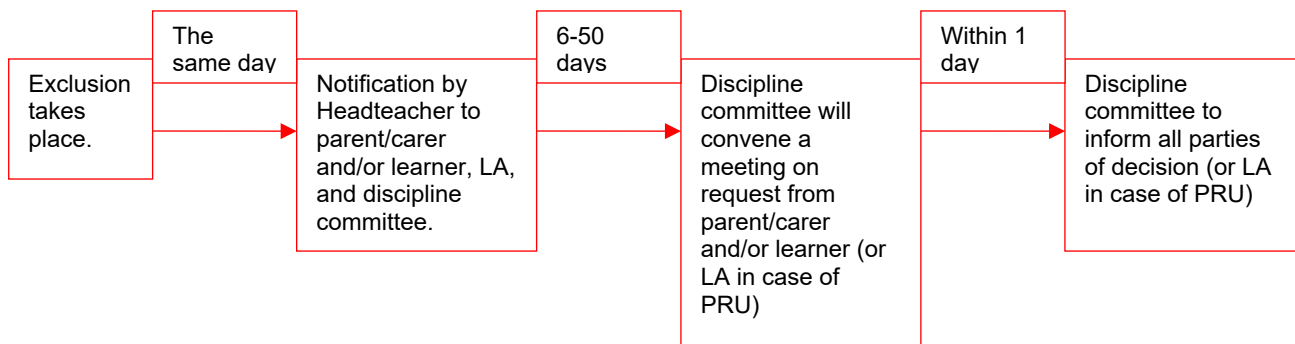
## Fixed term Exclusions

The term 'days' refers to school days throughout.

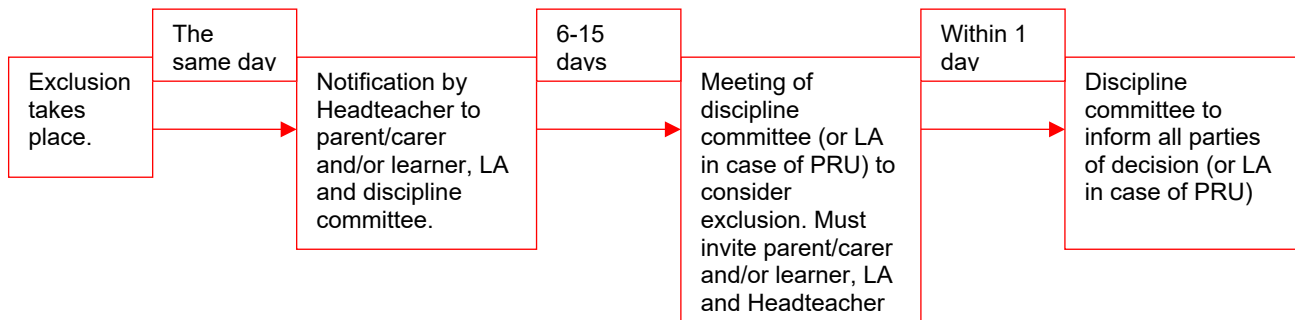
### 5 days or fewer in a school term



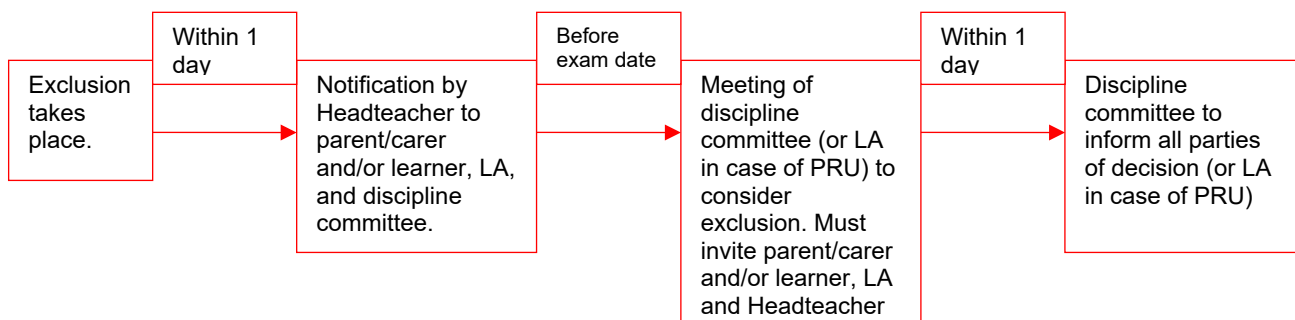
### 6-15 days or more than 20 lunchtimes in a school term and/or where a public exam or national test will be missed



### More than 15 days in a school term and following any exclusion in the same term after 15 days has been reached.



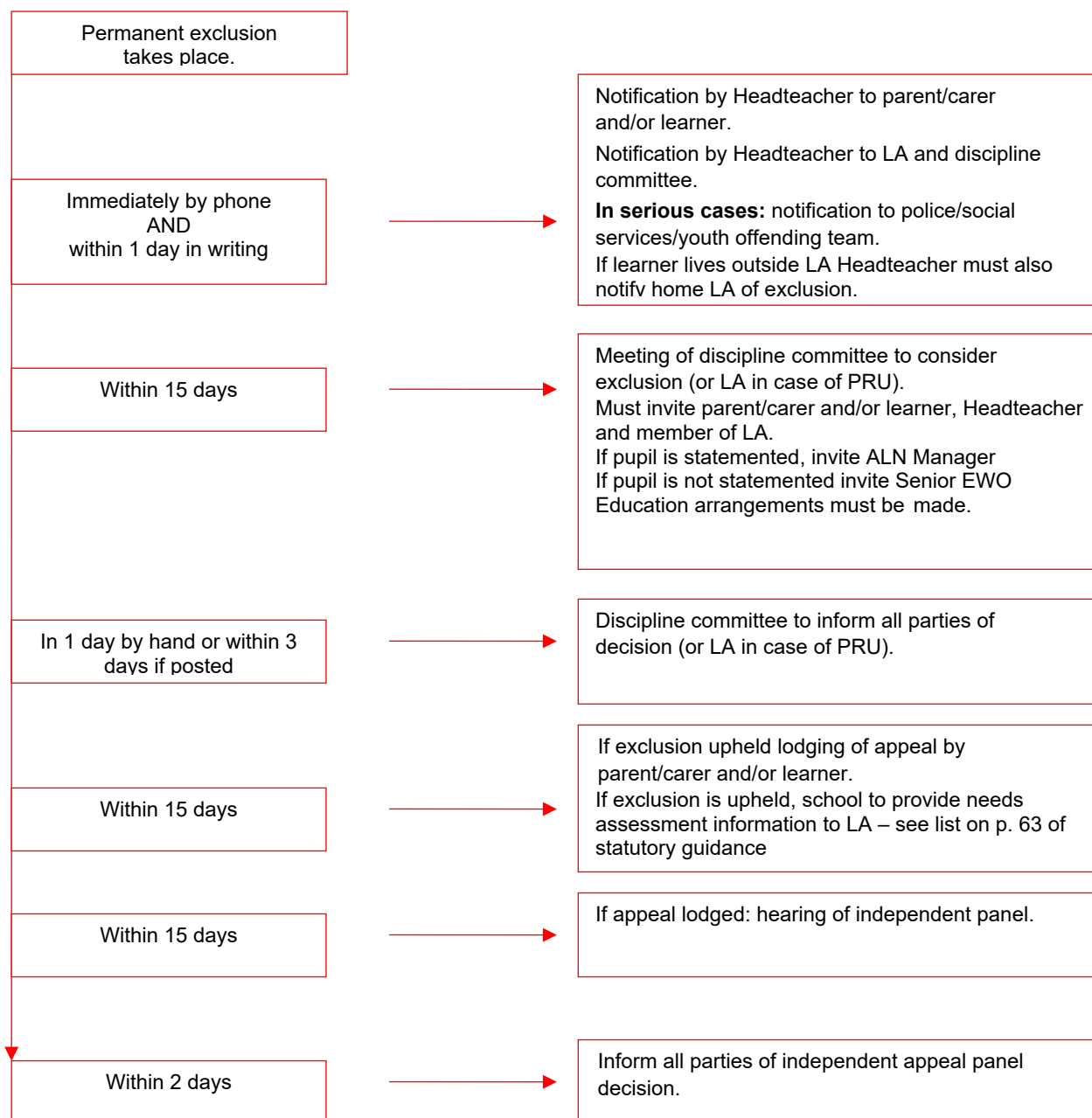
### Where a public examination will be missed



## Appendix C

### Permanent Exclusions

The term 'days' refers to school days throughout.





## Appendix D

### Model Letters

#### Model letter 1: Fixed-term exclusion of less than six days

From Headteacher (or teacher in charge of a PRU) notifying parent/carer and/or learner of a fixed term exclusion of less than six days, and where a public examination is not missed.

Dear **[parent/carer/learner's name]**

I am writing to inform you of my decision to exclude **[learner's name/you]** for a fixed term of **[period of exclusion]**. This means that **[learner's name/you]** will not be allowed in school for the period of the exclusion which began on **[date]**.

I realise that this exclusion may well be upsetting for you and your family, but the decision to exclude **[learner's name/you]** has not been taken lightly. **[learner's name/you]** has/have been excluded for this fixed term because **[reason for exclusion]**.

The school will continue to set work for **[learner's name/you]** during the period of his/her/your exclusion **[insert details of arrangements that are in place for this]**. Please ensure that any work set by the school is completed and returned to us for marking.

**[For learners over compulsory school age insert the following]**. As you have been excluded from the school you should arrange for someone to return the work to us on your behalf.

**[School/other setting]**

You **[and learner's name where learner is aged less than 11]** have the right to make representations to the school governors' pupil discipline committee. If you wish to make representations please contact **[name of contact]** on/at **[contact details: address, phone number, e-mail]**, as soon as possible. While the discipline committee has no power to direct reinstatement, they must consider any representations you make and may place a copy of their findings on your child's/your school record.

**[Special School]**

You **[and learner's name where learner is aged less than 11]** have the right to make representations to **Blaenau Gwent LA**.

These representations will be considered by **[contacting the Service Manager - Inclusion]**. If you wish to make representations please contact **[name of contact]** on/at **[contact details: address, phone number, e-mail]** as soon as possible.

You also have the right to see a copy of **[learner's name/your]** school record. Due to confidentiality restrictions, you will need to notify me in writing if you wish to be

supplied with a copy of **[learner's name/your]** school record. I will be happy to supply you with a copy if you request it. There may be a charge for photocopying.

A parent/carer also has the right to make a claim of disability discrimination to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW) if she or he thinks that the exclusion is because of a disability their child has. The address to which claims should be sent is Unit 32, Ddole Road Enterprise Park, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 6DF.

**[Primary school only]**

You **[and learner's name]** are requested to attend a reintegration interview with me **[alternatively, specify the name of another staff member]** at **[place]** on **[date]** at **[time]**. If that is not convenient, please contact the school before **[date within the next 10 days]** to arrange a suitable alternative date and time. The purpose of the reintegration interview is to discuss how best **your child's/your** return to school can be managed. You should be aware that **your/your parent's/your carer's** failure to attend a reintegration interview will be a factor taken into account by a court when deciding, on any future application, whether to impose a parenting order on **you/your parent/your carer**.

You may want to contact **[name]** at **Blaenau Gwent** LA on/at **[contact details: address, phone number, e-mail]**, who can provide advice.

**[Learner's name/your]** exclusion expires on **[date]** and we expect **[learner's name/you]** to be back in school on **[date]** at **[time]**.

Yours sincerely

**[name]**

Headteacher/teacher

## Model letter 2: Fixed-term exclusion of 6–15 days

From Headteacher (or teacher in charge of a PRU) notifying parent/carer and/or learner of a fixed-term exclusion of six to 15 days, or where cumulative exclusions in the same term fall within this range, or where a public examination is missed.

Dear **[parent/carer/learner's name]**

I am writing to inform you of my decision to exclude **[learner's name/you]** for a fixed term of **[period of exclusion]**. This means that **[learner's name/you]** will not be allowed in school for the period of the exclusion which began on **[date]**.

I realise that this exclusion may well be upsetting for you and your family, but the decision to exclude **[learner's name/you]** has not been taken lightly. **[learner's name/you]** has/have been excluded for this fixed term because **[reason for exclusion]**.

The school will continue to set work for **[learner's name/you]** during the period of his/her/your exclusion **[insert details of arrangements that are in place for this]**. Please ensure that any work set by the school is completed and returned to us for marking.

**[For learners over compulsory school age insert the following]**

As you have been excluded from the school you should arrange for someone to return the work to us on your behalf.

**[School/setting]**

You have the right to request a meeting of the school governors' pupil discipline committee at which you **[and learner's name where learner is aged less than 11]** may make representations and the decision to exclude can be reviewed. As the length of the exclusion is more than five school days (or equivalent) the committee must meet if you request it to do so. The latest date the committee can meet is **[date – no later than 50 school days from the date the committee is notified]**. If you wish to make representations to the committee and wish to be accompanied by a friend or representative please contact **[name of contact]** on/at **[contact details: address, phone number, e-mail]**, as soon as possible.

**[Special School]**

You **[and learner's name where learner is aged less than 11]** have the right to make representations to **Blaenau Gwent Local Authority**. These representations will be considered by **the Lead Officer for Inclusion**. If you wish to make representations please contact **[name of contact]** on/at **[contact details: address, phone number, e-mail]** as soon as possible.

**[Note: this wording is not suitable where the learner would lose the opportunity to take a public examination.]**

You also have the right to see a copy of **[learner's name/your]** school record. Due to confidentiality restrictions, you will need to notify me in writing if you wish to be

supplied with a copy of **[learner's name/your]** school record. I will be happy to supply you with a copy if you request it. There may be a charge for photocopying.

A parent/carer also has the right to make a claim of disability discrimination to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW) if she or he thinks that the exclusion is because of a disability their child has. The address to which claims should be sent is Unit 32, Ddole Road Enterprise Park, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 6DF.

**[Applies to children of compulsory school age only]**

You **[and learner's name]** are requested to attend a reintegration interview with me **[alternatively, specify the name of another staff member]** at **[place]** on **[date]** at **[time]**. If that is not convenient, please contact the school before **[date within the next ten days]** to arrange a suitable alternative date and time. The purpose of the reintegration interview is to discuss how best **your child's/your** return to school can be managed. You should be aware that **your/your parent's/your carer's** failure to attend a reintegration interview will be a factor taken into account by a court when deciding, on any future application, whether to impose a parenting order on **you/your parent/your carer**.

You may want to contact **[name]** at **Blaenau Gwent** LA on/at **[contact details: address, phone number, e-mail]**, who can provide advice.

**[Learner's name/your]** exclusion expires on **[date]** and we expect **[learner's name/you]** to be back in school on **[date]** at **[time]**.

Yours sincerely

**[name]**

Headteacher/teacher

### Model letter 3: Fixed-term exclusion of 16 or more days

From Headteacher (or teacher in charge of a PRU) notifying parent/carer and/or learner of a fixed-term exclusion of 16 days or more, or where cumulative exclusions in the same term are 16 days or more.

Dear **[parent/carer/learner's name]**

I am writing to inform you of my decision to exclude **[learner's name/you]** for a fixed term of **[period of exclusion]**. This means that **[learner's name/you]** will not be allowed in school for the period of the exclusion which began **[date]**.

I realise that this exclusion may well be upsetting for you and your family, but the decision to exclude **[learner's name/you]** has not been taken lightly. **[learner's name/you]** has been excluded for this fixed term because **[reason for exclusion]**.

Alternative education other than setting work will be provided for **[learner's name/you]** if the exclusion has not been overturned within 15 days. A **Blaenau Gwent** LA representative will contact you to discuss this.

#### **[School/Setting]**

As the length of the exclusion is more than 15 school days (or equivalent) the school governors' pupil discipline committee must automatically meet to consider the exclusion. At the review meeting you may make representations to the committee if you wish to do so. The latest date the committee can meet is **[date – no later than 15 school days from the date the discipline committee is notified]**. If you wish to make representations to the committee and wish to be accompanied by a friend or representative please contact **[name of contact]** on/at **[contact details: address, phone number, e-mail]**, as soon as possible. You will, whether you choose to make representations or not, be notified by the Clerk to the committee of the time, date and location of the meeting.

#### **[Special School]**

As the length of the exclusion is more than 15 days **Blaenau Gwent LA** must consider the exclusion. **[Set out the arrangements which the LA has made to review fixed-term exclusions.]** A review meeting will be held and at the review meeting you may make representations if you wish. The latest date for a review meeting is **[date – no later than 15 school days from the date the LA is notified]**. If you wish to make representations and wish to be accompanied by a representative please contact **[name of contact]** on/at **[contact details: address, phone number, e-mail]**.

You also have the right to see a copy of **[learner's name/your]** school record. Due to confidentiality restrictions, you will need to notify me in writing if you wish to be supplied with a copy of **[learner's name/your]** school record. I will be happy to supply you with a copy if you request it. There may be a charge for photocopying.

A parent/carer also has the right to make a claim of disability discrimination to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW) if she or he thinks that the exclusion is

because of a disability their child has. The address to which claims should be sent is Unit 32, Ddole Road Enterprise Park, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 6DF.

**[Applies to children of compulsory school age only]**

You **[and learner's name]** are requested to attend a reintegration interview with me **[alternatively, specify the name of another staff member]** at **[place]** on **[date]** at **[time]**. If that is not convenient, please contact the school before **[date within the next 10 days]** to arrange a suitable alternative date and time. The purpose of the reintegration interview is to discuss how best **your child's/your** return to school can be managed. You should be aware that **your/your parent's/your carer's** failure to attend a reintegration interview will be a factor taken into account by a court when deciding, on any future application, whether to impose a parenting order on **you/your parent/your carer**.

You may want to contact **[name]** at **Blaenau Gwent** LA on/at **[contact details: address, phone number, e-mail]**, who can provide advice.

**[Learner's name/your]** exclusion expires on **[date]** and we expect **[Learner's name/you]** to be back in school on **[date]** at **[time]**.

Yours sincerely

**[name]**

Headteacher/teacher

## Model letter 4: Permanent exclusion

From Headteacher (or teacher in charge of a PRU) notifying parent/carer and/or learner of a permanent exclusion.

Dear **[parent's/carer's/learner's name]**

I regret to inform you of my decision to exclude **[learner's name/you]** permanently from **[date]**. This means that **[learner's name/you]** will not be allowed back to this **[school/pupil referral unit]** unless reinstated by the **[school governors' discipline committee/LA pupil referral unit management committee]** or by an appeal panel.

I realise that this exclusion may well be upsetting for you and your family, but the decision to exclude **[learner's name/you]** has not been taken lightly. **[Learner's name/you]** has been excluded permanently because **[reason for exclusion – also include any other relevant history here]**.

Alternative education other than setting work will be provided for **[learner's name/you]** if the exclusion has not been overturned within 15 days. A LA representative will contact you to discuss this.

### **[School/Setting]**

As this is a permanent exclusion the school governors' pupil discipline committee will meet to consider the exclusion. At the review meeting you **[and learner's name where learner is aged less than 11]** may make representations to the committee if you wish to do so. The discipline committee has the power to reinstate **[learner's name/you]** immediately or from a specified date, or alternatively, has the power to uphold the exclusion in which case you may appeal to an independent appeals panel. The latest date the committee can meet is **[date – no later than 15 school days from the date the committee is notified]**. If you wish to make representations to the committee and wish to be accompanied by a friend or representative please contact **[name of contact]** on/at **[contact details: address, phone number, e-mail]**, as soon as possible. You will, whether you choose to make representations or not, be notified by the Clerk to the committee of the time, date and location of the meeting.

### **[Special School]**

You have the right to appeal to an independent appeal panel against this decision. If you wish to appeal please notify **[name of Clerk to appeal panel]** of your wish to appeal including your grounds of appeal in writing to **[address]** by no later than **[specify the latest date – the fifteenth school day after the second working day after the letter is posted if sent by first class post, or, if delivered by hand, the fifteenth school day after delivery]**. If you have not lodged an appeal by this date your right to appeal will lapse.

A parent/carer also has the right to make a claim of disability discrimination to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW) if she or he thinks that the exclusion is because of a disability their child has. The address to which claims should be sent is Unit 32, Ddole Road Enterprise Park, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 6DF.

You also have the right to see a copy of **[learner's name/your]** school record. Due to confidentiality restrictions, you will need to notify me in writing if you wish to be supplied with a copy of **[learner's name/your]** school record. I will be happy to supply you with a copy if you request it. There may be a charge for photocopying.

You may want to contact **[name]** at **Blaenau Gwent LA** on/at **[contact details: address, phone number, e-mail]**, who can provide advice on what options are available to you.

Yours sincerely

**[name]**

Headteacher/teacher



## Model letter 5: Permanent exclusion – discipline committee’s decision

From the Clerk of the discipline committee notifying the parent/carer of a permanently excluded learner of the discipline committee’s decision.

Dear **[parent’s/carer’s/learner’s name]**

The meeting of the school governors’ pupil discipline committee at the **[school]** on **[date]** considered the decision by **[Headteacher]** to permanently exclude you/your son/daughter **[name of learner]**. The committee, after carefully considering the representations made and all the available evidence, have decided:

### Either

to overturn the exclusion and direct that **[you/name of learner]** are/is reinstated in the school by **[date]**. We therefore expect **[you/name of learner]** to be back in school on **[date]** at **[time]**.

If you wish to discuss **[learner’s name/your]** return to school before reinstatement, please contact **[name of Headteacher]** to arrange a convenient time and date.

A copy of this letter will be added to **[learner’s name/your]** school record for future reference.

### Or

to uphold **[your/name of learner’s]** exclusion.

The reasons for the committee’s decision are as follows: **[give the reasons in as much detail as possible, explaining how the committee arrived at its decision]**.

You have the right to appeal against this decision. If you wish to appeal, please notify **[name of the Clerk to the appeal panel]** of your wish to appeal. You must set out the reasons for your appeal in writing and if appropriate, you may also include any disability discrimination claim you may wish to make and send them to **[address]** by no later than **[specify the latest date – the seventeenth school day after the date of this letter]**. If you have not lodged an appeal by **[repeat latest date]**, your right to appeal will lapse.

Your appeal would be heard by an independent appeal panel.

A **[three-member/five-member]** panel will comprise **[one/two]** serving education practitioner[s] (possibly **[a]** Headteacher[s]) **[one/two]** serving or recently serving experienced governor[s]; and one lay member who will be the chair. The appeal panel will rehear all the facts of the case – if you have fresh evidence to present to the panel you may do so. The panel must meet no later than the fifteenth school day after the date on which your appeal is lodged. In exceptional circumstances panels may adjourn a hearing until a later date.

I would like to remind you of the following sources of advice and assistance: **[repeat]**

**details from the original exclusion letter, i.e. a named LA officer and the Advisory Centre for Education and any other local source of advice or assistance if known].**

The arrangements currently being made for **[learner's name/your]** education will continue for the time being. However, new arrangements to provide full-time education for **[Learner's name/your]** are being made and **[name of LA officer]** will liaise with you shortly about these new arrangements. If you have any questions about this please contact **[name]**.

Yours sincerely

**[name]**

Clerk to the discipline committee

## Model letter 6: Independent appeal panel decision

From the Clerk to the independent appeal panel notifying the parent/carer and/or learner of the outcome of their appeal.

Dear **[parent's/carer's/learner's name]**

Following the hearing of your appeal by the independent appeal panel constituted by **Blaenau Gwent** Local Authority on **[date]** at **[location]** against the decision of the governing body of **[name of school]/the discipline committee for [name of PRU]** not to reinstate **[learner's name/you]**, I am writing to advise you of the panel's decision.

After careful consideration of your representations (both oral and written) and those of **[school/PRU]** and **Blaenau Gwent** Local Authority **[and of others if applicable, e.g., any victim]** and in the light of the available evidence, the panel has decided:

### Either

(i) to uphold the exclusion

or

(ii) to direct **[learner's name/your]** reinstatement in **[name of school/PRU]** with effect from **[date and time]**. **[Learner's name/you]** should report to **[name of school staff member]** at that time

or

(iii) that it is not practical to direct **[learner's name/your]** reinstatement **[here give reasons, e.g. because this is an exceptional case where reinstatement would not be in the learner's best interests or those of the whole school/PRU community]** although otherwise reinstatement would have been appropriate. Your **[child's]** school record will show that the permanent exclusion was overturned on appeal even though reinstatement was not directed.

**[Give reasons in as much detail as possible for the panel's decision: the decision may be challenged by judicial review; or be the subject of a complaint of maladministration by the appeal panel to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.**

The panel's decision is binding on you, the governing body of **[name of school]/** and **[name of LA]**.

### For decisions (i) and (iii) above:

The alternative arrangements put in place for **[learner's name/your]** full-time education will continue for the time being; but **[LA officer's name]** will be in touch with you to discuss future provision.

A copy of this letter will be added to **[learner's name/your]** school record for future reference.

Yours sincerely

**[name]**

Clerk to the independent appeal panel

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# **Blaenau Gwent County Council**

## **Attendance Policy**

### **Supporting Positive Attendance**

The Education Directorate's purpose is to deliver '***Better Schools, Better Citizens, and Better Communities***'

**Education Inclusion Service**

**Attendance Policy**

**Date: 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023**

**Date of review: 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025**



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol  
**Blaenau Gwent**  
County Borough Council

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*Improving attendance is everyone's business.*

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## **Introduction**

Blaenau Gwent Local Authority aim to:

***Promote and support excellent school attendance by direct work with schools, pupils, their families and secure the engagement of appropriate agencies where their support is critical towards securing improved attendance.***

The importance of regular attendance cannot be overestimated. It is a prerequisite to a good education and securing it must be a high priority for schools and their governing bodies, as well as for parents and pupils. Pupils who fail to attend regularly not only diminish the value of the education provided but may also jeopardise their future life chances to succeed.

Good attendance also has a positive effect on wellbeing. Establishing good attendance patterns from an early age is vital for social development. The inter-relationship between attendance and wellbeing is considered so strong that attendance is often considered a proxy measure for learner wellbeing.

The Local Authority (LA) encourages schools to adopt a **whole school approach** to attendance. This requires commitment from all staff employed within the school, together with governors, parents, pupils, and the LA.

This approach relates to a wide range of other issues, including punctuality, rewards and incentives, re-integration of long-term absentees, curricular differentiation, home-school links and the role of the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

The Education Welfare Service will work in partnership with Blaenau Gwent schools to monitor and address a wide range of attendance issues. The following document outlines our commitment to support schools as an Education Welfare Service in addition to outlining school responsibilities within this process. There will also be links provided to key attendance documents which frames the work undertaken, to ensure that young people and children in Blaenau Gwent benefit from regular school attendance.

This document will:

- Provide guidance to develop and implement whole school attendance strategies.
- Summarise efficient and effective early intervention and support strategies.
- Encourage educational provisions to work collaboratively with a range of partners to support and promote the welfare and wellbeing of children and young people
- Outline the LA's role in dealing with non-attendance.
- Explain legal contexts such as the Attendance Pathway, Fixed Penalty Notices and Legal frameworks and provide guidance in relation to the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) as a measure to improving attendance and safeguarding
- Provide an outline of the support available through the Education Welfare Service.
- Identify Schools responsibilities and parental responsibilities.
- Outline information which should be included in School Attendance Policies

- Provide school attendance codes and explanations with a clear definition of authorised and unauthorised absences
- Identify legalities around registration.
- Explore the use of data analysis to support positive attendance.
- 

## **Legal Frameworks**

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education:

- The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any additional learning need they may have.
- Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.
- For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

Whilst the legal responsibility for regular school attendance rests with parents, the school shares with them, and the local authority (LA), responsibility for encouraging good attendance and improving poor attendance. Schools are required by law to maintain specific records and to produce specified information on the attendance of pupils. Statutory obligation apart, **the school is committed to improvements in attendance standards** as a direct stimulus to raising pupil achievement. Poor attendance is destructive on educational achievement, undermines the well-being of each pupil and demoralises staff.

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for ensuring that their child(ren) of compulsory school age (5-16), receives efficient full-time education, suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any additional learning needs (ALN) the child may have. This can be through regular attendance at school or educated otherwise by the Local Authority. The law also permits parents to educate their child(ren) at home under the terms of Elective Home Education (EHE).

The LA has a statutory duty to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving suitable education and as a registered pupil at school means attending school regularly and on time.

**Compulsory school age** means that children and young people should attend school from the start of the first term commencing after their fifth birthday and are of compulsory school age until after the last Friday in June of the school year in which they have their 16th birthday.

If a registered pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, the parent could be guilty of an offence under section 444 Education Act 1996.

An offence is not committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence);
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/ parent belongs;

- the school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child's home and suitable transport arrangements have not been made by the LA. The law relating to walking distance effectively is defined as two miles for pupils under eight and three miles for all other pupils. Distance will be measured by nearest available walking route;

Only the registered school of the child can authorise an absence.

## **Registration**

Schools are required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to take an attendance register twice a day, at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It will also be used for end of term reports, records of achievement and reference requests, and information for other schools, LAs and external agencies. No pupil should be marked present unless in attendance at school or other agreed educational activity. The register should not have missing marks. When a pupil arrives late but the register is still open, the pupils should be marked as late but counted as present for the session. When a pupil misses registration, they should be marked as an unauthorised absence, unless a medical letter/ phone call by parent is received and deemed to be genuine. Pupils should not have access to the register. The headteacher is the only person who can authorise that a pupil be added or removed from the register; this can only be done with the agreement of the LA.

In addition to twice daily registration in form groups, a class register is taken for every lesson throughout the day. These are checked by the Head of Year / Phase to identify possible truancy and any pupil found to have missed a lesson. More information and guidance on school attendance codes can be accessed at <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/guidance-on-school-attendance-codes.pdf>

It can also be found in Appendix 1. It provides specific guidance to schools around how to use the codes to record attendance and absence in schools. Estyn has identified that schools that have both quality assurance procedures in place (with a member of the senior management team responsible for overseeing the coding of attendance) and good systems in place to analyse data are able to adapt their approaches to improve attendance.

An accurate and consistent registration system is crucial if poor attendance and punctuality within a school are to be tackled. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day.

All staff involved with the registration process should be made aware that the law is specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping the register is of the utmost importance and it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers.

## **National Context**

Attendance is key to whole school improvement and has direct influence on a pupils' learning, progress and well-being.

The Welsh Government Guidance document, *Inclusion and Pupil Support 2016*, provides advice and guidance and sets out responsibilities for maintaining high levels of attendance, positive behaviour and well-being of all pupils.

The All Wales Attendance Framework provides a toolkit on practice standards and guidance for Education Welfare Service practitioners. This key document aims to ensure greater consistency of practice throughout Wales and the toolkit usefully includes a section for schools that contains examples of strategies that can be employed to improve school attendance and manage lateness.

## **Local Context**

Blaenau Gwent County Council is committed to supporting positive school attendance by developing and implementing, policies and guidance documents aimed at improving levels of attendance and well-being for schools; providers of EOTAS, pupils, parents, and carers, in order to improve learning, progress and well-being for all pupils.

All schools in Blaenau Gwent are served by a small team of Education Welfare Officers, who provide a link between the schools, education services, families, children, and young people. The early intervention and support provided by an EWO includes improving whole school attendance, regular attendance meetings with school links, supporting individual pupils / families, and acting on behalf of the Local Authority to meet its legal responsibilities. The EWS service follow the attendance pathway (Appendix 2) and offers advice, guidance, support, and signposting to other services, working closely with health services, careers, youth services, police, and social services, with a focus on early intervention and support.

## **Support for Schools**

We support schools to develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance including:

- Recognising the importance of good attendance
- Recognising the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts
- Recognising improving attendance is a school leadership issue.
- Ensuring all staff know the importance of good attendance.
- Ensuring attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced.
- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels
- Demonstrating the benefits of good attendance throughout school life
- Recognising that irregular attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process.
- Recognising children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues.

## **School Policies**

Blaenau Gwent encourages each school to have a clear school attendance policy which all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents understand. School policies should:

- Include the attendance and punctuality expectations of pupils and parents,
- Outline the name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Provide a detailed timetable of the school day for parents including times for morning and afternoon registration
- Share information and contact details of the school staff who pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day to day basis
- Include the school's day to day processes for managing attendance
- Address how the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance
- Outline the school's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most
- Outline the school's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence
- Include the point at which Fixed Penalty Notices for absence and other sanctions will be sought
- Ensure compliance with all statutory requirements.
- Ensure that clear information is regularly communicated to parents and pupils.
- Collect and make effective and constructive use of attendance data.
- Contain clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness.
- Recognise the importance of early intervention.
- Make provision for first day of absence contact.
- Monitor post-registration truancy through the taking of class registers and spot checks.
- Be alert to critical times (include reference to supporting attendance in all transition plans)
- Identify a range of strategies to deal with absenteeism / lateness.
- Develop attendance incentive schemes which recognise pupils' attendance achievements.
- Consider the setting of targets for individuals, classes, year groups, etc.
- Establish procedures for identifying and reintegrating long-term absentees.
- Provide for regular structured meetings between school staff and the EWO.
- Follow the attendance pathway (appendix 1) before an appropriate referral is made to the EWS.
- Stress to parents the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family holidays during term-time (schools should grant leave for term-time holidays sparingly)
- Highlight how they use opportunities such as parents' evenings and the school prospectus / brochure to remind parents of the school policy on attendance;
- Involve governors in the creation and updates of the school policy
- Identify a key senior member of staff with overall responsibility for attendance.
- Ensure that good practice is identified and disseminated.
- Be regularly monitored and reviewed; and
- Take steps to create a culture which encourages attendance, addressing school-based causes of poor attendance such as bullying, racism, the curriculum, etc.

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A model attendance policy can be found in appendix 3.

Each school will also be provided with an operational level agreement between the school and the EWS to ensure best practice. – appendix 4

### **Whole school attendance improvement strategies**

Instil a staff mindset of high expectations around attendance.

- Establish a senior leadership team presence around school to support punctuality to school and each lesson.
- Make good attendance everyone's responsibility.
- Work closely with parents.
- Involve the local community.
- Give pupils a purpose to be in school each day.
- Offer pupils the tools to come to school.
- Provide secure conditions for learning.
- Use your exciting curriculum and four purposes to entice pupils
- Anticipate family patterns.
- Appoint an attendance lead who's passionate about high expectations.
- Include clear stages of action in your attendance policy.

Blaenau Gwent EWS also offer training and resources to schools to support and improve whole school attendance which can be requested via the EWO and these include - Whole school attendance improvement, Positive attendance workshops with Pupils, Coding information, Attendance pathway training, best practice etc.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

### **Engagement is key to improving attendance.**

Some key actions which can support positive attendance include the following:

- Building positive relationships when children first start school. Home visits provide the opportunity to meet parents in a more relaxed setting and to share information about the importance of good attendance. This also allows the school to have an understanding of the individual context of children and families within the school.
- Providing clear guidance and information on attendance and the school's expectations.
- Allowing parents to feedback their views on attendance and to be involved in co-constructing the policy and approaches that the school adopt.

### **Emotionally Based School Avoidance**

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. The impact of EBSA on young people is far reaching. Outcomes for young people who



display EBSA include poor academic attainment, reduced social opportunities and limited employment opportunities (Garry 1996, Pellegrini 2007, and Taylor 2012).

There are information booklets for schools, parents, children, and young people. This guidance can be found on Blaenau Gwent Website.

Literature suggests that children experiencing EBSA, experience a range of 'push' and 'Pull' factors: 'Push' factors (i.e., those that push the child towards attending school or towards staying at home) • 'Pull' factors (i.e., those pull the child away from attending school or towards home). The literature indicates that EBSA is most likely to occur when the risks are greater than resilience and when the 'pull' factors that promote school avoidance overwhelm the 'push' factors that encourage school attendance.

<p><b><u>PUSH- TOWARDS ATTENDING SCHOOLS</u></b>                  e.g., academically capable,                  school dinner,                  friends                  like certain subjects</p>	<p><b><u>PULL FACTORS- PULLING AWAY FROM SCHOOL (home factors)</u></b>                  E.g., worried about parent.                  Difficulties sleeping                  Parental illness</p>
<p><b><u>PULL FACTORS- AWAY FROM SCHOOL (School factors)</u></b>                  Poor relationships with peers                  Struggling with work                  Disengaged from curriculum.                  Prolonged period of absence                  Noisy environment                  Clashes with teachers</p>	<p><b><u>PUSH FACTORS - TOWARDS STAYING AT HOME</u></b>                  Reduced anxieties about leaving the home.                  Reduced anxieties about going to school.                  Reduced pressure around academic work.                  Not having to complete homework.                  Reduced peer pressure</p>

School plays a key role in the identification of children and young people who are currently experiencing, or at risk of, EBSA. It is important for schools to develop effective whole school systems to support young people, be vigilant to early indicators and employ a thorough assess, plan, do and review cycle placing the young person at the heart of the interventions. To break the cycle, schools should be looking to recognise the early warning signs: a change in attendance and/or punctuality, reduced engagement or negative talk about school, or a change in behaviour. It is important that this includes front line and support staff, as well as parents and families, as they are most likely to experience early signs before it reaches Head of Year/ALNCo /Headteacher etc. For schools with young people experiencing EBSA and struggling with attendance, it is the Headteacher's decision whether to authorise absence or not.

If a school decides to refer a student to the EWS where EBSA is an issue, the expectation would be that the school will have tried and exhausted an array of strategies to encourage and support the young person's attendance, including those outlined in Blaenau Gwent documents as well as having exhausted supportive interventions from other professionals prior to the referral to the EWS. Following referral, the allocated worker from the EWS can then assess whether there is a focus of work for the team and provide further advice.

Working with parents is essential to successful outcomes. While the focus is on the child, it is also important to remember that parents may need their own support and consideration should be made to support services.

When undertaking direct work with children and families at risk of EBSA, areas which can be explored include the child's:

- educational history/ their early experiences at school
- strengths, interests, and aspirations
- any potential changes or losses within the family or child's life (You could ask them to draw a family tree/ genogram).
- Relationships with other children both in and out of school/ any adults within school
- academic progress School should be aware if the child has identified ALN needs and should ask about these needs and the support in place. If there is no identified ALN school should ask if they have any concerns, or if the child has spoken about difficulties.
- the child's views- what are their specific fears/worries, what is going well in school (e.g., teachers, lessons, friends) Behaviour and symptoms of anxiety When s/he is worried what does it look like? What do they say they are feeling?
- Typical day – when they go to school and when they do not go to school
- How does their non-attendance impact on parents/ carers? And on other family members?
- Exceptions to the problem- Have there been times when s/he managed to get into school? What was different about those times? Previous attempts to address the problem What has been the most helpful thing that someone else has done in dealing with the problem so far? What has helped in the past when things have been difficult? What strategies have been most helpful so far in managing their anxiety?

## **Safeguarding and child protection**

All schools and education settings have statutory duties to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of learners. All staff members must be aware of and understand how to contact and raise concerns with the designated safeguarding person for the school. Absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and tracking and monitoring attendance has a crucial safeguarding role. Absence can signal possible wellbeing issues or problems at home.

Keeping Learners Safe guidance states that:

- Education settings should use their attendance policy and practice to ensure they are in regular contact with parents if a child is absent from school without authorisation or if they have patterns of absence. The child's attendance record at school could be an indicator of safeguarding concerns and an opportunity to identify and deal with abuse such as child exploitation.



- If a child is absent without notification, it could also be without the knowledge of their parent or carer and could be an early sign that the child is missing from home or care. The education setting should ensure any absence is followed up quickly to ensure the child is safe and not missing from home or care.
- If the education setting identifies the child is missing from home or care they should refer to the Wales Practice Guide 'Safeguarding children who go missing from home or care'.

Schools should regularly review attendance data to identify and respond to children who are at risk. Schools should have first day absence reporting processes in place and processes for deciding whether welfare sightings are needed. These systems should ensure back-up staff are in place when key attendance staff are themselves absent.

Where a child is registered at a school and subsequently attends a setting such as EOTAS the original school should assume responsibility for checking the child's attendance (at both settings) daily.

It is good practice for all staff to share information when necessary and lawful and to work closely with the designated safeguarding person and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to ensure that support for vulnerable learners is timely and joined up. One of the specific circumstances in which data protection legislation allows the sharing of sensitive personal information without the consent of the child or parent is to safeguard children and protect them and others from harm. Staff should be trained to understand when information should be shared with other stakeholders and what information may be disclosed.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Parent / Carer Responsibilities**

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their child / children attend the school at which they are registered, regularly, on time, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn (parents are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay at school once they have registered).

Parents can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children, including:

- take an active interest in their child's school life and work;
- attend parents' evenings and other school events, if possible;
- ensure that their child completes his/her homework and goes to bed at an appropriate time;
- be aware of letters from school which their child brings home or alternative communications from the school;
- ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day;
- ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance;

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- always notify the school as soon as possible - preferably on the first morning - of any absence;
- confirm this in writing when the child returns to school;
- avoid booking family holidays during term-time.
- talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend.
- make all medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.

If a child misses' school without an explanation from the parents / carer, or if the school is not satisfied with the explanation, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised', that is, truancy.

Although parents / carers may provide a reason for the absence, it is the school that decides whether the absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

If parents / carers think there may be a reason why their child does not want to go to school, they should speak to their child's class teacher for help and support in the first instance.

ATTENDANCE %	LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES	OUTCOME
95-100% attendance	Best chance of success	Your child is taking full advantage of every learning opportunity.
90-95% attendance	At least 2 weeks of learning missed	Satisfactory. Your child may have to spend time catching up with work.
85-90% attendance	At least 4 weeks of learning missed	Your child may be at risk of underachieving and may need extra support from you to catch up with work.
80-85% attendance	At least 5 ½ weeks of learning missed	Your child's poor attendance has a significant impact on learning.
Below 80% attendance	At least 7½ weeks of learning missed	Your child is missing out on a broad and balanced education. You are at risk of prosecution.

### **School and Governing Bodies Responsibilities**

All schools are expected to develop processes that meet the needs of their pupils and contexts that include arrangements to:

- Develop and maintain a whole school attendance policy.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures, registration regulations and education law relating to school attendance.
- Complete school registers at the start of the morning session and afternoon session\*
- Stress to parents and carers the importance of contacting the school as early as possible on the first day of absence.

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- Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence.
- Ensure regular evaluation of attendance by the Governing Body
- Work towards ensuring all pupils are supported and valued and so want to attend school.
- Proactively manage lateness.
- Encourage parents to contact the school when their child is absent to explain the reason.
- Identify any absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents.
- Develop positive relationships with parents / carers and external agencies working with the family/ pupil.
- Monitor and evaluate the early intervention strategies adopted by the school.
- Where reasonably possible, hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil.
- Regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable.
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners and agencies.
- Make the necessary statutory data returns to the local authority.
- Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence.
- Support the EWS audit when requested.

Schools should identify a designated member of staff for attendance matters, including monitoring registers, liaise with teaching staff, meet with the local authority officer on a regular basis, refer to other appropriate agencies, refer to school nurse in regards to the validity of an illness, oversee the use of standardised letters to parents addressing specific aspects of attendance, arrange for attendance meetings in the case of repeated, unexplained absences, ensure the EWO's role is known and understood in school, and ensure all staff are aware that attendance is the responsibility of all staff.

Schools also have a safeguarding duty, under section 175 Education Act 2002, to investigate any unexplained absences.

\* Schools are required under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The accuracy of the register is important to support any statutory interventions that may be required. It should be noted that it is a legal offence not to maintain accurate registers.

### **Attendance Pathway**

In addressing patterns of poor attendance, schools are responsible for closely following the graduated and escalated response as duly outlined within the Blaenau Gwent 'Attendance Pathway' document. The key elements are noted below:

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- Schools to contact home on the first, second and third morning of absence (when no explanation is received).
- If no contact on the third day of absence then the EWO can do a welfare check providing school have exhausted all avenues.
- Initial attendance concerns, school to send out Letter 1.
- If no improvement, school to send out Letter 2.
- If no improvement, school to arrange AIM 1 (Attendance Improvement Meeting).
- If no improvement, school to arrange AIM 2.

EWO's will support the school with their attendance at AIM's when able to do so. If an attendance matter cannot be resolved by the school and the appropriate steps have been followed, then a referral will be made to Blaenau Gwent Education Welfare Service for further investigation – [EducationWelfareService@Blaenau-Gwent.gov.uk](mailto:EducationWelfareService@Blaenau-Gwent.gov.uk)

### **Local Authority Responsibilities - Education Welfare Service (EWS)**

The role of an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is to address any issues or difficulties that might prevent regular attendance. They will explore the reasons behind school absence, offer information and guidance, undertake planned interventions, advise families about specialist support services and support referrals to appropriate services when required.

The EWS provides support to schools, pupils, and parents to ensure regular attendance and address problems relating to absenteeism. EWO's identify barriers to accessing education and supporting strategies to encourage positive outcomes. If school attendance has not improved following EWO involvement, there is an expectation that legal action will be explored.

There is an expectation that all pupils, regardless of their individual circumstances or needs, can secure their entitlement to high quality learning, teaching and support. Regular attendance is therefore critical if all our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities and support provided. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential to allow children to achieve their full potential during term time at school. Regular attendance also ensures that children are safe and lessens the opportunities to become involved in truanting and associated anti-social activities.

EWS case work is managed via a referral system, with threshold criteria set below 85% - the LA's attendance pathway, FPN Code of Conduct & referral system are updated and shared each term by link EWO's, all of which are informed by up to date WG guidance, research and are available via Hwb / SharePoint links.

EWS encourages collaborative working between schools, agencies, and pupils to support best outcomes. Agencies and support available include: School Nurse, Youth Service, Families First, CAMHS, Pastoral Support Plans (PSP's) and Youth Offending Service

### **Penalty Notices**

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school and alternative provisions is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise the educational opportunities

available to them. In law, an offence occurs if a parent / carer fails to secure their child's regular attendance at school / alternative provision and that absence is not authorised by the school. The Welsh Government (WG) Education (Penalty Notice) (Wales) Regulations 2013 states that Local Authorities (LAs) are required by law to adhere to the Education Act 1996 section 444 to include Penalty Charge Notices as one of the interventions to promote better school attendance.

If a pupil has

- a minimum of 10 sessions (five school days) that have been lost due to unauthorised absences during the current term and this brings the overall pupil's attendance to below 90% in the school year (these absences do not have to be consecutive)
- unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) due to holidays in term-time if the absences take a pupil's overall school attendance to below 90% in the school year to date (these absences do not have to be consecutive), or
- persistent late arrival at school i.e. after the register has closed at least 10 sessions of late arrival (U code) within a term; these do not need to be consecutive but should bring a pupil's overall school attendance to under 90% in the school year to date.
  - A penalty notice is £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice;
  - This rises to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days of receipt;
  - If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 42-days, the local authority must either prosecute for the offence or withdraw the notice.

The prosecution proceedings will be for the offence of failing to secure the child's regular attendance at school and not for non-payment of the penalty fine. The prosecution will be brought under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Withdrawal of the notice can only take place in limited circumstances as set out in the Code of Conduct.

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential to allow children to achieve their full potential during term time at school. Regular attendance also ensures that children are safe and lessens the opportunities to become involved in truanting and associated anti-social activities.

For further information on Penalty Charge Notices please refer to the Code of Conduct.

It is important to note that if there are no valid reasons for non - attendance then there are a range of legal measures that may be implemented by the LA; these can include the issue of FPN's, Education Prosecutions, Education Supervision Orders and School Attendance orders.

The Local Authority can apply for an Education Supervision Order under section 36 Children's Act 1989 if it believes a child of compulsory school age is not being properly educated. This can include irregular attendance at school.

## **Data Analysis**

The school and Local Authority should regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.

The key to this is regular data analysis to both identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.

This can include:

- The monitoring and analysis of weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support.
- Looking further into patterns of attendance within a session to ensure all pupils are attending all timetabled lessons.
- Using this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers or tutors.
- Identifying the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those pupils.
- Conducting thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends.
- Benchmarking attendance data.
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Monitor the data to evaluate the impact of whole school and bespoke attendance efforts.
- Provide data and reports to support the work of the governing body.

## **Reduced hours, flexi-schooling, study leave and blended learning.**

Reduced hours or part-time timetables, as part of a pastoral plan, can help learners reintegrate into a school after a long absence or be a means of preventing greater absence, they have the overall effect of reducing time in school for learners with a possible negative impact on their progress and wellbeing.

Such arrangements should generally be a short-term measure, with the intention of returning to full-time education as soon as feasible. They should never be used as a means of managing behavioural issues. All learners are entitled to a full-time education and access to the curriculum. In addition, schools are required to deliver the curriculum, other than where exceptions apply.

Reduced hours arrangements should be recorded in a plan as a formal arrangement between the parents, the child, and the school, for example as part of a reintegration plan following exclusion (see Exclusions from schools and PRUs section 6.7), or a managed move arrangement (see Effective managed moves - appendices include forms MM1 and MM2), or as part of a Pastoral Support Programme (PSP) or Behaviour Support Plan (BSP).

When considering placing a learner on a reduced timetable, the school should:

- evaluate the support already implemented and have a clear rationale for the proposed arrangements, such as EOTAS or blended learning provision, considering the needs of the learner
- consider the need for any additional interventions such as external behaviour support or family support.

Once it has been agreed a child had a reduced timetable, the school should:

- set out the new arrangements in a written agreement such as a Pastoral Support Plan signed by all parties and supplemented by supporting evidence from professionals such as CAMHS, health consultants or educational psychologist
- provide a detailed written action plan to education, and their parent, or young person with a named person responsible, clear objectives, targets and review dates and a time frame for expected return to full-time education
- liaise throughout with the parents or carers, gain parental approval and written permission,
- liaise throughout with the local authority, and all relevant agencies, and provide them and the EWS with a copy of the Pastoral Support Plan
- risk assess the safeguarding implications of the learner being out of school and arrange that the pupil is sighted virtually by a professional regularly if face to face attendance is not possible
- review the arrangements regularly
- maintain a formal record of all learners on reduced timetables, including the date implemented and review dates.

Where a reduced timetable has been agreed by all parties, the offer of provision may also include distance or blended learning through the school's online platforms to ensure continuity of learning. Schools should not use code B (approved educational activity that counts as present) when a pupil is studying at home as part of an agreed reduced hours or part-time timetable arrangement. When not in school, learners are unsupervised, and the arrangement does not meet the legal definition of approved educational activity. The authorised absence registration code C should be used when a pupil has been placed on an agreed reduced hours, part-time timetable.



## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1 WG Attendance Code Guidance**



attendance code  
guidance.pdf

### **Appendix 2 Blaenau Gwent Attendance Pathway**



EWS Attendance  
Pathway Document 2

### **Appendix 3 Model Attendance Policy**



Model attendance  
policy.doc

### **Appendix 4 Blaenau Gwent Operational Level Agreement**



OLA.doc

### **Appendix 5 School Allocation List**



Schools Served by  
Officers from Septern

### **Appendix 6 Whole School Attendance letter example**



SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE letter 1

### **Appendix 7 First Day Absence Response Guidance**



School First Day Call  
Procedure.docx



Our First Day  
Response Procedure:

### **Appendix 8 Reason for Absence Letter**



Reason for absence  
letter.docx



## **Appendix 9 Holiday Request Form**



APPLICATION FOR ANNUAL HOLIDAY Leave Request for Authorisation



Accepting a Parental Request for Authorisation



Declining a Parental Request for an authorisation



Relevant Consideration.docx

## **Appendix 10 Extended Holidays Form**



Microsoft Word 97 - 2003 Document

## **Appendix 11 Emotionally Based School Avoidance**



Blaenau Gwent Inclusion Service EBS

## **Appendix 12 Reduced Timetables**



Policy on Reduced Timetables.docx

## **Appendix 13 Pregnant School Girls Guidance**



Pregnant school girls Guidance.docx

## **Appendix 14 Policy on Children with a Parent/relative in Prison**



Policy on education of children with a parent in prison

## **Appendix 15 School Attendance Self Evaluation**



SEWC School Attendance Self Evaluation

## **Appendix 16 Register Inspection Template**



register inspections sept 2023.docx

## **Appendix 17 Targeted Support Meeting Template**



Targeted Support  
Meeting for attendar

## **Appendix 18 Traveller Attendance Guidance**



Traveller Attendance  
Guidance.docx

## **Appendix 19 Children Missing from Education Policy**



CME Policy  
September 2023.doc

## **Appendix 20 Education Welfare Service Legal Policy**



Blaenau Gwent  
Education Welfare S

## **Appendix 21 Fixed Penalty Notice Policy**



Blaenau Gwent FPN  
September 2023.doc

## **Appendix 22 Parenting Contracts and Orders**



Parenting contracts  
and parenting orders

## **Appendix 23 Educational Neglect Policy**



Education Neglect  
Policy.docx

## **Appendix 24 BG Protocol for Schools with Lower than Expected Rates of Attendance**



BG Protocol for  
Schools with Lower t

## **Appendix 25 Elective Home Education Policy**



Elective Home  
Education Policy 202

## **Appendix 26 Cross Border Working Protocol**



Cross Border  
Working Protocol SE'

## Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been designed to help support the Council in making informed and effective decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of statutory legislation, such as the Equality Act 2010. It consists of 10 main sections as outlined below:

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

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

- Section 1 - Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Section 2 - Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards
- Section 3 - Socio-economic Duty
- Section 4 - Children’s Rights Approach – The Right Way
- Section 5 - Data
- Section 6 - Consultation
- Section 7 - Decision

Lead Officer	Head of Service	Service Area & Department	Date
Service Manager for Inclusion, <b>Julie Sambrook</b>	Interim Head of Service, Kelly <b>Mackay</b>	School Improvement & Inclusion	September <b>2023</b>

Briefly outline the proposal indicating what change or decision is to be made, also provide any documentation that may be used to support this. **What is the proposal that needs to be assessed?**

**Inclusion Strategy and associated Policies and Guidance including:**

**ALN Policy**

**ALN Early Years Guidance**

**Exclusion Guidance**

**EOTAS Policy**

**EHE Policy**

**The Inclusion Strategy is a reviewed document for 2023/24; this strategy encompasses all policies, guidance and processes within the Inclusion Service Area, which is multi-faceted and wide ranging; a selection of which, as listed above, have been reviewed and updated according to changes in Welsh Government guidance and the continuation of ALN legislation implementation.**

**Section 1 – Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011**

*Briefly outline below if there will be any positive or negative impacts, on any groups of people with protected characteristics, who are covered by the Equality Act 2010, as a result of the proposal being considered.*

Protected characteristics	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.
<b>Age</b> <i>(people of all ages)</i>	Yes	No	All of the policies reviewed are put in to place to ensure positive impact on all of the learners within Blaenau Gwent. The policies are reviewed to ensure that they include and are cognisant of any recent updates/guidance and legislation.
<b>Disability</b> <i>(people with disabilities/ long term conditions)</i>	Yes	No	AS ABOVE
<b>Gender Reassignment</b> <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth)</i>	Yes	No	As above

Protected characteristics	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.
<b>Marriage or Civil Partnership</b> <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	Yes	No	All of the policies reviewed are put in to place to ensure positive impact on all of the learners within Blaenau Gwent. The policies are reviewed to ensure that they include and are cognisant of any recent updates/guidance and legislation.
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b> <i>(women who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave)</i>	Yes	No	All of the policies reviewed are put in to place to ensure positive impact on all of the learners within Blaenau Gwent. The policies are reviewed to ensure that they include and are cognisant of any recent updates/guidance and legislation.
<b>Race</b> <i>(people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and different racial backgrounds)</i>	Yes	No	All of the policies reviewed are put in to place to ensure positive impact on all of the learners within Blaenau Gwent. The policies are reviewed to ensure that they include and are cognisant of any recent updates/guidance and legislation.
<b>Religion or Belief</b> <i>(people with different religions and beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>	Yes	No	All of the policies reviewed are put in to place to ensure positive impact on all of the learners within Blaenau Gwent. The policies are reviewed to ensure that they include and are cognisant of any recent updates/guidance and legislation.

Protected characteristics	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.
<b>Sex</b> <i>(women and men, girls and boys and those who self-identify their gender)</i>	Yes	No	All of the policies reviewed are put in to place to ensure positive impact on all of the learners within Blaenau Gwent. The policies are reviewed to ensure that they include and are cognisant of any recent updates/guidance and legislation.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b> <i>(lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, other)</i>	Yes	No	All of the policies reviewed are put in to place to ensure positive impact on all of the learners within Blaenau Gwent. The policies are reviewed to ensure that they include and are cognisant of any recent updates/guidance and legislation.



## Section 2 - Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards

The Welsh Language Measure 2011 and the [Welsh Language Standards](#) require the Council to have 'due regard' for any positive or negative impacts that proposal may have on opportunities to use the Welsh language.

Requirements	Does the proposal have any positive, negative, or neutral impacts with regards to the below?	What can be done to mitigate any negative impacts?	Please demonstrate any evidence used to form this opinion.
<b>Compliance with the Welsh Language Standards.</b> <i>For example, Standards 88 - 93 – policy development and review of existing policies)</i>	Neutral		All policies are translated in to the Welsh language
<b>What opportunities are there to promote the Welsh Language?</b> <i>For example, status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work / community</i>	No - All policies are now translated in to the Welsh language		
<b>What opportunities are there for a person to use the Welsh Language?</b> <i>For example, staff, residents and visitors</i>	Policies are provided in both English and Welsh Language		
<b>Is the Welsh language being treated no less favourably than the English language?</b>	No		

### Section 3 - Socio-economic Duty (Strategic Decisions Only – Please refer to our Corporate Reporting Guidance)

Welsh Government's [Socio-economic Duty](#) provides a framework to ensure tackling inequality of outcome is at the forefront of decision making.

#### Please consider how your proposal could affect the following groups:

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

Socio Economic Disadvantages	Will the proposal have a positive, negative, or neutral impact?	How could you mitigate the negative impacts outlined?	Please highlight any evidence that has been considered (quantitative or qualitative)
<p><b>Low Income / Income Poverty</b> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i></p>	<p><b>Positive</b></p>		<p>All of the policies reviewed are put in to place to ensure positive impact on all of the learners within Blaenau Gwent. The policies are reviewed to ensure that they include and are cognisant of any recent updates/guidance and legislation.</p>
<p><b>Low and/or No Wealth</b> <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i></p>	<p><b>Positive</b></p>		
<p><b>Material Deprivation</b> <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e., financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i></p>	<p><b>Positive</b></p>		
<p><b>Area Deprivation</b>  <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport) Impact on the environment?)</i></p>	<p><b>Positive</b></p>		

<b>Socio-economic Background</b> <i>(social class i.e., parents' education, employment and income)</i>	Positive		
<b>Socio-economic Disadvantage</b> <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i>	Positive		

**Section 4 – Children’s Rights Approach - [The Right Way](#)**

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

<b>Protected characteristics</b>	<b>Will the proposal have any positive impacts on</b>	<b>Will the proposal have any negative impacts on the Children’s Rights Approach?</b>	<b>Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.</b>
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	the Children's Rights Approach?		
<b>Participation</b> (child or young person as someone who actively contributes to society as a citizen)	Yes	No	Person Centred approaches
<b>Provision</b> (the basic rights of children and young people to survive and develop)	Yes	No	All of the policies reviewed are put in to place to ensure positive impact on all of the learners within Blaenau Gwent. The policies are reviewed to ensure that they include and are cognisant of any recent updates/guidance and legislation.
<b>Protection</b> (children and young people are protected against exploitation, abuse or discrimination)	Yes	No	All of the policies reviewed are put in to place to ensure positive impact on all of the learners within Blaenau Gwent. The policies are reviewed to ensure that they include and are cognisant of any recent updates/guidance and legislation. Including safeguarding.

**Section 5 - Data**

*Please outline any data or evidence that has been used to develop the proposal. For example, this can be previous consultations, national/regional/local data, pilot projects, reports, feedback from clients etc.*

What data/evidence was used? - provide any links.	What were the key findings?	How has the data/evidence informed this proposal?
<p><b>Inclusion and Pupil Support WG 2016</b>  <a href="https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-05/guidance-inclusion-and-pupil-support_0.pdf">https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-05/guidance-inclusion-and-pupil-support_0.pdf</a></p>	<p>1.1.2 Effective inclusive schools and local authorities have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coherent plans for the development of inclusion linked to school improvement strategies</li> <li>• key personnel to drive forward inclusion and school improvement</li> <li>• a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils, as well as access to and recognition of extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• high expectations and targets for inclusion</li> <li>• strategies to address the training and development needs of staff and governors</li> <li>• clear strategies to listen to the views of children and young people in order to best meet their needs</li> <li>• proactive joint-working practices which involve parents/carers and partner agencies.</li> </ul>	<p>Inclusion Strategy and associated listed policies, guidance and processes were developed using National Legislative Policy &amp; Guidance in a Blaenau Gwent context. This has now been reviewed to ensure that BG Strategy still aligns.</p>

**ALNET 2018**

**Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners WG 2020**

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/guidance-supporting-vulnerable-disadvantaged-learners.pdf>

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/exclusion-from-schools-pupil-referral-units.pdf>

Legislative background for vulnerable learners. Preparing an approach from September 2020 on the back on COVID pandemic lockdown. Preparing for another lockdown and the use of blended learning.

Under section 52(4) of the Education Act 2002, headteachers, teachers in charge of a PRU, governing bodies, LAs and independent appeal panels must by law have regard to this guidance when making decisions on exclusion and administering the exclusion procedures and appeals. There is a strong expectation that the guidance will be followed unless there is good reason to depart from it. The guidance is not exhaustive and judgements will need to take account of the circumstances of individual cases. These procedures apply to all maintained schools, including nursery

<p><a href="https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-06/consultation-document-belonging-engaging-and-participating-guidance_0.pdf">https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-06/consultation-document-belonging-engaging-and-participating-guidance_0.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-05/elective-home-education-guidance-may-2023.pdf">https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-05/elective-home-education-guidance-may-2023.pdf</a></p>	<p>schools and PRUs, and all learners in them, including any who are below or above compulsory school age.</p> <p>Updates to attendance guidance</p> <p>Updates to EHE guidance regarding 'suitable education'</p>	
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<b>Are there any data or information gaps and if so what are they and how do you intend to address them?</b>		
N/A		

N/A

## **Section 6 - Consultation.**

*Using the questions below please provide details of any planned consultations or consultations that have been undertaken to support the proposal, referring to the Gunning Principles as appropriate:*

Principle 1: Consultation must take place when the proposals are still at a formative stage. You must not have already made up your mind.

Principle 2: Sufficient reasons must be put forward to allow for intelligent consideration and response. Have people been given the information and opportunity to influence?

Principle 3: Adequate time must be given for consideration and response. Is the consultation long enough bearing in mind the circumstances?

Principle 4: The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when finalising the decision

**Please consider the following questions:**

1. Who did you consult?

Liaised with officers within School Improvement and Inclusion Team from Education Directorate and colleagues from the Social Services Directorate, Early Years.

DMT/CLT

2. When did the consultation take place and was adequate time given for a response?

Summer 2023

3. Was there enough information provided to respond effectively?

Yes

4. What were the findings?

Strategy and associated policies and guidance required reviewing and updating to reflect new WG guidance.

5. Have the findings been considered with regards to the decision?

Yes

## Section 7 - Decision

*Using the information you have gathered from sections 1-9 please state in the table below whether you are able to proceed with the proposal.*

Continue with the proposal in its current form	<b>Yes</b>
Continue with proposal but take into account reasonable steps to mitigate any negative impacts of the proposal	<b>N/A</b>

Please contact Policy & Partnerships should you require any further advice or guidance on completing your assessment via [lissa.friel@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:lissa.friel@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

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# Agenda Item 10

*Cabinet 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: **19<sup>th</sup> September 2023**  
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023**  
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**  
**Cllr Haydn Trollope, Cabinet Member People and Social Services**  
Report Submitted by: **Scrutiny and Democratic Officer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
x	x				19.09.23			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
  - 1.1 To present to Members the People Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 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 July 2023, 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 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023, 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 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023, as presented.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023

## People Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

Dates	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Cabinet / Council
<b>Meeting: 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023</b>  Deadline: 24 <sup>th</sup> October 2023	Self-evaluation (SE)	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> To ensure that Members contribute to the development of the self-evaluation report.	Lynn Phillips	Cabinet
	Improving Schools Programme	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> To provide Members with an update on any inspection report findings (when available) and progress within schools that are causing concern or subject to Council intervention.	Luisa Munro-Morris	Cabinet
	Children's Residential Provision in Blaenau Gwent	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> To receive progress on the establishment of the Local Authority Children's Residential provision in Blaenau Gwent.	Tanya Evans	Cabinet
	Progress Against Estyn Recommendations	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> Members to receive progress on the Estyn Recommendations	Luisa Munro-Morris	Cabinet

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