

Committee: **Cabinet**
 Date of meeting: **4th December 2024**
 Report Subject: **Review of Inclusion Policies**
 Portfolio Holder: **Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**
 Report Submitted by: **Luisa Munro-Morris, Corporate Director of Education**
Julie Sambrook, Service Manager for Inclusion

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
✓ 21.10.24	✓ 24.10.24	14.11.24			✓ 12.11.24	✓ 4.12.24		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet members with an opportunity to consider the revised policies and practice from the Inclusion service area. Policies have been updated to reflect changes and amendments in Welsh Government Guidance and ALN Legislation (2018/2021). The revision of the policies ensures that Blaenau Gwent Local Authority is in alignment with the changes.
- 1.2 The policies will be taken through the democratic governance process for consideration by members, prior to re issuing to Governing Bodies for adoption by schools.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Education Directorate’s vision is to empower our communities to be ambitious, ethically informed lifelong learners who lead full and healthy lives. The policies underpin how the Local Authority, along with our schools, will support our learners across Blaenau Gwent in line with our vision for outcomes. Ensuring that we are supporting our vulnerable learners and those who present with ALN is fundamental to improving the life chances of all our children and young people.
- 2.2 The attached policies, which have been reviewed, are in line with published Welsh Government Guidance, the Additional Learning Needs (ALNET 2018) Legislation and Additional Learning Needs Code of Practice (2021) and align with Blaenau Gwent processes for Vulnerable Learners and those who present with Additional Learning Needs. We are now in the final academic year of ALN reform and have been managing the SEN and ALN systems in parallel since 2021.
- 2.3 Inclusion Officers have reviewed and updated several policies in the service area. This is to ensure that our Blaenau Gwent policies reflect changes within Welsh Government Guidance, the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act and ALN Code of Practice, and changes in our protocols/systems and processes within the LA. Updates also ensure that Blaenau Gwent is aligned with other LAs in and outside of the SEWC region.

Policies reviewed and subsequently revised (attached in appendices: 9):

EOTAS – to reflect the ALN Legalities of learners accessing the Ty Afon provision (requirement of an IDP (Individual Development Plan) as criteria for entry).

Managed Move – now includes the Vulnerable Learner Panel (VLP) referral form.

Community Tuition – removal of Ty Afon as a provision and to provide guidance on what is required as submission to the VLP.

Reduced Timetable – now includes the new PSP (Pastoral Support Plan) from Welsh Government and guidance for schools on gaining consent from the LA prior to agreeing reduction in timetables.

Pregnant Schoolgirl – Removal of Ty Afon as a provision.

Out of Chronological age group – reviewed in line with updates to current legislation.

FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice) – rebrand of the ‘advisory notice’ to ‘notice to improve’ and inclusion of guidance to schools for requesting FPN.

EHE (Elective Home Education) – now includes the newly established EHE panel.

ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) - services on the checklist updated.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The People Scrutiny Committee recommended Option 1, at its meeting on 12th November 2024.

3.2 This report provides members with important policy review and renewal information and demonstrates how the Local Authority is aligned with Welsh Government Guidance in the areas outlined.

3.3 **Option 1:**

To consider and accept the report and revised policy documentation as presented; or,

Option 2:

To offer appropriate suggestions and / or recommendations for the revised policies

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

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

4..2 **Statutory Responsibility**

The statutory requirements of the ALNET Act and ALN Code will be fulfilled, and Welsh Government guidance adhered to.

4.3 **Corporate Plan and Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan**

The policies play a key role in delivering the education aim in the Corporate Plan; 'Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent' and the Education Directorate vision 'Empowering our communities to be ambitious, ethically informed, life-long learners who lead full and healthy lives'.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

If the LA does not align with legislation (ALN), there is a risk of tribunal cases being brought to the attention of the organisation, which would incur a financial implication.

5.2 ***Risks including Mitigating Actions***

Should the newly reviewed policies not be considered, accepted and adopted by Blaenau Gwent (LA and schools) then there is a risk that the Authority will not be following Welsh Government guidance and will be at risk of non-compliance with legislation.

5.3 ***Legal***

As above

5.5 ***Human Resources***

N/A

5.6 ***Health and Safety***

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 The Inclusion Service uses an array of performance information and data to inform provision. This will be complemented through the GL Assessment work to secure a bespoke package of assessment tools that will assist schools in the early identification of potential children with additional learning needs. The range of diagnostic assessments available will allow schools to identify individual potential learning needs, and to implement early intervention and support for those learners.

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

6.2.1 High quality education is a fundamental pre-requisite of ensuring future local and national prosperity through the provision of an informed and well-educated workforce and society. The Local Authority's role is to ensure that our children and young people are given the appropriate options and support for education, in order to promote a well-educated and informed society.

Learners with additional learning needs are provided with high quality provision and placed appropriately, in order that they can reach potential, and those learners who are vulnerable but not identified as having an ALN are supported appropriately.

- 6.2.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
The policies have been developed within Local Authority teams with officers, in consultation with stakeholders who sit on VLP (Vulnerable Learner Panel) and with legal advice.
- 6.3 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
Since January 2022, the ALNET Act and ALN Code has been statutory. There has been a period of transformation between SEN Legislation and ALN Legislation with ALN full implementation to be complete August 2025.
- 6.4 ***Preventative focus***
A key element of the Council's work is to provide support and guidance to schools and settings and to ensure appropriate support and interventions are in place for children and young people.
- 6.5 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
Working in partnership with our schools and settings in a key priority within the inclusion service area. Inclusion (including School Improvement and ALN) also collaborates with all SEWC LA to align processes as far as possible, giving consideration and refining to our own LA demographics.
- 6.6 ***Integration (across service areas)***
Ensuring that schools deliver high quality education provision to secure high pupil outcomes relate to the Local Authorities high-level outcomes within the Corporate Improvement Plan that children's and young people's learning and achievement is maximised. These overarching outcomes and objectives involve the work of a range of Council departments and partners. Effective monitoring, evaluation and intervention are fundamental to the Council's wellbeing objectives.
- 6.7 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***
No specific impact related to this report.
- 6.8 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***
See attached (8)
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 As part of existing review of policy cycle within the Inclusion Service Area. Policies will also allow officers to hold schools to account.

Background Documents

Appendix 1 - EOTAS

Appendix 2 - Managed Move

Appendix 3 - Community Tuition

Appendix 4 - Reduced Timetable

Appendix 5 - Pregnant Schoolgirl

Appendix 6 - Out of Chronological age group

Appendix 7 - FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice)

Appendix 8 - EHE (Elective Home Education)

Appendix 9 - ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour)

Appendix 10 – Integrated Impact Assessment