



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C.Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: Sarah Daniel - Principal Democratic Services Officer (07385 086 169)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a meeting of **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held at the **Virtual** on **WEDNESDAY, 16TH FEBRUARY, 2022** at **5.00 PM**.

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Monday, 14 February 2022 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

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No's**

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 8 December 2021

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3. CONSULTATION LINKS

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

4. INFORMATION REPORTS

The following reports are provided for the information of Members:

[Breakfast Clubs](#)

[Seren](#)

[FPN Working Group report](#)

(For Members to acknowledge the information contained within this/these report(s) but any queries relating to the item can be directed to Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

5. CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SUPPORT

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6. SCHOOL BASED COUNSELLING

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REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

7. STATUTORY PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

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8. CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER PREVENTION STRATEGY

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9. CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

To reflect on the meeting and actions to be taken forward.

10. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
(County Borough Councillor S. Rees-Owen and County Borough
Councillor J Edwards respectively)

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor J Brencher, Councillor J Barton, Councillor A Calvert, Councillor S Evans,
Councillor A Fox, Councillor E Griffiths, Councillor S Morgans, Councillor S Powell,
Councillor M Powell, Councillor G Stacey, Councillor S Trask and
Councillor D Williams

Co-Opted Members:-

Mr M Cleverley
Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Ms A Jones, Representing UNITE
Mr C Jones, Representing GMB
Mrs C Jones, Representing the National Union of Teachers and Teachers' Panel
Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr D Price, Representing UNISON
Mr A Rickett, Voting Diocesan Authorities' Representative

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held
on Wednesday, 8 December 2021 at 5.00 pm

County Borough Councillors - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor J Edwards	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor A Calvert	Councillor S Evans
Councillor E Griffiths	Councillor S Morgans
Councillor S Trask	Councillor D Williams

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr J Fish

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Mr P Mee, Group Director Community & Children's Services
Ms A Lloyd, Service Director, Children's Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Mrs Sarah Daniel – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Andrea Richards - Service Director 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Denise Humphries - Senior 21st Century Schools Project Manager
Zoe Lancelot - Head Of Community Wellbeing and Resilience
Mandy Perry - Programme Alignment Manager

Apologies

Cllr G Stacey

1 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Code of Conduct the following declarations of Interest were received

Cllr Sam Trask - Personal Interest in item 6 as Governor of Maes Y Bryn Primary School Item 6 School Modernisation

Cllr Eleri Griffiths – Personal Interest in Item 5 as a trustee of Cylch Meithrin Evan James and family in receipt of Language support in item 8

Mr Jeff Fish Personal Interest in item 6 as Chair of Governors at Maes Y Bryn

and a Governor at Bryn Celynnog

Cllr D Williams Personal Interest Item 6 as a temporary school governor

2 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 13 October 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting with the inclusion of apologies being recorded for Cllr S Evans

3 Consultation Links

The Scrutiny Officer advised of the open Consultations available to members to contribute to should they wish

4 Termly School COVID-19 Update

The Director Education and Inclusion presented the [report](#) to members that provided information on the most recent changes in Education during the autumn term in response to the changing COVID-19 position.

The report provided information on the actions taken by the Council as a result of announcements made by the First Minister and the Minister for Education and Welsh Language and the associated amended Welsh Government guidance and framework for schools issued in readiness for the return to school in September.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update and asked if there were plans to close schools early for the Christmas period

The Director replied there were no current plans to close schools early and will close on the Friday 17th as planned. She added that last year schools closed early but that is not the case this year unless advised otherwise by Welsh Government

A Member asked if they could be provided with data in relation to staffing for teaching and non-teaching. She asked what is Welsh Government's plan to address the chronic staffing issues currently facing schools

The Director replied that the data provided to members in the report is extracted from SIMS data. She added that they can build a profile using data from Test, Trace and Protect who submit reports to the Authority. She added that the data therefore was not always accurate as the picture was ever changing. The Director also informed members that Covid case rates were not a direct cause for the staffing issues being encountered and these related to a combination of factors including staff being able to secure childcare for their own families. She added that this is a problem across Wales, not just within RCT. Welsh Government are monitoring this closely and she reassured members that RCT has not had to close schools as yet, due to staffing issues.

A Member stated that she did have concerns that the TTP did not work as well as planned and this could impact on the data received. She was also concerned that there was a lack of availability of education that was offered during school closures and many children are slipping behind as a result of the

pandemic. She asked if there is there a plan for them to be reaching their attainment and to catch up

The Director explained that the Director Public Health attends regular meetings regarding the pressures of the TTP. She added that schools are issuing letters to warn and inform parents where there is a positive case of Covid and the letter gives clear advice and guidance to parents. She added that the Education department are working closely with health board colleagues to identify pupils that need to self-isolate. She confirmed that the advice is clear and guidance is issued for each circumstance. She did however reassure members that for each case, it is a requirement that work should be sent home to pupils and if members were aware of a situation where this was not the case then they could raise this with her.

A member asked how schools cover absences for teachers where they are away from the classroom for their professional development.

The Director replied that many schools have a supply of teachers who are familiar with the school and pupils and they will be utilised to cover classes. She added some schools have greater flexibility than others due to RRRS funding. She added that school leaders are always mindful what courses they send their staff on as they are stretched but reassured that they want to achieve a balance so their staff continue in their professional learning and development.

A Member asked how closely the authority are monitoring remote learning. She asked if new advice, in line with guidelines will also be issued to schools and parents ahead of the new term as there did seem to be some confusion around self-isolation requirements.

The Director advised that there had been intensive work had been undertaken with regards to remote learning with parents and schools being surveyed. Discussions had been held about a hybrid/ blended approach to delivering live lessons. She added that the situation was not straight forward as live lessons could not be delivered remotely as teachers were now back in the classroom. The Director added that guidance is updated and shared with schools and parents in line with Government guidance changes.

A Member was concerned that a number of pupils had left welsh medium education during the pandemic as they were not receiving enough support during the lockdown periods.

A Member asked how the home learning provision is reviewed and stated it is important to ensure to include those children that have high absences for a variety of reasons and to ensure these are picked up by Wellbeing teams as pupils will be off for a variety of reasons and not just Covid related absences.

The Director reassured that there is lots of work from the absence teams being carried out and pupils who are away from school for long periods of time are monitored as to the reasons for the prolonged absence. If it's long term then there is an expectation that schools will send work home for individual pupils.

RESOLVED: 1. Members noted the report

2. Members asked to receive an update on the Welsh Medium Schools in the new municipal year.

5 Draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan - Pre Scrutiny

The Director Education and Inclusion presented the [report](#) to members to provide them with an overview of the Council's Draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) following the recent public consultation. The outcome of this consultation and the proposed WESP will be presented to the Cabinet meeting on the 13th December 2021

The Chair thanked officers for the comprehensive report and commented that there were aspirational targets to achieve which will require a joined up approach to ensure they are achieved.

A Member referred to comments from the Welsh Language Commissioner regarding the promotion of a 5 year strategy to promote the Welsh Language and asked for clarification on this.

The Director of Education and Inclusion clarified that he was asking for an alignment between the WESP and the Authorities Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. The Chair commented that Scrutiny would also like to see this alignment and as the document is a 10 year strategy that annual reporting is provided to Scrutiny.

A Member asked for comment on the percentage of responses received that indicated that provision of Welsh Medium Education should be local to them.

The Director Education and Inclusion replied that they ensure provision is mapped and planned throughout the County Borough to meet demand whilst considering the uptake and also surplus places in neighbouring schools

A Member asked about additional provision for children with additional needs and stated it would be useful to see the data associated with this to understand the requirements. She commented that some baseline data would be useful to populate this document and for annual reporting so members can see what the planned growth is. The Director Education and Inclusion replied that this data can be included within the annual delivery plan reporting and they would also look to include a data pack

RESOLVED: Members recommended that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee receive an annual report on the WESP

6 School Modernisation - Band B Programme

The Service Director 21st Century Schools And Transformation presented the [report](#) to members to provide an update on the Council's revised 21st Century Schools Strategic Outline Programme (SOP), recently approved in principle by the Welsh Government.

Members were updated on the investment secured through the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme to improve the quality of the education provision and learning environments for all learners throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.

A Member asked how secure the finance was under the new MIM model.

The Service Director responded that MIM is a revenue funding stream with

£20bn funding secured. She added she was not concerned about securing the funding and they were on good track with a number of business cases going forward.

A Member asked what criteria is used for a school to be determined of urgent need of replacement as some that she had considered to be in urgent need, particularly Pontygwaith were not on the list in the report. She urged that this be reconsidered should funding become available

The Service Director replied that Welsh Government had provided CO2 monitors to schools to monitor air quality and ventilation. She added that some Victorian schools were better than others as they had big open rooms and high ceilings. She added that funding is continually reviewed in line with the Funding coming forward, we do need to look at service asset management plan and build it in to the future.

A Member asked how the Authority are ensuring we can facilitate remote hybrid learning as this situation was here to stay and we need to ensure we have the technology and infrastructure in place to facilitate the requirement.

The Service Director acknowledged this this has been a challenge. She confirmed that they have improved internet broadband in schools with additional boosters and as part of the Councils Capital Programme they had been investing in classroom upgrades.

A member referred to the Community facilities within schools and asked how the Authority measures the requirement for the facilities and how they are staffed and accessed.

The Service Director replied that work has been undertaken over the last few years to provide 4g pitches for pupils with use being made available in the evening for the community to use. She added that they work closely with leisure colleagues to ensure the facilities are managed efficiently.

RESOLVED: Members noted the contents of the report

7 Draft Strategic Education Plan for 2021 - 2024

The Director Education and Inclusion presented the [report](#) to members to provide them with an overview of the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan for 2021- 2024. Members heard that the plan has been the focus of a consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and the outcome of the consultation, and the revised plan will be presented to the Cabinet meeting on the 13th of December 2021.

A Member referred to the 130 Children and Young People that took part in a number of engagement sessions across various school settings and asked if there was opportunity for officers to speak to other Children and Young People who may not be in full time education to ensure their voices are also heard.

The Director Education and Inclusion acknowledged that more was needed to improve the aspect of the learner voice and they are aware they need to ensure they reach out more directly to them. She reassured members that there would be a much stronger focus on this going forward to ensure full representation is captured.

A Member supported the comment from the Director and suggested they could reach out to the Governing bodies to support in the engagement of all pupils as he felt they were key in the delivery of this plan.

A Member commented that it would be good to understand more about the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young People and in particular how they feel about the pandemic and how this has affected them. She added that it would be useful to see the data on Learner Evaluation included in the strategy.

The Director of Education and Inclusion replied that this can be included in section 10 of the strategy. This will include stakeholder feedback so success can be clearly demonstrated.

Another member also commented that the voice of the Learner was important and asked if this could be incorporated into everyday learning, perhaps built into the curriculum or through school council channels rather than selecting specific schools to take part in stakeholder feedback. She added that an information session for Governors on the Strategy would also be beneficial so they are aware of their role in driving the strategy forward

The Director Education and Inclusion responded that they were keen to engage with more schools and also do this on a face to face basis going forward, rather than virtually and have those discussions with Children and Young People in person. She added that they would also take back the comments regarding the engagement with the Governing Body as they were keen to utilise those vital skills and resources that they provide.

A member asked if Trade Unions were also involved in the process as she was aware that often information was not always passed down from Senior Leadership Teams to all teachers and staff and some did not have access to consultation documents.

The Director responded that timescales were difficult however, Trade Unions, parents and PTAs were involved in the consultation process and going forward she would ensure that Governing Bodies, Trade Unions parents and PTA had access to the information to allow them to contribute.

RESOLVED: Following Members consideration of the feedback obtained from the stakeholder consultation in respect of the Education and inclusion Services Draft Strategic Education Plan for 2021-2024, the Scrutiny Committee provided feedback and noted the report

8 Early Years Transformation Programme

Head Of Community Wellbeing And Resilience presented the [report](#) to members to brief them on the progress made across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region towards the delivery of an integrated early years system as part of the Welsh Government's Early Years Transformation Programme and the transformation of Early Years services in RCT.

A Member thanked officers for the report and stated the progress is a huge testament to the teams involved. He asked about the sustainability for further funding and what rationale is in place to award cases with limited finances.

The Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience advised that funding is on an annual basis. She added that they were also in receipt of child development funding from Welsh Government with a possibility of other funding in the future. She reassured that they have been listened to and there will be longer term funding allocation in 12 months.

A Member asked if the Committee can do anything more to raise this with Welsh Government officers as 1 in 4 in receipt of Free School Meals was a huge amount of vulnerable children.

The Chair asked that members put their concerns in an email to her and she will raise this directly with the Cabinet Member.

The Group Director Community and Children's Services asked that members do not lose sight of the progress being made. He added that they will pilot a different approach to move to a more needs based assessment. He understood member's frustrations but reassured there is a willingness of change of pace and the Cabinet member is supportive of this. He also reassured that they were making regular representations to Welsh Government.

RESOLVED: Members to contact the Chair to make representations to the Cabinet Member

9 Regional Adoption Collaboration Annual Report for Scrutiny Committees

The Regional Adoption Manager presented the report to Members to provide the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee with an update against progress of the Regional Adoption Collaborative. The report is required to be brought before Scrutiny as part of the governance arrangements outlined in Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and section 15(c) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Regulations) (Wales) Directions 2015.

The Service Director Children's Services added that that it was pleasing to see some of the highlights reflected in the report on the past year, including the number of referrals being picked up and the report provided assurances around delays. The Director also commented on some of the challenges around post adoption support and ensuring access to the right support is available to families. Another challenge she added has been around difficulties attracting experienced qualified social workers, which has now been given additional resources.

A Member queried the post adoptive services and asked if there was an increase in demand from the lockdown period as children were spending a lot of time from home and away from their usual education settings.

The Regional Adoption Manager replied that the pandemic and subsequent lockdown is a feature, but the referrals have continued beyond the lockdown so this is only part of the picture as the children being supported have a range of complex needs and its within their right to come back and seek support.

A Member commented that as he has a background in family law as a magistrate he sees a lot of the reasons for adoptions and this report warms the heart. He was particularly impressed at the aspirations for zero placements which he thought spoke volumes of the excellent work of the adoption teams.

A Member asked if there is there any way we can support families to faster access to education psychologists to support in transition process too

The Regional Adoption Manager replied that as part of the assessment that is undertaken they do liaise with schools as part of the assessment, as do Adoption UK. Education workers are also aware of the huge issue of raising awareness in school settings ad they are working collaboratively to support pupils in the transition process.

RESOLVED: 1. To note the contents of the report
2. Agreed to receive an Annual Update

10 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked all members and officers for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

11 Urgent Business

The Chair announced that Rachel Nicholls, Co-opted Member had stood down from her role and thanked her for her attendance and contributions at previous meetings and wished her well for the future.

**CLLR S REES-OWEN
CHAIR.**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/2022

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16TH FEBRUARY 2022

**REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM
IN THE REGION AND RHONDDA CYNON TAF LOCAL AUTHORITY
DURING APRIL 2020 – SEPTEMBER 2021**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author(s): Andy Hurley & Steve Davies (Principal Improvement Partners)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the work of the Central South Consortium (CSC) and to update Members with the contribution of the CSC, working in partnerships with the local authority to raising standards in schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters considered within the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To offer members the opportunity to scrutinise the work of CSC.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Since 2012, the CSC has delivered aspects of school improvement services on behalf of the five authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon

Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. This covers 380¹ schools, around 32% of Wales' children. It is a growing region with rapidly changing demographic encompassing increasingly diverse communities across the economic sub region. It remains the region with the highest number of children living in poverty, with around one in five children claiming free school meals.

- 4.2 The service delivers challenge and support on behalf of the five local authorities, governed through a Joint Committee of Cabinet Members from each authority. The Joint Committee meets regularly and formally approves the annual business plan and budget for the service, holding the service to account in terms of performance and budgetary control.
- 4.3 This report details the work of the consortium for the academic year September 2020/2021 and the financial year April 2020 to April 2021. The global pandemic caused schools to be repurposed in March 2020 requiring CSC to amend our approach to supporting schools.
- 4.4 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, WG has cancelled most of the statutory data collections for both 2020 and also for 2021. The collections suspended include:
- Attendance: Primary 2020 and 2021 data collections
 - Attendance: Secondary 2020 and 2021 data collections
 - National Data Collections (NDC) 2020 and 2021 data collections.
- 4.5 The Minister for Education also confirmed on 21st June 2021² that WG would not be publishing performance measures related to the 2021 summer examinations series, which covers all school and post-16 performance measures for the 2020-21 academic year. In addition, given the clear implications that there will be ongoing disruptions for qualifications awarded next year, WG have suspended Key Stage 4 and legacy sixth form performance measures for 2021-22 academic year also. Therefore, there are no performance measures available for Key Stage 4 or post-16 for summer 2020 and 2021 results, and these will also not be available for results published for summer 2022.
- 4.6 The publication of performance data on My Local School is also suspended, with the publication of the national categorisation³ also being suspended for 2021-22 due to the processes not being held for the academic years 2020-21 and 2021-22. This report does not contain any information for the National Categorisation as this was included in the report published last year.
- 4.7 All Estyn inspections were suspended in March 2020⁴; therefore, no analysis is included in this report as no inspections took place between September 2020 and July 2021. However, the report will reflect on Estyn follow up visits undertaken with RCT schools.

¹ Source: *School census results: as at January 2019*

² <https://gov.wales/written-statement-school-information-improvement-and-inspection-arrangements-supporting-renewal-and>

³ <https://gov.wales/school-categorisations-be-suspended-next-year>

⁴ <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/news/estyn-will-not-inspect-maintained-schools-next-academic-year-statement-meilyr-rowlands-hmci>

5. UPDATE/CURRENT POSITION

CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM BUSINESS PLAN 2020/2021

- 5.1 The consortium business plan for April 2020 to March 2021 can be found [here](#). It has five priorities:
- Develop a high quality education profession;
 - Develop highly effective leadership to facilitate working collaboratively to raise standards;
 - Develop strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and wellbeing;
 - Continue to develop robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system;
 - Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of CSC.
- 5.2 The business plan sets out how we aim to deliver these priorities through effective school self-evaluation and improvement planning, underpinned by building capacity in schools to support other schools through the continued development of the 'Central South Wales Challenge'. This is led by schools and has involved the continued development of evidence-based strategies (school improvement groups - SIGs), school improvement hubs and peer engagement models in which schools can be resourced to work together to share practice across the region.
- 5.3 Drive Teams made up from senior leaders from across the consortium ensure that the operational plans for each priority are implemented and that impact is measured. Half-termly reviews, including an impact review with the managing director at the end of each term, ensures that monitoring is robust. Outcomes of this process are reported to Joint Committee found [here](#).
- 5.4 In addition to this LA focused report, CSC has produced a report focusing on the effectiveness and efficiency of its work as a regional organisation. A copy of this report can be found [here](#).

6. COMPARATIVE DATA

6.1 **Extract from minister's statement 21st June 2021:**

"In July 2020, given the implications of ongoing disruption to schools and post-16 providers for qualifications awarded in 2021, the Welsh Government announced that the suspension of performance measures would continue for 2020/21. We find ourselves in a similar situation as we near the end of the current academic year. I, therefore, want to provide early clarity again, by confirming that the suspension of Key Stage 4 and legacy sixth form performance measures will be extended to the 2021/22 academic year. Qualification awards data will not be used to report on attainment outcomes at a school, local authority or regional consortium level and must not be used to hold schools to account for their learners' outcomes.

In the post-16 sector, the range of providers (sixth forms, FE institutions, work-based learning and adult learning) and different types of programmes are affected in different ways. Some outcomes in 2021/22 will reflect a two-year programme for learners, while others are covering a single year of study. We will, therefore, consider the best approach to post-16 performance measures for 2021/22. The sector will be consulted, before any firm decision is taken, in order to consider what would be useful to help their own monitoring and quality assurance processes.”

6.2 **CSC’s Position**

It is important to note and understand that following Welsh Government’s (WG) suspension of statutory data collections and publication of outcomes for 2019/2020 and 2020/21 there will be a reduction in analysis available within CSC. However, schools will have their own internal systems for tracking and analysing pupil performance/outcomes. These form a key focus of discussions with school leaders to enable appropriate support and challenge by CSC to secure school improvement and partnership working in 2021/22.

6.3 **Enable and support schools to access appropriate support to respond to the changing accountability measures**

- The Welsh Government published consultation on the draft guidance for school improvement: framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability in January 2021. The consultation closed on 15th March 2021, with intended implementation in September 2021. The reporting requirements expected for 2019/20 were not available due to the cancellation of National Data Collections by the WG for summer 2020 and the corresponding removal of the publication of these indicators and other performance measures for data for reporting.
- CSC continued to “assess schools’ application” of the online test in line with the Welsh Government guidance for schools and local authorities to “make best effort” in moderation. However, at this period, under the current restrictions, the long-term requirement remains unclear.

7. **CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT**

The Intervention Strategy for Schools Causing Concern has been reviewed, agreed with all directors and shared with schools. This has led to clear processes for intervention being understood and utilised by the local authorities forms the basis of enhanced support work for all settings in the region. The LA Performance Report has been remodelled to provide greater detail regarding schools causing concern.

7.1 National categorisation was suspended from September 2020 and a new evolving model for improvement partner deployment was consulted on in the summer term 2020 and implemented from September 2020. To reflect the changing approach, challenge advisors were renamed IPs. (See Appendix 1 – Improvement & Accountability.)

7.2 In 2020/2021, local authority contributed £982,311 towards the core functions of the consortium. In addition to the core costs of the consortium this has

provided funding for 17 IPs (7.62 FTE), support from two accelerated progress leads and Principal Improvement Partners (PIPs) (2 FTE).

- 7.3 Elected Members will be aware that we used a categorisation process to identify the schools in need of support using both data and judgement of leadership and capacity to improve. During 2020/2021, the consortium continued to work closely on behalf of the local authority to monitor the progress of the schools in need. Of the 115 schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf, 16 schools required enhanced level support (see Appendix 1 Improvement and Accountability – section marked Allocating Support) and 99 schools required core level of support (see table in 7.10 for list of schools).
- 7.4 IPs continue to have a relevant educational background and level of experience and provide good quality support and challenge to schools. They have continued to work well and in partnership with the local authority to provide effective monitoring, challenge, support and intervention where needed. Improvement partners have continued to commission bespoke support and intervention from the wider support teams within the CSC.
- 7.5 Support for schools is prioritised following a strategic analysis of regional needs. This is reviewed on a termly basis as information and priorities emerge. Schools receive intensive support for core subjects as agreed with the school's IP and progress is fed back to school through a strategic evaluation for improvement statement and to the local authority director in the termly performance report.
- 7.6 The regional professional learning (PL) offer provided opportunities for leaders and practitioners to develop curriculum, pedagogy and professional pathways in support of identified school improvement priorities. Live and on-demand PL opportunities were available for schools as appropriate, throughout the pandemic. Lead practitioner networks provided opportunities for schools to collaborate on joint practice development and share effective strategies and resources. 999 practitioners from across 115 RCT schools accessed regional PL opportunities. Details of these opportunities are exemplified throughout sections 8-11, see especially tables in 9.23, 9.33 and 10.8).
- 7.7 All schools have a bespoke package if needed which is identified on the school development plan. Key improvement objectives are identified, and regular school improvement forums held for all enhanced schools to judge the impact of the support in enabling the school to meet its objectives. A judgement is made on the extent of the progress the schools have made in meeting each objective. This information is provided to directors in termly progress reports.
- 7.8 Each term CSC prepares a detailed report for directors and then meets with them to discuss the aspects of the report that they select. The report contains a detailed breakdown of the support provided within the previous term.
- 7.9 Estyn suspended their inspection activity in March 2020. As such, no schools were inspected during 2020/2021. Instead, they undertook a number of desktop reviews with LA officers for schools in Estyn Review. As a

consequence of timely information and the support of IPs, LA officers and, as appropriate, CSC strategic team or brokered school-to-school work, LAs have been able to appropriately amend the category and status of Estyn follow up for number of schools.

Estyn have returned to follow-up visits from the academic year 2021-22. These up-to-date figures have been added. As a result, only one school in RCT remains in an Estyn category; this school is awaiting their Estyn follow-up visit.

7.10 Table of summary of schools in Estyn category

School	Estyn category	2020-21 changes	Current position (autumn 2021)
Aberdare Community	Significant improvement	Awaiting Estyn visit	Removed from Estyn category; in core support
Abernant Primary	Estyn review	Removed from Estyn review and from enhanced support	In Core support category
Cefn Primary	Estyn review	Awaiting Estyn review	Removed from Estyn category
Craig Yr Hesg Primary	Estyn review	Awaiting Estyn review	Removed from Estyn category
Mountain Ash Comprehensive	Estyn review	Removed from Estyn review	Remains in enhanced support
Porth County Community	Significant improvement	Awaiting Estyn visit	Awaiting Estyn visit
Ty Gwyn Education Centre	Special measures	Awaiting Estyn visit	Removed from Estyn category
Williamstown Primary	Estyn review	Removed from Estyn review and from enhanced support	In Core support category
Ynysboeth Primary	Estyn review	Awaiting Estyn review	Removed from Estyn category

7.11 All 16 schools in receipt of enhanced support are reviewed at least termly to measure the progress being made against their priorities and/or the recommendations from Estyn visits. Progress is measured using the following judgements. (See Appendix 1 – Improvement & Accountability: Monitoring Progress section for definitions of the progress judgements.)

7.12 **Table showing summary of progress against recommendations/priorities**
The following table analyses the progress judgements made across a wide range of the key priorities in our enhanced support schools. Priorities will often cover a number of aspects of practice. Judgements are made and agreed in partnership with the school, CSC and LA officers. The data is based on all 16 schools, covering a total of 79 priorities or recommendations. These have been categorised under three broader headings of Leadership, Teaching and Learning and Wellbeing.

% FIGURES	Progress Autumn 2020		
Aspects of practice within Recs/Priorities	limited	satisfactory	strong+
OVERALL	9.2%	52.8%	40.6%
Teaching and Learning	11.7%	54.3%	37.2%
Leadership	5.0%	35.0%	60.0%
Wellbeing	3.6%	60.7%	37.0%
% FIGURES	Progress Spring 2021		
Aspects of practice within Recs/Priorities	limited	satisfactory	strong+
OVERALL	9.6%	54.1%	54.4%
Teaching and Learning	12.5%	48.9%	38.6%
Leadership	5.3%	36.8%	57.9%
Wellbeing	3.6%	57.1%	39.3%
% FIGURES	Progress Summer 2021		
Aspects of practice within Recs/Priorities	limited	satisfactory	strong+
OVERALL	0.0%	34.3%	65.7%
Teaching and Learning	0.0%	38.5%	61.5%
Leadership	0.0%	22.2%	77.8%
Wellbeing	0.0%	28.6%	71.4%

7.13 Table showing changes in progress during 2020-2021

The following table indicates the changes in the number of aspects still showing limited progress and the number of aspects that have improved to strong or better progress. This is broken down by the three broad categories, as above.

% FIGURES	Change (Autumn to Summer)	
	Number of aspects showing Limited Progress	Number of aspects showing Strong Progress
OVERALL	-9.2%	+25.1%
Teaching and Learning	-11.7%	+24.3%
Leadership	-5.0%	+17.8%
Wellbeing	-3.6%	+34.4%

7.14 As a result of the challenge and support, many schools continue to make good progress against a very challenging context. Schools causing concern are well-supported and many make good or better progress against most recommendations or priorities.

8. LEADERSHIP

8.1 Professional development support for current and future leadership

CSC delivers a range of national leadership programmes in order to enhance current and future leadership and to provide a comprehensive pathway.

- First 2 cohorts of Middle Leaders Development Programme (MLDP) (cohort 1: participants from 22 schools), cohort 2 (eight participants from seven schools) have completed the programme, which develops a range of the features of middle leadership. 100% of participants would recommend the programme, 100% of participants stated that the training met their expectations. Cohort 3 (30 participants from 23 schools signed up and were accepted on the programme for 2021-2022).
- The first round of Senior Leaders Development Programme (SLDP) has taken place with 14 participants (one per school) successfully completing the programme. Cohort 2 (12 participants from 11 schools signed up and were accepted on the programme for 2021-2022). The programme has been endorsed by the National Academy for Educational Leadership.
- National Aspiring Heads Programme has started (18 participants, from 17 schools) - cohort 1 and 2 amalgamated (cohort 1 paused due to COVID-19).
- NPQH Assessment centre successfully held online via Teams. Regional and National moderation completed. 7 candidates from RCT met the NPQH standards.
- National New and Acting Headteacher Programme continues to effectively support our headteachers (18 participants). Cohort 2 and 3 amalgamated (cohort 2 paused due to COVID-19).
- The Experienced Headteacher Programme has continued and will run through to autumn 2022 (seven participants).
- 14 new system leaders (seven from RCT) have been established, utilising experienced headteachers to offer support across the region. These leaders have undertaken professional learning ahead of their engagement with other schools.
- 11 headteachers and senior leaders provide coaching support to candidates on the leadership pathway programmes. Coaches that were allocated to support pathway programmes have received training.
- All bespoke coaching sessions have been completed. CSC Coaching 'Team' space created for all coaches to access resources and support.
- 23 coaching and mentoring facilitators from 23 schools, were trained in autumn/spring term 2020-21. The facilitators trained were from CSC schools and central staff. In autumn 2021, 12 coaching and mentoring facilitators were trained from 11 schools.

Facilitator coaches trained as part of cohort 1+2 have begun training three people in their networks, creating 216 in-house coaches across the region.

- 22 candidates across the region (8 in RCT) undertook Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) level 3 assessment in 2020-21.
- As a result, leadership capacity is being strengthened, with a strong focus on leadership styles, building effective working relationships, developing effective self-evaluation and improvement planning and securing accountability at all levels of leadership. In addition, the capacity for coaching has been improved.

8.2 **Cyfleoedd +**

The Cyfleoedd+ collaboration network consists of 5 Welsh medium secondary schools: Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda, Ysgol Garth Olwg, Ysgol Llanhari, Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun in RCT and Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd in Bridgend. These schools, supported by CSC, undertake peer review arrangements, acting as each other's IP for many of the functions.

8.3 The consortium has worked with the Cyfleoedd+ network in order to learn about the forms of leadership development and processes that will be required to develop a rigorous Peer Review Model to develop a shared understanding of each other's practice. This included adequate opportunities built-in for joint analysis and reflection both within and between schools. First-hand evidence is used critically throughout the collaboration and there were opportunities for leaders and practitioners to engage in professional dialogue around their understandings of current practices within their own settings, classrooms and schools.

8.4 The work this year has been subject to change because of COVID. The collaboration has been bespoke and flexible to any arising issues. This has been in response to changing circumstances in schools, the evolving role of IPs and requests for information from local authority directors of education.

Collaborative planning and co-design provide all those involved with ownership. Opportunities for practitioners to engage in professional dialogue around their understandings of current practices within their own settings and classrooms has been an integral part of supporting school improvement during COVID.

8.5 **Strengthening the CSC governance model**

CSC strengthened the effectiveness of the existing national governance model/structure through the following measures:

- A revised governance model for CSC has been agreed with Joint Committee which clearly sets out the terms of reference for our governance groups.
- The WG Implementation Plan outlines the role of consortia. Roles and responsibilities are outlined in the consultation document on the [School Improvement Guidance: framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability](#).

- There is an open invite to attend RCT headteacher meetings. Representative Stakeholder Group are supporting this with invitations to federation meetings.

8.6 Strengthening governance in schools

CSC has worked to strengthen school governance to provide effective leadership challenge and support through a range of professional learning support and structural developments.

- An extensive governor training offer has been established and continues to evolve. This included 'drop-in' sessions for all governors, focused on Blended Learning, Curriculum for Wales and Additional Learning Needs Readiness (see table below for details).
- A successful appointment process has been completed securing 13 Regional Leaders of Governance (RLGs) to support governing bodies and schools across the consortium. Of these, three are experienced RCT governors.
- An induction process has been undertaken which included piloting the Self-Evaluation Toolkit with their own governing body and a system for matching an RLG's skill set and experience to a particular school context has been established.
- The Governor Leads groups met and planned a consortia wide delivery programme for governors focused on the new curriculum and Additional learning needs requirements. The Leads will explore developing links with Governor Schools Cymru as a means of securing new governors where required on governing bodies across the region.
- The uptake for governors' training by RCT Governors (437) compares to 115 attendees in the previous year 2019-20 which is an increase of 73% and is the highest number compared to the previous five years.

8.7 Table of RCT governor delegates engaged in online training

Focus of Training	RCT Delegates
New Governor Induction	145
Understanding Data	173
New Chair Induction	9
New Clerk Induction	1
Headteacher Performance Management	99
Effective Challenge & Support	7
Curriculum Reform Update	3
Total	437

8.8 Table of Regional drop-in sessions

Focus of Training	Regional Delegates
Blended Learning	195
Additional Learning Needs & Educational Tribunal Act	507
Curriculum Reform Update	82
The Cost of the School Day (Child Poverty Action Group)	146
Total	930

8.9 CSC promotes effective collaboration models to increase leadership capacity. It continues to develop, establish and embed changes to the Central South Wales Challenge (CSWC) to enable schools to be effectively supporting in their progress to improvement. It is the partnership of all schools across the CSC region working together to develop a self-improving system.

All schools in the region are allocated collaboration funding to support participation in collaborative working within and beyond their school. Collaborations include:

- Clusters – All schools in Rhondda Cynon Taff have committed to cluster working on Curriculum for Wales, with 94% completing evaluation of their work, indicating they are developing aspects of the Curriculum for Wales.
- School Improvement Groups (SIGs) – during 2020-21, 87% of schools in RCT were engaged in a SIG, working with schools across the region on the curriculum and/or the wider education reforms. As of autumn 2021, 70% of schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf are engaged in a SIG.
- Networks - There are termly synchronous network meetings focused on Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs), pedagogy and enquiry. Networks are co-facilitated by 27 lead practitioners and CSC strategic advisers. Four lead practitioners are from Rhondda Cynon Taf schools. Over 1300 practitioners from 65% of schools across the region have engaged with these networks to date, including from 85 (74%) Rhondda Cynon Taf schools. The networks and related materials are also made available asynchronously for those who are unable to attend the live sessions (see 8.32 for further information).
- The collaboration funding also supports schools to engage with the National Networks, Talk Pedagogy and self-facilitated networks within and beyond their school.

8.10 Develop and strengthen effective leadership through peer engagement

- The collaboration has adapted to working under the current school closures by streamlining support for each other's remote learning offer. This has included developing leadership by sharing of practice in terms of provision and self-evaluation of said provision regarding impact. Value for money evaluation of collaboration continues to be put on hold due to current school operating challenges.

- A wider group of IPs have further sense checked the Peer Partnership Approach document including a process map leading to revisions and collation of case studies outside of initial pilot schools. The Treorchy Primary cluster and Y Pant cluster of primary schools' partnerships were part of the working party and pilot groups for the “Peer Evaluation and Improvement” phase of the project.
- Case Studies have been published which are available [here](#).
- WG School Improvement Consultation document has been fed into the Approach document. The peer partnership evaluation improvement partner, strategic lead and two IPs who have already brokered self-evaluation partnerships have presented a working draft of Peer Partnership Approach document to CSC internal school improvement briefing.

8.11 **Use the professional teaching awards Cymru to recognise and celebrate highly effective practice:**

- The previous year's ceremony was held virtually in December. RCT school winners from last year were David Jenkins, Ysgol Tŷ Coch Pontypridd as Headteacher of the Year and David Church from Mountain Ash Comprehensive for Pupils' Award for Best Teacher.

8.12 **Consortia as a Learning Organisation (CLO) - Developing an enquiry approach to learning:**

- The Performance Development Proposals and revised Human Resources (HR) Charter has been shared with Unions for comment.
- The final Human Resources (HR) Charter and Performance Development process has been shared with all staff. A briefing for all staff on Appreciative Enquiry has been given.
- School briefing sessions have been added to the CSC Professional Learning Offer for internal staff to support.
- Regular research and evaluation board meetings have shared evaluative information which is has been used to shape organisational strategy and support effectiveness and efficiency.
- Facilitation training to strategic team has been completed. All school facing staff have received coaching conversation training and situational leadership training.

8.13 **Bespoke leadership support for schools requiring enhanced support**

Where required, CSC develops leadership for schools requiring enhanced support. This is done through a variety of means, such as the work of the IP, specific support from colleagues in the strategic team as well as through the Central South Wales Challenge, for example in using leaders from other schools.

8.14 As a result of that support, strong progress has been made in nearly 80% of the recommendation and priorities which include aspects of leadership in our enhanced support schools (see Table in 6.12 for further details).

9. PEDAGOGY, CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND QUALIFICATION SUPPORT

9.1 Schools as Learning Organisations

CSC supports schools to manage change and develop as learning organisations through a range of provision.

- The regional Professional Learning Offer aligns to the National Approach to Professional Learning.
- National programme of change management was delivered and made available to schools asynchronously.
- Schools as Learning Organisations was integrated in the Professional Learning Offer.
- Schools as Learning Organisations survey was available on Hwb - Tonyrefail Community School and Ysgol Ty Coch repeated the survey in 2020-21. Whilst Aberdare Community School newly engaged in 2020-21.

9.2 Hubs and Lead Practitioners

Hubs and lead practitioners work with members of the CSC strategic team to co-construct and plan the professional learning for schools in the region. During 2020-21, there were 15 PLA hubs, five foundation phase hubs and over 50 lead practitioners across the region. Four schools from Rhondda Cynon Taff were PLAs and 11 lead practitioners (see 8.20). For 2021-2022, 17 lead practitioners were from Rhondda Cynon Taff schools. Brynnau Primary School was also a Foundation Phase Hub whose focus was developing Foundation Phase leadership, pedagogy and practice. In addition, CSC supported two specialist networks - Special school PLA and Gyda'n Gilydd. Both focused on Professional Learning and support to meet the specific needs of the sector.

9.3 Welsh medium pedagogy development – Gyda'n Gilydd

CSC has established and supports the development of pedagogy in the Welsh medium sector through Gyda'n Gilydd. This includes regular attendance at Gyda'n Gilydd meetings and offering updates on Professional Learning opportunities. As a result, there is now a well-established and effective group which is characterised by good features.

- A strong climate of integrity and honesty ensures that suitable schools are chosen to lead within their area of expertise in the Gyda'n Gilydd (GG) partnership. As a result, the standard of the provision is excellent from year to year.

- One of the main successes of 2020/21 is the way GG has adapted due to the pandemic. In response to the new dynamics GG quickly adapted and set about producing a series of Professional Learning seminars. As a result, the concept of seminars has become embedded and there is no doubt that these will be a strong and sustainable element of future provision.
- Other programs that have been hugely successful are the Leadership Programs. GG provides a Middle Leaders and Senior Leaders Program. The key to success is that members gained confidence from these programs and used them as a stepping stone to apply for accredited leadership programs within CSC and had subsequently been promoted to a leadership position within the sector.
- Since the formation of GG in September 2016, a very high number of staff have benefited from professional learning experiences which has included schools working together very successfully to respond to unique challenges.

As a result, all schools are being supported through the Professional Learning Offer to develop in line with the principles of effective improvement as set out in the Schools as Learning Organisations framework.

9.4 **Support for Teacher Assistants, Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Teacher Assistants**

CSC refined the teaching assistant learning pathway (TALP) which facilitated appropriate learning pathways for practitioners.

- 9.5 The new Aspiring HLTA Programme, Darpar Calu, has been completely transposed from a face to face to a blended online format. The round 1 (Cylch Un) cohort, with 20 participants, from 16 schools, resumed their programme online in November 2020 and the application process for round 2/Cylch Dau that will start in January 2021 has now closed. The programme runs over four days and culminates in participants applying for HLTA status. Experienced HLTAs have the option of applying to become trained assessors or facilitators.

Three English medium facilitators and one Welsh medium facilitator were successfully secured in January 2021 to add capacity to the CSC facilitation team for Cylch 2.

As a result, all 20 TAs have achieved HTLA status, improving capacity within each of their schools.

- 9.6 Induction Teaching Assistant programme module 1 has been accessed and evaluated. Module 2 has been launched and module 3 is in development. There were eight participants, from six schools.

Assessor training materials are complete, and 13 assessors across the region were successful in their application, five of these are from RCT.

Three English medium facilitators and one Welsh medium facilitator were successfully secured in January 2021 to add capacity to the CSC facilitation team for Cylch 2. Treorchy Comprehensive provided the region with one new assessor.

The Special School Teaching Assistant Programme has eight modules of high-quality bespoke resources for teaching assistants to access. Ysgol Ty Coch was a co-producer of the special school programme and will be facilitating the programme in our pre rollout pilot.

- 9.7 Ongoing professional learning also supports teaching assistants through Google Classroom, the Knowledge Bank, Twitter and bulletins.
- 9.8 Welsh medium resources for teaching assistants were published on the CSC website and a Welsh medium Aspiring Higher Level Teaching Assistant programme was facilitated.
- 9.9 **Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)**
The annual training for all NQTs, induction mentors and external verifiers was written in line with the amended guidance for induction by the regional induction leads and rolled out as a pan-Wales programme. Record numbers of CSC induction stakeholders attended the training this year and received a comprehensive Induction Handbook afterwards. Induction mentors played an essential part in successful induction and further training based around coaching and mentoring and the professional standards was offered in spring 2021.
- 9.10 As a result, 64 practitioners, from 32 RCT schools engaged with the NQT Induction programme, offering important support in difficult circumstances for first year practitioners. The induction team is working well to support NQTs in the region and to contribute to managing system change at a national level.
- 9.11 Synchronous training was completed with 100% attendance from External Verifiers. 48% Induction Mentor attendance (up from 28% last year) and 78% NQT attendance (up from 75% last year). Training sessions have been recorded and will be shared asynchronously with those not attending so far.
- 9.12 'Think Like A Teacher' portfolios were completed by 15 CSC schools. Nantgwyn and Hawthorn wrote sections and created podcasts in the ITE Handbook. Hafod and Treorchy also contributed strongly to the initiative.
- 9.13 All participating NQTs had the first three e-Aspire/e-Anelu sessions and the leading schools have provided additional monthly synchronous tutorials to support NQTs through this challenging period.
- 9.14 Regional and national meetings were held regularly to address a major induction review process. Regional leads are working together to develop a proposal for national professional learning in readiness for induction review over the next year.

9.15 **Initial Teacher Education (ITE)**

CSC chaired the Quality Assurance group at Open University and continue to contribute to ongoing school selection and the monitoring of student teacher progress.

The Initial Teacher Education handbook was completed and represented collaboration with eight schools across each local authority and four Initial Teacher Education providers.

9.16 The Cardiff Partnership created a series of four webinars for Initial Teacher Education partnership schools, targeting clinical practice schools across all local authorities and the lead partner schools provided focus groups to support the Cardiff Partnership schools and capture impact. 16 schools from RCT were involved with the Cardiff Partnership, including six schools undertaking lead school roles. These webinars were shared with all 43 RCT clinical practice schools to support ITE mentoring.

9.17 A further nine RCT schools, two as lead schools, engaged with Athrofa at University Wales Trinity St David's in initial teacher education. In addition, three RCT schools, two as lead schools worked with Swansea University in the same role.

9.18 **Strategic Team and Lead Practitioner support**

CSC supported the work of school leaders and practitioners through a range of professional learning opportunities to discuss and share practice in network meetings. The Central South Wales Challenge model fosters the development of a school-led, self-improving system in this area through the appointment and engagement of lead practitioners across the region.

9.19 11 applicants from seven RCT schools were successfully appointed to lead practitioner roles. These covered the areas of Languages, Literacy and Communications, STEM, Digital, Expressive Arts and Humanities.

Lead practitioners, as well as Hubs (see 8.2) undertook key work in partnership to:

- a) develop and run programmes of professional learning
- b) facilitate practitioner networks
- c) create resources
- d) develop e-learning activities.

9.20 **Health and Wellbeing AoLE**

Strong progress was made with the health and well-being pilot project. Participating schools effectively engaged with trialling the resources and exploring key considerations in relation to developing a whole-school approach. As a result, these resources and considerations are in place to support all schools in developing their approaches to this area of learning experience.

9.21 **Humanities AoLE**

Practical ideas and strategies for using and developing oracy skills within the Humanities classroom have been discussed within network meetings and shared in community areas.

Work with the WG to produce the Religion, Values and Ethics supporting guidance has continued to be successful. The consultation period will run in the summer term, with planned publication of the guidance in January 2022.

- 9.22 Progress has been made in relation to the development of resources to support political education in schools. All resources have been effectively shared via the CSC communication channels, and in the regular subject specific secondary network meetings.

In consultation with the WG and the four regional consortia, WJEC have successfully produced the 'Political Literacy' teaching and learning resource as part of the Global Citizenship Challenge within the Welsh Baccalaureate Skill Challenge Certificate. The resource has been shared through CSC network meetings and online.

The Association for Citizenship Teaching have been commissioned to produce the professional learning and guidance material to support the teaching of political education in schools. Schools across the four regional consortia have been approached to participate in this phase of the work.

9.23 **Literacy, Languages and Communication AoLE**

Regional oracy and vocabulary strategies and approaches were shared through e-learning programme. Uptake of programmes was high.

LLC professional learning	Number of attendees
Reading Reconsidered open cohort	14
The Writing Revolution	20
Words Matter Assignment	11
Teaching Writing Explicitly	160
Primary International Language (IL) learning sessions	4
Expectations in primary languages	16
IL Network Meeting	4
Literacy Leaders Network Meeting	26
Comparative Judgement Network Meeting	31
Reading Reconsidered open cohort	14

- 9.24 A collaborative pilot project, Comparative Judgement, focusing on the assessment of pupils writing in English successfully led to a professional learning course being developed, Teaching Writing Explicitly.

- 9.25 As a result of this pilot, CSC has engaged 70% of schools in the local authority on a 3-year RCT Writing project, which will support schools through establishing a means of testing the accuracy of pupils' writing but will also enable schools to develop bespoke writing pedagogy focusing on technical accuracy. This project began in the autumn term 2021.

- 9.26 Regional guidance was developed and shared by lead practitioners to support the understating of pedagogy for languages.

E-learning and resources were developed for secondary Spanish, German and French. Webinars and network sessions have been very well attended with some events having over 1000 views. E-learning to support the introduction of languages at Key Stage 2 has been completed with lead practitioners and curriculum pioneers.

Lead practitioners engaged in resourcing the Languages Passport.

Additional lead practitioners were appointed to lead virtual language lessons for Key Stage 2 teachers. CSC were the first of the regional consortia to lead in this way and our innovative approach was praised by the Global Futures Group.

- 9.27 12 RCT teachers signed up to complete the Teachers Learning to Teach Languages (TELT) module through the Open University. A blended learning project with the Language Ambassadors focused on cultural webinars looking at festivals, food and sport. CSC have also engaged Routes Cymru to develop and produce a languages engagement video designed to increase the uptake of languages at Key Stage 4.

9.28 **STEM AoLEs (Science and Technology and Maths and Numeracy)**

Additional professional learning has been developed for foundation phase mathematical pedagogy, outdoor learning and developing mathematical vocabulary.

Additional networking opportunities have been well attended by practitioners for primary and secondary mathematics, primary maths co-ordination and problem solving in mathematics.

- 9.29 Many practitioners have engaged with professional learning opportunities, including newly developed Pupil Referral Unit/Special school professional networking, developing breath in primary science; Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM) Story time and Outdoor science.

Secondary Applied Science professional material has been completed by lead practitioners, including Understanding Design principles.

Professional networking opportunities for Science, Design Technology and Computer Science were well attended, sharing national directives and best practice.

9.30 **Digital learning (DCF and online learning)**

The 'Digital Competence Framework (DCF) In-depth' professional learning modules were published to support school leaders and practitioners to develop digital skills across the curriculum. DCF network meetings were held to support practitioners to share practice and support planning. RCT practitioners engaged with and contributed to professional learning opportunities. The 'DCF in-depth'

modules were accessed by 107 RCT practitioners during the summer term 2021. Additionally, primary and secondary DCF webinars and DCF in-depth networks were well attended.

Bespoke support was provided to schools to develop the use of technology through the Hwb platform. Schools were supported to develop blended and online learning throughout the pandemic.

Lead practitioners from RCT schools have supported the leadership of digital learning and produced materials to support the development of cross-curricular digital skills across key stage 2.

9.31 **Assessment support and development**

Lead practitioners were appointed to focus on professional learning resources for assessment of progress in remote learning and assessment for learning more broadly in preparation for Curriculum for Wales.

9.32 **Post-16**

The capacity to offer professional learning and support was increased at post-16 with the introduction of two post-16 development officers on part-time secondment. A regional network of post-16 leaders was established. Termly network meetings were facilitated to collaborate, share practice, resources and guidance relating to post-16 education. 7 RCT schools were represented in the network.

The support and professional learning offered, reflected local, regional and national priorities, with the learner experience at heart. Also recognised was the need to support the well-being of all stakeholders through some of the most challenging times in education.

Post-16 leaders were offered guidance on how to use Alps Connect effectively within school, and bespoke 1:1 sessions were offered to support successful implementation of the platform.

The post-16 online community was used widely to communicate collaborative opportunities and share the most up to date information from a range of external stakeholders. This included WG and Qualification Wales updates.

Three RCT schools engaged productively with the cross regional VESPA Growth Mindset pilot project and utilised the resources effectively to support both the academic progress and personal development of learners to achieve success.

Following the success of the VESPA pilot, CSC produced a revised professional learning offer. Three schools from RCT were successful in their application to engage in the VESPA professional enquiry project. Three RCT schools collaborated to create tutorial resources and two schools created subject level transition resources.

Two school leaders from RCT completed the cross-regional Post-16 Leadership Development Programme in 2020-2021 to support their professional development.

Across subject AOLEs termly secondary network meetings incorporated discussions around post-16 issues such as specification and qualification updates and professional learning opportunities. Specific support was offered on request. A-level networks continued to feature as either discrete priority areas or embedded in subject network meetings.

9.33 Table showing engagement levels in Professional Learning opportunities, excluding discrete Curriculum for Wales Professional Learning (covering the period April 2020 to August 2021)

Leadership – Curriculum reform, Governors, Middle Leadership, Senior Leadership, Aspiring Headteacher, Newly Appointed Headteacher, NPQH.

Teaching and Learning – Digital Learning, Expressive Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Humanities, LLC, Maths and Numeracy, Science and Technology, Foundation Phase, Learning and Teaching & Pedagogy, NQT Induction, Post-16, Welsh Language Development.

Wellbeing Course – Equity and Wellbeing – Children Looked After.

Area of focus	Number of RCT schools engaged	Number of attendees
Total	115 - 100%	3143
Teaching and Learning	98%	1887
Leadership	97%	933
Wellbeing	63%	323

Figures for Curriculum for Wales Professional Learning in the next section (9.7).

9.34 In CSC, all professional learning opportunities (PLO) relates to supporting schools in the realisation of the new curriculum. There are explicit PLO that are focussed specifically on aspects of Curriculum for Wales, but it is also embedded in all PLO. This includes a wide variety of synchronous and asynchronous PL events and programmes across the professional pathway, from induction to leadership. PLO are co-constructed and facilitated by practitioners from across the region in partnership with the CSC strategic team. Between April 2020 and November 2021, a total of 19,000+ practitioners have engaged in CSC professional learning opportunities including 5600+ practitioners from all schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

10 CURRICULUM FOR WALES

10.1 The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 became law after receiving Royal Assent in April 2021. The Act stated the new curriculum requirements for all learners aged 3 to 16 in maintained or funded non-maintained nursery education in Wales. It replaces national curriculum and basic curriculum.

10.2 **CSC supported schools to prepare for the implementation of Curriculum for Wales (CfW) through a range of events and support mechanisms:**

- Cross-regionally developed CfW programmes were launched across all four regions: seven Leading Change sessions, 11 Vision sessions, four Making Time and Space for Professional Learning sessions, four Introduction to Curriculum Design sessions, 3 sessions for Curriculum Design Part 2, and 3 sessions for Curriculum Design Part 3. English medium and separate Welsh medium sessions offered.
- Each strategic area aligned their professional learning offers to the phases within the Journey to 2022 document.
- Strategic teams supported the delivery of cross-regional Curriculum for Wales professional learning programme.
- Middle leader asynchronous modules were launched and were available to access as an assignment.

10.3 To support practitioners in curriculum design, CSC developed a specific website. The focus of the website used the design thinking model, aligned to the phases of the shared expectations of curriculum roll-out, to support schools in the process of curriculum design. All regional Curriculum for Wales PL, resources, materials and guidance were also made available through the website. [CSC Curriculum for Wales Website](#)

10.4 **CSC Curriculum for Wales professional learning resources, materials and guidance**

There were a wide variety of resources, materials and guidance to support schools in Curriculum for Wales made available through the CSC website. These include:

Curriculum poster pack (3900+) Vision INSET resources (750+) Assessment poster packs (1300+) Progression resources (800+) FAQs (1300+)	Blogs (3305+) Vlogs (430+ views) Sgwrs podcasts (1100+) Governor Resources (1300+) (engagement to date)
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10.5 **CSC Curriculum for Wales Newsletter**

A monthly publication that aims to provide practitioners with regular updates, essential information and links to useful resources and professional learning on Curriculum for Wales. The newsletter also provided guidance on how the content could be used to further support whole-school professional learning. There have been almost 3000 views to date.

10.6 **Cross-regional Curriculum for Wales professional learning programme**

This programme offered professional learning and support related specifically to the journey to curriculum-roll out:

- Over 2100 senior leaders from 81% of schools across the region engaged with the cross-regional Curriculum for Wales senior leaders'

professional learning programme. In RCT, 73% of school engaged in the programme, this is an increase of 11% during autumn 2021;

- 3400 middle leaders from CSC schools engaged with the cross-regional asynchronous Curriculum for Wales middle leaders' professional learning programme;
- Over 1000 governors from CSC schools engaged with the governors' programme.

10.7 Cross-regional curriculum design programme

62 practitioners from 57 schools across the CSC region participated in this cross-regional professional learning (PL) programme. 10 of these practitioners were from Rhondda Cynon Taff schools. All PL resources, materials and guidance developed from the programme have been made available to all schools in Wales.

10.8 Table showing overall engagement with CfW Professional Learning

Programme	RCT Schools engagement	Overall engagement on CfW programmes for CSC schools
Asynchronous	233	779
Curriculum Design and Development	18	83
Engagement with the wider reform elements	23	77
Engaging with Areas of Learning	48	140
Engaging with the Curriculum for Wales framework	84	271
Establishing a shared vision	1	4
Leading change	14	57
Making time and space for professional learning	6	22
Thinking about AoLE vision	39	125
Synchronous: e-learning	204	975
Curriculum Design	153	734
Establishing a shared vision	14	50
Leading change	31	148
Making time and space for professional learning	6	43
Grand Total	437	1754

10.9 CfW readiness survey

Curriculum realisation is a core focus of all school improvement conversations in all schools undertaken by CSC IPs. During the summer term 2021 IPs worked with school leaders to complete a CfW survey. The purposes of this survey were:

- To report to local authorities on their schools' current readiness in the realisation of Curriculum for Wales.

- To support school self-evaluation and planning related to the realisation of the new curriculum specifically related to the Journey to 2022 document.
- To identify and share emerging practice from schools across the region.
- To inform CSCs professional learning offer and support for schools for the autumn and spring terms.
- To inform discussions with WG and other partners on Curriculum for Wales.

10.10 SWOT analysis reports of the surveys for all schools across the region and for each local authority were published in autumn 2021 (see Appendix 2 - Curriculum for Wales Survey Summary Report – Rhondda Cynon Taf).

Leaders and practitioners reported the pressure of time to engage meaningfully in curriculum reform, particularly linked to additional pressures from COVID. This was most acute in Welsh medium schools due to their inability to secure supply cover for staff.

Very few schools (5%) in the region were less engaged in the journey to curriculum roll-out, with 10 of these being schools in RCT.

As a result, CSC was able to target its support appropriately and offer bespoke support in addition to the wide range of professional learning support.

10.11 **Bespoke support**

CSC provided bespoke support to all schools and clusters across the region as required to support their realisation of curriculum reform. This was particularly targeted at schools who were less engaged. Remote and face-to-face professional learning and support met the specific needs of the school aligned to the shared expectations and priorities. For example, understanding a purpose-led curriculum, understanding of the curriculum model, establishing a shared vision, high-level curriculum design, etc. In RCT, 30 schools and one cluster received bespoke support from the CSC strategic team during autumn 2021.

10.12 **National Professional Enquiry Project (NPEP)**

To support the development of the new curriculum, WG worked with regional consortia and higher education institution (HEI) partners to develop a national programme of teacher professional enquiry. This programme supported a growing network of schools to develop a range of enquiry skills by leading enquiries in their own setting exploring professional learning requirements for the new curriculum. Two schools from RCT were Lead Enquiry schools, Treorchy Comprehensive and Y Pant Comprehensive and a further 13 were partner schools:

- Alaw Primary School
- Maesgwyn Hawthorn High School
- Parc Primary School
- Pengawsi Primary School
- Penyreglyn Primary School

- Pontyclun Primary School
- Pontypridd High School
- Porth Community School
- St Margaret's Catholic Primary School
- Tai Education Centre
- Ton Pentre Junior School
- Tonyrefail Community School
- Treorchy Primary School.

10.13 **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme**

This programme was designed to support schools in preparing for the new curriculum and forthcoming statutory guidance. The action inquiry work undertaken so far across CSC had already enabled researchers to identify some key priorities for developing RSE provision in the future. There was a need for PL to address low confidence, knowledge and skill levels amongst practitioners and for schools to be given better access to high quality research-informed resources and input from expert external providers. YGG Rhydywaun participated in a one-day programme in 2020-21, whilst four RCT schools have been significantly involved in the pilot programme from 2018 to 2021:

- Abercynon Primary
- Mountain Ash Comprehensive
- Tonyrefail Community
- Ysgol Ty Coch.

10.14 **Creative Pedagogy Network**

Schools were invited to be part of a new network designed to train and offer support to schools who previously participated in the Lead Creative Schools scheme across the CSC region. The intention was to ensure sustainability and a legacy to the creative learning work schools did as part of their Lead Creative Schools project. Also, to provide a platform to support and broker coaching opportunities, in how to develop creative learning pedagogies and innovative approaches to each setting's realisation of Curriculum for Wales. 17 schools from RCT were members of the network.

- Coedpenmaen Primary School
- Ferndale Community School
- Gwaunmeisgyn Primary School
- Hawthorn High School
- Llanharan Primary School
- Llwynypia Primary School
- Maesgwyn Special School
- Miskin Primary School
- Mountain Ash
- Pontypridd High School
- SS Gabriel & Raphael Roman Catholic School
- St Margaret's Catholic RC School
- YGG Evan James
- YGG Llwynycelyn
- Ynysboeth Community Primary School

- Ysgol Nantgwyn
- Ysgol Ty Coch.

10.15 **Health and Well-being pilot project**

Practitioners from five schools in RCT participated in a pilot project in the spring 2021, focused on understanding the key considerations and processes involved in developing a whole-school approach to health and well-being. Through engagement with a range of professional learning modules, participating schools have gained an understanding of how to develop a shared vision for health and well-being, as well as planning for and enacting change in relation to their school's identified priority areas.

10.16 Feedback indicated that their involvement with the pilot project had a positive impact within their schools, including changes to systems, structures, roles and responsibilities, as well as provision and practice. Outcomes from the pilot project helped inform the development of the regional health and well-being curriculum strategy and supported the identification of further regional professional learning needs. In addition, the professional learning modules developed, have been enhanced with high-quality exemplification materials from the pilot schools and shared with all schools across the region. Five schools from Rhondda Cynon Taff were part of the pilot project:

- Aberdare Community,
- Caradog Primary School
- Porth Community,
- Tai Educational Centre
- Ton Pentre Juniors.

10.17 **Remote Asynchronous Learning Design and Synchronous Learning Experiences Project**

CSC worked with practitioners in the region to support the development of professional learning linked to learning design. Forming a firm foundation of knowledge and understanding for practitioners in preparation for curriculum design within Curriculum for Wales. Six schools from Rhondda Cynon Taff were part of the pilot project.

- Alaw Primary
- Pontrhondda Primary
- Porth Community
- Tondu Primary
- Tonyrefail Community
- Trealaw Primary.

10.18 **CSC Curriculum for Wales community**

There are almost 1100 members in this online regional community. Providing an interactive platform for practitioners to access resources, materials, PLO and guidance related to Curriculum for Wales. Members participate in discussions with other members to share ideas and receive peer support.

10.19 **CSC collaborative funded projects**

There were almost 40 regional collaborative funded projects related to supporting schools in their journey to curriculum roll-out. 87 schools in RCT engaged in one or more of these projects. These include all projects focused on: mental health and well-being, curriculum design, all curriculum areas, oracy, reading, writing, digital competence, relationships and sexuality education, Welsh heritage, history, culture and diversity, citizenship, pedagogy, learning design, enquiry, etc.

10.20 **Additional support developed through the Local Authority Annex**

In 2020/2021, £34,385⁵ additional funding was provided to support RCT specific priorities via the Local Authority Annex.

10.21 **Pontypridd Cluster: To plan for a continuum of delivery MFL across a cluster in line with Curriculum for Wales**

Overall aims:

- Focused planning around the new Wales curriculum 2022 on Languages, Literacy and Communication AOLE.
- Prioritised the teaching and learning of International Languages as part of this AOLE.
- Targeted the plan at all Year 4 pupils within cluster primary schools from September 2019.
- Focused on Spanish as the international language, taught in each cluster school by PHS staff.
- Included broader learning opportunities that covered essential skills and link to other AOLES.
- Planned assessments that meet the expectations of the Progression Step 3.

The cluster adapted its work so that the project ran asynchronously with learners, which allowed the development of resources and approaches, which were developed to be available through digital platforms. It remains the case that through the duration of this project, in particular since March 2020 the impact of the COVID pandemic must be considered in evaluating progress through this project. This has and continues to be a frustration for all staff and the pupils in each school as it impacted on:

- attendance of students and staff in schools;
- limited opportunities for school visits and 'face to face' teaching from the PHS specialist staff;
- pressure on primary colleagues to deliver more of a 'recovery' type curriculum which has often altered provision times for Spanish;
- Estyn school visits which have required a focus in other areas of the schools' work.

It is important to report though that there remained a total commitment from all schools to this IL project, in relation to two wider aims:

- The importance of developing and delivering an IL provision within each primary and across the cluster that worked towards the Curriculum 2023 plans.

⁵ Data provided for the financial year (April 2020 - March 2021).

- That an 'online' way of working was developed across the cluster that enabled different specialist teachers to deliver different types of provision. (In this respect the situation with COVID actually gave greater emphasis to the development of this aim).

Curriculum provision

- Due to the factors above, it was agreed that in this autumn term, the project would only focus on the Year 6 cohort in each of our main 7 feeder schools.
- The Year 5 cohort continued in January, 2022 and it was agreed that at this time Year 4 would start the project.

11. WELLBEING AND INCLUSION (EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE)

11.1 CSC's new Teaching and Learning strategy encompasses the wellbeing strategy and reflects the approach of the local authorities including links with attendance and exclusions leads.

11.2 Equity and Excellence strategy has been designed and has been shared and released for consultation. This document is ready and available for schools and will be used by improvement partners to support schools.

11.3 Many examples of good practice have been generated via the Pupil Development Grant Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assessment Committee summaries.

Regular meetings are taking place with local authorities in understanding and aligning professional learning and support for wellbeing.

As a result, CSC and the LA are working this academic year on appreciative enquiries to identify strong practice that can be shared across the local authority.

11.4 Treorchy Cluster project: reducing exclusion rates through building positive relations

Funding for this project was through the LA Annexe (see 10.20 for details)

Cluster model for RAIS to involve Treorchy Comprehensive and all feeder primaries. The work was led by Julia Houlston Clark from WRAP Wales. The following impacts have been reported as this project ends its funding:

- All stakeholders understand they are going to be treated fairly and consistently.
- All stakeholders' voices are heard.
- All staff understand what they need to do and how to do it.
- Ethos of RA is embedding into everyday practice at all levels.
- Pupils lead the circle with the governors and provide them with progress feedback. Pupils can also use the BMR hand gestures to show governors what they have learnt. Pupils follow this format each time they attend governing body meetings.

- Pupils are familiar with the concepts of restorative approaches, circle time and language.
- Staff are changing their way of dealing with situations using a more positive approach.
- Detentions becoming more restorative and equal voice in meetings.
- Restorative ethos set at beginning of meetings allowing everyone opportunity to speak and encourages pupil voice. (Pupils have created videos for shared with governors in some schools.)
- Restorative ethos set at beginning of meetings allowing everyone opportunity to speak.
- Reflection on good practice and evaluations for next steps.
- Reported from school a reduction in behaviour issues. Parent and staff issues more structured and easier to resolve.
- Cluster meetings started with a check-in and ended with a check-out of one positive to be taken from meeting.
- Clear, concise targets consistent throughout cluster, addressing individual needs of each school.
- Designated staff equipped with further expertise to lead RA effectively.
- All staff equipped with strategies to take RA into Teaching and Learning planning as well as circle time and restorative meetings.

The cluster continues to work on the embedding of the practices developed through this project, with the next aims outlined.

- Creating centre of excellence and supporting/coaching other pilot school in their clusters if ready.
- Ensuring consistency of practice across all school areas and multi-agency work modelling and protocols for high end work with children and families.
- Development of all policies to ensure that they reflect restorative processes.
- Modification of HR and performance management process to reflect RA
- Restorative Service Quality Mark status considered.
- Review, evaluate and monitor outcomes and data sets, attend RCT Steering Group.

12. ALN

- 12.1 CSC has supported schools in the preparation for the Additional learning Needs (ALN) and Educational Tribunal Wales Act through effective partnership working.

IPs have had a continued focus on vulnerable learners; IPs have worked with schools to gauge the level of readiness schools have in relation to the act's commencement into law. This information is shared with the regional lead for ALN to align appropriate support and training.

- 12.2 School leaders and additional learning needs co-ordinators have been able to access online courses and professional learning. A self-evaluation audit toolkit has been developed and shared. This has been completed by all schools and

has informed both schools and the LA as to the strengths and the support required in effectively applying the new Act at a school level.

13. VULNERABLE LEARNERS

- 13.1 CSC is working to support schools to improve outcomes for vulnerable learners through effective strategic support, ensuring consistency of approach for CSC and the LA in supporting provision for these learners, through a range of measures. As a result, schools have a more consistent opportunity to improve their provision for vulnerable learners.

Information regarding the Pupil Development Grant has been added to the vulnerable learners' playlist.

Over 350 summaries have been collected by the CSC school improvement team. This has been shared with PIPs as well as strategic teams to support their work with schools.

- 13.2 IPs in RCT have gathered information on Pupil Development Grant on the adjustments that schools have made to their spending, the impact on Free School Meal learners and how the school is going to respond to the challenges of their free school meal learners will face in 2021/22. This is in line with the OECD DAC mandate of determining the merit or worth of intervention, policy, strategy, program, project or activity. It focuses on supporting schools to develop schools in supporting poverty eradication.

Examples of strong evaluations include Perthcelyn Community Primary School and Mountain Ash Comprehensive School who provide a comprehensive overview of all work involving the pupil development grant. These outlined how vulnerable learners were well supported in their home learning provision and interventions. Their evaluations enable the schools to have a strategic overview on the impacts of the PDG spend to date and to plan further support appropriately to address any concerns identified.

As a result of evaluations, PDG CLA work has focused on gathering intelligence and providing an overview on how the clusters have allocated the funding and how it has impacted. This has led to the development of a comprehensive toolkit which provides valuable guidance for schools on relational based play, attachment and trauma. An external consultant has been commissioned to deliver this work as part of the 2021/22 business plan.

The completion of Vulnerable Learners Evaluation Strategy & PDG Allocation Evaluative Report was delayed due to WG extension of grant spend closing date to August 2021. Pupil Development Grant summaries shared with Higher Education Institution partner as well as template for appreciative enquiry. Scoping exercise completed. No further work was identified. Cardiff Met Higher Education Institution provided a high-level overview of the Vulnerable Learners Project.

- 13.3 Professional development sessions have continued for IPs and strategic staff as well as school improvement sessions with a focus on vulnerable learners.

The focus of the school improvement briefings and the impact of blended learning on vulnerable learners has been a particular success.

Professional learning was also available to all schools via the PDG focus week which provided a wide variety of sessions including trauma, family engagement, literacy and the EEF.

- 13.4 CSC has identified appropriate professional learning support in regard to mental health issues for stakeholders. This has linked closely to the healthy school's work and the work being undertaken with the Pupil Development Grant Looked After Child Regional Co-ordinator and the whole school approach to mental health.

CSC has highlighted good practice in supporting children looked after (CLA) through appreciative enquiry work. Subsequently, a purposeful and comprehensive Professional Learning program has been put into place this year building on previous 2 years. Professional Learning courses have been well-attended with personal positive comments sent to trainers. 323 participants, from 72 schools registered and attended Professional Learning training across the region. This has increased the intelligence in schools on the best practices in supporting CLA.

- 13.5 Professional Learning Training event on The Role of Key Adults with vulnerable pupils in educational settings took place in March 2021.

- 13.6 An external consultant has worked with five schools within the region. All questionnaires have been completed.

- 13.7 Regular meetings are taking place sharing documentation and good practice amongst the five local authority leads. The group is examining Welsh Government documentation linked to Education Otherwise Than at School responding to updates and working collaboratively with across the region.

14. WELSH

- 14.1 CSC support the implementation of national and regional strategies for developing Welsh in schools through a range of support and initiatives.

- 14.2 A national committee has been established Siarter Iaith regional officers to share resources and best practice and a similar national committee in respect of Cymraeg Campus.

- 14.3 All arrangements are in place with 16 Welsh medium primary schools registered to take part in Darllen Dros Gymru and 13 English medium primary schools registered for Dwlu Darllen. All schools have received associated funding for this project. For RCT in 2020/21, there were 3 for Darllen Dros Gymru (WM)

and 1 for Dwlw Darllen (EM). The uptake has risen in the current academic year (21/22).

- 14.4 Welsh medium primary and secondary networks, Y Ffed and Gyda'n Gilydd, and the special schools' network also receive an additional £30,000 funding to facilitate professional learning opportunities to meet the specific needs of their sectors. There are 28 schools in RCT that are part of these networks (see 8.4).
- 14.5 CSC support schools in completing two key developmental initiative, Siarter Iaith and Campus Cymraeg. To date 16 schools have achieved the Bronze Award for Siarter Iaith, with 10 moving on to complete the Silver Award. 59 schools have begun the work on Campus Cymraeg, with a further 26 achieving the Bronze Award. One school, Aberdare Town Church, has gone on to achieve the Silver Award.
- 14.6 CSC's Welsh Language Development Professional learning was extremely well attended, with 361 RCT attendees, from 79 schools. This has increased the capacity within schools to further develop Welsh provision.

15. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 15.1 Central South Wales Challenge is reported on termly in LA and Diocesan reports.
- 15.2 Regular and ongoing evaluation of the CSWC is embedded in CSC systems. Each component of the model is considered in terms of engagement, impact and value for money in order to make decisions about shaping the model. This covers school-led, centrally led and collaborative professional learning. This allows the model to be shaped according to school level need and ensures that the Professional Learning Offer is able to respond to emerging needs. For example, webinars have been delivered in response to school requests for sharing current practice.
- 15.3 The evaluative findings and recommendations for refinements to the model are taken to directors to agree future funding. For example, School Improvement Group/cluster mid-year evaluations have been shared with convenors and have helped shape the Central South Wales Challenge for 2021/22 which has been agreed with all stakeholders. In addition, focus groups have supported evaluation in responding to high and low engagement in the Professional Learning Offer.

16. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1 There are no equality or diversity implications emerging from this report.

17. CONSULTATION

- 17.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

18. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

18.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. The budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23 have already been set and agreed.

19. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

19.1 No are no legal or legislative implications arising from this report.

20. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

20.1 There are links to the Council's Corporate Plan for the period between 2020 to 2024, specifically the priority:

Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper:

- o Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education

21. CONCLUSION

21.1 CSC has worked effectively with RCT LA to provide appropriate support to all schools and schools are continuing to improve in the context of continued challenging circumstances. Where concerns are identified, support and interventions are put in place promptly to address them. CSC offers transparent scrutiny of its work to enable the LA to examine further the impact of its work.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16TH FEBRUARY 2022**

**REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM
IN THE REGION AND RHONDDA CYNON TAF LOCAL AUTHORITY
DURING APRIL 2020 – SEPTEMBER 2021**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author(s): Andy Hurley & Steve Davies (Principal Improvement Partners)

Appendix 1 – Improvement & Accountability

Supporting School Improvement September 2021 and Beyond

Central South Consortium is commissioned by our partner LAs to provide school improvement for the region. This involves providing support and challenge to schools to ensure learners across the region have the right educational experiences to allow them to make progress and be successful in the next phase of learning or employment.

The academic year 2021-22 is a particularly poignant one in the national reform journey with the lead up to a new curriculum in September 2022.

The overarching purpose of school improvement is to support schools to give learners the best possible learning experiences and outcomes. In October 2020 the OECD's report to Welsh Government 'Achieving the new curriculum for Wales' emphasised the point that all aspects of the schools' system are aligned with and support the new curriculum and its underlying principles. To support such alignment, a draft document 'School improvement guidance - framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability' was published by the Welsh Government in January 2021. This guidance provides a new point of reference for schools, local authorities, diocesan authorities, regional consortia and Estyn and the expectations of them in contributing to school improvement. It is the intention of WG that this guidance will become statutory in September 2022. The changes set out in the guidance are not too far removed from the model that CSC adopted and trialled in 2020-21 academic year given the suspension of categorisation. A national evaluation and improvement resource (NEIR) is also being produced which will support schools in undertaking robust self-evaluation. CSC is therefore, in a very strong position to make further refinements to the way we support and challenge our schools and deliver national principles in a local manner bespoke to the needs of our schools.

CSC will continue to provide:

- An IP linked to every school;
- A Welsh in Education officer to every school;
- The Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) programme;
- The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH);
- Professional learning for all school-based staff at all stages of their career (including all leadership programmes);
- Extensive professional learning linked to emerging school priorities;
- Extensive professional learning linked to national priorities, e.g. intensive support for the development of the Curriculum for Wales; and
- Oversight of grant funded activity.

National Principles

This set of national principles will be applied through local approaches to meet the requirements of the national guidance. This is a cyclical process to support school improvement. The set of national principles are:

1. There will be a discussion/collaborative meeting with schools and governing body representative to:
 - Share and agree school improvement priorities based on self-evaluation and the national reform agenda.
 - Agree the additional support needs of the school/setting (LA and regional support). The agreed support should be reference within the SDP.
 - Identify where the school/setting has strengths and its capacity to support others.
2. Regions will collate an overview of school improvement priorities and the support being provided by both the LA and region.
3. Support provided to schools/settings will be documented.
4. In collaboration with schools, regions and LAs, will provide a termly evaluation on the school's progress towards meeting its priorities, identifying or amending bespoke support as necessary.
5. In collaboration with schools and governing bodies, regions and LAs will identify and discuss any potential risks to progress, identifying or amending bespoke support as necessary.
6. Work collaboratively with schools to undertake a range of self-evaluation activity where appropriate and facilitate opportunities for school-to-school peer working to support self-evaluation processes.

The role of the Improvement Partner (IP)

With the significant reform agenda that is in progress across Wales, it is important CSC continues to ensure the support provided by IPs is holistic, efficient and effective in line with the national principles. It is essential the IP forms a strong professional relationship with the headteacher.

As well as providing support and challenge to schools, the IP also ensures that schools are well prepared and display behaviours that positively support the complete national reform agenda. The complete national reform agenda encompasses five areas:

- Curriculum
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Equity, Excellence and Wellbeing
- Teaching
- Leadership.

CSC provide schools with excellent professional learning opportunities, resources and guidance to support schools through this transformational reform. School leaders need the time and space to be able to make sense of transformational reform and the plethora of national and regional supporting resource's that go with it. The IP role is a hugely significant one in 'signposting' school leaders and other stakeholders to use

the pertinent documents, e.g. CSC 'Equity and Excellence' strategy and professional learning that is available in the region, a conduit between policy and practice. This will enhance the school's ability to develop as a learning organisation and support putting the new curriculum and other reforms into place.

IPs will continue to support the governing body with the headteachers performance management and will support the governing body to understand their role in school improvement. IPs will also collaborate with the regional leads for governors in order to support school governors to fulfil their responsibility in holding schools to account.

In addition, IPs will continue to:

- agree eFSM allocation of spend and regularly monitoring impact;
- review monitoring cycle;
- collaborate with LA & CSC colleagues.

Allocation of Support

Support will take the form of 'core' or 'enhanced' support that is provided in a fair way that is inversely proportional to needs of the school.

All schools will receive a basic minimum allocation of days and further time will be allocated based on the support needs identified. This minimum is:

Primary/Nursery	7
Special/PRU	10
Secondary	10
3-16/19	16

Enhanced support schools will receive additional time to reflect the development needs and monitoring requirements. This support will be agreed between the school and IP and shared with the LA when the School Improvement Priorities are agreed. Specified days might not all be from the same IP but might include work of others more specialists in certain areas. The impact of this support will be monitored half termly and will be shared with LAs in the termly review meetings. CSC quality assurance processes will ensure that support is targeted and is meeting the needs of the school. Our processes will focus on the impact of support in school and will ensure consistency across the region.

Support and Challenge Functions

The IP will support schools through appropriate challenge to identify clear, manageable improvement priorities as a consequence of effective self-evaluation. The IP will work with school leaders to review first-hand evidence and ensure that this is rigorous and accurate. This will work in conjunction with the school systems and will not generate additional work for school leaders. This is in line with the WG guidance where it is the intention that these priorities will in part replace target setting.

Each school will have their own unique set of priorities, based on their own context, self-evaluation, needs and improvement journey, ultimately seeking to improve learner outcomes. Therefore, priorities will need to ensure a focus on pupil progress. Furthermore, the IP will also support schools in ensuring that improvement priorities are drawn together in a single, strategic school development plan, helping to reduce workload, streamline schools' strategic planning processes and avoid unnecessary duplication and bureaucracy. These priorities will be made available to the LA for their approval. All support will be referenced in the SDP and the IP will work in partnership with LA colleagues based on a shared understanding of their respective roles in supporting schools, to engage with schools on their development plan. It is important that IPs also capture strengths and emerging practice worth sharing. This can be shared with governors, other IPs and LAs.

Based on the needs of the school the IP will identify the support needs, and broker support required. Support will be tightly focused on the actions in the SDP and brokerage will be co-ordinated by the IP and overseen by the PIP. This will be internally quality assured by PIPs and our intention is that all support is provided based on need.

Once the support programme is agreed the IP is responsible for quality assuring the impact of this support with the headteacher and governors as appropriate. This will include regular discussions with the support team. This information will be shared with the LA.

Moving between Core and Enhanced Support

If schools are not demonstrating appropriate rates of progress towards achieving their improvement priorities then the IP will share this information with the school, governors, LA and CSC and a decision will then be made as to whether the school may need enhanced support. Similarly concerns raised by the LA will follow a similar process to enable the school to receive enhanced support. This reinforces the partnership approach to providing the best support for schools. IPs will then provide a detailed evaluation of progress with a judgement on the rate of progress. If the school, governors, LA and CSC agree that progress is appropriate, a discussion can then take place about moving the school to enhanced support. The same process exists if a school is making sufficient progress to move from Enhanced support.

Monitoring Progress

The IP will be providing challenge on behalf of the LA to ensure support is appropriate and that there is a measurable impact against the improvement priorities. IPs will provide termly progress evaluations on the school's progress in meeting its improvement priorities and identify or amend support as necessary. These evaluations will be captured in the School Improvement Partnership Log (SIPL) for the school. IPs will consider schools to be either 'on track' or 'off track'. For those schools who are in receipt of enhanced support, progress will be monitored more regularly, usually on a

half termly basis via progress review meetings. The IP will also provide a more detailed summative judgement on the rate of progress the school is making towards meeting its improvement priorities. Such judgements will be contained in the SIPL. The LA has access to the summative judgements contained within the individual school SIPLs. PIPs and IPs will share this information with LAs during the existing information sharing meetings. The judgements made fall into four categories and are assigned colours as indicated in the following table:

Very good progress	The school addresses the priority/recommendation in all respects. No aspects require further attention. There is very good impact on pupils' standards and progress/quality of provision/aspects of leadership. The school's capacity to maintain and build on this improved practice is very good.
Strong progress	The school addresses the priority/recommendation in most respects. Only minor aspects require attention. There is a positive impact on pupils' standards and progress/quality of provision/aspects of leadership. Most aspects have been covered already and there is little significant work left to do. The school's capacity to maintain and build on this improved practice is good.
Satisfactory progress	The school addresses the priority/recommendation in many respects. A few important aspects still require significant attention. The impact on pupils' standards and progress/quality of provision/aspects of leadership is not yet strong enough. Many aspects are addressed but there is still significant work to do in important areas.
Limited progress	The school does not meet the requirements of the priority/recommendation. All or many important aspects are awaiting attention. There is little or no discernible impact on pupils' standards and progress/quality of provision/ aspects of leadership. There is still much work to do and many aspects still to address. The school is not yet demonstrating strongly enough the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

A CSC report will also be produced by IPs for the governing bodies of all schools and will be shared in the summer term. The report will capture the progress the school has made during the year and will provide a summary of the support the school has received as well as the impact of professional learning.

Links with Local Authorities

IPs will continue to develop and foster collaborative working partnerships with LA colleagues. IPs are mindful of the individual systems and process in each LA and will work accordingly. Joint collaboration will facilitate an effective sharing of information to ensure a mutual understanding to enable effective school improvement. Termly LA performance meetings provide the opportunity for dialogue and information sharing.

IPs will continue using the successful strategies in place and will work with LA colleagues to adapt and improve where needs emerge. The PIP will continue to be a pivotal link with each LA and will ensure an effective two-way flow of information. We will ensure that LAs have regular feedback on the quality of provision and impact of support in all of their schools. Further links with LAs are identified in Framework for School Improvement.

Schools will continue to have the support they require and this will be monitored by IPs and shared with LAs. Where schools cause significant concern specific support and follow up mechanisms will be in place.

Deployment

All IPs are allocated up to 14-20 schools pro rata based on the need and characteristics of the schools. IPs work with the PIPs to allocate schools based on prior knowledge of these schools. An IP is responsible for the accurate understanding of the performance and needs of schools. It is the IPs responsibility to get to know schools well, establish and secure effective professional relationships and broker the correct support.

Deploying a range of professionals into a school would ensure effective and efficient use of resources and excellent value for money for the consortium and for the schools in the region.

A blended approach using a range of school improvement professionals and peer support schools will enable best support. No school is limited to the amount of support it receives. Support is allocated on a needs basis tightly linked to the SIP. The PIPs will ensure that this is reviewed and will be key in ensuring consistency is applied across each LA and the region. This also provides the opportunity to share effective and best practice across the CSC region.

The Assistant Director for Partnership and Improvement will work with the PIPs to monitor workload of staff and can allocate additional tasks to ensure efficiency. Local authorities are responsible for school improvement and this service is commissioned from CSC, directors in each LA will be responsible for holding CSC leaders to account for the progress in their schools. There is a collective responsibility across the consortium to ensure that children and young people have the best possible outcomes and all schools are supported in line with WG guidance.

IPs Schedule of Key Tasks

The framework below has an ongoing theme on pupils' learning, wellbeing and themes that will be discussed throughout the year. Our work will identify the schools starting point and ensure that support and challenge is appropriate to ensure all schools make progress. This schedule is not used as a 'tick list' but will remind staff and leaders as to key days when activity should be completed by, e.g. headteacher PM needs to be

completed by 31st December; however many schools have moved this into the first half- term to ensure that the staff targets can flow from the headteachers targets.

Dialogue to be structured around 5 fundamental questions for enquiry:

- What is the school's evaluation of this aspect?
- How do they know?
- What are they doing/planning to do to address any issues?
- How are they evaluating the success of their plans?
- What support do they require?

Annual Activities

School Improvement Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the needs of the priorities • Developing strong relationships • Influencing strategic direction of the school • Capturing first-hand evidence
Autumn Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the school improvement priorities and share with LA for approval • Co-construct a SDP identifying support • Broker support for priorities • Allocation of PDG, PL & RRRS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate Peer Partnerships • Discuss use of the Equity and Excellence strategy • Support GB to review headteacher's performance objectives and agree objectives for the current academic year • Collaboration funding
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review monitoring cycle and self-evaluation • Vulnerable Learners progress check focusing on participation, engagement and learning • Attendance and exclusion • CfW
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress towards priorities • Progress of all learners • Impact of PL • Quality assure the impact of brokered support with the HT and governors as appropriate • PDG evaluation
Spring Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion to focus on moving towards quality and effectiveness of Wellbeing, Learning and Teaching and Leadership. Signposting where appropriate to local, regional and national programmes and initiatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate impact of the PLG and PDG spend • Evaluate the effectiveness of the new ALNCo role as described in the ALN reform Act • Review monitoring cycle and self-evaluation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-being progress check linked to self-evaluation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress of learners Impact of PL Review impact of PDG spend Discuss and QA plans for new PDG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring of progress against agreed priorities in school improvement plan CfW Quality assure the impact of brokered support with the HT and governors as appropriate. Support Governing Body in reviewing progress against headteacher's performance objectives
Summer Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate effectiveness of school self-evaluation Review PDG spend Impact of PL Discuss PDG LAC cluster plans CfW
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What PL is planned that will support vulnerable learners for 2021-22 Effectiveness of the new ALNCo role as described in the ALN reform Act Quality assure the impact of brokered support with the HT and governors as appropriate Progress of all learners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Governing Body Report GB Meeting Complete review of impact of current priorities and agree future priorities including identification of possible support
Enhanced Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half-termly progress report and review of position agreed with the school, Principal Improvement Partner and LA representatives Regular discussions and information sharing with the support team and the LA
Other Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estyn pre inspection reports/Estyn follow up Senior Appointments in Schools RRRS Spending plans/Impact Reporting on KS4/5 Curriculum Offer meeting the Learning and Skills measure EOTAS reporting/Attendance Collaboration funding LA Priorities Wellbeing support/conversations

Appendix 2: Curriculum for Wales Survey Summary Report – RCT

Date written: October 2021

Report authors: Natalie Gould & Louise Muteham

Purpose:

- To share the findings of the CSC Curriculum for Wales survey undertaken in the summer term 2021.
- To outline the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats suggested through the survey in the region for Curriculum for Wales and other intelligence from the region.
- To share the next steps of the CSC professional learning opportunities and support for schools in the realisation of Curriculum for Wales (CfW).

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of Curriculum Implementation

- This report is a SWOT analysis of the survey of all schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).
- Since designing and sharing the survey with schools, Welsh Government have stated that numerical data on school readiness should not be collected, shared or used for any scrutiny or comparison. Therefore, percentage numbers have not been included in this report.
Future versions of the survey will focus on a narrative account of activity which will then be analysed to consider core themes, identify schools to share practice and schools that require focused support.
- The quantities generated for each statement are based on those schools that scored themselves 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (fully).

Strengths

- Professional learning:
 - A majority of schools in RCT are engaged with the cross regional CfW professional learning programme.
- Engagement phase:
 - A majority of schools report they have developed a whole school understanding of a purpose led curriculum.
 - Many schools report they have considered how the four purposes drive all school priorities.
 - Over half of schools report they have developed a vision of curriculum and the learning and teaching that supports it.
 - A majority of schools report they have made connections to wider reforms (Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act and Welsh in Education) to ensure activity is mutually reinforced.

- A majority of schools report they have developed an agreed view of priorities for and strategic approach to developing teaching in the school.
- A majority of schools report they have led a culture for change with ongoing conversations at all levels and time to understand and engage with changes.
- A majority of schools report they have understood the importance and value of knowledge, skills and experiences and the role each plays in enabling learning, as set out in the CfW guidance.
- Many schools report they have evaluated current practice and learning from responding to COVID-19.
- Designing, planning and trialling phase:
 - A majority of schools report they are ensuring engagement with professional learning and that it supports the development of teaching.

Weaknesses

- Subjectivity: Judgements made are subjective according to a school and/or IP perception.
- Engagement phase:
 - A minority of schools report they have built understanding of the curriculum model and approach to assessment set out in the CfW guidance amongst all staff.
- Designing, planning and trialling phase.
 - A minority of schools report engaging with their cluster on designing the curriculum.
 - A minority of schools report engaging with another networks of schools on designing the curriculum.
 - A minority of schools report beginning the design process involving all stakeholders - including learners, all practitioners and governors - and involving parents/carers and the local community.
 - A minority of schools report ensuring there are arrangements in place to secure engagement of key groups, including governors, and developing their understanding of the curriculum.

Opportunities

- Designing, planning and trialling phase. Around half of schools report that they are:
 - Setting out design principles to ensure high standards and enable at least good progress for all learners.
 - Engaging in professional dialogue with networks to identify and solve school curriculum challenges.
 - Demonstrating an integrated approach to implementation of wider education reform.
 - Developing approaches for the mandatory elements of the curriculum.

- Many schools report that they have considered their current practice as a result of COVID, whilst just over half have considered their vision for curriculum and the learning and teaching that supports it. 'Curriculum for Wales: The journey to curriculum roll-out' (September 2021) gives guidance to schools on both responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on learners and preparing for reform. The guidance states that it: 'aims to give a clear set of expectations for what curriculum design and learning should focus on for both:
 - 'renew' - adapting and reprioritising learning and teaching to ensure learners progress in light of COVID-19 and
 - 'reform' - preparing for the roll out of Curriculum for Wales.
 This recognises that the same principles for curriculum design, learning and teaching are critical for both.'

- Through the aspirations of curriculum reform, and the Curriculum for Wales framework and guidance:
 - Four Purposes: All learners in RCT to have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
 - Equity: All learners in RCT to have access to a curriculum and the pedagogy that meets their needs.
 - Workforce: All practitioners in RCT are enabled to function as part of a high-quality workforce through professional learning.
 - Leadership: Empowered in RCT can make informed school improvement decisions to meet the needs of their school.
 - Accountability: An improved system of accountability will drive more appropriate behaviour in the system.
 - Schools as Learning Organisations (SLO): Through the SLO model, all schools in RCT are enabled to respond to changes.
 - National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry (NSERE): All schools in RCT to be evidence informed and able to engage with research.

Threats

- There is a difference between the majority of RCT schools who report they have understood the importance and value of knowledge, skills and experiences and the role each plays in enabling learning as set out in the CfW guidance, when compared to the minority who report to have built an understanding of the curriculum model. Knowledge, skills and experience are integral to curriculum design as they will enable learning, support learners to progress in the concepts set out within the statements of what matters, and embody the four purposes, (Welsh Government, 2021).

- Few schools are engaging with their cluster on designing the curriculum. This will need to be considered more carefully if a 3–16 continuum is to be realised.

- COVID: The capacity of schools to engage in planning and preparations for CfW and the related professional learning and support available.

- Variability: The variability of standards that are planned for and achieved across schools with regard to both outcomes and well-being.
- Standardisation: Without an agreed national standard of expectations/outcomes for learners there is a risk that schools may not accurately plan their curriculum appropriately challenging or will remain aligned to prior systems that do not reflect the learning in their school level curriculum.
- Summative assessments: Without agreed summative assessments there is uncertainty in the system.
- Qualifications: Without the revised qualifications there is uncertainty in the system and a reluctance by many schools to plan the secondary curriculum.

Next steps in CSC to support RCT schools

- CSC is committed to supporting all schools in RCT as required in their journey of curriculum roll-out through the Central South Wales Challenge and brokered support.
- The CSC Strategic Lead and Associate Advisers for curriculum will continue to work with the CSC school improvement team to visit schools in RCT to capture examples of practice to share locally, regionally and nationally.
- Schools in RCT identified as less fully advanced in their journey to curriculum roll-out will receive focussed, targeted support.
- CSC officers will continue to work with RCT officers to support schools in the journey to curriculum roll-out, including the partnership working on a number of local authority curriculum focused projects.
- CSC officers will work with regional colleagues, Estyn, trade unions and Welsh Government to agree the system's expectations of schools and reporting arrangements.
- Further development of the CSC website and the new CSC Curriculum for Wales website to ensure that all information, guidance, resources and professional learning to support schools in the journey to curriculum roll-out is easily accessible and available. This will include sharing of school practice.
- Professional learning continues to be a priority at both a regional and national level. The CSC team will continue to work with stakeholders to identify needs and use this to inform the professional learning offer.
- A cross-regional project is being developed of working parties of practitioners to co-construct models of high-level curriculum design. RCT schools will be invited to apply to participate in the project.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 21/22

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16TH FEBRUARY 2022

SCHOOL BASED COUNSELLING

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services (Tel No: 01443 744008)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with an overview of the provision and effectiveness of counselling services for children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) during the academic year 2020/21 and to inform Elected Members of current plans to ensure ongoing provision that meets the needs of service users.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Consider if any further information is required.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 1st April 2013 the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 came into force. This Act places a statutory duty on local authorities (LAs) to provide an independent counselling service in respect of health, emotional and social needs for children and young people in their area.
- 3.2 At the same time that this new Act came into force, the specific grant funding for independent counselling services transferred to Local Authorities' Revenue Support Grants as part of the Local Government Settlement. LAs are consequently

required to make reasonable provision of counselling services for children and young people aged between 11 and 18 and for year 6 pupils. All children and young people residing in RCT are entitled to access counselling services, irrespective of whether they attend school or not.

- 3.3 The 2013 Act requires the LA to provide an independent counselling service on the site of each secondary school that it maintains and also offer counselling services at other locations for young people who are not in school and/or wish to access counselling outside of a formal education setting.
- 3.4 Within schools, counselling is a specialist intervention that complements other approaches to support the health and wellbeing of learners, such as school based wellbeing interventions and pastoral support or more specialist interventions from LA central support teams such as the Educational Psychology Service or Behaviour Support Service, as well as services provided externally through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- 3.5 The appointment of counselling services in each LA is carried out via a tendering process every three to five years. In RCT the Eye to Eye Young People's Counselling Service is currently contracted to provide the statutory service within schools and in the community. In addition to the statutory requirements of the 2013 Act, the LA commissions Eye to Eye to provide counselling services to primary aged pupils aged 7–10 years (Academic Years 3–5) and for young people from age 19–25 years. The current contract has been in place since July 2019 and is due to end in August 2022.
- 3.6 Eye to Eye is a registered charity comprising of a professional team of fully qualified counsellors who are registered with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and who practice in line with the BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy. The organisation consists of 17 employed counsellors (10 fte) and 6 volunteer counsellors who work in the community setting in the evening. Volunteer counsellors may still be in training but their practice is supervised by a fully qualified and BACP certified counsellor. Community based counselling is provided in community buildings on the site of Bryncelynog Comprehensive School and 4 outreach centres across the county borough.
- 3.7 During the academic year (2017/18) a Counselling Service Management Board was established, comprising representation from the Educational Psychology Service, Children Looked After (CLA) team, Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS), Youth Engagement service, a local Secondary Headteacher, LA Funding Flexibilities Team and the Eye to Eye Counselling Service. The purpose of the management board, is to ensure that the Eye to Eye Counselling Service is meeting the requirements set out in their contract, that the service provided meets the needs of children and young people in RCT and to consider the necessary requirements of an effective counselling service for children and young people, as we move towards the next tendering process.

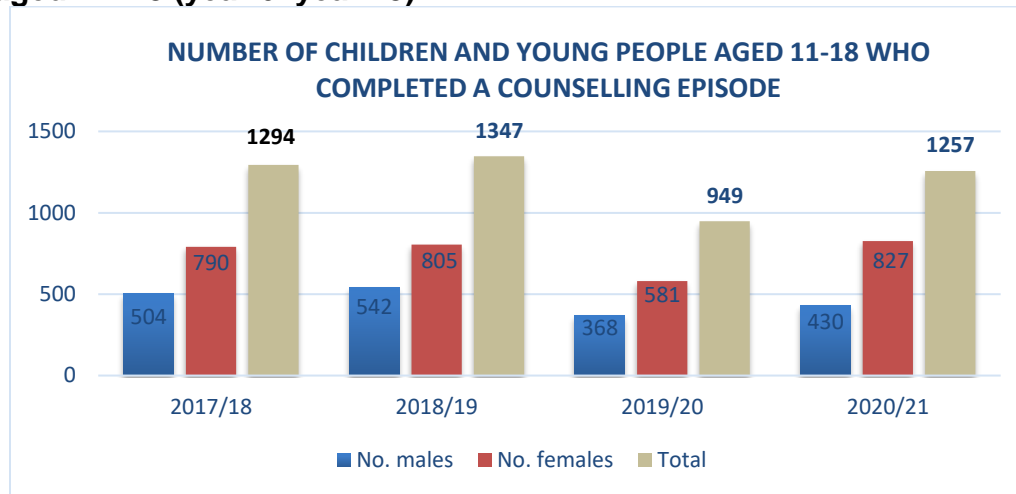
- 3.8 For the financial year 2020/21 Welsh Government provided all local authorities across Wales with additional funding to enhance their school and community-based counselling provision due to the anticipated increased need to support the emotional and mental wellbeing of learners as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. RCT received additional funding of £102,364 which was used to support priority areas specified by Welsh Government for the use of the funding: reducing waiting lists for counselling and increasing capacity; facilitating the delivery of support to young people in line with current requirements around social distancing; supporting work already underway to meet the needs of young people below the current year 6 statutory counselling threshold. References to the use of additional funding and impact will be linked to the appropriate sections of the report.
- 3.9 In March 2021, Welsh Government published its statutory guidance '*Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing*'. The school-based Step 4 model is supported by the overarching principles outlined in the Framework, which include:
- The responsibility for all school staff to take a whole-school approach to the promotion of good mental health and emotional wellbeing is universal and integral to a successful school environment.
 - A whole-school approach that puts the child at the centre of decisions made about them needs partnership and involvement with families, the community, other statutory bodies and the third sector.
 - A whole-school approach promotes equity for all, reducing variation and using evidence-based practices consistently and transparently, in terms of both use of data for planning and any interventions.
- 3.10 As part of its overarching strategy to support a whole-school approach to wellbeing Welsh Government has provided further grant funding to local authorities for the financial year 2021/22 of which RCT received an initial allocation of £143,080 and a further £119,592 in September 2021 following a successful proposal for additional resources. The Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing Funding has been made available specifically to support the changing mental health needs of children and young people in Wales, and in recognition of the effect that being away from school and other regular networks has had on young people during the pandemic. An overview of targeted grant funded activities is provided within the body of this report.

4. UPDATE/CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Graph 1 details the number of young people who completed counselling during the four-year period from 2017/18 to 2020/21. The graph shows an increase in the number of children and young people aged 11-18 completing counselling support in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20. However, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic during academic year 2019/20, whereby lengthy periods of school closure resulted in a significant reduction in referrals from schools, it is not possible to make direct data comparisons between the last two academic years. It is

considered more reliable to view the data over the four-year period indicated in Graph 1 which includes data for two academic years prior to the pandemic. In this context, the graph shows that the number of young people completing counselling in 2020/21 is slightly lower than the numbers reported in the two academic years prior to COVID-19, reflecting a slight reduction for this age group compared to 2017/18 and 2018/19. This in turn reflects a reduction in the number of referrals received in 2020/21 compared to 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Graph 1: Number of children and young people who completed counselling aged 11–18 (year 6–year 13)



4.2 During this four-year period, significantly more females than males continue to complete counselling, with males representing only 34% of the overall cohort. This is a decrease of 5% compared to 2019/20 and the lowest percentage of males completing counselling within this cohort since 2017/18.

4.3 As previously reported, poor engagement of males in counselling is an ongoing matter of concern across Wales and not an issue that relates specifically to RCT. Eye to Eye have undertaken a number of actions to promote the use of counselling services to males. These include:

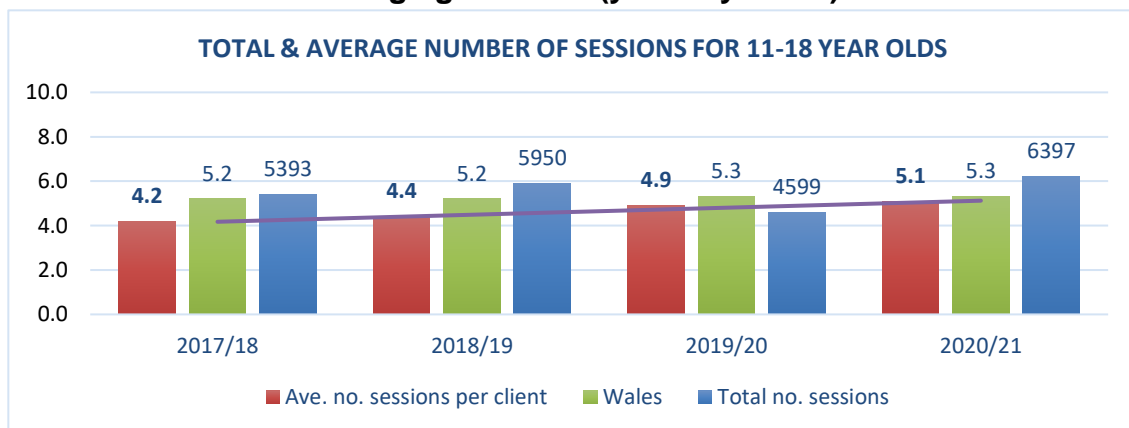
- The introduction of an electronic referral system for schools so that male pupils do not have to leave class to attend counselling but can discreetly access online counselling at home.
- Collaboration with Interlink, New Horizons Mental Health, Valley Steps and Valleys Kids to promote therapy through flyers and online messages.
- Targeted advertising on Facebook to adult males to encourage young male engagement.
- Recruitment of 2 outreach response workers via Lottery funding, who visit community groups, e.g. Gilfach Goch youth project, and target males to discuss mental health and how to seek support.
- Development of integrated pathways to take into account all agencies working with young people and males.

- Use of the Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) online platform to encourage males to seek help.
- Working alongside primary schools to upskill staff on recognising specific behaviours in male pupils who may benefit from counselling support.
- Targeted social media information for rugby/football clubs promoting mental health engagement.

4.4 Due to ongoing concerns regarding the uptake of males in counselling services, an element of the additional funding provided by Welsh Government for 2021/22 is being used to undertake a project designed specifically to identify the reasons for their low engagement. This information will be used by the Counselling Management Board to identify collaborative strategic actions to address identified barriers to males accessing counselling and also to consider the contribution that alternative support services could make in supporting the mental health wellbeing of young males. The project will be supported by the production of a short film in which young males talk about their mental health, barriers to seeking support and completing counselling.

4.5 Graph 2 indicates that the average number of counselling sessions attended by young people over the last four academic years has increased annually from 4.2 in 2017/18 to 5.1 in 2020/21. This is slightly lower than the national average of 5.3. (National data is not yet published for 2020/21 and, therefore, until this is available, 2019/20 national data is used for comparison). The 6,397 sessions in 2020/21 consisted of 3,723 face-to-face sessions and 2,674 remote sessions.

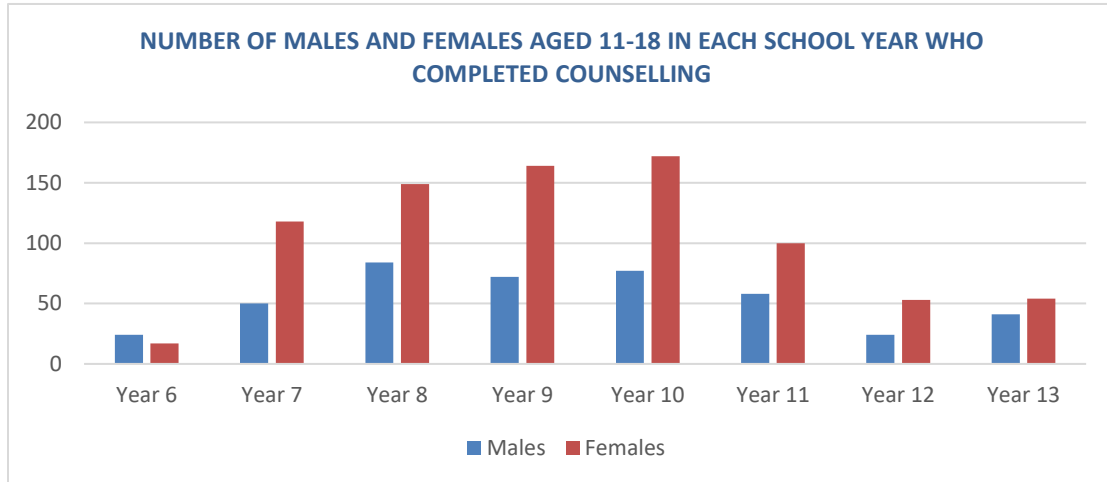
Graph 2: Number of sessions attended by young people who completed counselling aged 11–18 (year 6–year 13)



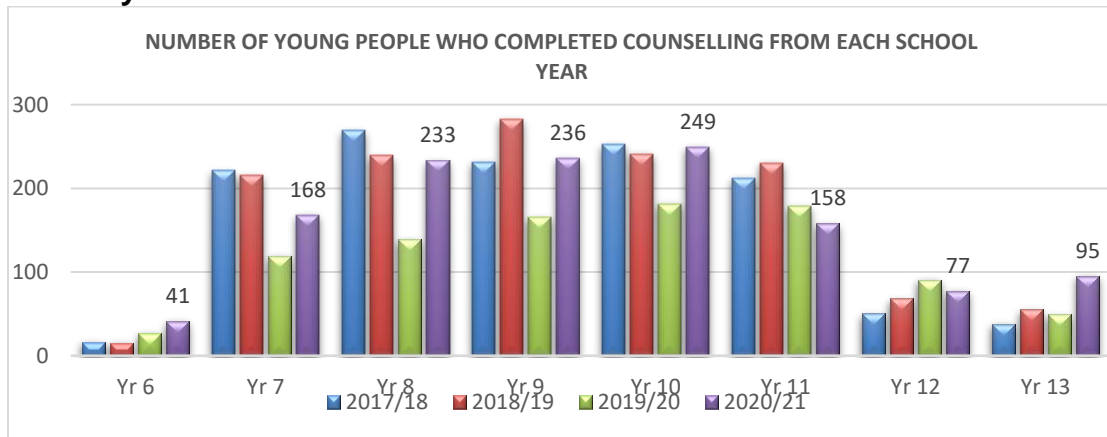
4.6 Data in Graph 3 indicates that during academic year 2020/21, year 10 (249), year 9 (236) and year 8 (233) pupils used the counselling service the most. Despite this being a general trend over the past 4 years, there was a notable percentage increase of 37.5%, 43% and 67.6% respectively in the numbers completing counselling within these year groups in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20. Although a much smaller cohort, the number of young people completing counselling in year

13 was significantly higher than any previous year, with a 94% increase in 2020/21 to the previous academic year as illustrated in Graph 4. Despite an increase of 51% in the number of year 6 pupils completing counselling the number remains low overall in comparison to other year groups but has shown a steady increase since 2017/18.

Graph 3: Number of young people aged 11-18 in each school year who completed counselling by gender

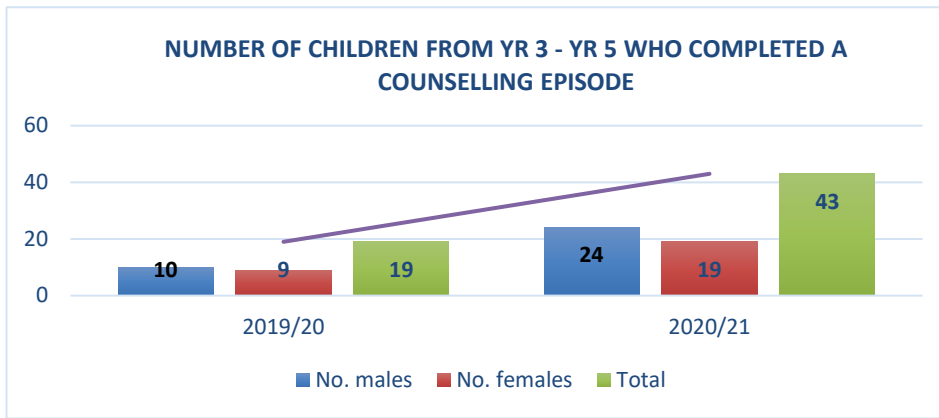


Graph 4 – Number of young people who completed counselling from each school year 2017/18 to 202/21



4.7 Under the current contract, Eye to Eye has been commissioned to provide counselling services to primary aged children in school years 3-5 since September 2019. As such, comparison data is only available over 2 academic years. The number of referrals received for this age group in 2020/21 increased in comparison to 2019/20. In turn, the number of year 3-5 pupils completing counselling increased by 70% in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20 as illustrated in Graph 5. It is encouraging to note that, of the 43 children who completed counselling sessions, 55.8% were males.

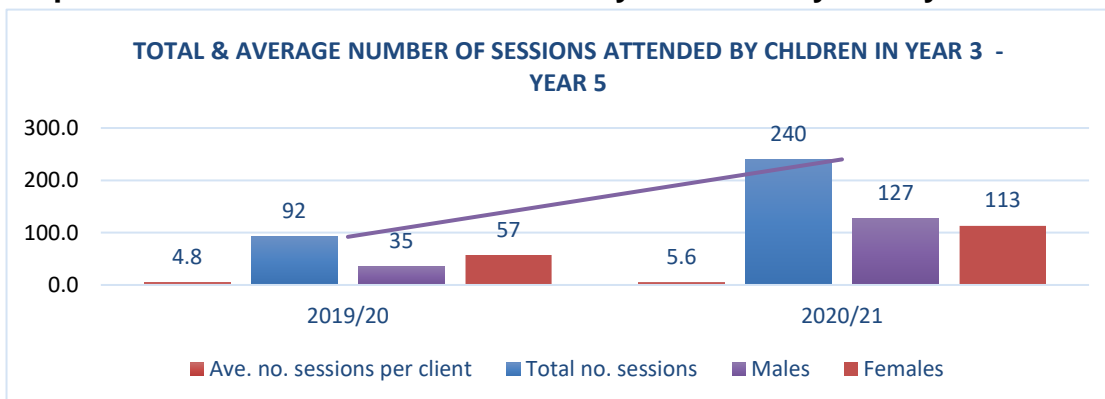
Graph 5: Number of children from year 3– year 5 who completed a counselling episode



4.8 The criterion for referral into counselling for the year 3-5 cohort is in place to support pupils suffering from significant trauma or bereavement/loss. As such, children attending counselling in this cohort have very complex needs and require a collaborative approach that involves parents in supporting counselling therapy objectives. Primary counsellors work closely with the Resilient Families Team to ensure there is an all-family approach to the emotional and mental health of young clients.

4.9 Graph 6 demonstrates that the average number of counselling sessions attended by children in years 3–5 over the past two academic years has increased from 4.8 in 2019/20 to 5.6 in 2020/21. This, combined with the increase in the number of children in this cohort completing counselling has resulted in a significant increase in the total number of sessions delivered. Of the 240 sessions 54 were delivered face to face and 186 were delivered remotely.

Graph 6: Number of sessions attended by children in year 3–year 5



4.10 Table 1 demonstrates the percentage of young people with special characteristics completing counselling, as a proportion of the total number of young people who completed counselling. These special characteristics include Special Educational Needs (SEN), a registered disability or where a child is looked after (CLA) by the LA. Despite a slight percentage decrease in the number of young people with special characteristics completing counselling in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20 it is pleasing to note that the actual number of young people accessing counselling increased significantly to near pre-COVID levels. The number of CLA completing

counselling remains low, and due to the very low numbers involved, fluctuations in terms of increases and decreases are inevitable.

Table 1: Percentage of young people with special characteristics

Year	Group	Total	Total No. C&YP who had counselling	%
2020/21	SEN	80	1,257	6%
	Disability	21		1.6%
	CLA	19		1.5%
2019/20	SEN	85	949	9%
	Disability	23		2%
	CLA	21		2%
2018/19	SEN	109	1,347	8%
	Disability	44		3%
	CLA	14		1%
2017/18	SEN	136	1,294	11%
	Disability	24		2%
	CLA	15		1%

- 4.11 Eye to Eye has worked collaboratively with Children’s Services and the CLA Education Team to facilitate referrals for CLA to the service, including a system for social workers to refer directly to the service for CLA living both in and out of county, promotional activities for staff and foster carers and the development of a fast track system for CLA and at-risk young people to the service.
- 4.12 Eye to Eye has reported that it is likely that the numbers of CLA completing counselling are under-represented due to factors such as referrers not always being aware of the CLA status of children and children and young people who self-refer or who are looked after by relatives not always identifying themselves as CLA. Eye to Eye report that they are working with relevant agencies to clarify the above.
- 4.13 Whilst recognising the benefits of counselling for many of our learners, it is important to acknowledge that there are a number of other approaches that may be considered more appropriate to address the very significant and complex needs of CLA than traditional school-based counselling. Research tells us that approaches led or contributed to by adults who know the child and that involve the main carer for consistency are likely to achieve the best outcomes for CLA. Children who have experienced developmental trauma need time to develop trust in adults which is more easily achieved with adults they know and who are present

throughout the week in other aspects of their life. In such cases, a key worker, relationship-based approach is considered to be more effective than working with external adults through a time-limited formal counselling model. To this end, the CLA Education team offers a comprehensive support package for schools, foster carers and residential staff, to enhance their expertise in how to implement a range of effective evidence-based approaches and interventions to support CLA learners. These include:

- Training for foster carers which includes Parenting with PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) (6 week course), LSA and Emotion Coaching.
- CLA Friendly School Training.
- Training on attachment and Introduction to PACE for schools.
- Training for residential staff in care homes in ELSA, emotion coaching and relationship-based play.
- Circle of Understanding meetings and Enhanced Case Management for CLA who are struggling with their wellbeing.

4.14 An analysis of the gender differences exhibited for the five most common forms of predominant issues for young people aged 11-18 years is highlighted in Table 2. In 2020/21, 'anxiety' maintained its status as the predominant issue for young people aged 11-18 years for the second consecutive academic year, replacing 'family' as the predominant issue for the previous three academic years. Apart from 'Relationships other', which replaced 'Anger', all four other issues are the same as last academic year. Eye to Eye report that anxiety relating to COVID-19 is the main presenting issue for the second academic year, with significant and complex anxieties relating to having lost or fearing the loss of a parent to COVID, the death of someone close due to COVID and limited availability of support services during the pandemic presenting as the predominant themes within this area.

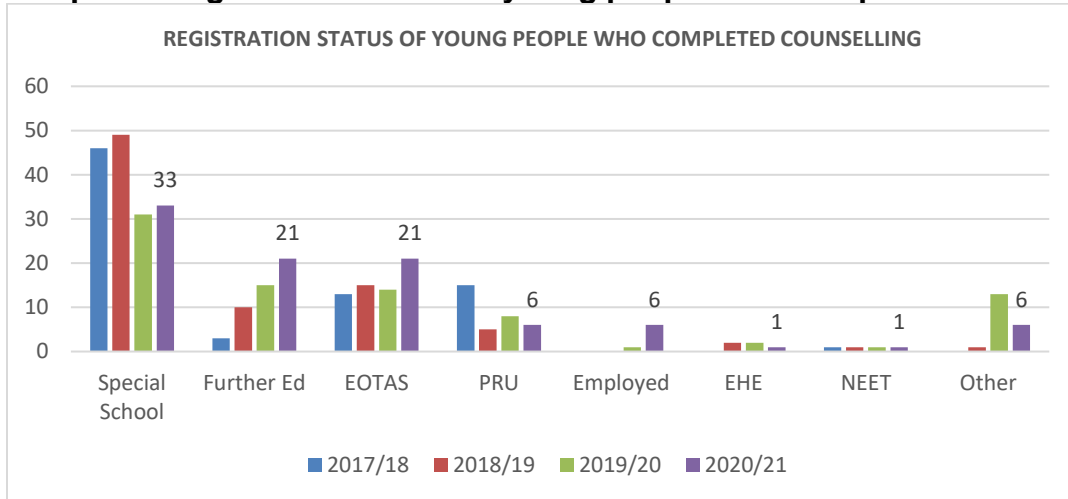
Table 2: 2020/21 Gender split for the five most common predominant issues for young people aged 11-18 years

Gender split for the five most common predominant issues for young people aged 11-18 years			
	Male	Female	Total
Anxiety	162	387	549
Family	128	264	392
Self-worth	69	163	232
Bereavement	68	84	152
Relationships other	34	97	131

4.15 The predominant issue for primary aged children in years 3-5 in 2020/21 was 'anxiety', closely followed by 'bereavement' and 'family' issues.

4.16 The majority of young people aged 11-18 who completed counselling (1,167 out of the overall cohort of 1,257 young people) were registered at mainstream schools. The lower figures from provisions other than mainstream school are reflective of the lower numbers of young people attending these different provisions and are consistent with data over the past four academic years. Graph 7 demonstrates the provisions attended by those completing counselling who did not attend mainstream schools.

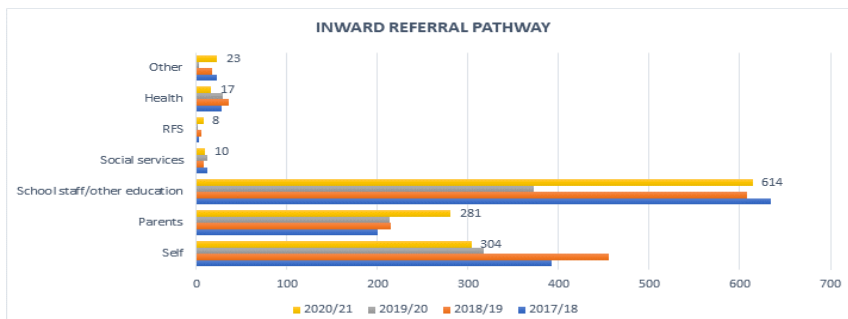
Graph 7: Registration status of young people who completed counselling



4.17 Following a notable reduction in the number of referrals made to the counselling service during 2019/20, largely as a result of school closures, the number of referrals increased across both the 11-18 year old (year 6–year 13) and the year 3–year 5 cohorts in 2020/21. At 1,388 the number of year 6–year 13 referrals for 2020/21 are still slightly below the 1,472 referrals received in 2018/19. Graph 8 shows the number of inward referrals relating to children and young people who completed counselling over academic year 2020/21. The majority of these referrals continue to be made by school staff. In 2020/21, 49% of referrals were made by schools or other educational establishments, 24% through self-referral and 22% made by parents. The other 5% were made by Health, Social Services and ‘other’. This data has been consistent over the past four academic years.

4.18 The high number of parental and self-referrals suggests a high level of awareness of the counselling service and is a positive indicator that young people, in particular females, are proactively choosing to seek help and engage in counselling.

Graph 8: Inward referral pathway



- 4.19 Information has been gathered in relation to young people who did not complete counselling following a referral. Previous concerns relating to the high number of unsuitable referrals received by the service resulted in the development of an integrated referral pathway in 2019. The pathway provides guidance to schools and other referring agencies regarding a range of approaches and interventions that should be considered as part of a graduated response to meeting the needs of young people prior to making a referral to Eye to Eye. The pathway also provides guidance on alternative support/interventions that may be deemed more appropriate than counselling to support the individual young person's needs. Following the implementation of the pathway, the number of unsuitable referrals declined to only 1.8% of the overall number of referrals in 2019/20 compared to 4.1% in 2017/18. Although this figure increased to 3.2% during 2020/21 it is encouraging that only 0.7% of the overall percentage were deemed unsuitable due to not following the pathway. Other reasons included pupils moving out of area, issues being resolved, support being accessed elsewhere and poor engagement due to attendance issues at school. Positively, only 4.5% of young people who were accepted for counselling declined to take part compared to 10.5% in 2019/20.
- 4.20 In relation to the length of time children and young people have to wait for counselling following referral, it is not possible to make direct comparisons with previous trend data. This is due to a change in the way that waiting times are now recorded whereby working days have replaced calendar days. Consequently, a new baseline for monitoring performance for waiting times will be established from 2020/21 onwards. Data for 2020/21 indicates that 84% of young people commenced counselling within 20 working days of referral with a further 11% attending their first session between 20-30 working days. Although not a direct comparison, 89% of young people aged 11-18 commenced counselling within 30 calendar days of referral in 2019/20. This suggests that improvement to waiting times has been sustained since the introduction of the referral pathway and referral triage system in 2019.
- 4.21 Data relating to the waiting times for children in year 3–5 is less positive with 64% commencing counselling within 20 working days and a further 21% within 20–24 days. In 2019/20, 77% of this cohort received their first counselling session within 20 calendar days.
- 4.22 In comparison, 97% of young people aged 19-25 received their first session within 20 working days.
- 4.23 Additional Welsh Government funding provided to local authorities during the financial year 2020/21 to reduce waiting lists for school-based counselling was used to provide an additional 316 counselling sessions to young people in both the Easter and Summer holiday periods during academic year 2019/20. It is likely that this contributed to the reduction in waiting times for young people from September 2020 onwards. Additionally, an element of the Welsh Government additional funding was used to enhance the capacity of the Youth Engagement & Participation Service (YEPS) to deliver a pre and post counselling support initiative

designed specifically to support learner wellbeing during the COVID-19 period. This enhanced support provided over 360 one-to-one sessions to young people remotely, with most sessions undertaken outside of school hours, during evenings and weekends. Support offered to young people included talking sessions, sleeping and relaxation techniques, mindfulness activities and anxiety management for when they are on school site.

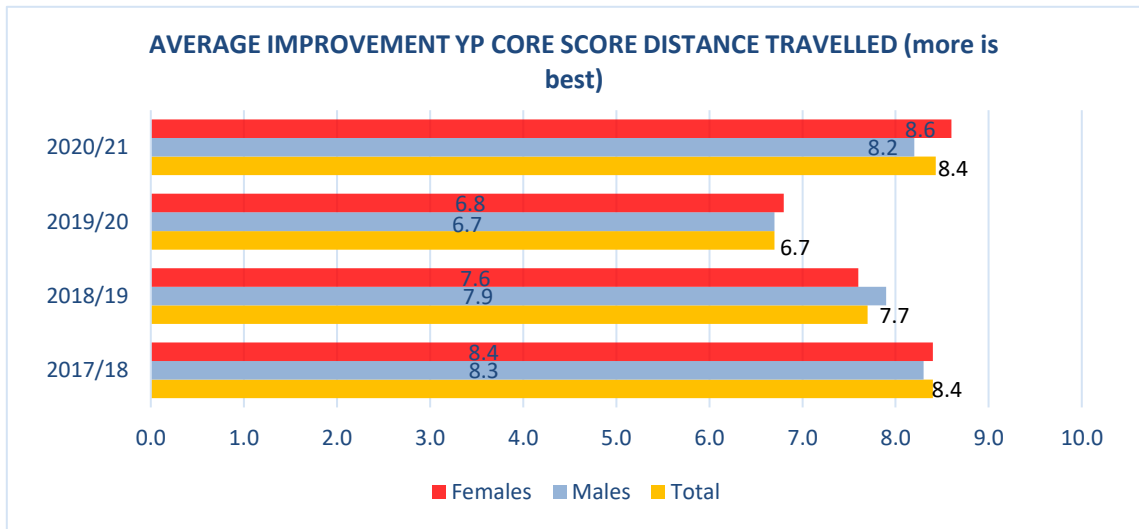
4.24 In addition, between April and August 2021, a further 20 of the young people aged 11-18 completed 71 sessions of counselling by recruiting additional temporary counsellors to the Service through the use of the 2021/22 Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing Funding. This additional funding will be used to provide enhanced counselling services to more young people during academic year 2021/22.

4.25 Other activities identified for expenditure of the above additional funding include:

- The YEPS First Step Forward Project which provides support to young people who are struggling to attend school due to anxiety and other related wellbeing issues.
- The engagement of pilot schools in the co-creation of a Peer to Peer Emotional and Wellbeing Support Service.
- Education & Wellbeing Theatre Programme – interactive drama wellbeing workshop.
- A range of training opportunities including Trauma Informed Approaches and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy that will enhance the capacity and expertise of schools and central specialist support services to support the emotional wellbeing of learners.

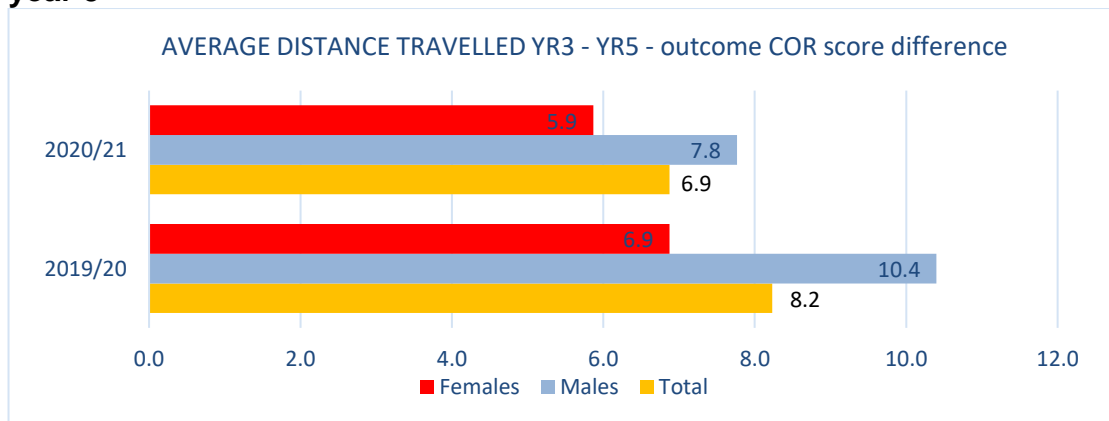
4.26 In order to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of counselling Eye to Eye uses the Young Person's CORE assessment for young people aged 11-18 years old. This is a 10 item self-report measure of emotional wellbeing and is a useful tool for measuring progress. Scores from the first and last counselling sessions are measured to evaluate the impact of therapeutic intervention upon the young people's emotional distress. Concerns were raised in the previous report to Children and Young People Scrutiny committee regarding the year on year decline in the average improvement in the Young Person's CORE score for this cohort between 2017/18 and 2019/20, notwithstanding the fact that Eye to Eye highlighted the unprecedented impact of COVID upon the complexity of issues experienced by clients as the major contributory factor to the notable decline in 2019/20. Encouragingly, the CORE score for 2020/21 demonstrates improvement for the first time in the past four academic year period, with an average improvement of 1.7 points compared to 2019/20. (See Graph 9)

Graph 9: Average Improvement Young People CORE Score (11-18 year olds)



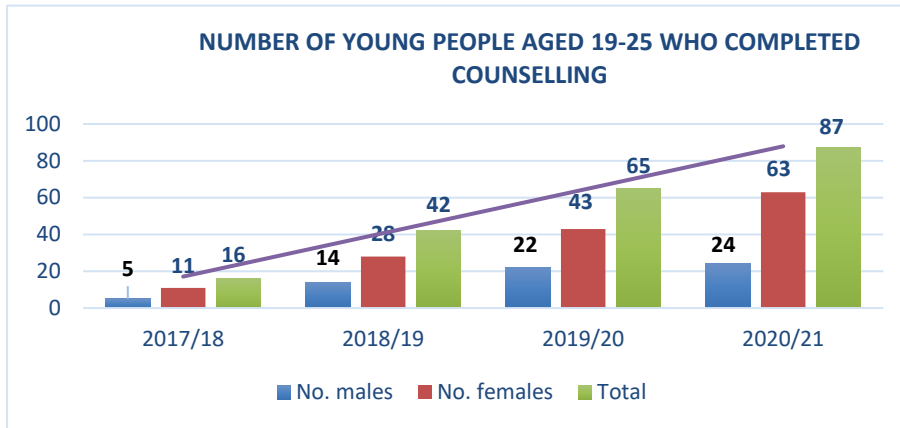
4.27 The impact of counselling for the year 3 to year 5 cohort is measured by the COR assessment. This is a simple, session by session four-item self-report measure designed to assess areas of life functioning known to change as a result of therapeutic input. The scores from the first session and last session are measured to provide the therapeutic movement of emotional distress during counselling sessions with a lower score at the last session indicating improvement. As illustrated in Graph 10, the average improvement gain for children in years 3–5 during 2020/21 demonstrated reduced impact overall in comparison to 2019/20. Eye to Eye report that this can be attributed to the increased severity of need amongst this cohort due to COVID related issues combined with the majority of counselling sessions being delivered online, resulting in less meaningful engagement of children in interactive therapy approaches such as play-based counselling which are considered most effective when delivered face-to-face.

Graph 10: Average Improvement Young People COR for children in year 3-year 5



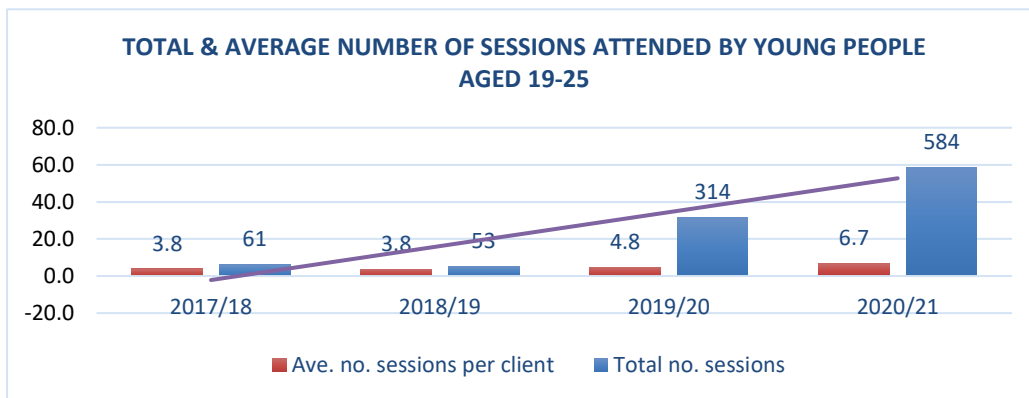
4.28 Eye to Eye has seen a year on year increase in the number of young people aged 19-25 years completing counselling since 2017/18 as demonstrated in Graph 11 below. Despite targeted interventions to encourage more males to take up counselling, the percentage of males completing counselling in 2020/21 decreased to 28% of the overall cohort compared to 34% in 2019/20 and 31% in 2017/18.

Graph 11: Number of Young People aged 19-25 who completed counselling



4.29 Graph 12 highlights a significant increase in the number of counselling sessions attended by the 19-25 age cohort for the second consecutive academic year with the average number of sessions attended increasing from 4.8 in 2019/20 to 6.7 in 2020/21. Eye to Eye have reported that remote delivery all sessions to this cohort due to COVID was more time-efficient, which allowed the service to increase the number of available sessions.

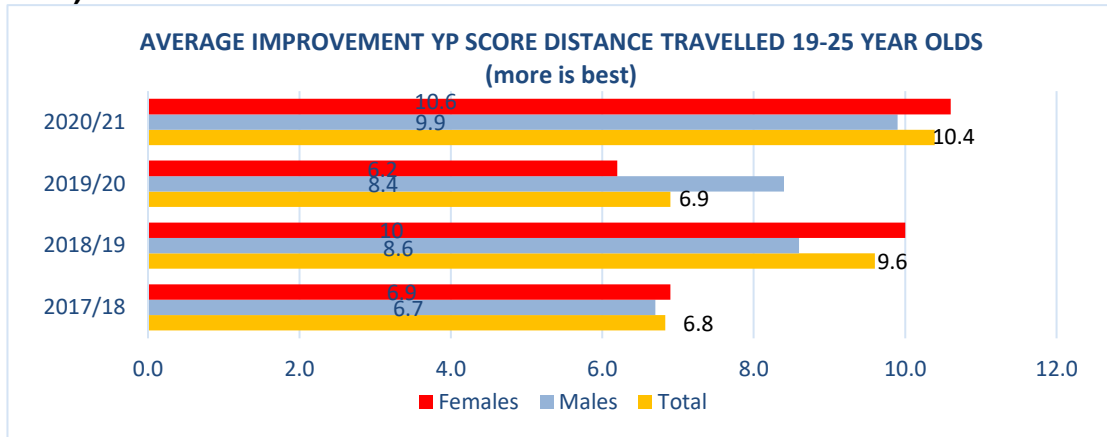
Graph 12: Number of sessions attended by young people aged 19-25



4.30 Data indicates that the most significant predominant issue for young people aged 19-25 in 2020/21 was 'anxiety', followed by 'family', 'depression', 'self-worth' and 'bereavement' respectively as the top 5 presenting predominant issues.

4.31 The effectiveness and impact of counselling on young people aged 19-25 is measured using the Young Person's CORE Score. Following a significant decline in the average improvement score from 9.6 in 2018/19 to 6.9 in 2019/20, there has been a notable improvement with an average improvement score of 10.4 in 2020/21, as illustrated in Graph 13. This is attributed in the main to the ability of the service to offer an increased number of sessions to clients.

Graph 13: Average Improvement Young People CORE Score (19-25 year olds)



4.32 Service evaluations are carried out every year with the young people using the service. It is not mandatory for service users to complete an evaluation. The number of evaluations completed for 2020/21 increased significantly from 372 evaluations in 2019/20 to 763 in 2020/21. The outcomes are extremely positive with regards their views of counselling as an effective way of dealing with their problems and, notably for the youngest cohort, with regards their voice/views being listened to and valued.

Table 4: Service Evaluations completed by service users aged 11-18 years (year 6–year 13) and aged 19-25 years

	Yr 6-Yr13	19-25
No. evaluations completed	706 (54%)	34 (39%)
% easy to get an appointment	98%	94%
% a good way of dealing with your problems	96%	100%
% impression of the service was 'good' or 'great	94%	100%

Table 5: Service Evaluations completed by service users in year 3-year 5

	Yr 3-Yr 5
No. evaluations completed	23 (53%)
% they were listened too	98%
% what they talked about was important.	93%
% liked what they did.	98%
% would like to do it again.	96%

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as the contents of this report are for information purposes only.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 No consultation exercises have been undertaken.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 The current contract with Eye to Eye Counselling Services is for 3 years and expires 31/08/22 with the option to extend for a further year. The current value of the contract is £400k and increased from £376k during 2019/20. The contract is reported within the financial position of Community and Children's Services Group.

7.2 In addition to the above, Welsh Government have provided the following additional funding via the Local Authority Education Grant:

- 2020/21 £102,364
- 2021/22 £143,080
- 2021/22 £119,592 (additional grant award)

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

9.1 One of the key priorities of the RCT Corporate Plan 2020-2024 Making a Difference is to 'Encourage residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing'. It is considered that an effective counselling service is key to ensuring that the needs of vulnerable young people are met, in order for them to develop independent coping strategies, build good mental health and positive lives. The vision and working practices of the counselling service support the council to implement the Wellbeing Goals of the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act (Wales).

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 Following a significant reduction in the number of children and young people being referred for counselling during 2019/20, largely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is encouraging to note that there was an overall increase in the number of children and young people referred for counselling during academic year 2020/21 compared to 2019/20. This, in turn, resulted in an increase in the number of children and young people who completed counselling during 2020/21 compared to 2019/20.

10.2 In September 2019, Eye to Eye counselling services were extended to include primary children aged 7-10 years (years 3-5). Baseline data established in 2019/20 indicates a notable increase in the number of children in this cohort completing counselling in 2020/21, together with a significant increase in the number of sessions delivered.

- 10.3 Despite the implementation of a number of targeted approaches to promote the use of counselling services to males, their uptake in counselling remains low compared to females. It is hoped that the male engagement project undertaken by Eye to Eye through the use of additional Welsh Government grant funding during academic year 2021/22 will provide an in-depth understanding of the reasons that males are reluctant to engage in counselling and enable the local authority and Eye to Eye to address this issue and identify potential new approaches to support the emotional and mental health of young males. However, it is positive to note that the engagement of males is strongest at 55.8% within the youngest cohort of children and young people who completed counselling (years 3-5) suggesting a positive impact of the targeted approaches taken collaboratively by Eye to Eye with primary schools to identify and encourage young male learners who would benefit from counselling. It will be important to undertake further analysis of the underlying factors that have contributed to increased engagement of males amongst our youngest children as part of our strategy to improve the overall engagement of males in counselling.
- 10.4 A slight decrease was observed in the number of children and young people with special characteristics who completed counselling. This is not surprising due to the impact of COVID upon service delivery, such as the use of remote counselling sessions, which young people who fall into this category would find particularly difficult to engage with. In addition, in response to the pandemic, specialist settings and designated persons for CLA have worked collaboratively with Education and Children's Services to implement an enhanced range of protocols and school-based wellbeing interventions to support the emotional and mental health needs of their learners and families as an alternative to formal counselling.
- 10.5 The predominant issues for children and young people who have completed counselling are broadly consistent to previous years, with 'anxiety' recorded as the main reason for all age groups of children and young people requiring counselling. For the second consecutive academic year, issues relating to the COVID pandemic have been the overwhelming contributor to the anxieties cited by children and young people during counselling sessions.
- 10.6 Despite changes implemented in 2020/21 in relation to monitoring waiting times for counselling following referral (working not calendar days), data suggests that improvements reported in 2019/20 have been sustained for children and young people in the 11-18 and 19-25 age cohorts. Data is less positive for children in the year 3-5 cohort. However, it is important to acknowledge that the judgements above have not been based on direct comparative data and the waiting time data recorded in 2020/21 will become the new baseline for ongoing performance evaluation.
- 10.7 Data for 2020/21 indicates that there has been a decrease in the number of young people who have declined to take part in counselling following a referral. This, together with the high number of self-referrals made by young people and parental referrals, suggests that the strategies implemented by Eye to Eye to promote awareness of the counselling service to young people and their families are having a positive impact.

- 10.8 For the first time in the past four academic years Eye to Eye has reported improved performance in the Young Person's CORE Score for both the 11-18 and 19-25 age cohorts, indicating that the service has been more effective in addressing the issues presented by these young people. This is attributed in the main to the increase in the average number of counselling sessions attended by both cohorts of young people. Unfortunately, this was not the case for the year 3–year 5 cohort where a decline in performance was observed. Reasons cited by Eye to Eye to account for this decline relate to the complexity of issues faced by the children as a result of the COVID pandemic, the negative impact of online counselling sessions upon the delivery of counselling therapy approaches specific to young children and the impact of COVID upon the wellbeing of parents whose support and engagement in supporting the strategies introduced to their children during counselling sessions is a key factor to the successful outcome of counselling for children in this young cohort.
- 10.9 Service evaluations completed by service users clearly indicate that the children and young people who completed counselling in 2020/21 valued the support that they received, reporting overwhelmingly how effective it was in solving their issues and meeting their needs. This is consistent with service user feedback over the past four years.
- 10.10 Effective use has been made of the additional funding provided by Welsh Government to enhance counselling services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding has supported both Eye to Eye in providing additional services to young people and their families and the local authority in developing innovative and collaborative approaches to support the wellbeing of children and young people.
- 10.11 Moving forward it will be essential to consider how the role of school-based counselling can support the vision articulated in the recently published Welsh Government strategy '*Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing*'. The 'Framework' sets out a clearly defined process for schools to work collaboratively with a range of external agencies, including school-based counselling services, to develop both universal and targeted provision to support the wellbeing of all their learners.
- 10.12 To facilitate the implementation of the Framework, Welsh Government has provided additional grant funding for a second financial year (2021/22). This is enabling the local authority to build upon the initiatives, training and additional support for wellbeing developed under the initial grant period in 2019/20.
- 10.13 Taking a collaborative multi-agency approach to supporting the wellbeing of learners will be essential to enable schools to develop their expertise in meeting a more diverse range of emotional and mental health wellbeing needs without the need for onward referrals to external agencies. Adopting a robust whole-school approach to wellbeing in line with the requirements of the Framework, should, in turn, provide enhanced capacity for specialist external services such as school-based counselling and health based mental health services to provide more intensive support for the children and young people with the most significant needs.

In light of the above, the Eye to Eye referral pathway that has been successfully embedded over the past two academic years will be revised and refined in collaboration with the Education Psychology Service, other relevant agencies and schools to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

- 10.14 Despite the availability of grant funding to enhance the level of school-based counselling provision on offer to children and young people, Eye to Eye has faced significant challenges in recruiting additional qualified counsellors on temporary short-term contracts to fulfil this additional requirement. Eye to Eye reports that this is a common issue across Wales. This issue has been highlighted to Welsh Government in all-Wales meetings. Whilst additional grant funding is always welcomed, the short-term nature of grants does not enable the local authority to undertake long-term strategic planning to develop effective enhanced school-based counselling provision.
- 10.15 Due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon the mental health and wellbeing of learners, their families and the wider school community the need to provide effective, high quality, co-ordinated and evidence-based support for wellbeing continues to be one of the local authority's highest priorities. Working collectively to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people reflects the ethos of the national Framework that values inclusion, effective collaboration for the collective good and the creation of a '*supporting environment where young people are encouraged to fulfil their personal and academic potential, where they thrive, learn and emotionally develop*'.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16TH FEBRUARY 2022
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Ceri Jones, Head of Inclusion Services (Tel No: 01443 744008)

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16th FEBRUARY 2022

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Agenda Item No:
Play Sufficiency Assessment 2022 - 2025

Author: Jessica Allen, Children and Young People's Service Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To gain approval from Scrutiny Committee members for the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) and action plan to be submitted to the Welsh Government by 30th June 2022, as per statutory obligation placed upon the Council in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Play Sufficiency Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2012.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Scrutiny Members:

- 2.1 Consider the PSA for 2022 - 25 and the supporting action plan.
- 2.2 Endorse the PSA and action plan and agree for it to be submitted to Welsh Government.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The preparation of the Play Sufficiency Audit is a statutory duty of the Council. As well as establishing a baseline of provision, the Play Sufficiency Assessment enables the following:

- Identification of gaps in information, provision, service delivery and policy implementation;
- Support the establishment of evidence to give an indication of distance travelled in relation to play sufficiency;
- Highlight potential ways of addressing issues relating to partnership working;
- The input and involvement of all partners increasing levels of knowledge and understanding;
- A monitoring system which will involve and improve communication between professionals;
- The identification of good practice examples;

- Increased levels of partnerships in assessing sufficient play opportunities;
- The identification of actions for the Securing Play Sufficiency Action Plan which accompanies the Play Sufficiency Assessment.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most universally recognised human rights treaty, recognises that every child has the right to play. This right has been recognised and promoted for many years in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 4.2 Our vision is that all children and young people should be able to: have fun; enjoy their childhood and youth; pursue learning; and develop life skills through participating in a range of high quality play, leisure, sporting and cultural opportunities, thus ensuring we meet the interest and needs of each individual child or young person. The Council continues to work collaboratively with partners from across all departments of the Council, as well as third sector and national organisations. Wherever possible we endeavour to ensure that Welsh medium play opportunities are given the same priority as English medium provision.
- 4.3 There are more than 200 children’s play areas in Rhondda Cynon Taf, which are incorporated into a rolling programme of investment to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The programme is informed by annual independent play area condition surveys, which ensures that investment is targeted at the most deserving facilities. As well as modernising play equipment, improvements have also been made to increase accessibility in and around play areas, with considerable focus on enhancing the play experience that these valuable community assets offer.
- 4.4 Under the statutory obligation placed upon the Council in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Play Sufficiency Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2012, a full Play Sufficiency Assessment must be completed every three years.
- 4.5 This 2022 PSA has been compiled over the last 6 months and has involved a range of partner services that make up the PSA Working Group, led by the Play Development Team and involving the Resilient Families Service, the Youth Engagement and Participation Service, Sport, Leisure, Parks, Transport, Planning, Education, Disabled Children’s Team, Family Information Service, the third sector and officers working on Community Resilience Hub and Neighbourhood Network developments in RCT.

5. KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2022 PLAY SUFFICIENCY AUDIT

- 5.1 Completion of the Play Sufficiency Audit involves an evidence based self-assessment of the local authority’s position in relation to a set of criteria within each of the nine sections or ‘matters’, as identified by Welsh Government. Full details of each of the “matters” and subsequent criteria

can be found in Appendix A of this report, together with subsequent action plan for improvement. For each criterion of the nine 'matters', the PSA requires the Council to RAG its progress using the following definition:

- Green – criteria fully met
- Amber – criteria partially met
- Red – criteria not met

5.2 The areas considered as part of the 2022 PSA include:

- Matter A - Population
- Matter B – Providing for diverse needs
- Matter C – Space available for children to play: Open space and Outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces
- Matter D – Supervised provision
- Matter E – Changes for play
- Matter F – Access to space/provision
- Matter G – Securing and developing the play workforce
- Matter H – Community Engagement and Participation
- Matter I - Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas

5.3 The findings of the PSA have informed the action plan for 2022-25 to ensure that work undertaken next year addresses the shortfalls in provision identified by the 2022 PSA. Our key priority areas for 2022-25 are to improve the gathering and use of data to target play opportunities; Increase the amount of Welsh medium play provision; to roll out WG's quality assurance framework; and to promote play opportunities across the county borough via online platforms. The full action plan can be found as part of report, following the assessment.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 An Equality and Diversity Assessment has not been carried out in connection with the recommendation set out in this report as the contents and actions do not require a policy or service change, resulting in no reasonably foreseeable differential impacts.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 As part of the 2022 PSA, the Council were required to carry out a consultation exercise with a range of children and young people. Using the questions in the PSA toolkit, provided by the Welsh Government, an on-line questionnaire was developed and utilised to gather the views of children and young people. A total of 588 children and young people completed the questionnaire from 18 schools and 7 play schemes, running over October half-term. The sample of schools were chosen as representative of primary and secondary schools across RCT and included Welsh medium schools and special schools. Private sector businesses, such as after school clubs, childminders and education providers also contributed to the workforce

development elements of the PSA. The full report can be found in the main body of the PSA, and at Appendix B of this report.

- 7.2 Most children and young people (83% of respondents) said they preferred to play and hang out in their own home or at a friend house, which is significant change to when the consultation was conducted in 2019; a sign of changing habits since the pandemic. The next most popular responses were in a designated play area (69%), in the school playground (64%), and in the streets around their house (50%).
- 7.3 88% of the children and young people said that always or usually feel safe playing in their chosen location, a reduction from 95% in 2019. When asked how adults react to them in the play locations, 87% said they felt the 'grown ups' were great with them or at least ok with them playing in that location, but almost 14% stated that the 'grown ups' seemed to be angry or grumpy about them playing there.
- 7.4 42% of children and young people said that the opportunities for playing or hanging out were excellent and could not be improved, but 7% stated that the facilities were 'not good' or 'rubbish' and needed to be made much better.
- 7.5 In addition to the consultation with children and young people, a full consultation has been undertaken with the play providers to determine if they feel equipped to provide play opportunities and meet children's emerging support needs as a result of the pandemic. These results have been analysed and the results can be found in Appendix C together with a proposed timetable of training and professional development courses to further improve their play skills to deliver meaningful play experience for children and young people in RCT, Appendix D.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 The PSA is not a business case, however, the majority of actions noted in the Assessment where standards fall below green (i.e. amber and red) require funding to implement improvements. This funding will be sought from both the Children and Communities Grant, the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant, the Playworks Grant and the Council's core funding for Play as well as any other monies that may become available during the financial year.
- 8.2 The Children and Communities Grant will continue to provide flexibility than to sustain current provision and resource future initiatives to meet identified gaps. Should Welsh Government allocate discreet play grants to the Council during the year, the PSA action plan will be key to its allocation and spend.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 In 2012, the Welsh Government placed a duty on all local authorities to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities for children in their areas. The first Play Sufficiency Assessments and Play Action Plans were submitted to Welsh Government in March 2013.
- 9.2 In 2014, the Welsh Government commenced the second part of the duty on local authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities, having regard to their assessments. This put into effect the complete Section 11, Play Opportunities of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN AND/OR OTHER COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 10.1 The PSA will contribute to the Council's corporate priorities:
- Economy – building a strong economy through resilient children able to manage risk and develop innovative solutions to challenges;
 - People – promoting independence through social interactions with other children and self-management in play situations, such as team games;
 - Place – creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work and where children are encouraged to play safely and respectfully.
- 10.2 The PSA has been developed in full consideration of the sustainable development principles. The proposal will also support the Council to contribute to all of the seven well-being goals:
- A prosperous Wales: children who learn to manage risks and socialise with others are more prepared for the demands of functioning in the adult world;
 - A resilient Wales: children who play learn to manage risks and recover from accidents in safe, supported environments that challenge them and allow them to grow, giving them the tools to build resilience throughout life;
 - A healthier Wales: children who play outside benefit from exercise and the wellbeing effects of being closer to nature;
 - A more equal Wales: children who play together learn to socialise and accept other children with different skills and abilities, making them tolerant, helpful and inclusive children, young people and adults;
 - A Wales of cohesive Communities: children who play with others benefit from understanding about turn taking and cooperation, preparing them for adult interactions, team working and leadership roles;
 - A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language: children who are given the freedom to play in the language of their choice learn to be tolerant and accepting, preparing them for a multi-racial, globalised adult world;

- A globally responsible Wales: children who have access to play equipment and furnished with the skills and techniques to use it properly, preparing them for an adult world of finite resources.

11. **CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 This report has provided Members with details of the Play Sufficiency assessment (PSA) for 2022-25 and the supporting action plan for their consideration and approval to be submitted to Welsh Government.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Form



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Name of Local Authority: Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Name of responsible officer: Gail Beynon

Job title: Play Development Manager

Date of completion: 1st February 2022

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



Conducting the Assessment – Play Sufficiency Assessment

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

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

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

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

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

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

Principle Statement

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

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most universally recognised human rights treaty and recognises that every child has the right to play. This right has been recognised and promoted for many years in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Our vision is that all children and young people should be able to: have fun; enjoy their childhood and youth; pursue learning; and develop life skills through participating in a range of high quality play, leisure, sporting and cultural opportunities, thus ensuring we meet the interest and needs of each individual child or young person. The Council continues to work collaboratively with partners from across all service areas of the Council,

as well as third sector and national organisations. We endeavour to ensure that Welsh medium play opportunities are given the same priority as English medium provision.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the demand for play for disabled and vulnerable children and young people at the end of the school day and throughout the school holidays. To ensure we are meeting the needs of these cohorts of children and young people, RCT has established the Council's Care2Play (C2P) programme. The aim of the C2P programme is to provide a bespoke package of support for children and young people to enable them to access open access play provision within their local community alongside their peers and siblings. This support may be provided in the form of strategies for the play team to use whilst at the play setting or additional adult support, depending on the needs of the child. The C2P and Open Access Play programmes are continuously monitored, reviewed and improved.

The Council will continue to strive to develop and deliver efficient, effective and high quality play, cultural, leisure and sporting opportunities for all children and young people and ensure that the Council and its partner organisations continue to build on the strong foundations that already exist. We will continue to work collaboratively to develop, plan and co-ordinate the delivery of effective and efficient services to meet the identified needs of local communities across the county borough.

Context

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

The starting point to undertake the 2022 Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) has been via the PSA working group. The group membership consists of representatives from a range of services, including the internal services: Community Wellbeing and Resilient Service, the Children & Young People Service, Sport RCT, Leisure, Parks, Transport, Planning and Regeneration, Education and Inclusion, Disabled Children's Team, Family Information Service and the Community Development Team. External PSA partners include Interlink and Menter Iaith. In order to ensure that the action plan of the 2022 – 2025 PSA continues to be monitored and reviewed the PSA group will continue to meet on a quarterly basis.

The PSA itself has been compiled by involving all partners listed above in the self-assessment process. Each has contributed to the rating of the Council's current ability to meet the key elements of the assessment documentation, outlining the reason for that rating, the evidence that supports the rating and any mitigating factors as to why the rating was not different. These ratings were subsequently scrutinised by fellow PSA working group partners to ensure the rating is objective. Each partner was then required to consider the development actions it would need to undertake over the life of this PSA to increase the rating and provide a full play offer.

In addition, feedback has been taken from play delivery partners throughout the three year period of the previous PSA, and this has been used to influence the self-assessment process to inform future developments across the sector in RCT.

A consultation was undertaken with children and young people from across RCT, both those involved with existing play services and those who do not participate in the open access play or C2P provision. This highlighted the play opportunities they are interested in, the opportunities currently available to them and those that they would like to have more chance to participate in. There were also a number of pandemic related questions that looked at how it had affected them and their right to play. The results of these consultations have been reflected in this document and used to inform the future action plan.

As part of the 2022-2025 PSA, the Council conducted a Play workforce audit with play staff from 3rd sector, private and local authority play teams across the county borough. Using the questions provided in the PSA toolkit, the team worked with the corporate consultation team to compile an on-line questionnaire. There was a total of 44 respondents from 11 play settings. The main aim of the Play workforce audit is to identify the training needs of the sector to ensure that they have access to training throughout the year to enable them to deliver good quality, stimulating play opportunities for CYP. The full workforce audit report can be found at Appendix 1A .

This PSA document and the subsequent action plan has been presented to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee and the Council's Cabinet, for discussion and approval.

Partnership working

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

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

There are a number of third sector organisations commissioned to deliver play, leisure, cultural and sport provision across the county borough. Interlink is the body supporting voluntary sector organisations and representatives from this organisation and the play sector are active members of the PSA working group.

Private sector businesses, such as after school clubs, childminders, and education providers have contributed to consultation and workforce development elements of the PSA. The lead officer with responsibility for the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) is a key member of the PSA Group which serves to link the two assessments.

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the play sector across RCT has continued to develop and deliver a range of virtual and face to face play opportunities for some of the local authority's most vulnerable children. The play sector supported the delivery of the emergency childcare hubs, for key workers and vulnerable families during the summer holidays in 2020, delivered over 2000 craft packs to the homes of isolating children and

young people across RCT and delivered virtual play sessions for children and young people open to the Children's Services.

The feedback from all of the above partners has been reflected in this PSA document, including helping the Council to identify good practice and areas for development for the future.

Consultation and participation

This section should describe how the Local Authority has:

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

As part of the 2022-2025 PSA, the Council conducted a consultation exercise with a range of children and young people. Using the questions provided in the PSA toolkit, the team worked with the corporate consultation team to compile an on-line questionnaire. A total of 588 children and young people took part in the consultation, from 18 schools and 7 playschemes over the October half-term holiday 2021. The full consultation report can be found at Appendix 1B.

During the summer holiday period 2021, parents were asked for their feedback on the provision offered by the Play Development Team. The results were overwhelmingly positive with requests being made for even more sessions to be made available in future holiday periods. This feedback has been used to inform the PSA action plan with additional providers being sought to offer additional play sessions.

All commissioned play providers are required to regularly consult with the children and young people accessing their provision to enable them to improve the play space and opportunities they are delivering. The play teams are also required to reflect on their own practice and capture statistical information on the effectiveness of their offer. The Council uses this statistical information to ensure that the play provision being commissioned and delivered is in communities where there is an identified need.

Maximising resources

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

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

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

During 2021/22, the Council has welcomed an increase in funding from Welsh Government. The Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing funding was used to commission a range of third sector, community organisation and local authority partners, many of whom the Council's Play Development Team had not previously worked with, to deliver additional play, leisure, cultural and sporting opportunities for children and young people 0 – 25 years. This increased capacity in the county borough's play offer has been vital to respond to the emerging needs of children, young people and their families that have arisen or been exacerbated by the pandemic.

The revenue element of the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant (AWPOG) has been used to improve a range of play and youth facilities that children and young people access locally and across the wider community.

The capital element of the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant has been used to develop the outdoor play spaces in parks and skate parks; cultural venues for use by children and young people such as theatre spaces; and, nature trails and allotments.

The Children and Communities Grant (CCG), specifically the Childcare and Play element, has been used to upskill the play workforce to respond to the emerging needs of children and young people as we exit the pandemic. Furthermore, it has been used to enhance the delivery of free open access play provision across the county borough in the areas identified as having the least amount of opportunities available. Additional CCG funding was made available during 2021/22 and was used to pilot the Children's Wellbeing Support Programme (CWSP) for 7-11 year olds.

The new Playworks funding has been used to improve the quality of the play equipment and resources that children and young people have access to within the commissioned play sessions. We have also used the funding to raise the profile of play across RCT, ensuring that families are aware of the opportunities in their local area so that they have the option to engage in them. In addition, this funding had supported the delivery of 12 National Play Day celebratory events in various communities, nine Family Fun Days and project based workshops within play sessions. This was a conservative number of events due to the pandemic restrictions, and so this future PSA plan will include an increased number of these as the restrictions ease.

The service has secured Integrated Care Fund (ICF) monies to support the delivery of the Care2Play programme. This grant funded the additional adult support costs incurred when a child was in need of a dedicated adult to help them attend and engage in open access play provision alongside their siblings and peers.

A Council commitment in the form of a Play Development Team base budget funds the three staff that coordinate all of the work of the team and much of this PSA.

The continuation of the the AWPOG, CCG, Playworks and base budget will allow the Council to meet some of the identified play needs of children and young people across the

county borough. However, additional long term funding will need to be secured to meet all the desired outcomes of the 2022 - 2025 PSA action plan, if previous short term funding is no longer available, i.e. ICF, AWPOG capital, additional CCG, Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment and local Well-being Plans

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

The vision of the PSA is evident through the organisation's plans all the way through to the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan. The PSA is used to inform the local needs assessment and as a priority for the Public Service Board, one of the three objectives of the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan states, ***"To grow a strong local economy with sustainable transport that attracts people to live, work and play in Cwm Taf."*** This demonstrates that play sits at the highest strategic position of the organisation's direction. The Cwm Taf Well-being Plan can be found at www.ourcwmtaf.wales

Monitoring Play Sufficiency

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

The lead Director for the PSA is the Group Director for Community and Children's Services, supported by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. Since April 2019 responsibility for the management of the PSA and the subsequent monitoring of play sufficiency sits with the Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service.

Membership of the PSA Group includes representatives from a range of internal service and external partners who are committed to ensuring appropriate play opportunities across RCT. The working group meetings are held to monitor and review the priorities of the PSA action plan. Whilst members of the group are fully committed to the development and delivery of play opportunities against actions within the plan, recently there has been limited opportunities and capacity to facilitate the work of the group as a collective due to Covid restrictions. This partnership working will resume as restrictions ease.

Collective monitoring of the PSA and Youth Support Service Strategy has been undertaken and the information taken from this has identified that work needs to be done to develop an enhanced commissioning model for third sector organisations to deliver a comprehensive joint play and youth offer across the county borough for ages 5 – 25 years. It is envisaged that through the continuation of the monitoring role of the PSA working group it will enable the Council to gather routine data to identify priority areas for the development of play, youth and other recreational opportunities.

Insights from the Coronavirus

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

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and in light of the imposed restrictions across the UK and Wales, the Council been limited in how it has been able to complete the 'in-person' actions within our PSA action plan. However, with that said, services have continued to deliver covid compliant play opportunities, albeit using a targeted approach for vulnerable children and young people and on a virtual basis. It has also provide time to identify and deliver training opportunities to upskill the play workforce to meet the emerging needs of children and young people.

Criteria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Comments section: asks some specific questions for each matter that should enable you to give a clear overview of how the Local Authority complies with the intention

and implementation of this matter as set out fully in the Statutory Guidance. It also provides the opportunity to identify challenges and how they might be overcome.

Matter A: Population

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

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

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

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, we are waiting for the dissemination of the 2021 Census data. Once the data has been released we will be use a number of factors such as deprivation, ages of children and young people etc, to determine where we will be focusing the development of play, youth and recreational opportunities for the next 3 years. We are continuing to develop profiling models for children and young people, for families and for communities. These models will utilise both local and national data sets and analyse them to ensure we are targeting our services where they are needed most. This modification of our systems and processes takes account of national developments such as our involvement in the Early Years Transformation work in Cwm Taf Morgannwg, the NEST/NYTH regional implementation plan and the roll out of Community Resilience Hubs and Neighbourhood Networks.

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

We have worked in conjunction with colleagues from across the play sector to commission and deliver play provision in areas of identified need through using a range of data sources including vulnerability profiling information, community profiles, Children's Services data, Youth Services data and community safety / anti-social behaviour data. Priority areas for the delivery of provision will also include evidence of need within the Neighbourhood Network areas.

Have there been challenges?

A small number of historical organisations which would have been commissioned to deliver play provision are no longer operating, due to a lack of sustainable funding. This lack of organisations from which to commission play provision has been the greatest challenge for the play service in

previous years. However, during the pandemic, the Play Development Team have worked with new local groups to support them to become play providers and as such, three new providers have been commissioned to deliver play provision in 2021/22 alone despite the pandemic, offering a total of five additional playschemes across the county borough.




How can these be overcome?

Part of the challenge has already been overcome, and using the same model, it is hoped that further external partners will wish to be supported to become long term play providers within their local area. Service Level Agreements with current and new third sector providers will provide them with the security to invest in resources, staff development and marketing activities to support their long term sustainability and improve the integration of joint service delivery. Furthermore, it is envisaged that through working with colleagues across other council departments, it will be possible to plan and deliver a range of Council-maintained play.

Comments

The Council’s Service Planning and Transformation Team will produce robust and live profiling data from a range of sources with which the PSA group will be able to ensure that moving forward all play opportunities will be targeted to meet the emerging needs of our communities, whilst ensuring that there is an equitable spread of provision across the local authority as far as reasonably practicable.

RAG Status for Matter A

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

Matter B: Providing for Diverse Needs

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

RAG Status:

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

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LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MB01	The play requirements of children living in isolated rural areas are understood and provided for	GREEN	AMBER	<p>Whilst we know understand generic themes about what children and young people would like in terms of play opportunities, the data behind this is not yet available whilst we await the most up to date census information.</p> <p>As part of the 2022 PSA, specific cohorts of children and young people from rural areas have been consulted with and the findings will be referenced throughout this report.</p>	We are waiting for the data from the 2021 Census to be released. Once we have this information we will use it to prioritise the future development of play opportunities.	The data is to be analysed and used to develop and deliver appropriate levels of play opportunities.

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p>The 'Your Voice Survey' consults approximately 5,000 children and young people about their needs, feelings about their community and the activities they participate in, or the barriers they face to participate.</p> <p>The RCT assessment of Needs offers further guidance on local needs of communities.</p> <p>Finding suitable and accessible venues to offer play provision can be difficult in rural areas – the RCT mobile provision has enabled play provision to be accessible and inclusive across the rural areas of RCT.</p>		
MB02	The play requirements of Welsh language speaking children are understood and provided for	RED	RED	As part of the 2022 PSA, specific cohorts of children and young people from rural areas have been consulted with and the findings will be	It has been difficult to identify external providers that can deliver through the medium of welsh	Work to be carried out to identify partners to support the development and delivery of play and youth

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p>referenced throughout this report.</p> <p>The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) includes specific actions to increase and improve the opportunities for children to engage in activities through the Welsh Language, this is done through a partnership between different organisations.</p> <p>A high percentage of Welsh speaking staff allows children aged 11-14 to engage through the language of their choice.</p>		<p>provision through the medium of Welsh.</p>
MB03	<p>The play requirements of children from different cultural background are understood and provided for</p>	<p>AMBER</p>	<p>GREEN</p>	<p>As part of the 2022 PSA, specific cohorts of children and young people from rural areas have been consulted with and the findings will be referenced throughout this report.</p>		

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p>All provision is inclusive and diversity is encouraged and celebrated.</p> <p>Further opportunities for children are developed through the equality and diversity youth forum.</p>		
MB04	The play requirements and support needs of disabled children are understood and provided for.	GREEN	GREEN	<p>The Care2Play programme provides children and young people with access to a range of play opportunities during term-time and holiday periods. It also meets the support needs of individuals to access play provision locally within their community.</p> <p>We continue to work with our Education colleagues to provide additional supported places as part of the SHEP programme.</p> <p>Specific provision is offered to children attending Special Schools in RCT. A strong working partnership has been developed with the schools to</p>		

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				ensure the needs and requirements of each pupils is understood and met during the provision. Some school staff are offered temporary play worker posts to ensure a level of consistency to the required care.		
MB05	Play projects and providers have access to a range of resources which support inclusion	GREEN	GREEN	<p>As part of the Care2Play offer, a Passport 2 Play (P2P) is completed specifically for each child or young person. The aim of the P2P is to support the child, to develop their play skills in specific areas of their holistic development. Where it has then been identified that the child may need some additional resources or specialist equipment this is sourced and provided by the play development team.</p> <p>Additional staff can be allocated to provision to ensure that all young people are able to attend.</p>	Prior to covid the sensory rooms at the children and family centres were available for use for practitioners and the general public free of charge. Whilst there is still no cost robust measures now need to be developed and implemented to ensure they are covid compliant before they can be used publicly.	Covid risk assessment to be developed to reinstate public usage of the sensory rooms across the Children and Family Centres.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MB06	There is a well known and agreed mechanism which is used to identify the need for separate provision for disabled children	GREEN	GREEN	The Care2Play service receives applications from the Disabled Children's Team and Resilient Family Service for children and young people they are working with and where they have identified that they may need additional support or strategies to access local play provision.		
MB07	Access audits for all play provision as described in the guidance are undertaken	AMBER	RED	Access audits are undertaken on all playscheme premises. The information captured in the audit aims to inform service users of the accessibility of the building for service users.	All collated data needs to be embedded into the virtual playscheme timetable via a range of symbol and publicised on the council website.	Work to be completed on including access data onto the playscheme timetable.
MB08	Designated play space is provided and well maintained on gypsy traveller sites	RED	RED	There are currently no council-maintained play spaces on gypsy traveller sites		Work with colleagues within the parks department to undertake a consultation with the gypsy traveller community to gain their views and opinions on

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MB09	The requirements of young carers are understood and provided for	GREEN	GREEN	Support for young carers is offered through a service level agreement with an internal children service.		developing a designated play space on their site.
MB10	The requirements of lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) children are understood and provided for	GREEN	GREEN	<p>Training is provided to our commissioned play providers to enable them to understand and support the needs of LGBTQ+ children and young people within the play setting. Service wide training has been delivered to staff to improve the knowledge and understanding of the requirements of LGBTQ+ children and young people.</p> <p>The equality and diversity youth forum develops further opportunities for young people to engage in inclusive provision.</p>		

Providing for Diverse Needs

How has data been used (or how will the data be used) to address the barriers that children with diverse needs face in accessing inclusive and accessible opportunities for playing?

The Council uses the relevant data available to us to ensure that the children and young people referred to our flagship Care2Play programme are placed in community based play settings alongside siblings and peers. The Play Development Team also use the data to put in place the necessary support for their individual needs. During the pandemic, the Council used local data and information from a range of sources to assess the play needs of other cohorts of vulnerable and play deprived children, to ensure resources were targeted in these areas to help them access the available play offer.

Have there been challenges?

Due to Covid restrictions, the level of play opportunities were significantly impacted, reducing the availability of provision for children and young people.

How can these be overcome?

The easing of Covid restrictions will resolve the majority of the challenges and allow the key actions to be addressed.

The Play Development Team is working with various internal departments to stream line the processes and delivery of a number of services for children and young people. This will include the development and implementation of integrated service delivery opportunities facilitated by the flexible use of the new Children and Communities Grant alongside Council core budget. These developments will take into consideration new Welsh Government programmes of work and local government initiatives, which will include, The Cwm Taf Early Years Transformation Programme the Resilient Families Service and the Neighbourhood Networks.

Comments:

It is envisaged that through partnership working across all council departments and with both, the voluntary and private sector, the quality of play opportunities for all children throughout the County Borough will flourish. We will also be working extensively with partners to support children and young people to improve their wellbeing and feel safe to go out and play again.

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

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

RAG Status

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

Open Spaces

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MC01	The Local Authority has undertaken an Open Space Assessment (OSA) that maps areas that are used, or might be used for playing as listed in the Statutory Guidance	GREEN	GREEN	An updated Open Space Assessment (OSA) will be prepared during the preparation of the Revised Local Development Plan. However, the study whilst including some areas used for play such as play areas, does not assess whether areas are used for or could be used for play and is broader in its remit.	OSA to be completed as part of the next planned LDP. Any issues are to be reported back to the PSA working group for consideration.	

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MC02	The Local Authority has undertaken an Accessible Greenspace Study that maps areas that are used for playing	GREEN	GREEN	A Green Infrastructure Assessment and an updated Open Space Assessment will be prepared during the preparation of the Revised Local Development Plan. However the studies do not specifically assess areas for play and will not specifically map areas used for play.		
MC03	The Local Authority undertakes access audits at all open spaces and implements proposals to improve access and safety	GREEN	GREEN	Access audits on all LA owned/maintained play spaces are undertaken on an annual basis. Also, where an open space is part of a Community Asset Transfer, the relevant department provides support and guidance on access and safety.		
MC04	The Local Authority has developed its own Open Space Standards in accordance with the advice and requirements of Planning Policy Wales	GREEN	GREEN	An updated Open Space Assessment will be prepared during the preparation of the Revised Local Development Plan.		

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				During the preparation process consideration will be given for the need for localised policies on open space where there is evidence to support this.		
MC05	The Local Authority undertakes and actions play value assessments in public open space	RED	AMBER	Play value assessments are undertaken on fixed equipped playgrounds only.	Undertaking play value assessments on all public open space is not feasible within the current service provision structure.	
MC06	Brownfield sites owned by the Local Authority are assessed for the potential for the site to be reclaimed to provide for children's play	GREEN	GREEN	With Corporate Estates officers being based within Leisure, Parks and Countryside they are requested to comment on any planned disposals or development of land.		

Outdoor Unstaffed Designated Play Spaces

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MC07	The Local Authority keeps an up to date record of all designated play space as described in the Statutory Guidance	AMBER	GREEN	The Playgrounds team has a record of all fixed equipped play spaces and designated play spaces within the Councils ownership.		A schedule of works has been developed and will be implemented as and when resources and funding becomes available. A monitoring cycle will be developed and any issues fed back to the PSA
MC08	The Local Authority assesses play spaces for play value and potential to increase in play use as set out in the Statutory Guidance	AMBER	GREEN	Play value assessments are undertaken on fixed equipped play spaces. Capital programme in place supporting play space improvements.		
MC09	The Local Authority undertakes access audits at all designated play spaces and implements proposals to improve access and safety	AMBER	AMBER	Access audits undertake in 2021.	Funding to implement all the work required.	

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MC10	The Local Authority has developed and agreed a new fixed play provision standard	GREEN	GREEN	The Local Authority applies minimum standards and undertakes inspections in line with the standard	On-going monitoring and review	
MC11	The Local Authority undertakes and actions play space assessments in designated play spaces	GREEN	GREEN	Assessments are undertaken on fixed equipped play spaces. Capital programme in place supporting play space improvements	On-going monitoring and review	
MC12	The Local Authority has introduced smoke-free playgrounds The local authority complies with The Smoke-free Premises and Vehicles (Wales) Regulations 2020 that requires playgrounds in Wales to be smoke-free.	AMBER	GREEN	Legislation introduced in 2021. All playgrounds now have appropriate signage.		Signage to be monitored and removed during routine checks
MC13	The Local Authority has removed 'no ball games' signs to encourage more children playing in the community	GREEN	AMBER	Action can only be taken by the service area on land within their portfolio. Where playgrounds are not safe for ball play, signs will remain.	On-going monitoring and review	

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MC14	The Local Authority has erected signs, such as Play Priority Signs to encourage more children playing in the community	AMBER	AMBER	Where appropriate space is allocated, signage is erected.	Action can only be taken by the service area on land within their portfolio.	Signage to be monitored and erected during routine checks if required
MC15	The Local Authority includes a recognition of the importance of playing fields to children's play when any disposal decisions are made	GREEN	GREEN	Disposal notices are sent to appropriate service areas for comment.		
MC16	The Local Authority includes children and their families in any consultations regarding decisions to dispose of playing fields	AMBER	RED	A formal Open Space Notice will advertised for each location and an opportunity for any resident to comment on proposal.	General Land Disposal (via a lease) Where this may include the leasehold transfer of land for a Community Asset Transfer the applying community organisation will be expected to undertake its own community consultation activities evidencing the need and support	Corporate Estates to develop a process that a community organisation applying for a lease or transfer of community asset that are able to evidence they have consulted with the children and families within the area.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
					for the proposal. Recent examples include Splash Pads, Multi Use Games Areas, Skateboard Park and Outdoor Gym etc.	
MC17	The Local Authority refers to guidance around creating accessible play space when refurbishing or developing new playgrounds	GREEN	GREEN	Local Authority applies minimum standards and undertakes access/accessibility audits	On-going monitoring and review	

Open Spaces

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

The collaboration between the OSA and PSA has resulted in additional spaces being identified for use either for informal play or formal structure play provision, such as family fun days. In addition, the capital funding made available via the PSA has allowed development work to be undertaken at specific sites.

Have there been challenges?

There have been no major challenges at this time.

How can these be overcome?

N/A

Comments:

The Local Authority officers from various departments will continue to work together in this area.

Outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces

Due to the restrictions imposed as part of the pandemic limited work has been undertaken in this area and will be a priority for development in during the 2022-2025 PSA action plan.

The local authority's Play Development Team undertook all accessibility audits in 2021 and will continue to do so in 2022 and beyond.

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

In 2021 an accessibility audit of all children's play areas within the Council's remit was undertaken. This report will be reviewed and broken down into key actions as soon as staffing resources become available.

Have there been challenges?

There are many challenges and the key issues faced include resources – physical and financial. Accessibility usually requires physical work to be undertaken from lowering kerbs to creating pathways to play spaces, these often require expertise from different service areas. In terms of

providing accessible equipment e.g. a roundabout or swing that can be used by wheelchair users, these are substantially more expensive than a standard item not deemed as inclusive or accessible. However where resources allow all play area refurbishments include an accessible roundabout and an inclusive basket swing as minimum, as well wheelchair accessible picnic tables, hard surfaces and linking pathways around the play area and hydraulic self closing gates in yellow.

How can these be overcome?

The majority of challenges can be overcome with additional funding and ensuring that wider partners have a better understanding of play considerations and its importance.

Comments

The Council has over 200 designated play spaces and to ensure that these play facilities better meet the play needs of ALL children and young people living in RCT. Over £5 million has been invested over the past six years, with a further commitment of additional funding to come in the next financial year. Accessibility has been a fundamental part of this work. Whilst increasing accessible opportunities within the play space itself has been relatively easy to achieve, the greater challenge has been facilitating improvements to the old infrastructure like access paths and routes.

With the emphasis on changing needs has come a greater use of the phrases 'accessibility' or 'inclusive play'. Whilst the concept has long been engrained in certain aspects of the play industry it relatively new in others and with this has come confusion and an expectation that all play equipment should be adapted for wheelchair users. As a provider of play opportunities it has sometimes been difficult to relay a message that shifts the emphasis from adapted equipment to providing spaces that enable children no matter what their ability to play together.

Matter D: Supervised provision

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

RAG Status

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

Playwork provision

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LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MD01	The Local Authority keeps an up to date record of all supervised playwork provision as described in the Statutory Guidance	GREEN	GREEN	All information of commissioned open access play provision is collated into quarterly timetables which is then disseminated to the public, through the FIS, Wicid website, RCT council website, Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service website and all play providers websites and Facebook accounts.		
MD02	The Local Authority offers playwork provision which offers a rich play environment as	AMBER	RED		The Play Soft Outcomes tool was previously used by	This is a priority for the play and childcare team to support all play providers

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
	described in the Statutory Guidance				commissioned play providers to reflect on the play environment created for the children and young people to use. However, this process has now been disestablished and we are waiting for the All Wales QA to become available from Play Wales.	to undertake the All Wales QA toolkit as and when it becomes available.
MD03	The Local Authority ensures that partners offering playwork provision are supported to offer rich play environments as described in the Statutory Guidance	GREEN	AMBER	The play development officer (PDO) carries out annual monitoring visits at all commissioned play provisions. Where necessary the PDA will issue requirements for improvement.	As and when funding becomes available the play team issues grants to replenish equipment and resources. There is no long term funding available to embed this as an annual play improvement grant.	Identify a long term funding stream to deliver an annual play improvement grant offer.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MD04	Staffed playwork provision that the Local Authority provides meets the regulatory requirements and National Minimum Standards	GREEN	GREEN	All play provision delivered directly by the RCT play team is done so in line with the National Minimum Standards for OAP.		
MD05	Staffed playwork provision that the Local Authority funds meets the regulatory requirements and National Minimum Standards	AMBER	GREEN	<p>All existing and newly commissioned community based play provision is delivered in line with the NMS for OAP.</p> <p>During the last 2 years and within the Covid pandemic we have recruited 3 new play providers and opened 5 new play provisions.</p>		
MD06	Staffed playwork provision that the Local Authority's partners provide meets the regulatory requirements and National Minimum Standards	AMBER	GREEN	All commissioned open access play provision is either registered with CIW or working within the under 2-hour rule, meet the required national minimum standards.		

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MD07	Staffed playwork provision across the Local Authority works to a recognised quality assurance programme	RED	RED		At present there is no formal QA scheme for play, however, Play Wales are developing an All Wales version. RCT will use as soon as it becomes available.	Engage with Play Wales to ascertain when the QA scheme will be available for rollout. Play Development Team will work with the play sector to produce a timeline for roll out of the QA scheme across all commissioned play provision.
MD08	The Local Authority prioritises quality issues when engaging with/ commissioning the private sector to deliver recreational activities for children.	AMBER	GREEN	As part of the Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing grant funding streams, the LA has commissioned a number of community based organisation to deliver recreational activities. All partners are required to submit copies of their public liability insurance, Safeguarding policy and activity risk assessments to ensure they meet the requirements of grant funding.		
MD09	The Local Authority provides council premises and space free of charge to organisations	GREEN	GREEN	We work closely with our leisure colleagues and extensively use their		

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
	which provide free (at the point of access) playwork provision for children			facilities free of charge to deliver play and family play opportunities.		

Structured recreational activities for children

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MD10	Local authority sport, physical activity, and active recreation plans are contributing to increasing free play and recreational activities	GREEN	RED	Sports RCT have linked with stakeholders to support the Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing objectives and offering free sessions through play.	Lack of casual workforce in Sport RCT. At present there is limited access to free provision for families.	Undertake a recruitment drive to enhance the casueal workforce in Sport RCT. Leisure services to look at free access to paid provision for families that need it most, which will include dry and wet side provision for all the family.
MD11	The sports agenda contributes to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children	AMBER	AMBER	Through collaboration with stakeholders that include Welh Cycling, FAW, Welsh Netball, Welsh Athletics, we	Lack of casual workforce.	Undertake recruitment drive to enhance the casual workforce in Sport RCT.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p>are currently offering more than ever. This includes fun weekly sessions happening across the authority. Leisure for Life has been integral to its success and has been key in enabling us to subsidise these sessions as much as possible.</p>		
MD12	The cultural and arts agenda, is contributing to the provision of sufficient recreational activities for children	GREEN	GREEN	The local authority Arts Service works with partners to provide creative opportunities through play. RCT Theatres work with artists to provide activities and are creating an outdoor community space at the Park & Dare Theatre for the provision of creative play and performances.	<p>Lack of casual workforce in Sport RCT.</p> <p>At present there is limited access to free provision for families.</p>	
MD13	The Local Authority Youth Service provides for children's opportunities for leisure and association	GREEN	GREEN	The Council's youth service, Youth Engagement and Participation Service, offers a range of sporting and leisure opportunities as part of the after-school,		

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				evening and holiday provision. Some of these are provided by the youth workers, others are with local organistaions including Cardiff City Football Club.		

Supervised play provision

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

Development Officers support childcare settings in all aspects of their practice and businesses. Specific advice concerning improving play opportunities is provided by Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs via settings membership and courses commissioned by the LA, and signposting to other training and funding opportunities that will improve their practice.

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

The same level of support, as detailed above, is provided to all play and out of school childcare settings.

Have there been challenges?

There is a limited capacity to offer an intensive level of support to all settings in RCT.

How can these be overcome?

Without additional funding to provide additional Development Officers, this will continue to be a challenge.




Comments:

We will continue to work collaboratively with colleagues across the childcare and play sector to ensure that any emerging themes or areas of identified support needs are being met.

Matter E: Charges for play provision

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

RAG status

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

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LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
ME01	The Local Authority keeps records of the number of children living in low income families	GREEN	RED	Continue to use vulnerability profiling methodology to support the planning and delivery of recreation activities for all children and young people across RCT.	No up to date information has been shared with the PSA partners.	New information to be collated against the 2021 census and shared with PSA partners.
ME02	The Local Authority keeps records of the number of children living in areas of deprivation	GREEN	RED	As Above		
ME03	The Local Authority keeps records of the number of children living in rural areas	GREEN	RED	As Above		
ME04	The Local Authority keeps records of the number of disabled children and those with particular needs.	GREEN	GREEN	The Capita One Management Information System also stores all records of children with additional learning needs therefore service data is able to		

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				reflect how many young people have engaged with the service who have Additional Learning Needs		
ME05	The Local Authority records the availability of no cost provision	GREEN	GREEN	The Play Development Team collates this information and is available via the FIS website and social media platforms, where they are made aware of them through commissioning routes etc.		
ME06	The Local Authority records the provision of no cost / low cost premises used for play provision	RED	RED		There is no information currently recorded for no cost / low cost premises across the area	Establish mechanisms for recording ALL no cost / low cost provision across RCT.
ME07	The Local Authority records the provisions where grants or subsidies are available for play providers	AMBER	AMBER	<p>The Play Development Team records this information, which is then used to inform grant funders of the desired outcomes of the funding.</p> <p>More recently additional funds have been distributed to community organisations to deliver play and recreational activities as part of the the</p>	The lack of sustainability for community organisations due to lack of continuity of funding from WG post the 31 st of March 2022.	Set up an approved supplier list on Bravo for small community organisations to become an approved supplier to deliver recreational activities. All community organisations will receive the same

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing grant offers.		information and notifications of opportunities to apply for grant funding.
ME08	The Local Authority provides subsidised transport for children travelling to play opportunities	AMBER	AMBER	Funding has been allocated to community organisations to provide free transport for participants to access play and recreational activities.		Seek clarification from WG to find out if any additional funding will be available from the 1 st of April 2022 to allow better co-ordination of the delivery of play and recreational activities.

Charge for play provision

All commissioned play and additional recreational activities delivered by the local authority or third sector organisations are free for children and young people and their families.

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

The LA continues to invest in developing play opportunities and community events in areas of identified need. The Council favour smaller, more local activities over larger events to reduce access and transport barriers. The Council will also continue to review and re-profile our services to meet the changing needs of communities and in line with the most up to date research and Welsh and National Government initiatives.

Have there been challenges?

The Covid-related additional funding, namely Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing, have supported the Council to offer more free activities to children, young people and their families. However, the challenge will be maintaining the offer from April 2022 onwards when they funding is no longer available. Without this funding, the Council will have to evaluate the current offer and decide what can be sustained over the next three years of the PSA and what will have to be de-commissioned/end with the financial year.

How can these be overcome?

We will use emerging data to ensure that all play opportunities are being developed, commissioned and delivered in areas of identified need.

Comments:

The Play Development Team will work more closely with colleagues within the YEPS service to streamline processes to commission play provision alongside youth provision and deliver joined up provision to offer provision 5 – 25 years.

Charge for play provision

All commissioned play provision is free on entry for all children and young people across the county borough.

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

PSA working group members will work to identify opportunities to make fee-paying activities available free/lower cost to families most in need. This will include sporting activities, cultural activities and those offered by third party providers, such as football groups etc.

Matter F: Access to space/provision

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

RAG Status

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

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MF01	The Local Authority keeps an up to date record of the number of 20 mph zones/school safety zones in residential areas	GREEN	GREEN	Traffic Management hold information on all 20mph zone locations which is regularly updated		Continue to bid for schmes and seek other funding opportunities.
MF02	The Local Authority has an identified mechanism for assessing the impact of speed reduction and other road safety measures on the opportunity for children to play outside in their communities	AMBER	GREEN	Before and after speed surveys are made at sites where traffic calming / 20 mph zones are introduced. This provides evidence of the effectiveness of the measures in reducing speeds.		
MF03	The Local Authority has a plan(s) to reduce the negative effect of busy roads and junctions through the	AMBER	AMBER	Measures are implemented on an evidential need basis through a numbe of internal	Schemes are subject to funding availability.	

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
	introduction of speed reduction measures and provision of safe crossing points/routes for pedestrians and cyclists			and external funding sources.		
MF04	The Local Authority has a plan(s) to improve walking and cycle access to parks, outdoor play facilities and local leisure centres from residential areas	AMBER	AMBER		Bids for Active Travel and Safe Routes in Communities schemes are submitted to Welsh Government via the Local Transport Fund (LTF) and Safe Routes in Communities funding (SRIC).	Active Travel and SRIC schemes aim to improve connectivity and health and wellbeing, access to leisure facilities is an associated benefit and not a key outcome.
MF05	There is potential for the Local Authority to take further action to reduce traffic speed and improve road safety to promote play opportunities	AMBER	AMBER		The Council continues to introduce traffic calming measures at locations where there is identified need. The necessary legislation is in place. Welsh Government are pursuing a	Traffic calming is subject to funding, which is allocated towards road safety measures across the region to reduce the incidence of personal injuries

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
					change in legislation to introduce a national default speed limit in Wales from 30mph to 20mph on residential roads and busy pedestrian streets	
MF06	The Local Authority uses road safety grants and/or other funding to support delivery of cycling training for children to national standards	GREEN	RED	.	Welsh Government are pursuing a change in legislation to introduce a national default speed limit in Wales from 30mph to 20mph on residential roads and busy pedestrian streets	Agree traffic calming policies and procedures to introduce traffic calming measures. (Transport)
MF07	The Local Authority uses road safety grants and/or other funding to provide pedestrian safety training for children	GREEN	AMBER	National Standards cycle training delivered is delivered to approximately 1000 pupils (age 10-11) each year. Kerbcraft / Child Pedestrian Training delivered to	Only a minority of children can be accommodated by the training	Continue to bid for WG Road Safety grant funding to enable continuation of National Standards cycle training.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				approximately 1,600 pupils (age 5-7) each year.		
MF08	The Local Authority has an accessible and well-known way of arranging temporary road closures, to support more children to play outside their homes	GREEN	RED		The LA will be trialling the introduction of a number of Play Street Schemes in 22/23, in co-ordination with Play Wales.	RCT Playstreets working group to develop a devleiry plan for the delivery of the pilot proposed for the Spring term.
MF09	The Local Authority refers to <i>Manual for Streets</i> when considering new developments and changes to the highway network/urban realm	GREEN	GREEN	RCT Residential Design Guide is based on Manual for Streets <i>TAN 18 and RCTCBC's Design Guide for Residential Streets</i>		
MF10	The Local Authority works to nationally recognised good practice guidelines when developing walking and cycling facilities	GREEN	GREEN	The Welsh Government's Design Guidance: Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 must be considered when designing and maintain active travel routes and related facilities.		
MF11	The Local Authority uses child pedestrian road accident casualty data to inform the	RED	RED	There is no evidence currently available to support this.	Nationally, Wales to reduce the accident of personal injuries.	

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
	location and design of interventions which help children get around independently in their communities					
MF12	The Local Authority considers children's needs to access play opportunities when making decisions about public transport planning and expenditure	AMBER	AMBER	This is not a significant consideration. Welsh Government has not increased public transport funding since 2013. Funding currently available will be used to focus on social inclusion; which will support children and young people to access leisure opportunities.	Limited access to play opportunities	
MF13	The requirements of disabled children are understood and provided for within traffic and transport initiatives	GREEN	GREEN	All traffic and transport initiatives are designed to be inclusive for all service users.		

Information, publicity and events:

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

MF14	The Local Authority has a clearly identified section on its	GREEN	GREEN	Information of all commissioned play		
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Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

	website which gives information about play opportunities as described in the Statutory Guidance (play areas, play provision, clubs and their accessibility)			opportunities is recorded on a timetable and disseminated on a quarterly basis through the council's website, FIS, Wicid website and play providers.		
MF15	The Local Authority provides information on access to play opportunities and contact for support if required	GREEN	AMBER	<p>YEPS provide information on all activity timetables on www.wicid.tv, which all young people can access. Information is also shared on individual secondary school websites and the local authorities Family Information Service website. Information is also displayed in the secondary schools via display boards and plasma screens.</p> <p>YEPS provide information and updates through Social media, via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat.</p>	At present the Play Development Team has limited means to promote play online. The service currently uses FIS and the online platforms of out third sector providers. However, it is anticipated that this will significantly change with the launch of the new RCT Families website.	The Play Development Team will develop a range of information leaflets for professionals and parents on play opportunities and play support services available to them. All information to then be kept up to date and made available on the designated play page on the new RCT Families website.
MF16	The Local Authority supports and publicises events which encourage play opportunities and events for children and families	GREEN	GREEN	The play team deliver family play opportunities during school holiday periods, which is publicized via the council's website, FIS,		

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

				Wicid website and play providers.		
MF17	The Local Authority publicises information which contributes to positive community attitudes to play	GREEN	AMBER	<p>YEPS produces press releases to showcase and celebrate young people's achievement gained from attending YEPS provision. This information is also put on Wicid</p> <p>YEPS hold an annual Celebration Event to celebrate the achievements of young people and the wider community.</p>	At present the Play Development Team has limited means to promote play online. The service currently uses FIS and the online platforms of out third sector providers. However, it is anticipated that this will significantly change with the launch of the new RCT Families website.	
MF18	The Local Authority publicises information and support for parents to help them encourage their children to play	RED	AMBER	During lockdown, the Council's Play and Parenting teams developed a range of short 'follow along' films for children and their families to use to play together. They raged for nursery rhyme dances to arts and crafts project to nature trails. This were made available on the FIS	These will continue to be developed and circulated on the new RCT Families website once it has launched.	

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

				social media pages on YouTube.		
MF19	The Local Authority widely uses on-site signposting to safeguard and promote play	AMBER	AMBER			
MF20	The Local Authority engages with the media to encourage the positive portrayal of children playing in the local area	GREEN	GREEN	<p>YEPS produces press releases to showcase and celebrate young people's achievement gained from attending YEPS provision. This information is also put on Wicid</p> <p>YEPS holds an annual celebration Event to recognise the achievements of young people and the wider community.</p> <p>Cultural events run by the Arts Service and by the 3rd sector arts organisations in RCT - such as the Hot Jam Bootcamp and SONIG Young Promoters Network music nights, promote the creativity of young people.</p>		

Access to space/provision

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

The local authority continues to deliver a package of road safety initiatives to thousands of school children every year, which includes school road safety sessions. The aim of the road safety sessions is to equip children and young people with the necessary skills they will need to travel safely to and from school and their local play space. Other safety initiatives include 20 mile calming measures, dropped kerbs etc.

'Safe routes in communities' schemes are also being developed locally in consultation with children and young people and their parents, through school surveys and workshop sessions to ensure that the proposed measures meet the needs of the community.

Have there been challenges?

There have been no challenges at this point.

How can these be overcome?

N/A

Comments

We continue to work closely with the 21st Century Schools team as and when new schools are being built to ensure we take account of the new routes children and young people will need to take in order to get to school safely.

Information, publicity, events

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

The LA continues to use information to positively promote access to all provision for children and young people.

Have there been challenges?

In recent years there has been limited opportunities to disseminate play information to children and young people and their families.

How can these be overcome?

The Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service is in the process of developing a bespoke website where the play service will have a designated section on it to be able to promote all aspects of the play service.

Comments:

The corporate Public Relations and Tourism department continues to support all other council departments to advertise and disseminate a range of information, publications and up and coming events in line with council policy.

Matter G: Securing and developing the play workforce

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

RAG status

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

Note – These criteria are specifically about Playwork: Playwork is a highly skilled profession that enriches and enhances play. It takes place where adults support children’s play but it is not driven by prescribed education or care outcomes. This includes both open access and out of school childcare settings.

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LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MG01	The Local Authority keeps up to date information regarding the playwork workforce across the Local Authority (this should include the number of playworkers, playwork management structure, qualification levels, training opportunities and volunteers)	GREEN	GREEN	We have recently undertaken our annual Play Workforce audit, which identifies the training needs of the play workforce. The outcome of the audit will be used to develop the play training programme for 2022/23. Additional annual audits will be carried out for		

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

				23/24 and 24/25 to inform the future training for the play sector.		
MG02	The Local Authority supports all of the workforce to achieve the qualification level required by the Welsh Government's National Minimum Standards	AMBER	GREEN	<p>We provide free statutory training for the play workforce. Where applicable we also provide training grants to enable volunteers and play workers to undertake level 1 & 2 play training course.</p> <p>All play training qualifications promoted in RCT are on the Pathway Framework for Playwork.</p>		
MG03	The Local Authority has a staff development budget ring fenced for play, including playwork	GREEN	GREEN	An element of the Childcare & Play grant is designated on an annual basis to deliver quality play training opportunities.		
MG04	There is a comprehensive range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities available for playworkers in the area	GREEN	GREEN	The Play Development Team and their commissioned providers have access to the Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service's training prospectus, offering mandatory and	The training prospectus continues to be developed to ensure emerging training needs of the play workforce	Regularly review the play workforce training needs and liaise with the Training and Development Officer to offer these as part of the termly training prospectus.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

				good practice training courses for funded staff	are offered on a termly basis.	
MG05	Training is available for volunteers and parents to develop their knowledge on skills in playwork	AMBER	RED		Due to recent covid restrictions there has been extremely limited engagement with volunteers and parents	The Play Development Team will reengage with local communities to improve the knowledge and understanding of Playwork locally.
MG06	The Local Authority includes playwork within its Workforce Development strategies	GREEN	GREEN	The Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service has a Training Working Group that identifies and delivers a range of mandatory and service specific training for the Play workforce.		
MG07	The Local Authority supports partners to deliver appropriate training to community groups, parents and volunteers	GREEN	RED		Due to covid restrictions limited work has been carried out in this area.	The play team will develop a bespoke package of play training to raise awareness of the importance of play to community groups parents & volunteers.

Note – these criteria are about the Play workforce: This encompasses anyone employed whose role has an impact on children playing – those who may either directly facilitate their play, design for playing, or those with the power to give permission for children to play, or not.

MG08	The Local Authority has undertaken a comprehensive training	GREEN	GREEN	This has been achieved through the play workforce audit, which		
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Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

	needs analysis for the play workforce as defined in the toolkit glossary and above			identified the mandatory training and specialist training needs the play workforce need for 2022/23		
MG09	The Local Authority takes action to expand the variety of learning and development opportunities that are offered to staff	GREEN	GREEN	This is done through offering blended training opportunities and evening and weekend training sessions.		
MG10	There is a comprehensive range of CPD opportunities for a range of professionals who work with children	GREEN	GREEN	Our training officer identifies and sources new inavitive training opportunities for the play sector.		
MG11	Training awareness sessions are available for professionals and decision makers whose work impacts on children's opportunities to play	GREEN	RED		Due to recent changes in service areas and the commissioning of services there is limited evidence available to support this.	Work to be undertake by the PSA working group to identify record and publicise play awareness training for professionals and decision makes. The information gathered will focus on the importance of providing children with stimulating play opportunities.

Securing and developing the play workforce

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

We have a designated core Play Development Team that commissions providers to deliver open access and targeted play, as well as assisting new providers to deliver play opportunities. The service also has a bank of casual play staff that support the direct delivery of the after-school play provision in RCT's special schools, family fun days and community play sessions. The team commissions third sector organisations to deliver the new Children and Wellbeing Project and Family Play Programme.

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

During 2020, the service undertook a play workforce audit to identify the training needs of the play workforce. Therefore, as the covid pandemic hit and lockdown restrictions were imposed, the service was able to use the time to upskill the play workforce by providing them with innovative and a bespoke package of training.

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

The Local Authority has a designated Play Officer who is responsible for ensuring the training needs of the play workforce are identified and met on an annual basis. The local authority provides free / subsidised training for childcare, play and youth providers to ensure that they are meeting their legal requirements and are kept up to date with the outcomes of research or new practices. All training delivered is done so in partnership with Adult Learning Wales and other reputable training providers.

Over the past two years, there have been many changes in the way training is offered to the play sector. Due to staff having the opportunity to access blended learning there has been a noticeable increase in the uptake of and attendance at training sessions.

Have there been challenges?

Due to the restrictions imposed throughout the covid pandemic there has been limited opportunities for face to face training.

How can these be overcome?

We will endeavour to reinstate elements of face to face training as and when it is safe to do so.

Comments

We will continue to carry out annual training audits on the needs of the play sector. This will enable the Council to prioritise and compile and annual comprehensive package of training whilst maximising budgets across the sector.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

Matter H: Community engagement and participation.

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

RAG Status

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

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MH01	The Local Authority promotes initiatives to engage relevant groups in enhancing play opportunities for children in its area.	GREEN	GREEN	<p>The aim of the annual Teddy Bear Picnic is to engage with parents and children to promote the importance of play within the Early years. We see over 3000 visitors attend the event on an annual basis. This is also used as an opportunity to consult with children and their families.</p> <p>We also deliver a number of free family fun days over the holiday periods from our children centres. An example of some of the</p>		

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p>activities we offer can range from a climbing wall to storytelling, silent discos, clog dancing, junk modelling and much more.</p> <p>Street Play workshops have been delivered to community development partners to identify and engage with new community groups to develop locally based play opportunities.</p>		
MH02	<p>The Local Authority promotes community engagement in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making space available and suitable for play - organising play events - positive attitudes towards children and play - training on the importance of play. 	GREEN	AMBER	<p>Through close working relationships with a number of council and voluntary organisations, we promote free usage of the children centres to organisations who want to deliver play opportunities for children and young people.</p> <p>The venues are also used to deliver various play training and with prior notice we can arrange for the centres to be open in</p>	<p>Due to the Covid restrictions over the past 2 years, there has been limited promotion of access to these venues and resources.</p>	<p>As the Covid restrictions ease, the PSA working group will establish a list of community based venues and facilities that can be promoted to community groups that are suitable for a range of play opportunities and support groups.</p>

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				the evenings and weekends.		

Community engagement and participation

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

Throughout this section there is a clear indication that a range of community engagement activities are taking place; from formal consultations to customer satisfaction. There have been a number of events held to capture the views of specific cohorts of children and young people, service users and community members in the development and delivery of specific projects and programmes. We have recently undertaken our annual consultation with 560 children and young people from across 18 schools and 7 playschemes. We have also consulted with children and young people and the families who access the Care2Play programme.

Have there been challenges?

There have been no challenges at this time.

How can these be overcome?

N/A

Comments




The Local Authority will continue to consult and engage with children and young people and communities to ensure that the provision being commissioned and delivered meets the individual needs of the service user, their families and communities. All feedback information from the consultations we have undertaken will be imbedded into the annual play service delivery plan and 2022/23 PSA action plan.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

Matter I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas

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

RAG Status

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

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MI01	There is a named person on the Local Public Service Board who champions children's play and ensures that the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan contribute to and are incorporated within the Well-being Plan	GREEN	GREEN	The Group Director for Community and Children's Services as named person for Play sits on the Cwm Taf Strategic Partnership Board that acts as an advisory working group for the PSB. Any considerations for the PSB in relation to children's play are fed up via the SPB Play is referred to in one of the key objectives of the Well-being Plan		
MI02	The Well-Being Plan recognises the importance of play and contributes to the provision of rich play opportunities	GREEN	AMBER	The Wellbeing Plan places an emphasis on the need of play opportunities for all children and young people, including those who require	From April 2022, much of the funding previously used to support wellbeing programmes will not	Identify funding to continue to deliver the play projects that improve children and young people's wellbeing.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
				<p>support to access provision. The Regional Commissioning Board have realised this and approved ICF funding for the Care2Play programme in RCT.</p> <p>Children and Community Grant (CCG) funds the Children’s Wellbeing Support Programme in RCT to offer 1:1 support for children aged 7 – 11yrs known to the Resilient Families Service. The programme builds resilience via the use of play techniques that families can continue with once the initiative has ended.</p>	<p>be available. Therefore, the PSA partners will need to continue to champion the need for play opportunities as a means to improve children and young people’s wellbeing.</p>	

Education and schools						
LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MI03	Schools ensure that children are provided with a rich play environment for breaks during the school day	GREEN	AMBER		<p>Opportunities have been limited over the past 2 years due to Covid restrictions but YEPS is re-opening its after-school provision, we have after-school special school sessions delivered by PDT.</p> <p>Play wales are working with schools to make their outdoor spaces available after the school day.</p>	<p>Re-establish YEPS after-school provision once it is safe to do so</p> <p>Progress the Play Wales initiative of utilising school playgrounds after the school day.</p>
MI04	Schools provide play opportunities during out of teaching hours	AMBER	AMBER	Some schools have been commissioned from the Winter of Wellbeing grant to run afterschool activity sessions.		Clarity needed from WG if additional funding for 2022/23 will be made available to continue to support these sessions to run.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

MI05	Schools provide access to school grounds for playing out of school times	AMBER	AMBER		Work is currently on-going to engage with local schools to promote this.	Work with relevant partners to take the Play Wales initiative forward.
MI06	Schools encourage children to walk and cycle to school	GREEN	GREEN	<p>Schools are required to develop a sustainable travel plan. Within this, they identify areas of development to encourage children to use more sustainable modes of transport to school, such as walking and cycling.</p> <p>As part of our 21st Century Schools' investment we ensure that scooter and bicycle shelters are a part of the new school build, and we work closely with officers in our 'Safe Route's Team' to ensure that the works onsite and off complement each other.</p> <p>It is a condition of Planning Consent that schools review their Travel Plan to ensure they utilise any additional sustainable transport initiatives that have been included in the new school builds, and schools are supported by officers to</p>	these assessments recommend improvements to the walking and cycling routes, these works are implemented.	

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

				<p>deliver any new initiatives that are developed. Alongside this, Traffic Impact Assessments are undertaken as are assessments of the safe walking routes.</p>		
MI07	<p>The Local Authority offers guidance to ensure schools understand and ensure that regular outdoor play is not curtailed</p>	GREEN	GREEN	<p>Welsh Government Foundation Phase guidance supports schools to design and develop engaging and appropriate outdoor play spaces for Foundation Phase pupils, this is also a priority within the New Curriculum for Wales. This is supported through the 21st Century Schools investment programme as the ability for 'free-play' is designed into all of our Foundation Phase classrooms and associated external areas, and where practical in our KS2 classes too. Our 21st Century School standard design includes external canopies that are installed outside all Foundation Phase classrooms to ensure that</p>		

				<p>there is the opportunity for outdoor play whatever the conditions.</p> <p>There is guidance contained within the Welsh Government Building Bulletins, specifically 98 and 99, which advises on what type of external spaces are required for schools, and the associated areas of each. We use this guidance to inform the design of all of our 21st Century Schools.</p> <p>The Cwm Taf Well Being Plan 2018-23, and the New Curriculum for Wales encourages all schools to make the most of opportunities to engage pupils with the outdoors to support their mental health and well-being.</p>		
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Town and Country Planning						
LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MI08	The Local Development Plan recognises and addresses the	AMBER	GREEN	The Local Development Plan contains policy AW4		

	<p>outdoor play needs of children of various age groups and abilities</p>			<p>which seeks planning obligations including for open space, sport and play space where it is deemed appropriate. The plan also contains policy AW6 which supports development proposals which provides open space in line with the Fields in Trust Standards. Policy AW7 also seeks to protect areas of public open space.</p> <p>In preparing the revised LDP consultation with other Council departments will be undertaken.</p>		
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Traffic and Transport						
LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MI09	<p>The local Transport Plan recognises the importance of local streets, roads and walking and cycling route in offering play opportunities for children of different ages and</p>	GREEN	GREEN	<p>One of the LTP's core interventions is to develop programme for innovative walking, cycling and Smarter Choices, to deliver</p>		

	abilities			Active Travel schemes that improve walking and cycling links to key services and facilities and, to improve accessibility within and between communities.		
MI10	The local Transport Plan identifies ways of assessing and addressing the needs of all groups including those which are often marginalised.	GREEN	GREEN	Social inclusion and equality is promoted in the LTP, through the provision of a transport system that is safe, accessible and affordable to all sections of the community. The needs of vulnerable groups are understood and taken into Account in the overall direction of the LTP and in the design of individual transport schemes that are delivered through the Plan		

Early Years Plans

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MI11	Early Years and Flying Start plans and services recognise the importance of play and contribute to the provision of rich play opportunities for	GREEN	GREEN	Flying Start continues to support commissioned childcare settings to improve the quality of play provision. Recent		

younger children

improvements over the past 12 months include providing settings with outdoor play equipment, canopies, wet weather clothing so the children can access outdoor play in all weather conditions.

Settings have been provided with movement matters packs and resources to encourage outdoor physical literacy activities.

Childcare staff have received training around developing the outdoors and physical play which included natural resources and Jabadao.

Outdoor play has been the main focus throughout the COVID 19 Pandemic where settings have adapted their practice to fully utilise outside play.

Family policy and initiatives						
LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MI12	Family support initiatives provide up to date information and support for parents to enable them to support their children to play	GREEN	AMBER	The play team has recently developed and piloted the new Family Play Programme initiative. Once the evaluation of the pilot has been completed, aspects of the programme will be amended. A programme of delivery for the year will be timetabled and delivered.	To date, this initiative has only been piloted. Going forward, this needs to be mainstreamed to offer maximum capacity for targeted families to access the support.	Roll out the Family Play Programme across additional areas of RCT
MI13	The local implementation of the Families First programme recognises the importance of play and contributes to the provision of rich play opportunities	AMBER	GREEN	In 2021/22 a new Children's Well Being project was piloted via the increase in CCG in order to meet an identified need and gap in provision. The aim of the pilot was to develop a wellbeing intervention for children aged 7-11 where the child displayed low self-esteem, confidence and resilience levels which focused on play opportunities.		

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

MI14	Plans to reduce the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences recognises the importance of play and contributes to the provision of rich play opportunities	AMBER	GREEN	<p>A comprehensive ACE's awareness training schedule has been implemented across schools, youth service and children's services teams. The protective factors of engaging in play opportunities is highlighted as an important aspect of reducing the impact on ACE's</p> <p>Trauma-informed practice is fundamental to the way in which Play Development Team operate. Training has also been provided to wider Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service teams and Education and Inclusion Services.</p>		
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Inter-generational policy and initiatives						
LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MI15	There are a range of play based approaches to inter-generational activity	AMBER	GREEN	The play team delivers a number of family fun days throughout the year, offering children, young people, and		

				<p>families to come together to take part in groups activities.</p> <p>YEPS deliver intergeneration projects to support the perception of young people in the community. An example of this is where young people share a building with a local bowls club. The young people designed and created a mural of a bowls player and created planters with some of the older players that were placed outside the bowls pavillion</p>		<p>Play Development Team and the Youth Engagement and Participation Service to jointly commissioned community-based play and youth sessions across RCT.</p>
MI16	<p>There is a creative approach to inter-generational activity which encourages better interaction between children of different ages</p>	GREEN	RED	<p>The Play Development Team and the Youth Engagement and Participation Service are planning to jointly commission external partenrs to deliver provision to children and young peole aged 5 – 25 years. The widened age range will improve the interaction between age groups and</p>	<p>Youth Play sessions have been suspended as a result of the pandemic. It is being considered if these are the best way forward as normal service resumes.</p>	

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

				ease children's anxiety as they transition from primary to secondary school, and the associated support services.	The services have not yet implemented this commissioning model	
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Health and Safety

LA Ref No	Criteria	RAG Status 2019	RAG Status 2022	Evidence to support strengths	Shortfalls	Identified actions for Action Plan
MI17	The Health and Safety policies explicitly recognise the value of children being able to experience risk and challenge	GREEN	GREEN	<p>YEPS offer young people the opportunity to participate in numerous activities such as climbing river boarding and canoeing. All off site activities have to comply with EVC and AALS licences protocol and all staff taking young people on 'adventurous' activities are experienced, have up to date DBS checks and have completed First Aid and safeguarding training.</p> <p>All building and activity risk assessments are reviewed as part of the Play Monitoring visit.</p>		

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

MI18	The Health and Safety policies and procedures incorporate the risk-benefit approach to health and safety assessments as recommended by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)	RED	GREEN	A number of Risk v. Benefit training sessions have been and will continue to be deliver to the play sector throughout the year.		
MI19	The Local Authority offers the provision of insurance through the Local Authority scheme to all third sector play providers and community councils	RED	GREEN	<p>Individual organisations must have their own public liability insurance in order to be commissioned by the Council.</p> <p>However when commissioned play providers deliver provision jointly with the play team the RCT council insurance is used for cover.</p>		

Play within relevant policy and implementation agendas

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

Play features in the top layer of objectives of the regional Cwm Taf Well-Being Plan adopted by the Council. This has encouraged a more innovative approach to meeting cross cutting objectives including play.

Have there been challenges?

The main challenge over the past 2 years has been the covid pandemic and restrictions that were imposed.

How can these be overcome?

With the easing of restrictions and our way of life continuing to become more normal again, we need to ensure that at every step of the way we develop and promote a range of play and wellbeing opportunities for children and young people and families in local communities.

Comments:

We will continue to work with partners from across council departments and our community based third sector organisations to develop and deliver play and recreational opportunities for children and young people aged 0-25 years, from childcare to play and to youth work underpinned by a quality assurance framework that can be used across all providers within the sectors. Changes to commissioning arrangements via the Children and Communities Grant will also encourage and support more collaboration between services and more sustainability for third sector providers able to deliver integrated provision.

Conclusion

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

Throughout the whole of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) report it is evident that there are a number of issues that need to be addressed in order to ensure that all budgets and funding available are being utilised to deliver provision to meet the emerging needs of individual service users, families and communities. A main priority will be the gathering, analysis and use of data to inform and co-ordinate the planning, delivery and monitoring of play, leisure, culture and sporting provision. The use of this data will enable us to identify areas of need and target our resources to address them. It will also enable us to identify those children and young people who face barriers to accessing play as a result of their socio-economic or family situation and enable us to proactively remove these barriers.

All members of the PSA group will be responsible for undertaking and monitoring of the actions of the 2022-25 PSA Action Plan. This will mean that colleagues from across the sector will need to share their knowledge and understanding of how various approaches and processes can be applied to achieve these actions, for example, engaging with communities and carrying out consultations. It is envisaged that through the joined up working across the sector we will be able to provide children and young people, families and residents across the communities of RCT access to a range of play, leisure, culture and sports activities as and when they want it.

Way forward

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

As the county recovers from the pandemic, the Council will need to realign our priorities to develop services that focus on supporting the needs of all of our children and young people aged 0 – 25 years and their families to enable them to engage in accessing community based play, childcare, youth and other recreational activities.

The action plan focuses on addressing those PSA criteria that have been assessed as red and amber within this document and therefore in need of development and improvement. This does not mean that the activities rated as green will not be continued, but that they will be mainstreamed as part of the ongoing work of internal services and partners. Existing funding and resources will be utilised to create the infrastructure needed to quality assure a range of provision and develop the tools necessary to monitor quality of delivery.

Signed:

Date:

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

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

Matter	Priorities	Targets	Links to other Matters	Resources, including costs	Funding source (new or existing funding streams)
Matter B: Providing for diverse needs	To analyse the 2021 Census data and use it to prioritise the future development of play opportunities.	To develop play opportunities in the 3 most vulnerable areas across RCT.	Matter E	New play providers. Approximately £15,000	New 2022 / 23 Playworks funding.
	Work with the PSA working group to undertake a mapping exercise to identify where current play, youth and other recreational activities are being delivered through the medium of Welsh across the county borough.	Review and amend current SLA's to meet the identified needs for the development of provision for Welsh language speaking CYP.	Matter C	Staff time	Reprofile existing funding streams.
		Identify partners to support the development and delivery of provision through the medium of Welsh.	Matter G	Welsh medium play providers	
To reopen the sensory rooms to the general public free of charge	Develop and implement robust Covid compliant risk assessment to reinstate public usage of the sensory rooms across the C&FC.	Matter E	Staff time to take responsibility for the implementation the Covid Risk assessments.	Core funding	

	Design a playscheme timetable that incorporates a range of symbols to publicise the accessibility of buildings for service users.	To enable services uses to make an informed choice of what playscheme suits their needs best.		Staff time	Core funding
	Undertake a consultation with the gypsy traveller community to gain their view on developing a designated play space on their site.	Work with colleagues within the parks department to design and undertake a consultation with the gypsy traveller community.	Matter C	Staff time and potentially capital costs to fund the purchase of land/construction of play equipment.	Core funding to undertake the consultation. Use AWPOG Capital funding as and when becomes available.
Matter C: Space available for children to play	Undertaking play value assessments on all public open space	Identify staff within the departments current service structure to undertake the work.		Additional hours for staff to undertake this work.	New funding to be identified.
	Access audits undertake in 2021.	Implement the schedule of works that has been developed form the outcome of the access audits. Remove No Ball signs from areas where it is safe to do			New funding to be identified.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

		so on land within the department's portfolio.			
	<p>All residents are given the opportunity to be able to comment on the proposal to dispose of General Land,</p> <p>All residents are given the opportunity to comment on the proposal to transfer the leasehold of land for a Community Asset Transfer, including Splash Pads, Multi Use Games Areas, Skateboard Park and Outdoor Gym etc.</p>	<p>Corporate Estates to develop a process that enables residents to comment on the disposal of General Land</p> <p>Corporate Estates to develop a process that a community organisation applying for a lease or transfer of community assets can evidence they have consulted with the children and families within the area.</p>	Matter I	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Staff time</p>	<p>Existing funding</p> <p>Existing funding.</p>
Matter D: Supervised provision	To identify a fit for purpose designated play quality assurance scheme (QAS) to be rolled out across RCT.	Roll out of the new All Wales Play QAS to as and when it becomes available from Play Wales.		<p>Staff time</p> <p>Cost of registration to the QAS.</p>	<p>New 2022 / 23 Playworks funding.</p> <p>Children and Communities Grant allocation.</p>
	Identify funding to introduce an annual Play Improvement Grant.	Provide commissioned play providers with an opportunity to apply for funding to improve and		<p>Staff time</p> <p>£20,000</p>	New 2022 / 23 Playworks funding.

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

		replenish play equipment and resources.			Children and Communities Grant allocation.
Matter E: Charges for play provision	Provide service user with information on free or subsidised provision.	Establish mechanisms for recording no cost / low cost premises	Matter D	Staff time	Existing funding
	Develop an approved supplier list for private and 3 rd sector organisations to deliver recreational activities.	To create a central distribution list to notify providers of funding as and when funding becomes available.		Staff time	Existing funding
	Identify funding to continue to commission community organisation to deliver recreational activities locally.	Develop a process and guidance to commission additional recreational activities.	Matter I	Staff time £10,000	Children and Communities Grant allocation.
Matter F: Access to space/provision	Develop a timetable of delivery for specific schemes that meet the needs of service users.	Continue to bid for funding for schemes and seek other funding opportunities to deliver various road safety training opportunities to CYP.		Staff time	Existing funding streams
	To implement changes in legislation on the national speed	Develop and agree traffic calming policies and procedures to introduce traffic calming measures in		Staff Time	Existing funding

	limit as and when directed by WG.	residential roads and busy pedestrian streets			
	To deliver a comprehensive programme of Active Travel and SRIC schemes.	Continue to bid for funding to schemes and seek other funding opportunities			
	To develop a process of sharing child road traffic accident data	Use the data to inform changes that may be needed to enable children to safely move around their local communities		Staff time	Existing funding streams.
	Work with Play wales and other key partners to pilot the Play Street Scheme.	Develop a scheme of works to pilot the delivery of Street play across RCT. RCT Playstreets working group to implement the devilery of the pilot in the Spring term.	Matter G	Staff time	Play Wales funding.
	To establish a publicity campaign to promote the importance of play for ALL CYP. which will be highly visible across the CWRS Website.	Develop a range of publicity material to be disseminated to professionals and decision makers RCT wide. Develop a range of promotional information for parents / CYP and volunteers.	Matter G Matter H	Staff time	New 2022 / 23 Playworks funding

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

		Develop a range of promotional material for schools and lunchtime supervisors.			
Matter G: Securing and developing the workforce	To create CPD opportunities for staff across the social care sector.	Develop a CPD pathway across play, youth, and childcare to upskill the social care workforce. Develop a training package to upskill the social care workforce.			New 2022 / 23 Playworks funding
	To create opportunities for volunteers to become engaged in the delivery of play provision.	Develop a pathway for volunteers and/or parents to get involved in the delivery of play opportunities within their community.	Matter H	Staff time	Existing funding
Matter H: Community engagement and participation	Undertake a mapping exercise and to identify and record the availability of community buildings that are suitable to deliver a range of play, recreational and training opportunities.	Develop promotional material for community groups on how to apply for usage of council buildings.	Matter B Matter E Matter G	Staff time	Existing funding

Play Sufficiency Assessment Template

Matter I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas	Streamline the delivery of the Childrens Wellbeing Support Programme.	Identify relevant funding to continue to deliver the CWSP. Develop a 3-year plan for the continued development and roll out of the CWSP.	Matter B	Staff Time £80,000+	To be sourced.
	To raise the profile of play during the school day with all teaching staff and lunchtime supervisors.	Work with colleagues in Education to support schools to develop a play policy. Promote and support the Play Wales initiative to enable communities to have access to the school grounds at the end of the school day.	Matter G	Staff time	Existing funding
			Matter H	Staff time	Existing funding
	To develop a programme of delivery for the Family Play Programme.	Work with partners to identify staff to deliver the programme		Staff Time	To be sourced.
Streamline the commissioning of Play & Youth provision.	To develop a timeline for the commissioning of a Play & Youth offer.		Staff Time	Existing Funding	

		Develop a framework for the commissioning of a Play & Youth offer.			
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Child Play Questionnaire_copy

This report was generated on 07/02/22. Overall 588 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.

The following charts are restricted to the top 12 codes. Lists are restricted to the most recent 100 rows.

(How old are you?)

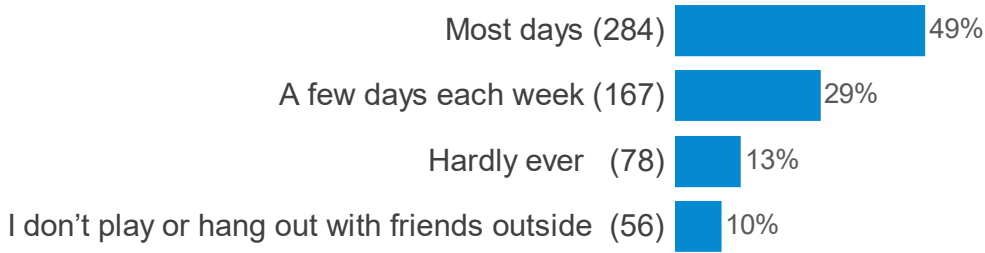
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6	10	8	9	6	7	11	9	5	7	8	9	8	11	10	9	8	7	10	9
9	10	5	9	6	6	9	7	7	10	9	8	6	6	10	6	8	7	9	9

(Which school do you go to?)

Parc Lewis Primary	Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	YGG Aberdar
Parc Lewis Primary	Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	YGG Aberdar
Parc Lewis Primary	Pengeulan Primary	Heol Y Celyn	YGG Aberdar
Parc Lewis Primary	Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn
Parc Lewis Primary	Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	YGG Aberdar
Parc Lewis Primary	Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	YGG Aberdar
Parc Lewis Primary	Pengeulan Primary	Heol Y Celyn	YGG Aberdar
Pengeulan Primary	Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	Pengeulan Primary	Heol Y Celyn	Heol Y Celyn
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Pengeulan Primary	Pengeulan Primary	Heol Y Celyn	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	Pengeulan Primary	Heol Y Celyn	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	Pengeulan Primary	Heol Y Celyn	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn
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Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	YGG aberdar	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	YGG aberdar	Heol Y Cely	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn	Heol Y Celyn
Pengeulan Primary	YGG Aberdar	YGG Aberdar	Heol Y Celyn

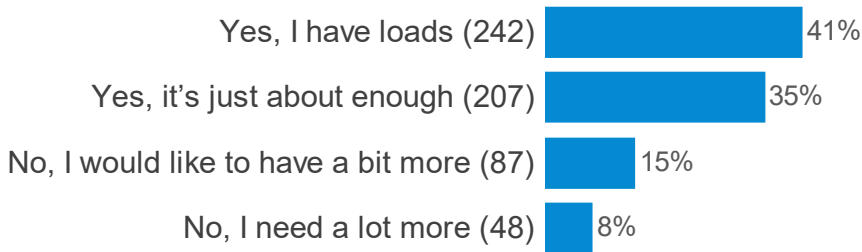
How often do you go out to play or hang out with friends?

Tick just one answer



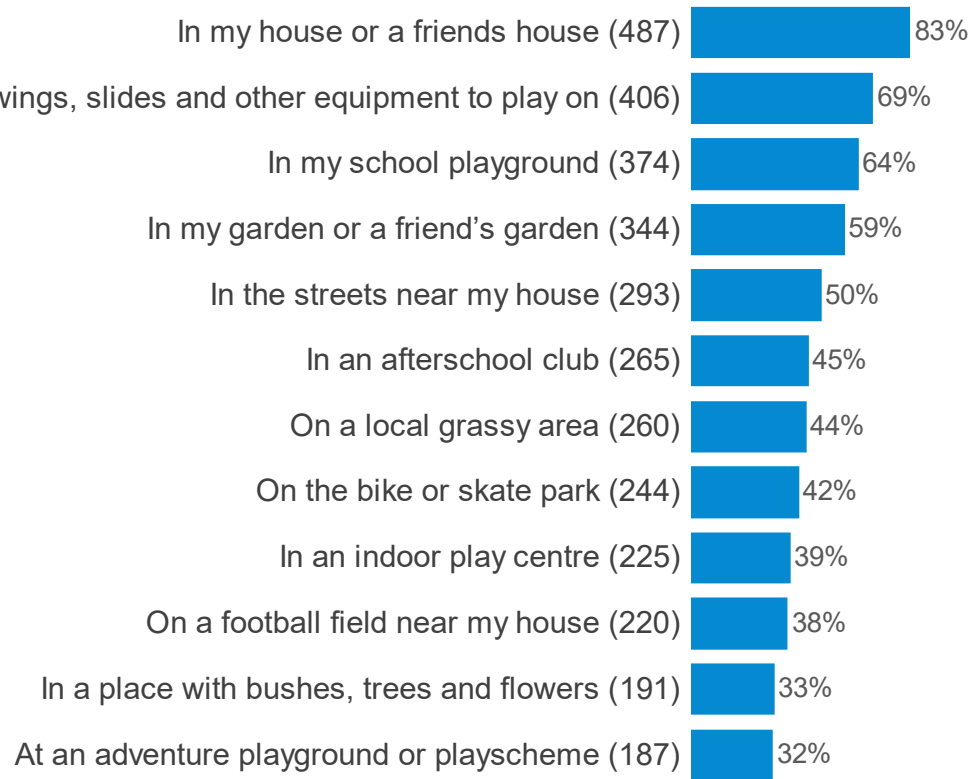
Do you have enough time for playing or hanging out with friends?

Tick just one answer



When you're not in school, what types of places would you like to play or hang out in?

Tick all the answers that are true for you:



Somewhere else (tell us where)

in my friends street	Mountain + Rugby Pitch
Up the top shop streets	The fair.
Gymnastics	on my trampoline
Beach	The park.
Soft play	shop or my nans
Park	nans
On a beach	Trampoline park.
Farm	shop, dance class, costa
Trampoline park	on my balcony.
Woods	swimming pool and horse riding
Gwenifor Park	football
Brynifor park	around the area
Brynifor Park	Inside my house
Car park	Outside of school
McDonalds	Football club
going somewhere like ninja world	Football club
Park	In the car park
I play in mud.	Carpark

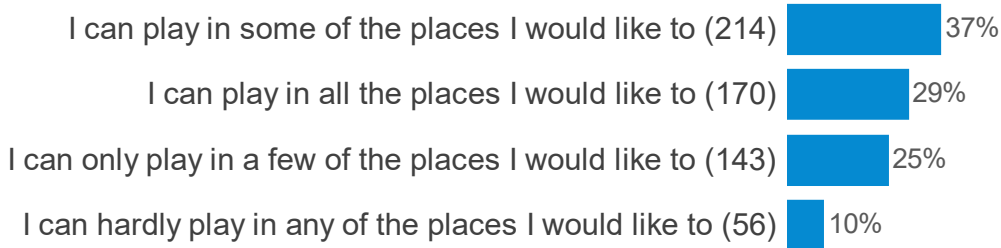
Child Play Questionnaire_copy

Somewhere else (tell us where)

My cousins new house.	The park
Rugby Field	In my bedroom and take dogs for a walk.
On the yard on my farm	Mountain
Rugby Pitch	Up the mountain
in the river area	Rugby Pitch
cubs, archery	in a football cage
Rugby Pitch	netball and gym
Swimming pool	on my switch and in my house
School	darran park
Back of shop (outside theres a swing)	Tylorstown Tigers RFC
Beach	soft play
Up the mountain	rugby tylorstown
Ibiza on holiday	netball barn
in a forest	holiday blue stone
Swimming	I play tag in a nice garden
Holiday	football field
Holiday	party's
Holiday	nans house
Holiday	nans house
basketball	swimming
Arcade , playground	on holidays i go to theatre club
Dance	park
park and horse riding	phone
Dance	in the park with my family
Nanny's house	caravan
Tonypandy	Up at my friends
in the park	caravan
The beach	rugby field
my nans house	football
On holidays	rugby field
Nans house	at a club
on xbox	Anywhere

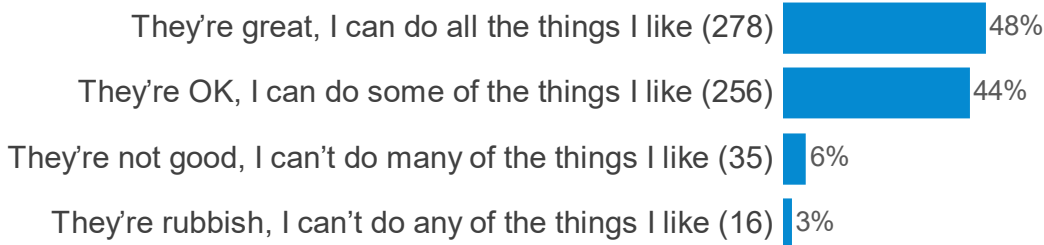
Can you play in all of the places you would like to?

Tick just one answer



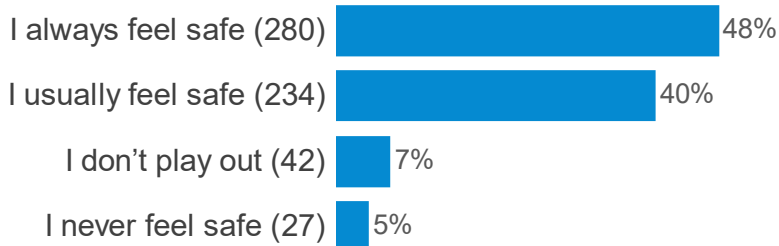
How good are the places you play in?

Tick just one answer



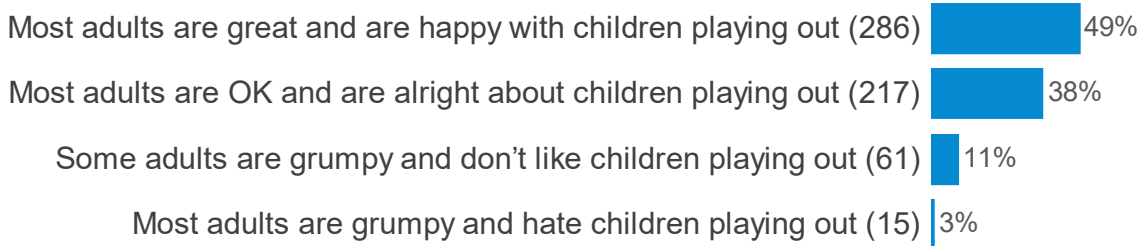
How safe do you feel when playing or hanging out?

Tick just one answer

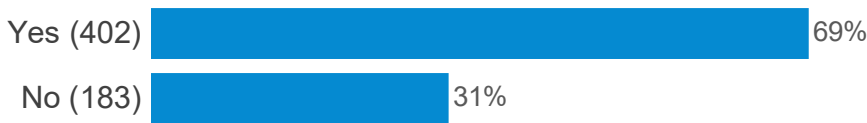


What are grown-ups like when you're playing or hanging out?

Tick just one answer

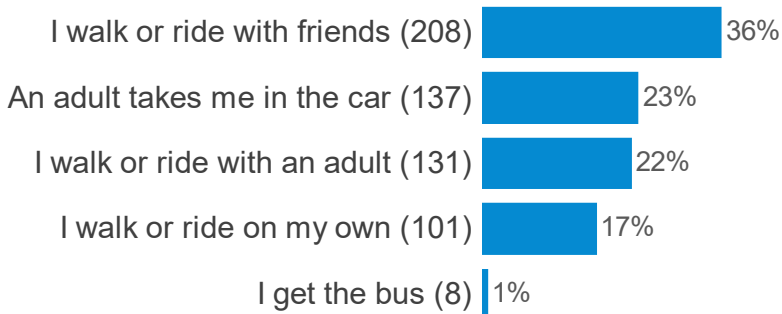


Are you allowed to play out on your own or with friends?



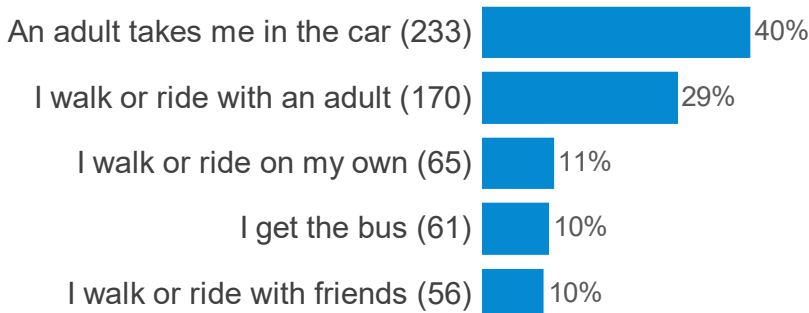
How do you usually get to places where you play?

Tick just one answer:



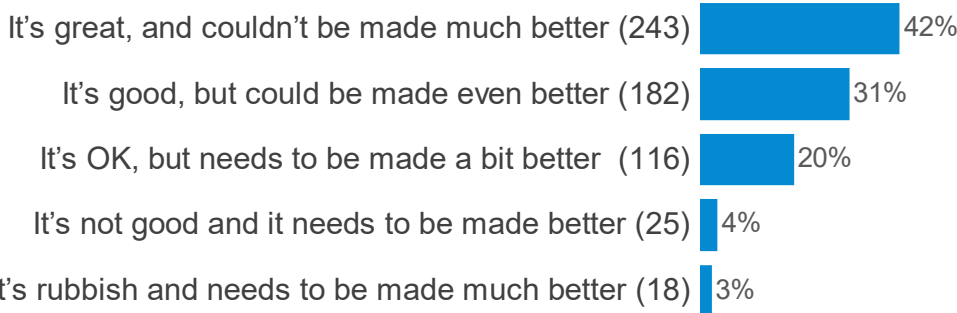
How do you usually get to school?

Tick just one answer:



Overall how good are your opportunities for playing and hanging out?

Tick just one answer



What's good about your area for playing and hanging out?

- go to the ride park
- different buildings or certain parks are mostly ok unless usually teenagers break stuff or are rude with certain jokes or offences
- basketball, football, tennis
- I like it when I'm on my trampoline
- there are grown ups to supervise the children playing and because of that there are less accidents
- on the scooter in mountain ash park
- everything is good
- it's fun and it's nice and has a nice garden and it's good to play
- playing with my friends
- tree house in the park
- park
- park
- park
- trampoline
- it is the best
- there's adults to watch over us
- it's good
- park
- we have water fights in the summer
- playing on the streets with friends
- swimming
- it has a skate park
- skate park
- park
- skate park
- that all of my friends live in the street
- not having a roundabout
- a lot of my friends live around the area we play in

What's good about your area for playing and hanging out?

ride my bike

it's near my house

playing football

ride my bike

I can play whatever I want to

adults keep me safe

park near house

football field

friends

I can do wheelies on my bike

only cars come in the night

most people are kind and helpful

where I live there is a mountain for me to play

we can play rugby or football

It's good because I live near my friends so I communicate with them

the back street

kind

I live near a forest and a park and I enjoy it

I like playing football and going for walks

good parks

got good play area in my house

dragons den

dragons den

parks

park

park

it's secluded, only my friends and family can find me

make the park bigger

it's safe

There's grassy areas, rocky area to find crystals and it's nice to be out in the fresh air

I have lots of activities in my garden

it's safe and fun

there's quite a lot of parks to walk to

The swings slide and tyre swing

it's very quiet

Loads of space

There's a park

football fields, parks, rugby field

The park is in my street

a football field

The park is good I like the swings

What's good about your area for playing and hanging out?

- a park a football field
- we have places to go and we can make our own adventures
- it's quiet
- I like the park
- that I get to play everywhere just not dangerous places
- I like the swings
- garden
- They are ok
- the park and football better
- no cars or anything are on the roads
- I feel safe and it's a great place to have fun
- it's fun, have some parks
- I like the slides and swings
- I have a park which has 2 slides, see-saw, roundabouts, monkey bars
- we have a good park where we have fun
- park
- Not really much
- It has a slide
- It has a park, zip line, shops, swings and I have a pool in my house
- There is a park close to my house and a play centre
- I love going to the park and on the monkey bars
- I love swinging on the bars
- New equipment
- It's safe for me
- There's a lot of hiding places when playing hide and seek
- It's a good place to play at my house or church because it's quiet
- I don't go out
- The woods
- It's safe
- It is a big space
- No

What's not good about your area for playing and hanging out and needs to be made better?

- the roads
- Karen's mean people
- it does not have a swimming pool
- it's too far
- a skate park
- better places to play
- animal run across the road

What's not good about your area for playing and hanging out and needs to be made better?

- internet
- people always scream
- broken equipment
- I sometimes don't go out
- it down the bottom of the street
- dog mess
- a bigger park and football field
- the park up graig
- it's a big hill so when I ride my bike I could fall
- there's lots of dangerous places that people like going to
- Mam don't like me playing in the street
- the big kids
- skating area
- damaged stuff
- if there were cameras able to see what people do it will make us feel much better and safer to do with particularly my street
- there is a lot of pubs
- some kid fighting down flats, people getting drunk, glass
- to have a park and see kids hanging around. I would like to have a friendly centre
- there are not much games but still play time is enjoyable
- going on an adventure trail
- nothing
- they haves stones and they hurt me
- trampoline
- better equipment in parks
- more slides
- not much
- that people come and hurt feelings
- I don't like going out
- nothing
- playing on my own
- more ramps in the skate park
- playing with my brother
- swings
- too many cars
- cars
- some people are mean and nasty
- park could be closer
- it's not close to where my friends live
- playing rugby
- nothing

What's not good about your area for playing and hanging out and needs to be made better?

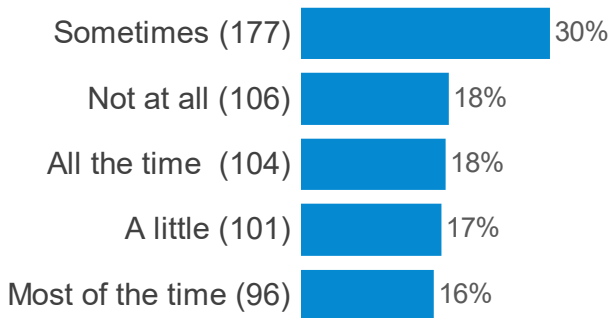
- fighting
- nothing
- ball goes down the banking
- we need more activities
- nothing
- the main road
- fight
- because I live on a main road
- more parks
- no parks
- make the park bigger
- There's a lot of people walking around and I don't feel safe
- it's small
- maybe it could be better if there were more things in the park
- The CP line and the bounce things
- The zip line you stand up
- Swimming pool
- Not many places to build dens
- more pools
- A skate park
- we lose the ball loads in the bushes
- Lots of glass and rubbish
- sometimes there is rubbish on the floor
- there's no park or anything
- Everything is broken
- nothing really
- There's always fighting
- that I can't really go anywhere without my mam
- Trampoline
- The park
- big slide
- there's not a lot of space
- sometimes there's scary music on
- Make it bigger
- dog poop
- dog poop
- Need more football pitches in my area
- It's not good because the swings are not good
- Nothing
- Nothing needs to be better

What's not good about your area for playing and hanging out and needs to be made better?

- _____ The equipment
- _____ The equipment in the park
- _____ New equipment because the things are broken
- _____ New equipment in the park
- _____ New equipment in the park
- _____ Things happen not good things The park is rubbish all it's got is baby swings Bad slide
- _____ A lot of sketchy adults and teens in places
- _____ Nothing in my opinion
- _____ I don't go out
- _____ The parks are closed
- _____ Kidnappers
- _____ The grass is long
- _____ More football pitches

How has COVID-19, lockdowns and restrictions affected how you usually play?

Tick just one answer



If you can, please tell us more about how COVID-19 has affected your play?

- _____ Good - I stayed with Mam
- _____ fun and nice because I was with my mum, dad and sister
- _____ I couldn't see my nanny
- _____ couldn't go out
- _____ couldn't see family
- _____ can't go out with my friends
- _____ I could only go out to play sometimes
- _____ we did WhatsApp with my friends
- _____ someone had covid
- _____ I play in my garden
- _____ I was bored and couldn't go to the park
- _____ the scape park
- _____ it has closed down certain buildings and pods that I like to hang out in

If you can, please tell us more about how COVID-19 has affected your play?

couldn't play outside

many people can't play together

a bit sad

couldn't go to western canal county park

it has not affected my play

I play around and use roblox on my laptop

I was sad

sad

sad

not allowed to go to places

couldn't play

sad

I wasn't allowed to go to certain places

I can't go out much

play roblox

sad

couldn't go play

not allowed out

couldn't see my nans dog

sad

we couldn't go to the beach

some places got shut down that I liked

having to stay in the house

because I couldn't play

not being able to go out and play

because I couldn't play

hate it

couldn't go outside

when will it stop?

I had to stay inside, doing home schooling and I felt sad because I couldn't play with my friends

couldn't see friends

we can't communicate with friends

sad

I couldn't see my friends for 11 months

angry

it only affects me when I or my friends catch it

missed my friends

sad, bored

sad, bored

sad

sad

If you can, please tell us more about how COVID-19 has affected your play?

sad

sad

sad

sad

couldn't see my friends

Sometimes when I try and go out there are people coughing and sneezing all the time

I was bored

I didn't get to see my friends

I can't go in my friends house and can't see all of my friends

Angry

Had to play I. The house

Couldn't go out

bored

Sad I didn't see my friends

bored

I couldn't play with my friends

bored

we can't go into people's houses. we have to stay 2 meters apart

Bad, I missed playing with my friends

only because I was a little bored

I was ok but I couldn't play

Sad because I couldn't go out to play

bored

No

missed my friends

I caught COVID and couldn't play with my friends

in the first lockdown I wasn't allowed to play and I wasn't allowed to have sleepovers as much as I used to

sad

Because I like going out with my friends

sad

sad

bored

I can't play with my friends

Playing with my friends

It has affected my play a little

Some parks were shut

Missed my friends

Sad

Couldn't go out and play

Not a lot it's fine

If you can, please tell us more about how COVID-19 has affected your play?

A bit but I kind of don't know

When I was on holiday I had COVID so I could barely make new friends and play with them and then when we got home we had to stay in our house for a while so I couldn't see my friends

Nothing

Lock down

I couldn't go to the park

I have t been out much

Are you ...

A girl? (299) 51%

A boy? (274) 47%

Other (10) 2%

Other (please describe)

i don't feel like any gender so I'd say I'd prefer they/them

Tom boy

A tom boy

Prefer not to say

non-binary

Do you think of yourself as being disabled?

No (556) 96%

Yes (24) 4%

Which language do you prefer to speak?

English (509) 87%

Welsh (50) 9%

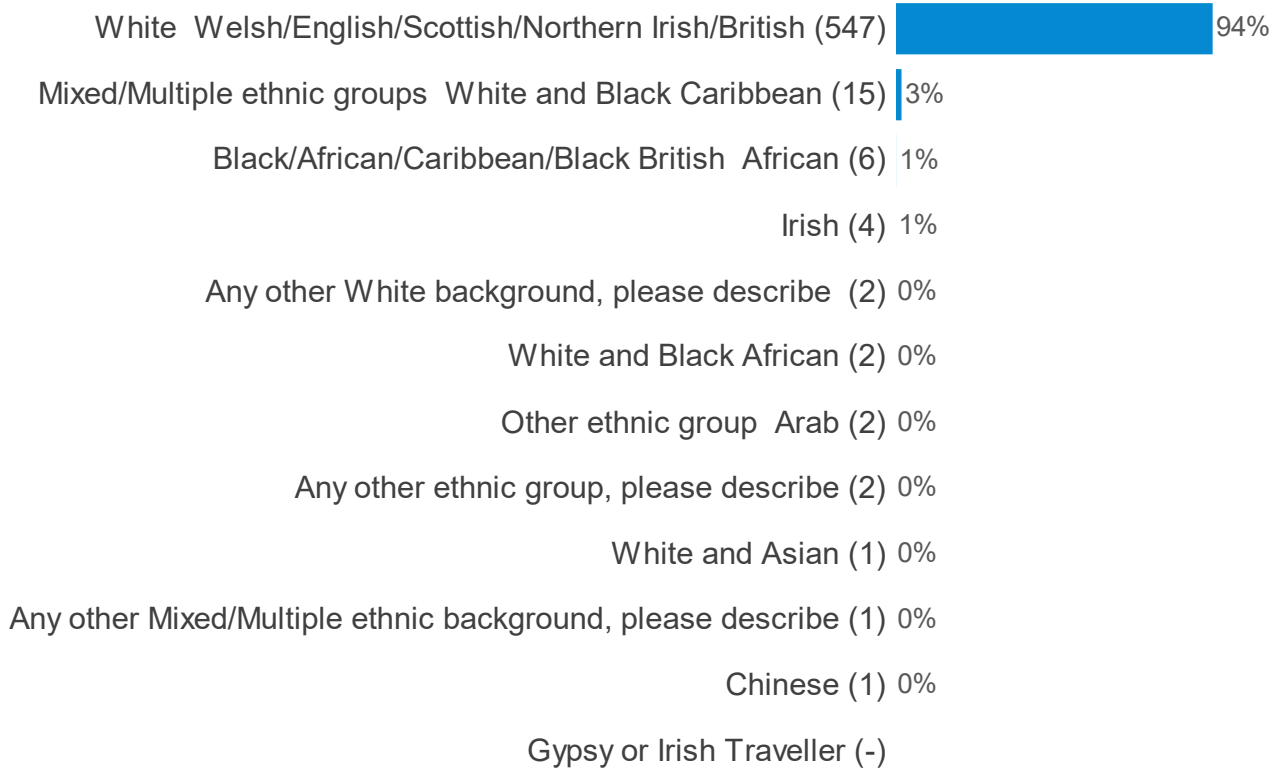
Other (24) 4%

Other (tell us which)

Polish	I speak English and mostly polish
Greek	English but speak polish to grandparents
British	Turkish
French	French and Chinese
French	spanish
Dutch	British
French	house
I like speaking polish.	Arabic
Polish	Arabic
French	sinhala
English and Spanish	Portuguese

Tell us which one of the following best describes your ethnic group or background?

Please ask for help if you're not sure.



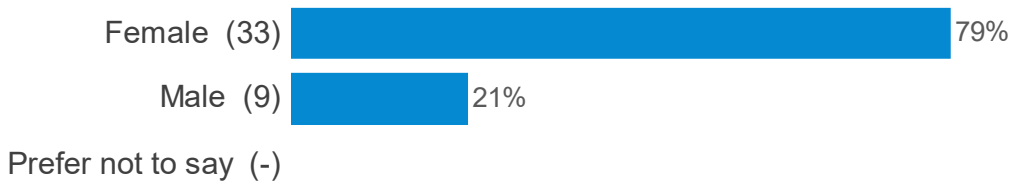
Play Workforce

This report was generated on 18/01/22. Overall 44 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.

The following charts are restricted to the top 12 codes. Lists are restricted to the most recent 100 rows.

Sex

Are you:



Gender Identity

Do you identify as:



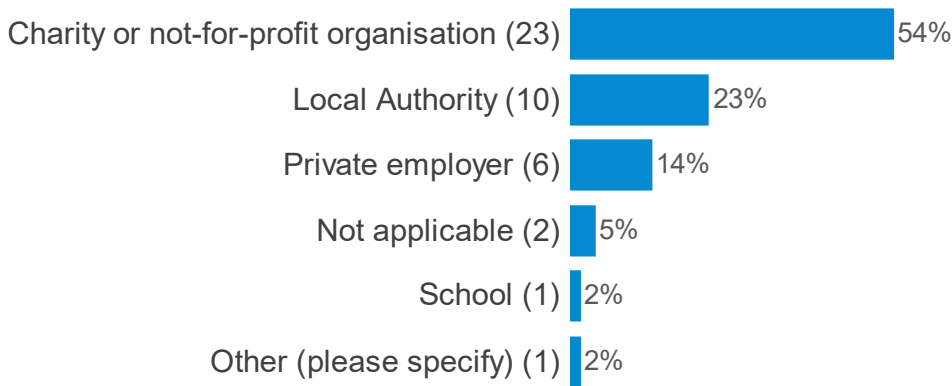
If you prefer your own term, please provide this here:

(Trans is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.)

Male

Play Workforce

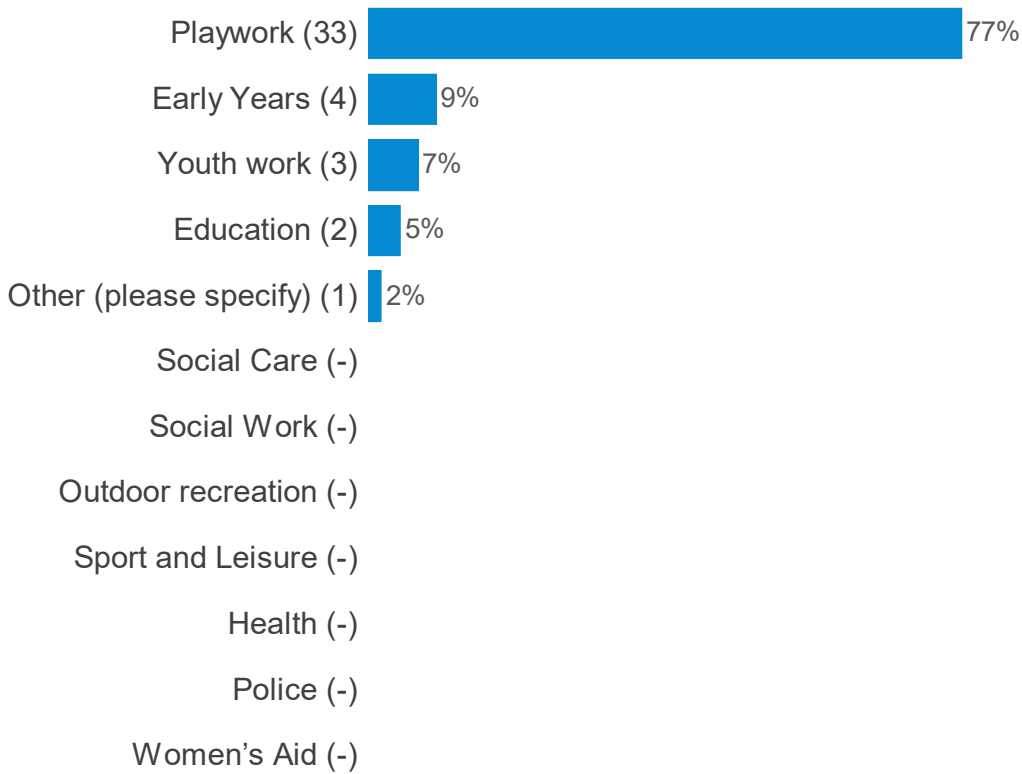
Do you work for a...?



Other (please specify)

Community Centre

What sector do you work in?



Other (please specify)

Playwork, youth work, early years

Play Workforce

What is your job title?

Play Development Officer	Nursery nurse key worker
Care 2 Play Officer	Casual playworker
Play Leader	Deputy Childcare & Community Manager
Youth Project Coordinator	Cook
Play worker	Support assistant
Development Manager.	children and youth development officer
Play worker	Play and Youth development mana
Playworker	Playworker
Playworker	Play Assistant
Childcare practitioner	Playworker
Playworker	Playworker
Team Manager	Deputy leader
Playworker	Owner
Playworker	Play Support Worker
Play assistant	Play worker and youth coordinator
Playworker	Playworker
Casual playworker	Play worker
Casual playworker	Play worker
Playworker	Family Hub Manager
Playscheme worker	Play leader
Play worker	Playworker

Briefly tell us your job role:

- To develop play opportunities in the local community for children and young people aged between 5-14.
- ensure children that have additional needs are placed in play settings and their play needs are being met
- Supervise and provide after school play activities
- Manage activities and projects for children and young people. Gain funding for this to happen and manage staff and oversee the day to day operating of the project including responsibility for finance and report writing.
- Organise, plan and deliver play activities for children age 5 to 11, supervise children making sure they are safe and happy. Liaise with parents, keep records and control petty cash.
- I am the Development Manager of our Soft Play Centre and over see our Play Schemes and Wellbeing and support worker.
- Provide a space where children have opportunity to experience play opportunities
- Look after and support children and young people, ensure they stay safe during play.
- Setting up a stimulating play environment for children aged 5-11 and taking part in child led activities when invited by the children.
- Play work looking after children
- I Work in a daycare. Keeping accurate records, assessments of children, key worker, plan and set up activities etc.
- Set up activities, work alongside children as they play, help pack away at the end of the session

Briefly tell us your job role:

Manager of the 16+ support team within the Youth Engagement and Participation service. My team provides youth work support for young people aged between 16 and 25 and this can take the form of advice and guidance around issue based concerns, EET and those at risk of homelessness.

Holiday club pslworker

Playworker for children aged 5-11

I provide safe and enjoyable play opportunities for children and young people aged 5-14

To supervise and give children play opportunities

Assist and support open access play schemes and after school clubs in special schools, some 1 to 1 and 2 to 1 support

Offer play provision to children. Travel to special schools and offer disabled children the chance to play like other children Run and lead open access play provision

Activities with children

Activities with childer

I go around RCT providing okay provision for children

Cook for a primary school

One to one support worker

Responsible for the children and youth activities and programme

Plan and manage the running of all provisions at the centre.

Support children splay in a supervised session

I care and understand the needs of young children and give them the support that they need. I make sure they have the best start in life and get the best outcome.

Working in nursery and after school clubs

To allow children to have free play within our development

I own an out of school setting

To support the play development team to deliver high quality play service. To work with children and young people to participate in a range of play activities, support them to achieve and identify their play needs.

I work for a charity doing several job roles. Working in a nursery, running playschemes and an after school club and helping to run a youth club

Supervise children

To encourage and support play of children and young people

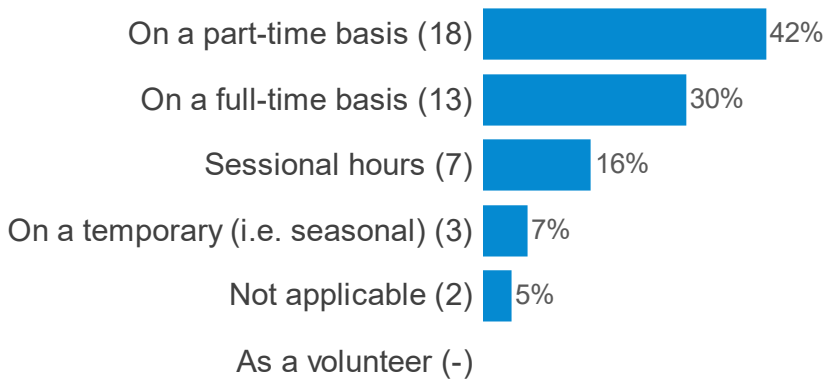
To manage a team of Play and Youth Workers ensuring delivery and facilities are safe and legal

Daily running of after school club, ensuring children are safely supervised, communicating with parents and other staff at the school, planning appropriate activities for the children. Completing daily safety checks and ensuring records are up to date

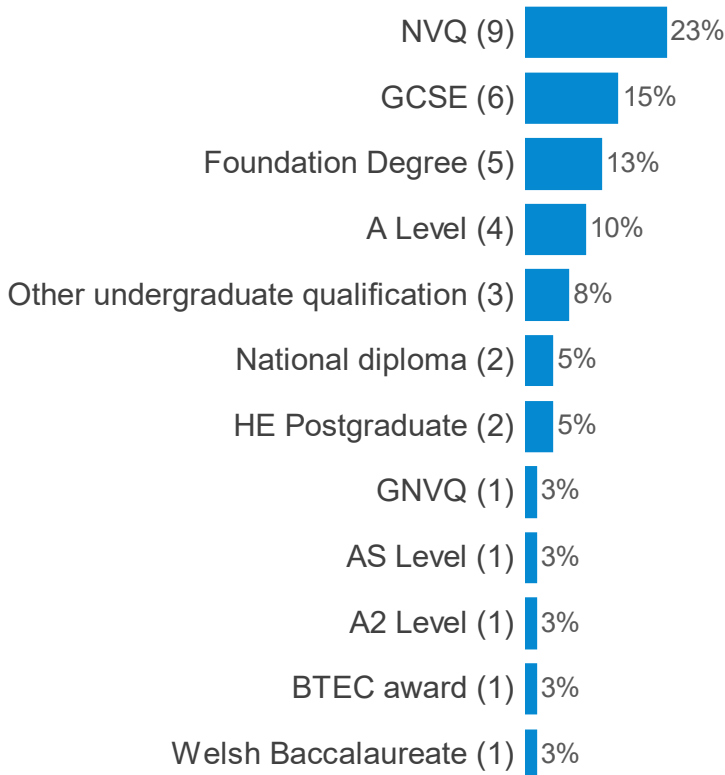
As a Playworker we organise, plan and take part in play and leisure activities for children. We also care for and supervise the children, making sure that they are safe and happy.

Play Workforce

Do you work:



What is the highest qualification you have achieved?

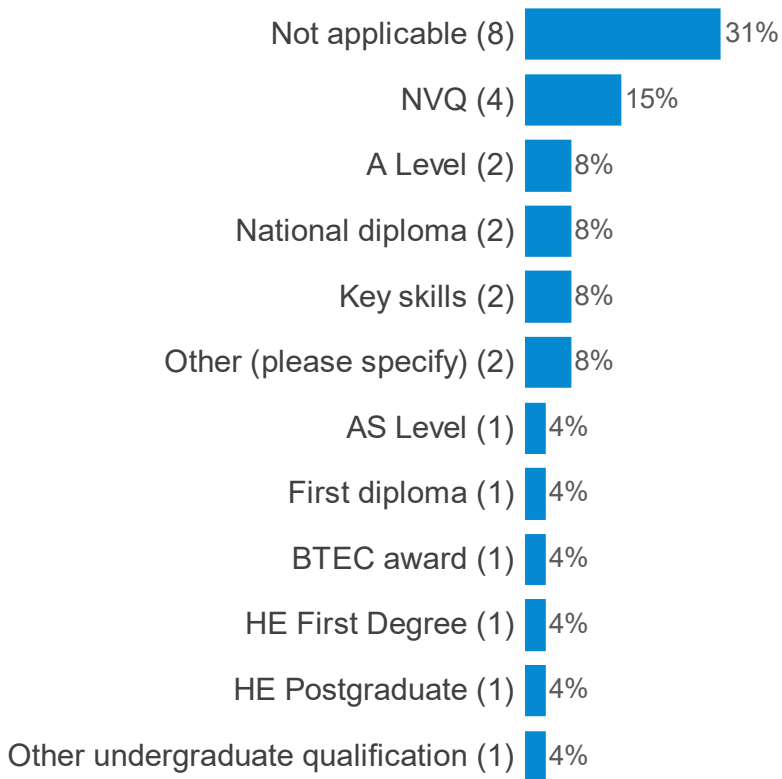


Other (please specify)

- _____
MSc
- _____
City & Guilds Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Childcare, Learning and Development.
- _____
Level 2
- _____
Hlta status
- _____
Bachelor of science degree 2:1
- _____
BA honours

Play Workforce

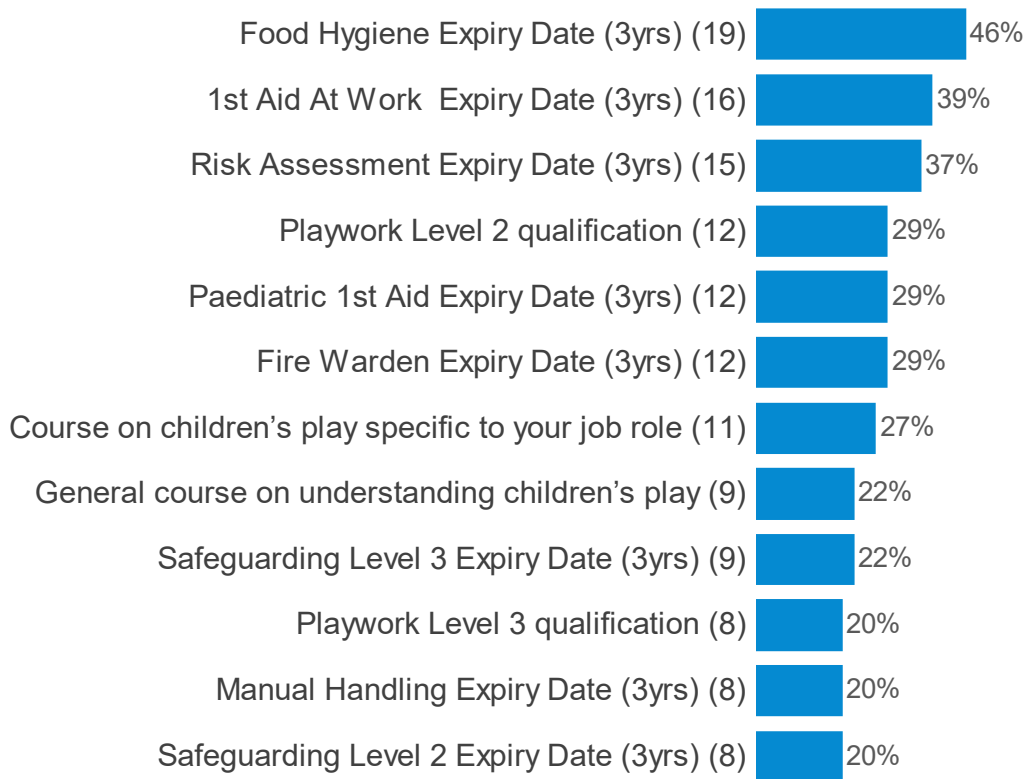
If you are you working towards a further qualification, please indicate:



Other (please specify)

- Level 3 in Playwork
- Looking at level 3 play work currently have Transition to play work level 3
- Level 3 transition into play work
- Transition into play work level 3

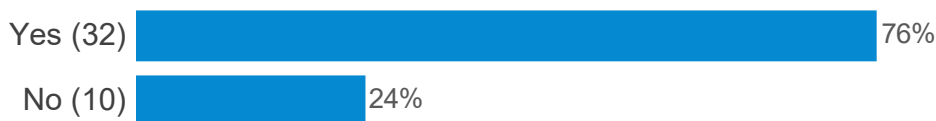
What training needs do you think you have?



Please list any other Training you would like to attend:

- Play therapy Welsh active offer Basic Welsh in a play environment Makaton
- **Understand special needs **Issuse based - Mental health, drugs and alcohol, sex and sexuality, health and well-being
- Any other training that would benefit me within my role.
- Play therapy, makaton, welsh language
- How play and youth work teams can work together for mutual benefit.
- Any
- ADDAPT
- Basic welsh language
- Risk assessment Food hygiene Fire warden
- Additional learning needs training, managing challenging behaviour
- Playwork level 2 Playwork level 3 First aid at work
- Additional needs and makaton

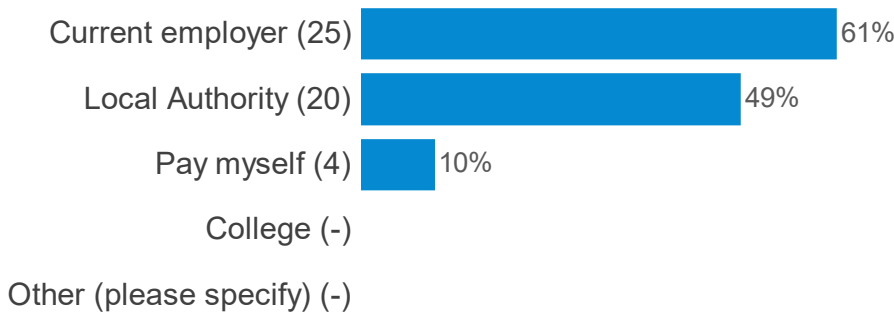
Are you able to access this training locally?



If you answered yes to the above question, please tell us who provides this training?

- Our in house training department will organise it
- Not sure
- local community. RCT.
- the fern partnership
- Adult wales
- LCDP
- LCDP
- Council
- range of providers
- R.C.T
- RCT
- Adult learning wales
- Local Authority
- Within the setting I work in.
- RCT council
- Adult learning wales
- Feel good factory
- Organisations that reach out to the centre and local council
- Various delivery partners such as High Speed Training with most available via the Local Authority

Please tell us how you are currently able to fund training?



When would you be able to attend training sessions?



How would you like the training to be delivered?



Briefly tell us why you feel you need to better understand children’s play

- I am always looking to broaden my knowledge and experience ongoing professional development
- To understand better.
- Any training that would benefit my job role I am willing to under go. I am always looking for more courses to attend to develop myself to support the children and families I work with.
- To extend personal development
- Because all children play and learn in different ways therefore it is good practice to have an understanding of play.
- I am undertaking a University placement in a play scheme and I am finding it difficult to merge my remit (youth work for 11 - 14 years olds who attend) with the play ethos.
- I feel the need to better understand children’s play so that I can improve the level of quality of a service we provide in order to give children and young people the best play opportunity we can provide them
- To provide a happy play experience
- To improve my knowledge and provide a better play provision for children daily
- Always room to learn more
- Always something else to learn
- It allows me to present the best possible play opportunities for children
- To gain a greater understand and knowledge, to enhance my professional development
- I would find it easier to understand children and there needs better, and will give me a greater understanding which would further the help I could give.
- It’s important to keep updated in childrens play to ensure that I am a efficient playworker
- I feel that being more trained in challenging behaviour and additional learning needs will help better facilitate my ability to provide more inclusive playschemes
- I would just like more training for the future
- There’s always way to better your understanding and being able to access courses is always a good thing to have.
- In order to be fully up to date with current legislation and to ensure my staff are trained and qualified.
- Because all children are different.

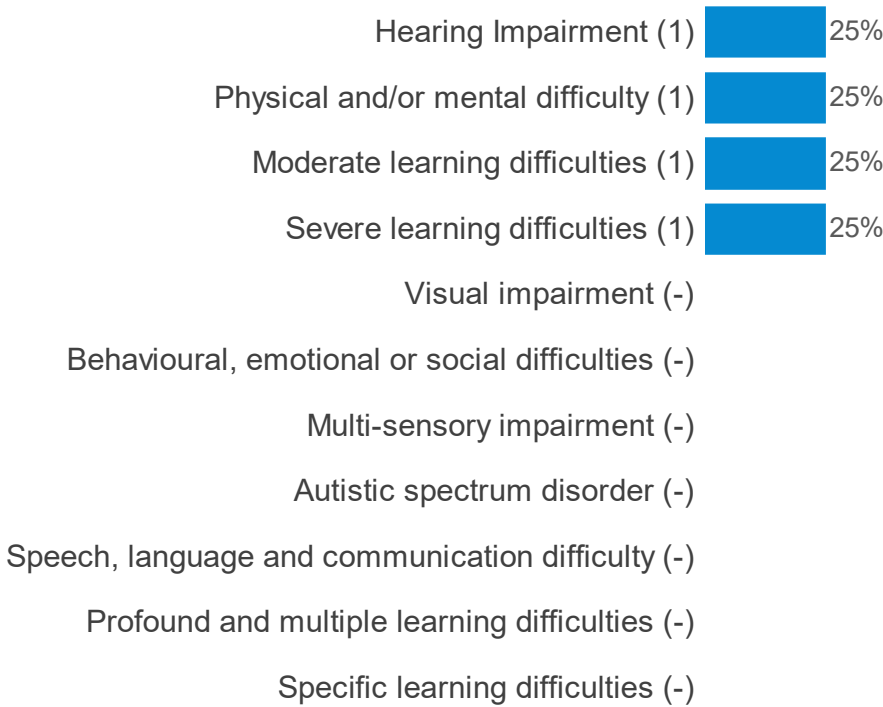
Disability

Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

‘The definition of disability as defined under the Equality Act (2010) is ‘a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or long term adverse effect on the ability to carry out day-to-day activities’.



If yes, what is your primary type of disability?

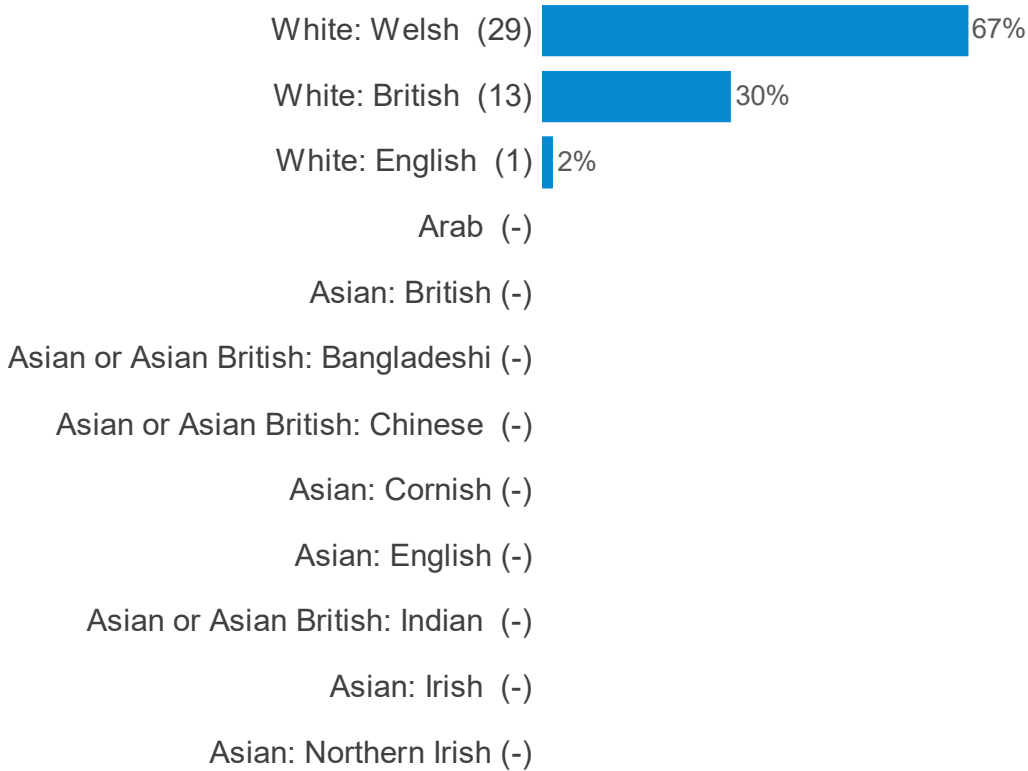


Do you live and/or work in Wales?



Ethnicity

How would you describe your ethnic origin?



Please state Asian or Asian British Other / Black, Black British or Black African Other / Mixed/Multiple Other / White Other:

White

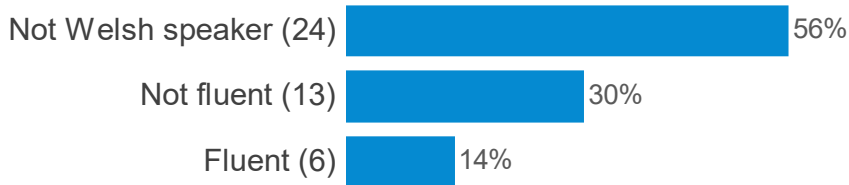
What is your first language?



Other (please specify)

Welsh

Are you a Welsh speaker?



What is your preferred language of learning?



Is there any other information you would like to add?

I personally do not think there is enough outdoor play provision and parents use after school and holiday clubs as a “babysitting “ service. There is limited understanding of play and it’s benefits to C/YP in the wider parental community and I feel training opportunities for this population is non existent. I feel having parents who have some understanding will give them the confidence to get their children away from screen time and outside.

No

No

None

PSA Workforce Training Timetable April – March 2022/2023

	Course	Date	Time
April	L2 Safeguarding (1) First Aid at work (1) Playwork Level 2 (1) Neurodevelopment (1) Makaton (1) Active Listening (1)	4 th April 2022 9 th April 2022 Start 4 th April 2022 12 th April 2022 14 th April 2022 23 rd April 2022	9am (weekday) 10am (weekend) 6pm (evenings) 9am (weekday) 9am (weekday) 10am (weekend)
May	L3 Safeguarding (1) Paediatric First Aid (1) Playwork Level 3 (1) Course on Children’s play specific to your job role (1) Incidental Welsh (1) Managing Challenging Behaviour (1)	14 th May 2022 17 th and 24 th May 2022 Start 21 st May 2022 5 th May 2022 3 rd May 2022 28 th May 2022	10am (weekend) 6pm (2 twilight sessions) 10am (weekends) 9am (weekday) 6pm (evening) 10am (weekend)
June	Food Hygiene (1) Fire Warden (1) Risk Assessment (1) Understanding Children’s Play (1) Additional Learning Needs (1) Resilience, Self Assessment and Action Plan Building (1)	6 th June 2022 7 th June 2022 8 th and 15 th June 2022 13 th June 2022 11 th June 2022 21 st June 2022	9am (weekday) 6pm (evening) 6pm (2 twilight sessions) 9am (weekday) 10am (weekend) 6pm (evening)
July	Manual Handling (1) Substance misuse (1) Sex and sexuality (2) Play Therapy (2) Emotion Coaching (1) Mental Health First Aid (1)	2 nd July 2022 6 th July 2022 9 th July 2022 16 th July 2022 11 th July 2022 18 th July 2022	10am (weekend) 6pm (evening) 10am (weekend) 10am (weekend) 9am (weekday) 9am (weekday)

August	Incidental Welsh (Clybiau) (2) Makaton (2) Bereavement Training (1) Resource Planning (1) Building Resilience (1)	6 th August 2022 13 th August 2022 16 th August 2022 20 th August 2022 8 th August 2022	10am (weekend) 10am (weekend) 6pm (evening) 10am (weekend) 6pm (evening)
September	L2 Safeguarding (2) First Aid at work (2) Playwork Level 2 (2) Neurodevelopment (2) Active Listening (2)	10 th September 2022 14 th September 2022 6 th and 13 th September 2022 17 th September 2022 19 th September 2022	10am (weekend) 9am (weekday) 6pm (2 twilight sessions) 10am (weekend) 9am (weekday)
October	L3 Safeguarding (2) Paediatric First Aid (2) Playwork Level 3 (2) Course on Children's play specific to your job role (2) Managing Challenging Behaviour (2)	5 th and 12 th October 2022 15 th October 2022 Start 10 th October 2022 Start on 24 th September 2022 18 th and 25 th October 2022	6pm (2 twilight sessions) 10am (weekend) 6pm (evenings) 10am (weekends) 6pm (2 twilight sessions)
November	Food Hygiene (2) Fire Warden (2) Risk Assessment (2) Additional Learning Needs (2) Emotion Coaching (2) Mental Health First Aid (2)	12 th November 2022 14 th November 2022 8 th November 2022 10 th and 17 th November 2022 2 nd November 2022 19 th November 2022	10am (weekend) 9am (weekday) 9am (weekday) 6pm (2 twilight sessions) 6pm (evening) 10am (weekend)
December	Substance misuse (2) Health and wellbeing / mental health (2) Sex and sexuality (2) Play Therapy (2) Makaton (3) ADD (2)	3 rd December 2022 10 th December 2022 5 th December 2022 7 th December 2022 12 th December 2022 14 th December 2022	10am (weekend) 10am (weekend) 9am (weekday) 6pm (evening) 9am (weekday) 9am (weekday)

January	L2 Safeguarding (3) First Aid at work (3) Playwork Level 2 (3) Course on Children's play specific to your job role (3) Managing Challenging Behaviour (3) Resilience, Self Assessment and Action Plan Building (2)	11 th and 18 th January 2023 19 th and 26 th January 2023 Start on 23 rd January 2023 9 th January 2023 17 th January 2023 12 th January 2023	6pm (2 twilight sessions) 6pm (2 twilight sessions) 6pm (evenings) 6pm (evening) 9am (weekday) 9am (weekday)
February	L3 Safeguarding (3) Paediatric First Aid (3) Playwork Level 3 (3) Manual Handling (2) Neurodevelopment (3) Additional Learning Needs (3) Resource Planning (2)	7 th February 2023 9 th February 2023 Start 13 th February 2023 16 th February 2023 15 th and 22 nd September 2023 23 rd February 2023 2 nd February 2023	9am (weekday) 9am (weekday) 6pm (evenings) 9am (weekday) 6pm (2 twilight sessions) 9am (weekday) 9am (weekday)
March	Food Hygiene (3) Fire Warden (3) Risk Assessment (3) Understanding Children's Play (2) Incidental Welsh (3) Bereavement Training (2) Building Resilience (2)	2 nd and 9 th March 2023 8 th and 15 th March 2023 7 th March 2023 11 th March 2023 13 th March 2023 20 th March 2023 4 th March 2023	6pm (2 twilight sessions) 6pm (2 twilight sessions) 6pm (evening) 10am (weekend) 9am (weekday) 9am (weekday) 10am (weekend)

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**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22**

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER PREVENTION STRATEGY

16th FEBRUARY 2022

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

**Authors: Annabel Lloyd Director of Children's Services, Community &
Children's Services**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny Committee with information on the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee Members consider this report by way of informing lines of enquiry at Scrutiny Committee.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide assurance to Members that Children's Services are reviewing and improving services that have impact in safely avoiding child-parent separation.

- Note the information contained within this report.
- Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Children's Services' prevention duty is established in the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. In line with our legislative duty, and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, Children's Services have developed the following purpose statement:

Our purpose is to work alongside families to prevent problems from getting worse, to provide support, to safeguard and to improve children's well-being

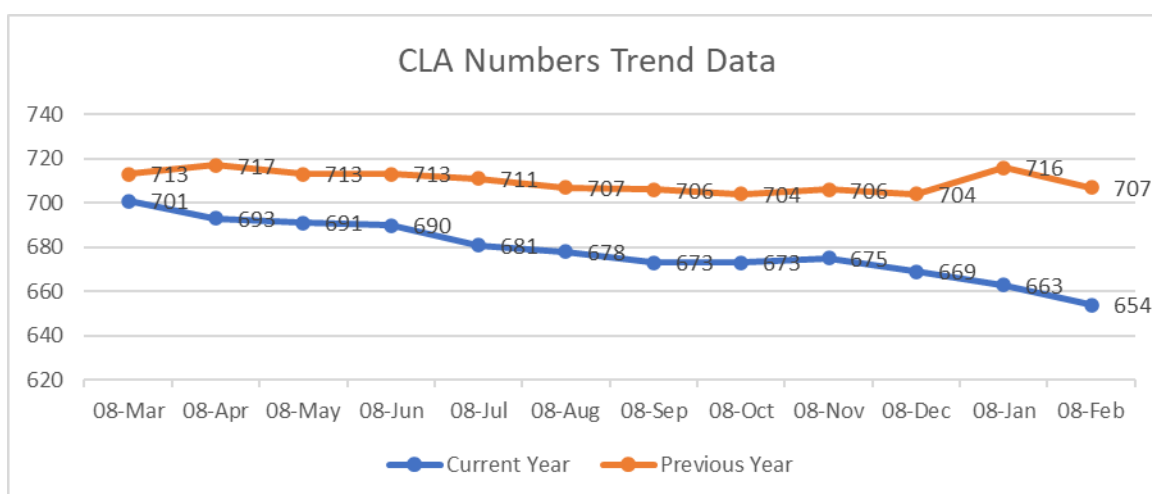
4.2 Children’s Services record the child’s right to a family life as the central driving principle to their prevention work.

4.3 Children’s Services plan to continue the work aimed at safely supporting families to stay together. A review of the prior looked after children strategy has highlighted that further work is required, some of which can be achieved via deployment of existing resources however, and additional resources have also been agreed by Cabinet on 27.1.22. This report outlines the outcomes of the review of the prior strategy, our next steps in CLA prevention and also provides information about how the additional resources will be deployed.

4.4 **Evaluation of the Looked After Prevention Strategy**

An evaluation of the existing looked after children strategy took place during 2021. The evaluation was informed by a rapid research review, secondary data evaluation, a deep dive of 70 relevant cases, and focus groups, further information about the evaluation can be found at Appendix I. Overall, the evaluation found that the first looked after children prevention strategy had delivered important changes that have enabled the service to make progress. Those important developments are evidenced in the strong decision-making process that puts accountability for looked after decisions at the most senior level in the service, in practice standards that see the management of children’s cases towards permanency without delay, and in the performance results where we can demonstrate a gradual reduction in looked after number (see para 4.4 below).

4.4 Acknowledging that it is a difficult and sometimes unpredictable area of business for the Council, that we will always prioritise our safeguarding duty, and that we face the uncertainty of the post pandemic impact for vulnerable families, it has been promising to see steady decline in the rate at which children become looked after in RCT. This is illustrated below:



4.5 However, there are four areas to build upon in order to sustain this and develop services further in a way that optimises our offer to families at risk of parent – child separation. The fuller looked after prevention strategy and

action plan is included at Appendix I, a summary of our 4 next steps are summarised below:

Four Improvement and development areas	Why do we want to improve this area?
<p>1. <u>Model of Practice</u></p> <p>Development of a clear RCT practice model for social workers and allied staff working with families referred to Children's Social Care for support, including to generate better engagement of families who are in 'pre-contemplation' (who have not yet come to the view that they need or want to change). This is a significant development and will require a step-change throughout the service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that staff have the guidance, support and skills to practice to a consistent and evidence based • To be clear about the RCT model of practice • To generate better engagement of families including those in 'pre-contemplation' • To enable even more effective relationship-based and successful involvements with families • To reduce the need for children to become looked after • To attract and retain staff
<p>2. <u>Better Pre-birth Services</u></p> <p>Development of a specific pathway and set of supports for families referred to Children's Social Care during a pregnancy to enable earlier intervention with parents considered to be very vulnerable before the child is born.</p> <p>Linked with this, improvements to the support available to parents who have had a child removed from their care are also important. A proposal has been developed called Magu- see 4.6 below.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the parents' resilience, reduce risk factors and reduce the need for infants to come into care • To improve the services and support for parents who are in care or leaving care • To reduce the likelihood of parents who have had one child removed having subsequent children removed from their care • To reduce the likelihood of care experienced parents being separated from their children
<p>3. <u>Developing reunification</u></p> <p>Development of a more coherent and consistent approach to reunifying children home who have spent some time being looked after by the local authority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An updated and developed approach will lead to more children being reunified successfully and reduced pressure on the looked after population
<p>4. <u>Improve support for kinship carers and special guardians</u></p> <p>Strengthening of the support to be offered to children living with extended family - in kinship care and / or with a Special Guardian, including to their carers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the likelihood of a breakdown in these placements with kinship carers and special guardians • Improve outcomes for children

Better Pre-birth Services - Magu

4.6 The fuller business case can be found at Appendix II. The term ‘Magu’ translates from Welsh as ‘to bring up, rear, nurture, raise, gain’ and promotes the ongoing long-term nature of the support required to deliver better outcomes.

4.7 There is clear evidence in support of this proposal:

- High and increasing rates of children coming into care aged under one year of age, currently 34% of looked after children are under 1,
- 63% of new born children who became looked after are from families where older children had already been removed or were on the child protection register themselves,
- Identified as a gap in current service provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf in independent evaluation.

4.8 As is illustrated above, whilst Children’s Services have seen the rate at which children become looked after reduce by 9%, the rate at which children under 1 become looked after has increased. This feature of the data was confirmed in the September 2021 performance report and is illustrated below. It has become a steady feature in performance reporting for more than 3 years.

Age	Total 2019/20	% of Admissions	Total 2020/21	% of Admissions
Under 1	38	25%	45	33%
Age 1	10	7%	9	7%
Age 2	10	7%	9	7%
Age 3	10	7%	5	4%
Age 4	4	3%	4	3%
Age 5	3	2%	5	4%
Age 6	6	4%	9	7%
Age 7	5	3%	4	3%
Age 8	4	3%	6	4%
Age 9	7	5%	6	4%
Age 10	7	5%	0	0%
Age 11	2	1%	5	4%
Age 12	6	4%	5	4%
Age 13	11	7%	5	4%
Age 14	6	4%	5	4%
Age 15	11	7%	6	4%
Age 16	5	3%	6	4%
Age 17	5	3%	2	1%
Total	150	100%	136	100%

4.9 The Magu project proposal is informed by the rapid research review aspect of the CLA evaluation, and local intelligence of ‘what works’. It is aimed at addressing this area of need, and the traumatic impact for parents of repeat separation from their baby at birth. Worryingly, we have found high rates of care experienced parents in this cohort.

- 4.10 The development of Magu has coincided with the publication of Cascade research into the experiences of parents in care and leaving care. (The study can be found at: <https://cascadewales.org/first-signatories-for-innovative-charter-announced>.) The study found evidence highlighting the potential for stigma and discrimination, showing concerning levels of statutory intervention and separation, as well as variable and under-developed support services. The study concluded that urgent policy and practice attention was needed at national, local and individual levels to improve corporate parent support responses to parents in and leaving care.
- 4.11 The Council is asked to consider being signatories to the Charter for Parents who are in care and Leaving Care that is part of the plan for change in relation to the Cascade research that is highlighted above. The charter itself documents a promise of a fair and attuned supportive approach to parents who are in care or leaving care and will be considered at a future Corporate Parenting Board.
- 4.12 The establishment of Magu would provide strong assurance to care experienced parents that we can deliver against those promises. The proposed Project, will deliver an integrated care pathway for pregnant women and their families across early intervention and edge of care services that focuses on building skills, resilience and reducing risk. A single agreed early intervention approach would deliver the opportunity to prevent children entering care at birth as well as provide consistency and continuity for families whose care requires step up to statutory intervention.
- 4.13 The performance of the service, once established will be monitored in the following ways:

Early help: Resilience Families phases of intervention	Statutory / intensive phases of intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of referrals to RFS accessing Magu intervention • No of families completing RFS Magu intervention • No of cases closed at end of Magu intervention • No of cases stepped up at end of RFS Magu intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of referrals to Magu Team • No of referrals accepted • No women and families-disengaged • Outcomes: child's legal status at exit • Customer feedback for each intervention

5. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and the initial screening test has not identified any negative impacts. A fuller assessment will be carried out in the event that the funding proposal is supported. All of the services identified here are available to all families on a basis of risk and need irrespective of any protected characteristics.

- 5.2 The staff group will benefit from relevant training in this regard. The service and staff skill set will be attuned to reach families who most need the service and will do so in a way that over comes any socio - economic barrier. Supporting families to overcome barriers to improving well-being, accessing services and, where appropriate the workplace will be central to this work. Specifically, the service will seek to address and reverse any discrimination and stigmatisation experienced by parents who are in care and leaving care.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE

- 6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been carried out and submitted for review. In the event that the proposal is supported, there will be actions associated with ensuring compliance with the Welsh Language Standards including seeking to appoint bi-lingual staff.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 Staff and parents with experience of the services took part in a focus group to inform the overall evaluation of the former looked after strategy.
- 7.2 Care experienced young people have been involved in developing the charter that is embedded below. Charter for Parents who are in care and Leaving Care.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 Financial modelling of the costs has been carried out, and the relationship between better outcomes for vulnerable children, safely reducing looked after populations and improved cost control is well established.
- 8.2 The proposals set out should provide a cost benefit (or cost avoidance) alongside improving the outcomes for young people. Financial modelling in this regard however is extremely difficult and it is important that we evaluate the impact as the proposals are implemented given time to deliver intended outcomes. Nonetheless, this gap in service provision cannot be closed within existing resources without standing down other essential services, therefore additional investment is required.
- 8.3 Whilst the overall cost of the Magu proposal would amount to £418k, it is proposed that the team be incrementally stepped up, alongside ongoing prioritisation and evaluation to ensure that the identified outcomes are being realised and to provide some flexibility of approach. In this way, we can fund from existing one-off resources and pending evaluation of outcomes, can then transition and mainstream into the Councils base budget on a fully informed basis. Some parts of the new service would need to be implemented in full immediately, such as the new model of practice and kinship carer/SGO support arrangements. The MAGU team can be introduced incrementally, and this approach may also be driven by constraints on available resources, particularly availability of qualified social workers.

8.4 Resources and flexibility provided by the Social Care Recovery Fund are available to supplement existing one-off resources to fund this in line with the aforementioned principles.

8.5 The additional investment that has been agreed by Cabinet is included below:

Four Improvement and development area	Funding Source / New Cost
1. Development of a clear practice model for social workers and allied staff working with families referred to Children's Social Care for support, including to generate better engagement of families who are in 'pre-contemplation' (who have not yet come to the view that they need or want to change).	Gr 14 Post to lead, and continuously develop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £58,000 per annum
2. Development of a specific pathway and set of supports for families referred to Children's Social Care during a pregnancy to enable earlier intervention with parents considered to be very vulnerable before the child is born. Linked with this, improvements to the support available to parents who have had a child removed from their care. A proposal has been developed called Magu	Team of 9 FTE social care professionals as per the business case in appendix 1. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £418,000 per annum
3. Development of a more coherent and consistent approach to reunifying children home who have spent some time being looked after by the local authority.	To be delivered within existing resources
4. Strengthening of the support to be offered to children living with extended family - in kinship care and / or with a Special Guardian, including to their carers	1 FTE SW Gr 12; 1 FTE BS GR6; Kinship Cymru Contract. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total additional ongoing resource estimated at £150,000 per annum

8.6 Whilst the cost profile of incrementally implementing, as outlined above, will be largely led by the ongoing evaluation of outcomes and resource availability, it is estimated that approximately £300k would be required in year 1.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The proposed development will see the Council enhance its potential to deliver against its prevention duty to families. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 10.1 The implementation of the proposed changes to foster carer allowance allowances will make a positive contribution towards the Council's Corporate Plan Vision of '*a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all*'; as it will deliver against the specific priorities of '*People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone and Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work*'.
- 10.2 It will also help the Council to meet three of the seven wellbeing goals that The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:
- A more equal Wales
 - A healthier Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities
- 10.3 The proposed changes are also consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:
- Long-term – the proposals seek to make a long-term difference to people's lives, the way we work with families and the Council's resources.
 - Prevention – the proposal is fundamentally focused upon strengthening our prevention offer
 - Integration – Partner organisations have been invited to join the steering group and will continue to be involved. Particularly important in terms of integrating a seamless offer to vulnerable families with the Resilient Families Service, and Midwifery
 - Collaboration – Families, and staff have been involved in the evaluation and proposal
 - Involvement – Families, and staff have been involved in the evaluation and proposal

11. CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 An evaluation of the previous looked after children strategy has taken place leading to a new one with 4 key improvement areas.
- 11.2 By implementing the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy, the Council is providing families with the strongest possible service model for reducing the risk of family breakdown and preventing avoidable entries to the looked after system.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S CSRUTINY COMMITTEE

16th FEBRUARY 2022

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR LEYSHON

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES –
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PREVENTION STRATEGY 2022-2025**

Background papers



None

OFFICER TO CONTACT: Annabel Lloyd, Director of Children's Services

Rhondda Cynon Taf Looked After Children Prevention Strategy 2022-2025

1 Introduction

Supporting children and families to stay together safely and to thrive and providing effective supports for children who need to become looked after are two essential responsibilities and key aims of Children's Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT). A review of the RCT Looked After Children Strategy (2018-2021) co-produced with the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University identified many strengths within our Children's Services which reflect positively on the commitment, experience and expertise of the staff providing these services.

The work leading up to developing this Strategy can be found here	
1. Rapid Review of Literature and Secondary Data Analysis (interim report)	 RCT Evaluation of LAC Strategy Interim R
2. Summary: what we have learned from the deeper dive of cases and staff / service user interviews (final report)	 RCT Evaluation of LAC Strategy Final Rep

The review also identified **4 key areas** in which the service could continue to improve and develop, as outlined in the table below:

Four improvement and development areas	Why do we want to improve in this area?
<p>1. Development of a clear practice model for social workers and allied staff working with families referred to Children's Social Care for support, including to generate better engagement of families who are in 'pre-contemplation' (who have not yet come to the view that they need or want to change).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To generate better engagement of families including those in 'pre-contemplation' (who have not yet come to the view that they need or want to change). ■ To enable even more effective relationship-based and successful involvements with families ■ To reduce the need for children to become looked after
<p>2. Development of a specific pathway and set of supports for families referred to Children's Social Care during a pregnancy to enable earlier intervention with parents considered to be very vulnerable before the child is born. Linked with this, improvements to the support available to parents who have had a child removed from their care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To improve the parents' resilience, reduce risk factors and reduce the need for infants to come into care ■ To reduce the likelihood of parents who have had one child removed having subsequent children removed from their care
<p>3. Development of a more coherent and consistent approach to reunifying children home who have spent some time being looked after by the local authority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A more consistent approach will lead to more children being reunified successfully and reduced pressure on the looked after population
<p>4. Strengthening of the support to be offered to children living with extended family - in kinship care and / or with a Special Guardian, including to their carers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reduce the likelihood of a breakdown in these placements ■ Improve outcomes for children in care

A more detailed rationale for these improvements can be found in the Looked After Children Strategy Review Report (March 2021).

It is projected that successful implementation of these improvements will lead not only to better outcomes for children and families but also to medium to long term savings, primarily in the form of:

- Better outcomes for children and families.

- Reductions in the number of children needing to become looked after or who need subsequent statutory interventions.
- Increases in the number of children who can safely 'exit' from care, either to return home to birth family members or into a form of long-term kinship care (with a Special Guardianship Order).
- Reductions in the number of placements that break down, either from kinship care or from failed reunifications home.

Including in the context of the Covid Pandemic, which is known to have increased the needs of and in some cases the risks within vulnerable families, failing to continue to develop services also risks the opposite i.e. increases in the number of children needing to become looked after or who cannot safely exit care or who experience the breakdown of a family placement.

In section 2 of this document, a 'Theory of Change' has been developed for each of the 4 priority areas, articulating: our basis for change; what we think we need to do to implement change; what the short-term indicators are likely to be of a successful change; and what are the medium to longer term outcomes we are aiming to affect through the change. The 2 latter elements will form the basis of our monitoring arrangements, to enable us to see the impact of our strategy over the next 1-3 years. It is anticipated that the first of the 4 priority areas (developing and implementing a practice model) will involve the greatest amount of collective effort and resources to effect transformational change, but also has the potential for the greatest impact.

2 Four Development Areas, Four Theories of Change

2.1 Area One: Development of a Clear Practice Model

Rationale for Change	What this will involve?	What we expect to see in the short term if successful	What are we aiming for in the medium to longer term?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although the number of children becoming looked after has declined in recent years, there were signs of numbers growing again pre-Pandemic ■ More families are thought to have complex needs and to be under significant strain, including because of the Covid Pandemic ■ Working with families at the edge of care often requires successful engagement with parents who are misusing drugs or alcohol or who have significant mental ill-health or where levels of domestic abuse are high ■ The recent RCT review and evidence from elsewhere in the UK strongly suggests that relationship and strengths-based practice can make a significant difference to parental engagement in positive change ■ Research suggests that having a clear practice model is essential for enabling consistently good quality practice and embedding a relationship-based way of working with families ■ Too high caseloads can negatively effect the implementation of desired practice models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A significant change in practice for many social workers, their team managers, senior managers and allied staff (particularly teams providing change programmes) ■ The development of an agreed practice vision and model with staff, with reference to the evidence base about 'what works' when engaging with families who need a social worker ■ Staged implementation with attention to pace (not too fast, not too slow) ■ Continued investment in social worker numbers, particularly non-agency staff, to enable caseloads that will allow for relationship-based as opposed to more 'arms-length' practice with families ■ More consistent and effective use of Family Group Conferencing and other methods to promote the engagement of family members when their child(ren) are on the edge of needing care ■ Whole system support for these ways of working e.g. assessments, reviews, case conferences ■ Senior leader support and modelling of the desired change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development & implementation of the model is undertaken with pace and in collaboration with staff who 'buy into' it ■ Staff can articulate the practice model and are enthusiastic and confident about working in this way ■ Caseloads reduce and staff describe having enough time to engage effectively with families ■ Staff describe being supported to deliver the model including through training and supervision ■ Families describe their engagement with social workers positively ■ Families describe how interventions build on their strengths (as well as addressing risks to the child(ren)) ■ More families engage successfully ■ Colleagues in other agencies understand and support these ways of working ■ Plans, reviews and other documentation reflect the practice model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fewer children need to come into care ■ Families who remain together through an intervention can stay together in the longer term (have developed resilience) including that they do not require repeat statutory plans ■ Children and parents feel better supported including through improved relationships with their social worker ■ Social work practitioner skills develop including in relation to direct work, for example with the child, in collaboration with family support colleagues ■ Absence of 'blockers' in the whole system to these ways of working with families

2.2 Area Two: Development of a Pre-Birth Pathway and Service

Rationale for Change	What this will involve	What we expect to see in the short term if successful	What are we aiming for in the medium to longer term?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There are relatively high numbers and proportions of infants (aged under 1 year) becoming looked after ■ Often the parents of these children are care or social care experienced. Some have had another child already removed from their care. Some have a learning disability or difficulty. ■ More has been learned since 2018 (when the last strategy was produced) about 'what works' in reducing the need for infants to come into care and to support improved resilience in these family units ■ For example intensive, 9 month interventions starting as early as possible in pregnancy, strengths based and solutions focused, drawing on a clear evidence-based programme of educative and therapeutic work (recognising the likely past trauma of parents), team around the family ■ Services as currently configured do not have the capacity to provide a good service in this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Re-focusing services on this important area ■ Some additional investment ■ Development of a specific pathway and support tools ■ Work with partner agencies to ensure that key areas of support they can provide are available relatively quickly to families ■ Key workers with the right skills to deliver much of the work themselves ■ Senior leader support over a sufficient period of time to protect the service as it develops ■ Enabling more referrals into the service of very vulnerable (first time) parents early in pregnancy ■ Starting work with parents as early as possible (in pregnancy) rather than relying on assessment only during this period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The development of an effective, evidence-based and clearly signposted programme that can accept early referrals of very vulnerable parents around the perinatal period ■ Improved identification of very vulnerable parents at an early stage i.e. in pregnancy ■ Greater and earlier engagement of very vulnerable parents in change work (not just an assessment) ■ Improved understanding amongst social workers and referring professionals of the value and availability of this kind of early work with parents ■ Staff, parents and referring professionals describing feeling confident about the programme ■ All relevant agencies engaged with the programme 	<p>Amongst families referred to or known to social services in the perinatal period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved child/parent attachment ■ Good / improved parenting skills and capacity ■ Good / improved parenting confidence ■ Reduction in risks to children, for example from domestic abuse, parents' substance misuse, parents' mental health ■ Reduced need for infants to come into care in their 1st year of life ■ Where infants do need to enter care, they achieve permanency quicker ■ Families are more resilient (i.e. need fewer or no child protection referrals)

2.3 Area Three: Improving the coherence of reunification work

Rationale for Change	What this will involve	What we expect to see in the short term if successful	What are we aiming for in the medium to longer term?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not all children who need to come into care can or should return home to birth parents. However, many can do so successfully, with the right support ■ The number of (successful) reunifications of children home to birth families after a period in care has been reducing in RCT in recent years ■ There is evidence of some positive and successful reunifications with good planning and parents well-engaged. This is particularly the case where the child has been taken into care relatively recently, under 6 months ago, or where the child is 'younger-aged' ■ Returns home for older children tend to be stimulated by a looked after placement breakdown and are less well-planned. ■ Overall, reunification practice is inconsistent ■ Staff have suggested that a clear strategy to inform and drive reunification work is lacking and that it is not sufficiently prioritised or practiced within the current system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development of a clear evidence-based reunification strategy and guidance for staff ■ Development of appropriate incentives within the whole system to re-prioritise this work ■ Consideration and development of best practice for successful reunifications (at different child ages) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff can consistently describe the reunification strategy and guidance ■ Staff feel able to prioritise this work and are (more) confident in this area of their practice ■ There are appropriate supports available to assist with returns home ■ There are more planned reunifications home, where appropriate and safe to do so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ More successful reunifications home for younger and older aged children ■ Increased numbers and % of children exiting care through reunification

2.4 Area Four: Strengthening of support to children with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO)

Rationale for Change	What this will involve	What we expect to see in the short term if successful	What are we aiming for in the medium to longer term?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The number of children with a SGO were growing steadily in RCT, but appear to have stalled slightly in 2019-20. ■ Acknowledging recent developments to enable SGO carers to receive support, messages from the staff suggest that a greater promotion of and support for SGOs in RCT is required. ■ Most care experienced children and their adoptive parents / carers will require support at some stage(s) of their development, including at key transitions. For example: recent research suggests very high levels of emotional health and wellbeing needs for children with a SGO or in kinship care or adopted compared with the general population. ■ Failing to provide such support risks worse outcomes for children and placement disruptions ■ It has been difficult to retain SGO-specific posts in the past, particularly as social workers in these roles get drawn into frontline practice / assessment only work. It is also generally difficult to recruit to social worker posts currently in RCT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with and provide guidance for frontline social work teams to support the consideration of SGO placements as early as possible in work with families, where appropriate ■ Develop, deliver and publish a core offer (for all SGO carers and families) including with reference to the pre and post-placement period e.g. training, signposting and peer support. With reference to recent WG Guidance, this must now include checking in with SGO carers at least once a year ■ Develop, deliver and publish a targeted offer of support for SGO families beginning to experience difficulties. This could include therapeutic parenting 'top up' training and support; life story work for the child; psychology consultations ■ Consider how best to provide these supports with reference to an in-house team (with a balance of social work qualified and unqualified support worker roles and/or other generic supports in the local authority (e.g. in house life journey workers with some capacity for work with SGO children) and commissioned (voluntary sector) supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Social workers describe feeling confident about exploring SGO options, as appropriate, at an early stage in their work with families ■ SGO carers are more aware of the support offer available to them ■ Staff and SGO carers describe how the placement of the child with them is well-supported ■ Innovations in support are evidence-based and cost-effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Better outcomes for children placed with special guardians including in relation to their: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Emotional health and wellbeing ■ Educational outcomes ■ Better outcomes for the whole family unit including better family functioning and parenting confidence ■ Fewer breakdowns from SGO care ■ More confidence in the SGO 'system' enabling more SGO carers to come forward to care for children

3 Implementation Plan

3.1 Key principles of effective implementation of change within children's services

A key message from many recent evaluations of innovation in this field is that **transformative change is not easy to achieve** either for individuals or for organisations (for example: Bostock et al, 2017; Sheehan et al, 2018), also that it is important not to under-estimate the scale of change or adaptation needed in culture and working practices (Albers et al, 2020) whilst the whole system continues to need to respond effectively to families with very complex needs.

Key principles relating to more successful implementation of social work practice change are as follows:

1. That implementation plans should pay attention to 3 areas:
 - Practice innovation (what happens between workers and families).
 - Effective alignment of service pathways to the desired change, including: assessment, planning and review activity and documentation; and IT supports.
 - How the whole system supports the innovation, for example through: practitioner caseloads sustained at a reasonable level; heavily aligned training and practice supervision arrangements; multi-agency conference arrangements.
2. Effective, consistent leadership of change is required at all levels, including: modelling of the desired practice changes by all including senior leaders; sustained support for the vision for change; and effective, varied communications.
3. Performance management and monitoring arrangements that reflect the priority areas for change.
4. Attention to the pace of the implementation of change – not too fast, not too slow. Transformational change (for priority area one) is likely to take longer, up to 2-3 years.
5. Staged implementation including with reference to:
 - a) Exploration – of the rationale for change and proposed change(s) with practitioners and team managers to create a burning platform for effective change and to ensure that there is a common language and framework of understanding. Essentially, they need to be brought on board, expecting always that some practitioners will embrace change quickly, others not.
 - b) Design work – based on the local vision for change and the existing evidence base, to develop a practice and practice supervision model that is relationship-based and strengths-based.
 - c) Initial launch – including with attention to aligned training and broader supports (e.g. toolkit) for practice; opportunities to celebrate along the way; IT and administration and pathways aligned.
 - d) Full implementation / roll out with attention to the same as above.

- e) Embedding – attention to sustaining change over a longer period of time.

Also worth considering with reference to Area One are:

- The need for some additional capacity in the system to drive the more detailed design work, and to keep it on track. All relevant staff will also need some ring-fenced capacity to be able to engage in more reflective work around practice development.
- Naming the change which may be useful, with support from staff, for example 'The RCT Way' or something similar.
- Consideration of all support services and worker contributions in the new system, for example with reference to 'who will do what' in a strengths and relationship-based model? Particularly across assessment, planning, PLO, interventions (with children, parents etc.). Research suggests that it is helpful if frontline social workers undertake some direct work with families, particularly the children, to stay involved.
- Careful design of the training programme alongside the more detailed work on the desired model, including with reference to existing worker skills and skills or experience 'gaps'. It will need to be 'rolling' to accommodate both waves of existing staff and newly recruited staff over time.
- The extent to which the new practice model should be articulated not just to staff, but to partner agencies and children and families.

3.2 Starter Implementation Plan for Area One: Development of a Clear Practice Model

Time frame	Block of Work	Detail
July-October 2021	Exploration - of the rationale for change and proposed change(s) with practitioners and team managers to create the right conditions for effective change and to ensure that there is a common language and framework of understanding. Essentially, they need to be brought on board, expecting always that some will embrace quickly, others not.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify additional capacity to lead the change and how staff can be involved. Is a Transformation Board needed? ■ With all staff groups, at least once and in different ways e.g. written material, oral 'sessions' ■ Using consistent materials articulating why this work is important and what the early thoughts are about the model ■ Encouraging of dissenting as well as early adopter voices ■ Facilitated by someone /people who are relatively senior who are advocates of the change ■ Senior leader work on the key areas e.g. 'how will we model this ourselves?' + how can we ensure our performance systems monitor the important things?
November – December 2021	Further design work – based on the local vision for change and the existing evidence base, to develop a practice and practice supervision model that is relationship-based and strengths-based.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some of this work can be done during the stage above ■ Should be involving of staff groups – could have design groups? E.g. for practice model, supports/toolkit, supervision ■ It requires consistent leadership and 'checking back' with key stakeholders during the design phase ■ Worth drawing in other agencies at this stage? ■ Worth commencing work on the supports (see below) in this stage ■ Leaders to begin modelling desired behaviours including through all comms ■ Active comms required at this stage

Time frame	Block of Work	Detail
January – February 2022	Initial launch – including with attention to aligned training and broader supports (e.g. toolkit) for practice; opportunities to celebrate along the way; IT and administration and pathways aligned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An initial launch could be, for example, in one or more teams ■ This should be treated as a pilot with reference to hearing practitioner views and adjusting ■ Some supports will not be fully finalised. Staff should be appraised of this including what supports are being further developed ■ Pathways and supports e.g. assessment, planning and review tools are likely to be critical potential blockers to a new way of working and therefore need development time
March – December 2022	Full roll out – including with attention to all of the above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Comms, leadership, staff involvement, trouble shooting blockers are all important ■ Roll out will take longer than you expect – you may need to repeat some training etc. ■ Performance monitoring arrangements to be articulated during this time including regular (monthly) and irregular (e.g. audit) monitoring and review over time
January 2022 – December 2023 (approx.)	Embedding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Will be needed to sustain change over time ■ Will need attention to leadership, comms, performance monitoring and blockers being actively addressed

3.3 Starter Implementation Plan for Area Two: Development of a Pre-Birth Pathway and Service

Timeframe	Block of Work	Detail
July – October 2021	Further design of the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With reference to the key findings from the review and background evidence base paper, also existing service dimensions and pressures ■ Also with reference to the Theory of Change above, which may need adjusting ■ A Steering Group of interested leaders + Working Group including practitioners and possibly service users to further consider the design ■ Formulation of a detailed specification including: referral criteria and pathways; core and broader aspects of the service / model including use of practitioners; key tools for use by key practitioners delivering it; how a ‘team around the family’ model could be achieved (with reference to likely parent needs e.g. mental health, substance misuse, learning disability, care experienced etc.); costs and anticipated implementation aspects and monitoring arrangements ■ Consideration of what should be the key, consistently collected measures, e.g. of parent attachment, parenting capacity + how best to do this
November – December 2021	Sign off of the service model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Including with relevant partner agencies
January – February / March 2022	Recruitment and/or redeployment of existing workers into a core team or service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ongoing comms with other aspects of the service and partners – see below for detail
April 2022	Service goes live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Comms will be needed to inform key partners, particularly community health and front-line social workers, what are the types of parent that the service would like to see – particularly pre-birth. This will be highly

Timeframe	Block of Work	Detail
		significant if pre-birth referrals are desired (as research indicates they should be).
May 2022 – May 2023	Service operational in pilot form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Attention to ongoing support and/or ‘protection’ of the model from other demands ■ Attention to continuous feedback loops, particularly in relation to (type of) demand ■ Attention to evaluation of the pilot – setting this up and making sure that key data is collected regularly (e.g. key measures) as well as irregularly (e.g. feedback from service users and partner agencies/referring staff)
January 2023	Review and learn	

3.4 Starter Implementation Plan for Area Three: Improving the Coherence of Reunification Work

Timeframe	Block of Work	Detail
July – October 2021	Review existing reunification strategy and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Including with reference to the findings from this review ■ Including to identify its fit with the ‘best practice’ articulated in the review of evidence, and with reference to different aged children ■ Using a Working Group to drive this work ■ Reporting on what they find and what strategy / guidance they recommend should be developed or refined as a result ■ Articulating as precisely as possible how much change is envisaged and in what areas / for what ages of child etc. ■ Reporting on how ideas about how best to incentivise and support this work in practice
November – December 2021	Develop the new / refreshed strategy and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Including with groups of staff from all relevant aspects of the service ■ Including with key partner agencies ■ Develop arrangements for monitoring the change(s) that are desired in detail
January 2022	Launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Including with ‘briefings’ for all staff and stakeholders (written and oral, more than one of each)
February 2022 – December 2022	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continuous monitoring including regular (data) and irregular (e.g. audits) reporting
January-February 2023	Review and learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Using regularly collected and some additional data as required
March – December 2023	Embedding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ With reference to the findings (above) and ongoing, possibly slightly adapted monitoring arrangements

3.5 Starter Implementation Plan Four: Strengthening Support to Children in Kinship Care including SGOs

Timeframe	Block of Work	Detail
July – September 2021	Finalise the plans to develop SGO support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development work with social work teams and ‘legal’ ■ Development of the core and targeted early help offer for SGO carers and children with reference to the existing Welsh Government guidance / requirements and broader evidence base e.g. Kinship Model ■ Core SGO Support Team development including how roles / budgets will be utilized (across assessment and support work) to generate more effective support work including exploration of what can be commissioned cost-effectively from specialist providers e.g. online therapeutic training; peer support ■ How other services and supports can be drawn in appropriately to support SGO carers, e.g. life story work, recognizing that not all generic family support will be appropriate for this group ■ Recruit at least 1 more worker (potentially 2 more) to enable a team of 2-3 focusing on SGO Development and Support work
October – December 2021	Implementation begins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Begin implementation of the work of the team and identify key monitoring methods
January – December 2022	First full year of implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ First year of full implementation
January-February 2023	Review and learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review first year of full implementation and revise SGO Support Strategy

4 Resources

The areas of the strategy and implementation plan that have implications for (additional) resources are as follows:

Area	What	Approximate resources required
One	Capacity to drive the more detailed work on the practice model design and implementation, and to keep it on track	1 middle manager post for 18-24 months (a currently vacant post may be used for this work)
	Facilitation of senior team modelling and leadership of this agenda	1 external facilitator 0.5 day every 2 months for 18 months = 6 days total inc prep approx. £5K
	Staff training existing training budgets be redirected? It will need significant coordination.	To be considered in the early phases but will include a proportion of existing budget
	Caseloads at a reasonable level	To review in March 2022, no additional costs estimated currently as the problem with regard caseloads is thought to relate to vacant posts (that need filling)
Two	<p>Implementation of a new pre-birth pathway and discreet service for very vulnerable (first time) parents</p> <p>*Note this service should be located within existing intervention services</p>	<p>Based on a similar innovation in a similarly sized local authority area (Calderdale) start up costs (in the first 12-18 month period) are estimated at £300K per year including overheads with ongoing running costs estimated at £210K per year including overheads and inclusive of approximately 3.5 FTE non-social work qualified staff (family support or early years workers), senior worker manager role, supervision, training, and overheads.</p> <p>An RCT business case is in development - Magu</p>

Area	What	Approximate resources required
Three	Small additional costs associated with middle manager time required to develop and promote embedding of the reunification strategy	Approx £20K *Family support services will also be required to support reunifications home in all / almost all cases
Four	At present there is no dedicated resource for SGO support, resources are required to coordinate reviews of support plans and respond to Special Guardians / provide attuned support. Kinship Cymru are providing attuned / sign posting support at present at no cost.	1 FTE business support and SGO support SW. Anticipate commission to kinship Cymru should charitable funding changes impact on service

The three key areas of investment (one, two and four) are projected to lead to cashable savings over time, in terms of:

- **For Area One (practice model and improvement)** a small reduction in the need for children to become looked after or to require a repeat statutory plan. Based on the experience of a recent similar transformation programme in Hampshire, a conservative saving represented by approximately a 12% reduction in the number of children needing to become looked after or requiring repeat statutory assessments or interventions are projected. The recent Covid-related dip and projected 'surge' post-Covid may need to be taken into account by way of baseline against which any change may be measured.
 - A 12% reduction in the number of children requiring to become looked after in RCT, based on 179 children becoming looked after in 2019-2020 (21) and an average cost per child of becoming looked after for an average of 2.21 years of £129,647¹ = **£2,722,587.**
 - A 15% reduction in the number of children requiring at least one subsequent Care and Support Plan based on (recent whole 12 month period no. children per year with a second or further plan). The average cost of a Care and Support Plan for a period of 1 year is £3,402, based only on the case holding social worker costs².
- **For Area Two (pre-birth pathway and service for very vulnerable parents),** a small reduction in the number of children who need to be looked after aged 0-1 year is projected. In addition to this small reduction, we are also projecting that there will be a

¹ Source: New Economy Manchester Unit Cost Database (2019) <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/research/research-cost-benefit-analysis/>

² Ibid

greater proportion of infants with a Care and Support Plan who require no further statutory intervention in the 12-18 months following an intensive intervention. Relatively conservative reductions are projected based on experience from other similar pilot programmes in the UK showing how intensive early support either assists families to remain safely together in a more sustainable way, or shines an early spotlight on unacceptably risky parenting. However, for those infants who cannot remain living safely with birth parent(s), permanency will be achieved at an earlier stage, with the result that adoption will be a more viable option and savings as a result of that early exit from the care system. This is an area that will require careful monitoring to ensure that, at the very least, the costs of the service are being re-couped in the form of savings through reduced number of infants coming into care and the likelihood of further savings from more resilience in families that do stay together as well as earlier permanency for children who do come into care..

- **For Area Four (Reunification)** a reduction in the number of children who need to remain looked after (through. increased numbers of children able to return home). As above, the costed benefits of only 10 such children successfully reunified would be 10 X average looked after child costs for 2.21 years at £58,664 per year = approximately **£1,296,474**.
- **For Area Four (SGO and kinship care support)** a reduction in the overall number of children looked after based on more children being supported into SGO care. The reduction in costs associated with remaining looked after may be offset to a certain extent by increases in the costs of supporting such SGO and kinship care placements. However, where relatively low-cost preventative supports are pro-actively offered, there is also an assumption that some SGO or kinship carers may be able to cope well without the need for more expensive supports or allowances from the start or at a later stage of the family placement. By providing pro-active, well-targeted support, some placements will be prevented from disrupting. The costed benefits of only 10 such additional new SGO placements or placements prevented from disrupting would be 10 X average looked after child costs for 2.21 years at £58,664 per year = approximately **£1,296,474**.

5 Measurement and evaluation proposals

Success in relation to the implementation of these 4 key development areas should be measured in part by incorporating within our regular performance monitoring arrangements (data collection, staff surveys etc.) the key measures from Theory of Change documents above (from the final 2 columns).

However, it will be important also to have more detailed monitoring of the process of change with reference to the implementation plans above, including to identify at an early stage whether and to what extent progress is 'off track'. This should be undertaken by a Transformation Programme Board or Group.

Finally, some of the measures of success for this strategy will not be capable of being measured in a very regular way and will require periodic 'deeper dive' reviews or evaluation. For example, over and above the number of children entering care, it will be important to understand the extent to which practice is becoming more strengths and relationship-based and whether and how it does in fact lead to a greater proportion of resilient families.

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**The Magu Project – Delivering specialist intensive pre-birth support
across Early Intervention and Edge of Care Services in RCT**

October 21

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Background

In September 2020, Children's Services commissioned the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University to evaluate the progress to date in implementing the RCT Looked After Strategy written in 2017. Carried out between October 2020 and March 2021, the evaluation sought to measure the extent to which current services, arrangements and pathways support the achievement of two key aims of the strategy, namely:

1. Continuing to improve edge of care supports for families to safely prevent children from needing to become looked after.
2. Safely helping children to leave statutory care to go home or into a SGO / adoptive / kinship placement and to support them to thrive there.

A range of evaluation activities including rapid research into "what works"; analysis of management data; case file sampling; interviews with parent/carers and young people and interviews with Children's Services staff were employed to inform the findings and suggested recommendations within the Evaluation Report.

The Evaluation found that whilst early progress had been made in the reduction of the number of children becoming looked after aged under 1 year, the numbers had begun to rise again:

Relatively high numbers and proportions of infants (under 1's) coming into care. In the years 2016 to 2018, a high proportion of children became looked after aged under 1 year (29% in 2016-17 climbing to 34% in 2017-18). In 2019-20, the proportion of children coming into care aged under 1 year reduced significantly to 22% of the total. However, latest data up to January 2021, indicates that numbers are rising again, at 34% and are higher than the same period in the previous year. The trend shows that this age group continues to have the highest number of admissions. A detailed examination of the most recent figures suggest that the highest number of under 1's becoming looked after are brought into care within the first week after their birth.

The case file sampling (of children becoming looked after) found that 63% of the 'new-borns' who came into care after an edge of care intervention were from families where older children had already been removed or were on the child protection register themselves. 37% were a 'first child' and the concerns were due to the parent having been in care or subject to a child protection plan herself, and parental mental health, drug use and/or learning disability concerns.

IPC (2021) *'Evaluation of the Looked After Children Strategy. Final Report: What have we learned and where to go next?'* p.10

The evaluators highlighted a recent study by Broadhurst et al, (2018) that has cast a spotlight on a growing trend of local authorities to issue care proceedings at or soon after the birth of a child. This study raised concerns about what is described as a 'typically short window for pre-birth assessment' which means that prospective parents who are known to be vulnerable do not have enough opportunity to work purposefully on their parenting skills before the child is removed from their care. A recent study of the 'Positive Choices' Programme in Calderdale undertaken by IPC identified the potential for more effective intensive interventions with very vulnerable prospective parents *during* pregnancy (Burch et al, 2020).

The evaluation report went on to identify the Council's provision of pre-birth services as a suggested area of development, providing the following rationale:

Review and development of pre-birth services that can prevent separation at or soon after birth.

Rational - A gap identified in RCT is earlier work/specific programmes with parents of unborn children and 'newborns' at risk of harm and removal at or around birth. Referrals for this cohort have been increasing and local data indicates that many under 1s who become looked after do so as newborns within their 1st week. Research suggests that intensive, targeted work with very vulnerable parents during pregnancy and perinatally can have a significant positive effect. Timing of interventions (starting during pregnancy rather than at birth) seems to be critical.

IPC (2021) *'Evaluation of the Looked After Children Strategy. Final Report: What have we learned and where to go next?'* p.5

Scoping pre-birth service models

As a result of the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University evaluation and of the 2017 RCT Looked After Strategy, the Head of Edge of Care and Service Development and the Head of Community Wellbeing and Resilience undertook exploratory meetings with the following project teams in Bridgend, Newport and Swansea to research the models of pre-birth service delivery in place in these local authorities:

- Baby in Mind (Bridgend) 12.3.21
- Jigsaw (Swansea) 23.3.21
- Baby and Me (Newport) 13.4.21

Meeting with project staff from each of the three local authority areas was helpful in being able to gauge the approaches taken at a strategic level as well as gather an insight into the experiences of implementing a specialist bespoke service at an operational level. Whilst there were commonalities in the approaches there were also

key differences in the way in which the services were structured and governed. Across the three areas the following key principles and considerations were identified:

- Referral at the earliest opportunity is key to securing the best outcomes;
- A multi-disciplinary approach including Midwives, Social Workers, Parenting Workers, Intervention / Support Workers provides the best support;
- A longer term approach is required – from point of referral through to up to 1 year old;
- Clear midwifery pathway and case management responsibilities need to be defined and agreed upfront;
- Step up arrangements at stage a pregnancy is viable need to be clear if support has already begun and provide continuity for families;
- The siting of a pre-birth support service needs to be considered to minimise the potential impact on progress as a result of transition between teams for families requiring step up.

Demand for a pre-birth service in RCT

Performance Information

Children's Services data from August 21 indicates increasing demand in the following areas:

- Assessment of unborn children where there are child protection concerns carried out by Children's Services statutory teams
 - 2018/19-146 assessments of these 55, child protection enquires
 - 2019/20- 229 assessments of these 60, child protection enquires
 - 2020/21-222 assessments of these 81, child protection enquires
- Pre -birth Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC)
 - 2018/19- 68 ICPC 59 children registered at birth 87%
 - 2019/20- 75 ICPC 68 children registered at birth 90%
 - 2020/21- 80 ICPC 70 children registered at birth 90%
- Children looked after between 0-1, parents with history of Children's Services intervention, i.e., care or child protection register experienced (CPR)
 - 2018/19- 65, 38% within a week of birth, 20% care experienced parent 28% CPR experienced parent
 - 2019/20- 50, 46% within a week of birth, 40% care experienced parent 40% CPR experienced parent
 - 2020/21- 55, 38% within a week of birth, 50% care experienced parent 75% CPR experienced parent

➤ Children looked after current 10/15 year age group

- 2020/21 69, 27% of children from this age group came into care between the ages of 0/3 years and continue to be CLA

Miskin Service data

WCCIS data indicates 81 unborn babies were referred to Miskin Younger Teams (0-10 years) between 01/04/2019 and 31/03/2021. Outcome data is available for 66 children:

- 11 (16.7%) were in care at the end of Miskin involvement (9 already had in care status at time of referral).
- Therefore, 83.3%, 55 were living at home or with appropriate family members at the time of Miskin involvement ended.

NB these referrals were made at a much later point in pregnancy typically 28 weeks+ affording a very brief period of time to work with parents to affect change. The intention is to extend capacity and improve outcomes through the proposed Magu model providing an integrated care pathway for pregnant women and their families across early intervention and edge of care services, that focuses on building skills and resilience and reducing risk.

Cost of Foster placements

Set out below are the current costs to the Council for a foster placement for a young child as well as the costs of parent and child placements used to inform decisions often within the Court arena about whether parents can safely care for their children.

0-3 year old internal placement per annum (most babies placed with in house carers)

Narrative	RCT In House Fostering	
	Weekly Cost 21/22	Full Year 21/22
Child Allow (0-4 years)	£ 194	£ 10,088
Carer Fee	£ 181	£ 9,412
Total	£ 375	£ 19,500

Parent and child placement

Narrative	Independent Sector Fostering	
	Average Weekly cost	Average Full Year Cost
Parent Cost	£ 833	£ 43,299
Child cost	£ 792	£ 41,167
Total	£ 1,624	£ 84,465

Management information and current Miskin performance would suggest there is demand for an early intervention approach that would provide the opportunity to prevent children entering care at birth and potentially remaining looked after throughout their childhoods.

Investing in a specialist pre-birth service offers the opportunity to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families particularly those for whom the Council is or has been a corporate parent.

In addition, there are potential savings to be made on placement costs, and also on more hidden resources which include Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers capacity and likely reduced demand in other parts of the Children's Service such as placements, Child Protection Conferences and Edge of Care services.

Existing opportunities in RCT

It became evident early on that there were existing resources in RCT that if reconfigured could assist in delivering a comprehensive response to the current challenge of reducing the relatively high numbers and proportions of infants (under 1's) coming into care. These resources in the form of both staff and existing service delivery pathways spanned both the Resilient Families Service and Edge of Care services in Miskin / IFST and could be further enhanced by the Youth Engagement and Participation Service in the provision of targeted youth work support for pregnant women under the age of 25 years. The following existing resources were identified as having a part to play in the creation of a systems approach to delivering effective pre-birth support services:

Pathways

- RFS Midwifery and Health Visiting Pathways
- IAA and RFS work to track and support families pre-birth

Service arrangements

- Miskin / IFST model of working, delivering intensive family focused evidence based interventions which aim to improve parenting capacity to enable families to care for their children with the minimum statutory intervention. Services are currently delivered through individual, family, and group work
- Miskin strength-based Solution Focused Approach and Motivational Interviewing techniques.
- The Therapeutic Families Team (TFT) a multidisciplinary team, offering consultation, therapeutic assessments and interventions to children and families.

Staff

- RFS Specialist Midwives
- RFS Health Visitors
- RFS Parenting Workers
- RFS Intervention Workers

- YEPS Youth Engagement and Progression Workers
- YEPS Transitional Support Workers
- YEPS Youth Homelessness Worker / Emphasis Worker
- YEPS Mental Health and Wellbeing Officers
- Miskin/IFST Consultant /Social workers,
- Miskin/IFST Intervention Workers/Support Workers
- IFST Specialist Substance misuse workers
- IFST Health Visitor/Midwife
- Therapeutic Families Team Therapists and Psychologists

Whilst there is a range of existing resource in place to support a systems approach, additional capacity is also needed to create a small bespoke specialist team to deliver intensive targeted work with very vulnerable parents during pregnancy and perinatally.

Proposal

It is proposed that the Magu Project is established to deliver an integrated care pathway for pregnant women and their families across early intervention and edge of care services, that focuses on building skills and resilience and reducing risk. A single agreed early intervention approach would deliver the opportunity to prevent children entering care at birth as well as provide consistency and continuity for families whose care requires step to statutory intervention. The term 'Magu' translates from Welsh as '*to bring up, rear, nurture, raise, gain*' and promotes the ongoing long term nature of the support required to deliver better outcomes.

Intervention

The service will deliver evidence based interventions to achieve the best outcomes for families:

- RFS and Miskin, currently use a common operating model which is strengths based, relational approaches and are trained in the same parenting programmes e.g., gro brain.
- The RFS Parenting Team are trained in the use of a range of formal licenced parenting programmes including 'Welcome to the World' which has well evidenced outcomes for both parent and child including
 - Improving attunement and bonding
 - Improving parental wellbeing
 - Improving knowledge and skills in breastfeeding and practical care of babies
 - Parents reflect on their own values and their hopes and fears for the future and begin to understand the needs and intentions of their baby

This programme is accessed during pregnancy. Topics include empathy and loving attentiveness, infant brain development, healthy eating choices, breastfeeding, infant care, managing stress and difficult feelings, promoting self-esteem and confidence, and the couple relationship.

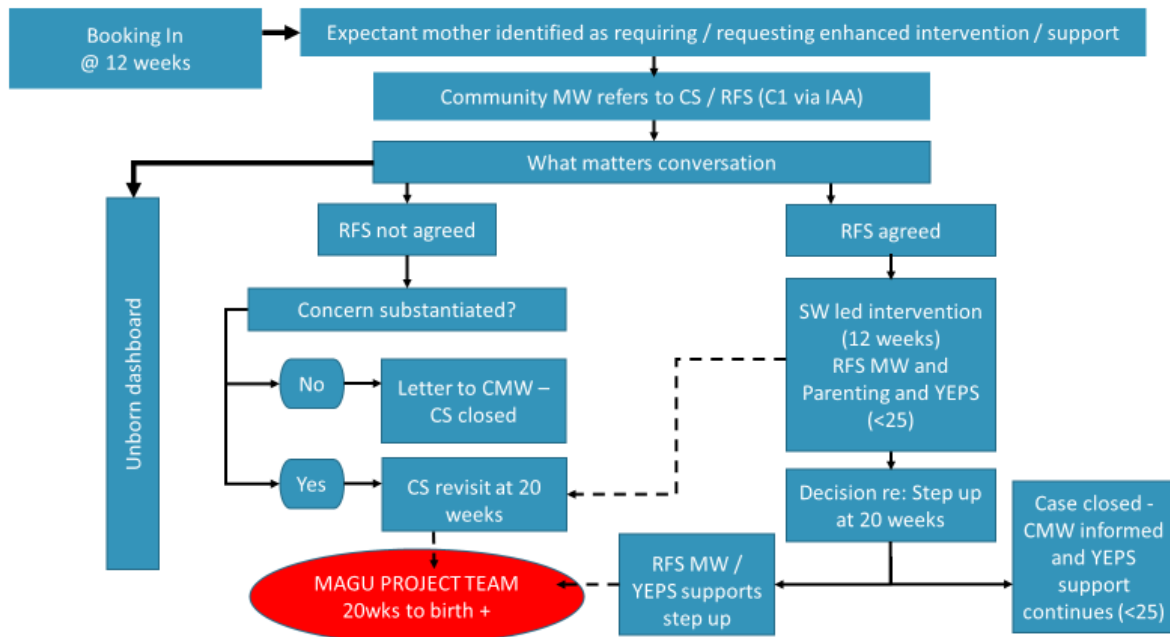
- A whole family systemic approach to deliver a structured, intensive, accessible programme of learning, role modelling and tailored support
- Offer very intensive support as required to ensure that risks can be closely monitored and managed
- Use Family Group Meeting to identify and build on any family supports including who can help when the baby is born
- Work with partners and families to change the culture from presumption of failure to one of seeking success
- 8 weeks before birth, produce a detailed parenting assessment to guide short, and medium future work

Research and evaluation of similar projects indicate such an approach can:

- Improve child to parent attachment
- Improve parenting skills including being able to manage behaviour when frustrated and life is difficult
- Reduction in risk factors such as domestic abuse, substance misuse or exploitative friendship groups
- Improved resilience amongst parents i.e., parenting without risk or crisis for a sustained period of time
- Better adult/child interactions and the child more likely to remain with their birth parent

Pathway

Whilst all Children's Services Teams and Health colleagues have a part to play in the successful delivery of the Magu Project, operational delivery mechanisms will be managed by the Resilient Families Service and the Miskin Service. The diagram below identifies the proposed care pathway that focuses on early engagement and supported transition between teams and professionals:



In order to accommodate the requirements of this pathway the following service changes are required in the Resilient Families Service, the IAA Team and the Miskin Service:

Resilient Families Service / IAA Team

- Existing RFS Midwifery Pathway is amended to request that Community Midwifery refer all women requiring or requesting support (including safeguarding concerns) to the IAA Team at 12 weeks following booking in appointments.
- RFS automatically extend intervention period to full 12 weeks for pregnant women to maximise the opportunity to remove of barriers to engagement (e.g., housing, finance, health etc) and to start parenting preparation work.
- An additional Social Work post is created in RFS to provide capacity to delivery of social work led specialist early intervention supported by RFS Midwives, RFS Parenting Team and YEPS for women under the age of 25.
- During this time, RFS Midwives provide a single point of contact for Community Midwives, to ensure there is regular communication between Children's Services and Health in relation to the RFS Family Plan and interventions being delivered.
- Enhanced step up arrangements are established to support case handover and ensure continuity of interventions i.e., parenting preparation work started in RFS can be carried on by the Magu Team.

Miskin Service

- The creation of a Magu Team, to deliver intensive specialist support, based on the existing service model within Miskin and managed within that service.

Interventions would be led, directed, and monitored by the Consultant Social Worker and delivered by a combination of Intervention Workers and Social Workers depending on the level of risk and need. The proposed team would comprise of the following eight posts:

- 1 x Consultant Social Worker
 - 1 x Principal Social Worker
 - 1x Social Worker
 - 4 x Intervention Workers
 - 1 x Business Support
- The team would create the opportunity of intervention earlier in pregnancy to deliver a combination of evidence based interventions, parenting programmes and practical advice/support and consequently a chance to effect change pre-birth and improve the quality and timeliness of decision made about children most at risk.
 - The service would be particularly relevant for women and their partners that have experienced or who are at risk of repeat removals of children from their care as well as pregnant care experienced young women.
 - The team would be led by a Consultant Social Worker to provide capacity to deliver specialist social work led evidence based interventions to 'parents of unborn children and 'new-borns' at risk of harm and removal at or around birth'.
 - The intervention plan would be supported by Intervention and Support workers within the team alongside other specialist workers including therapist and health staff within TFT and IFST.
 - The work would inform decisions about parents' ability to look after their children safely and meet their needs. This would include the necessity for care proceedings or Child Protection registration.
 - The service could provide support after the birth of the child for an agreed maximum period and ensure appropriate step down arrangements through existing processes.

Finance

Whilst the reconfiguration of existing services and amendments to service delivery pathways will support the establishment of the Magu Project, additional capacity is required to create the Magu Team to provide specialist intensive pre-birth support for those families requiring statutory intervention. The table below offers a breakdown of the proposed costs:

Post	Grade 21/22	Hrs / Week	FTE	Cost with pay review
CONSULTANT SOCIAL WORKER	GR14	37	1.00	59,466
PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER	GR13	37	1.00	55,513
SOCIAL WORKER (1 RFS and 1 Miskin)	GR11/12	37	2.00	105,097
INTERVENTION WORKER	GR9	37	4.00	156,816
BUSINESS SUPPORT	GR6	37	1.00	29,158
TOTAL REVISED SALARY BUDGET 2021/22			9.00	406,050
Associated Staff Costs at £1.5k per FTE				12,000
TOTAL				418,050

Evaluation

It is proposed that the new Magu Service is evaluated following the first full year of operation to assess the impact the service has had. Measures will include:

RFS

- No of referrals to RFS accessing Magu intervention
- No of families completing RFS Magu intervention
- No of cases closed at end of Magu intervention
- No of cases stepped up at end of RFS Magu intervention

Magu Team within Miskin

- No of referrals to Magu Team
- No of referrals accepted
- No women and families-disengaged
- Parents' status – e.g., care experienced (CLA), Child Protection Register (CPR), Care and Support Plan (CASP) history, previous children removed from their care
- Outcomes child's status at conclusion of Magu intervention CLA, CASP, CPR, RFS (utilising, current Miskin format - post intervention 6 and 12 months)
- Customer feedback for each intervention

Conclusion

Addressing the significant number of children removed from parents care at birth, is a clear priority in RCT. The creation of the Magu Project provides the opportunity to provide a continuum of support for pregnant women and their families from the earliest opportunity to prevent the need for statutory intervention. Investing additional resources now alongside existing efforts to ensure children and families receive the right support at the right time, will deliver cost saving longer term benefits to the Council.

The service delivery pathway the Magu Project offers will improve both the quality and timeliness of decisions that need to be made for those children most at risk. Tailored and intensive support throughout pregnancy and beyond offers the means to enhance parenting confidence and capability in the longer term, securing positive outcomes for children and families.