



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**A hybrid meeting of the CABINET will be held on
Monday, 23rd October, 2023 at 10.30 am**

Contact: Hannah Jones - Council Business Unit (Tel No. 07385401954)

Councillors and members of the public wishing to request the facility to address the Cabinet on any of the business as listed below, must request to do so by 5pm on the Thursday, 19 October 2023 Councillors and Members of the public should stipulate if this address will be in the medium of English or Welsh. It must be noted that the facility to address the Cabinet is at the discretion of the Chair and each request will be considered based on the agenda items being considered, the public interest/interest of the member in each matter and the demands of the business on that day. To make such a request please email:- ExecutiveandRegulatoryBusinessUnit@rctcbc.gov.uk

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

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 Cabinet Committee on the 18th September 2023 as an accurate record.

(Pages 7 - 16)

3. FUTURE COMMISSIONING OF DOMICILIARY HOME CARE

To receive the report of the Director of Social Services, which outlines recommendations with regards to the future commissioning of domiciliary home care services.

(Pages 17 - 78)

4. FUTURE COMMISSIONING OF THE COUNCIL'S SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICE FOR PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY

To receive the report of the Director of Social Services, which makes recommendations with regards to the future commissioning of the Council's Supported Living Service for people with a learning disability.

(Pages 79 - 124)

5. PRE-SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

To receive the report of the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication, which provides the feedback and comments of the items that were pre-scrutinised by the Council's thematic Scrutiny Committees following its last Committee cycle.

(Pages 125 - 128)

6. CWM TAF MORGANNWG SAFEGUARDING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

To receive the report of the Director of Social Services, which provides the Cabinet with the 2022/23 Annual Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Report.

(Pages 129 - 174)

7. SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

To receive the report of the Director of Social Services, which provides Cabinet with an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the Council's statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.

(Pages 175 - 192)

8. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK SCHEME - COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT - 2022/23

To receive the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services, which provides Cabinet with an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the Council's Customer Feedback Scheme (CFS) between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.

(Pages 193 - 212)

9. PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT AND LETTER 2022-2023

To receive the report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, which provides Cabinet with information in respect of the publication of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' ('PSOW') Annual Report and Annual Letter to this Council for 2022-2023.

(Pages 213 - 254)

10. PROPOSALS TO DEVELOP A NEW SPECIAL SCHOOL IN RCT

To receive the report of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services, which seeks to advise Members of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposal to open a new 3 to 19 special school in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and introduce catchment areas for all 3 to 19 special schools across RCT.

(Pages 255 - 316)

11. CIL ANNUAL MONITORING 2022/2023

To receive the report of the Director of Prosperity and Development, which seeks Cabinet's approval in respect of the contents of the CIL Annual Monitoring Report and the proposed changes to the Regulation 123 List; following pre scrutiny undertaken by the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

(Pages 317 - 334)

12. UPDATE REPORT ON EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

To receive the report of the Director of Prosperity and Development, which provides Cabinet with an update on the progress being made in bringing empty homes back into use in line with the RCT Empty Homes Strategy (2022-2025).

(Pages 335 - 398)

13. PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR STRATEGY 2023-2026

To receive the report of the Director of Prosperity and Development, which provides Members with an overview of the proposed Private Rented Sector Strategy 2023 -2026 and seeks approval for it to be implemented.

(Pages 399 - 444)

14. ENGAGEMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET 2024-2025

To receive the report of the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication, which informs Cabinet of the proposed approach to resident engagement and consultation in respect of the 2024/25 budget setting process.

(Pages 445 - 450)

15. TO CONSIDER PASSING THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:

"That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act".

16. WRITE OFF OF IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS

To receive the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director for Finance, Digital and Frontline Services, which provides Members with a position statement on irrecoverable debt and identifies the requirement to write-off certain amounts in accordance with strict review criteria.

(Pages 451 - 464)

17. CYNON VALLEY WASTE DISPOSAL COMPANY LIMITED AND AMGEN RHONDDA LIMITED - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To receive the report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, which affords Members the opportunity of inspecting the financial statements of Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited (the 'Companies') which are to be presented to the Companies' Annual General Meetings to be held 'virtually' in November 2023 and enable Members to instruct officers who attend on behalf of the Council as sole shareholders of the Companies to vote in accordance with Members' instructions.

(Pages 465 - 522)

18. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items which the Chair 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:-

Councillors: Councillor A Morgan (Chair)
Councillor M Webber (Deputy Chair)
Councillor G Caple
Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor R Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon
Councillor M Norris
Councillor B Harris

Officers: Paul Mee, Chief Executive
Barrie Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Andy Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services
David Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Louise Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Richard Evans, Director of Human Resources
Simon Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Stephen Williams, Director for Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services
Neil Elliott, Director of Social Services
Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Paul Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Derek James, Service Director – Prosperity & Development

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CABINET

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 18 September 2023 at 10.00 am.

This meeting was live streamed, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present:

Councillor A Morgan (Chair)

Councillor M Webber Councillor G Caple
Councillor A Crimmings Councillor R Lewis
Councillor C Leyshon Councillor M Norris
Councillor B Harris

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Director of Finance & Digital Services
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr S Williams, Director for Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr N Elliott, Interim Director of Social Services
Ms A Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Ms C O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager
Mr C Davies, Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager
Ms L Carter – Inclusion Co-ordinator

36 Declaration of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct:

- The Deputy Leader declared a personal interest in respect of Item 6 – Local Cost of Living Support Scheme 2023: "I have family members who would be recipients of the fund";
- The Deputy Leader declared a personal interest in respect of Item 11 – Consultation on the Proposals to Realign Additional Learning Needs Mainstream Learning Support Class Provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf: "A school of which I am a governor of, is referenced within the report";
- The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services declared a personal interest in respect of Item 6 – Local Cost of Living Support Scheme 2023: "I have family members who would be recipients

- of the fund”; and
- The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure declared a personal interest in respect of Item 6 – Local Cost of Living Support Scheme 2023: “I have family members who would be recipients of the fund”.

37 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2023 as an accurate record.

38 Leader's Scheme of Delegation

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the updates to the Leader’s Scheme of Delegation.

39 Change to the order of the Agenda

To accommodate speakers, the Cabinet agreed that the agenda would be considered out of sequence and as detailed in the minutes set out hereunder.

40 Statutory School Organisation - Proposal to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services sought formal approval to begin the relevant and required statutory school organisation consultation to close Rhigos Primary School in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government’s School Organisation Code (2nd Edition) (011/2018); and to extend the catchment area of Hirwaun Primary School to incorporate the current catchment area of Rhigos Primary School.

With the agreement of the Leader, the following Non-Committee Members were granted permission to address the Cabinet:

- County Borough Councillor K. Morgan
- County Borough Councillor A. Rogers

With the agreement of the Leader, the following members of public were granted permission to address the Cabinet:

- Ms M. Evans
- Ms S. Oliver

The Leader thanked the Non-Committee Members and members of the public for their contributions. Referring to the table at section 4.5 of the report, the Leader questioned how robust the projections were and how officers had come to their conclusions. The Director advised that accurate live birth data is used from the Local Health Board.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language spoke of the Council’s statutory duty to monitor surplus places throughout its schools. The Cabinet Member commented that the projected 33% decrease in numbers of pupils attending the school in the next five years would have a financial impact on the sustainability of the school. That, together with the age of the site, the backlog of repairs required and the site’s incompliance with the Equality Act 2010 gave the Cabinet Member concerns regarding the future viability of the school. The Cabinet Member added that there were excellent facilities within and around Hirwaun Primary school, in terms of outdoor space. As such, the Cabinet Member was in support of commencing a consultation to

gain a further insight into the views of residents.

The Deputy Leader thanked the speakers for raising key areas for Cabinet's consideration. The Deputy Leader was in support of commencing a statutory consultation based upon the ageing building and the number of surplus places, which would allow Cabinet, at a future date, the opportunity to balance the views and look thoroughly at the consultation responses.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the content of the report;
2. To give formal approval to commence a statutory consultation with relevant stakeholders on the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School and extend the catchment area of Hirwaun Primary School to incorporate the current catchment area of Rhigos Primary School;
3. To give formal approval to report back to Cabinet to consider the Consultation Report and determine whether to publish the Consultation Report and approve the publication of the proposal in the form of a Statutory Notice; and
4. To give delegated authority to the Director of Education and Inclusion Services to make any minor changes required to the draft Consultation Document prior to its publication and the statutory consultation commencing.

41 Consultation on the Proposals to Realign Additional Learning Needs Mainstream Learning Support Class Provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf

The Head of Inclusion Services advised the Cabinet of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposal to realign the mainstream Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language firstly took the opportunity to thank all those who engaged with the consultation process. The Cabinet Member spoke of the increased pressure, in terms of the number of children and young people additional learning needs support and felt that the report clearly demonstrated the Cabinet's willingness to invest in the provision. The Cabinet Member was in favour of the proposals and commented that the proposal to transfer the LSC for pupils in Years 3-6 with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Abercynon Community Primary School to create a through provision in the Primary Phase at Perthcelyn Primary School would be beneficial in the long-term. In respect of the proposal to establish two Welsh medium primary phase LSCs at the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin for pupils with significant ALN, the Cabinet Member felt it was positive and would give further choice to families, whilst supporting National legislation.

Referring to the consultation responses, the Leader clarified that the proposals before Members were not about cost savings, and that if agreed, it would be an increase of £400,000 a year in costs.

The Leader questioned what support would be available to the children and families, in terms of transitional arrangements, should the Cabinet agree the recommendations. The officer acknowledged that there would be a small number of pupils impacted by the proposals and that families were rightfully concerned about the prospect. It was explained that transitions had been done successfully in the past and a key factor in respect of the proposals was that staff would be moving with the children, which would maintain a degree of

consistency. If the parents decided not to move their children to Perthcelyn, the pupils would be supported in mainstream with a specialist ASD and additional non-teaching support, where necessary. The Director added that further discussions with families would take place to ensure all individual's needs are met and to reduce parental concerns.

The Deputy Leader was in support of the proposals and took the opportunity to thank the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee for its constructive comments.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the information contained within the consultation report, which includes a summary of items of correspondence received during the consultation exercise and notes of the various meetings held;
2. To progress the following proposals to realign the mainstream Learning Support Class (LSC) provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) by issuing the appropriate statutory notices:
 - **Proposal 1 (amended):** To relocate the Observation and Assessment LSC at Penrhiwceiber Primary School to Abercynon Community Primary School taking effect from September 2024. *(Amended from April 2024).*
 - **Proposal 2 (amended):** To transfer the LSC for pupils in Years 3-6 with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Abercynon Community Primary School to create a through provision in the Primary Phase at Perthcelyn Primary School taking effect from September 2024. *(Amended from April 2024).*
 - **Proposal 3:** To establish one Early Years Assessment and Intervention LSC for pupils under statutory school age with significant presenting needs at Abercynon Primary School taking effect from April 2024.
 - **Proposal 4:** To establish two Welsh medium primary phase LSCs at the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin for pupils with significant ALN taking effect from September 2024.
 - **Proposal 5:** To establish one LSC for pupils in years 7-11 with ASD at the new 3-16 school on the Hawthorn Primary/High School site taking effect from September 2024.
3. To note the comments, observations and/or recommendations of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee, following its pre-scrutiny of the above recommendations at the meeting held on 14th September 2023.

42 Pre-Scrutiny: Local Toilet Strategy Review

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication provided Cabinet with the feedback and comments of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee following its pre scrutiny of the Local Toilet Strategy Review at its meeting on the [10th July 2023](#).

The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries then provided the Cabinet with an update on the review of the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Local Toilets Strategy from 2019-2023 to 2023-2028. It was explained that the provision of local toilets for public use is not a statutory requirement of local authorities in Wales; and that at a challenging time for local authorities, the strategy aims to mitigate potential impacts by making toilets in more Council facilities available for public use and to work with the private sector to help

promote their facilities.

The officer informed Members of the progress to date and drew Members' attention to Section 6 of the report, which detailed two objectives, that had been developed with supporting actions.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health & Communities was supportive of the recommendations outlined within the report and took the opportunity to thank the Community Services Scrutiny Committee for its valuable contribution.

The Deputy Leader reiterated the thanks to the Scrutiny Committee for its contribution and commented that it would be an opportunity to engage with community councils to add further value to the provision.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the comments and observations of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee as advised within section 5 of the report; and
2. To approve the reviewed Local Toilet Strategy 2023 – 2028 as attached to the report as Appendix A.

43 Proposed Extension to Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC's Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Orders

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services provided Members with the outcomes of the public consultation exercise initiated by Cabinet in relation to the dog control public spaces protection orders and to seek authority to extend the two Public Spaces Protection Orders relating to dog controls in Rhondda Cynon Taf (the 'Dog Control PSPOs'), subject to any amendments Members may wish to consider in response to the consultation.

Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 1 of the report, which detailed the responses following the six-week consultation period.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure was supportive of the proposal to extend the Dog Control PSPOs and commented that despite the Council's best efforts, dog fouling remained a concern of residents and as such, the extension would be invaluable.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health & Communities acknowledged the overwhelming response to the consultation, which he felt highlighted the importance of the PSPO. The Cabinet Member spoke of the serious human health repercussions of dog fouling on sports pitches and was in support of the recommendations contained within the report.

The Leader was in support of the proposals and emphasised that residents of RCT were fortunate enough to have a plethora of hills, mountains, trails, and parks on their doorstep for dog walking; and that sports pitches were off limits to dogs. The Leader spoke of the extensive social media campaign undertaken over the years in respect of the PSPO and the existing signage installed in areas. The Leader requested that officers undertake a review of the signage, and if deemed appropriate, consider the installation of additional, simple signage, to ensure residents are clear.

The Leader concluded by giving credit to the local football and rugby clubs who had direct involvement in bringing the issues to the forefront for the Local

Authority to establish the PSPO's in 2017.

The Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care was in support of the extending the PSPO's and questioned how enforceable it is. The Leader was disappointed to advise that several fines were still being issued each week for non-compliance and that issues can be escalated to the police. The Leader added that it would be beneficial to receive an update in the future, in respect of the number of fines issued for dog offences in the past 12 months.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the overwhelming public support in the consultation for the extension of the Dog Control PSPO's relating to Dog Controls within Rhondda Cynon Taf for a further 3 year period from 1st October 2023;
2. To consider the responses to the public consultation, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, together with the Equality & Welsh Language Impact Assessments at Appendices 2 and 3, and to determine whether any amendments are required to the existing prohibitions in relation to the PSPO's as detailed in Appendices 4A and 4B to the report;
3. To extend the Dog Control PSPOs as detailed in Appendix 4A and 4B to the report;
4. To give delegated authority to the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services, in consultation with the Group Director, Finance, Digital and Frontline Services, to produce the final PSPOs relating to Dog Controls and ensure their publication on the Council's website; and
5. To request officers review the existing signage installed in areas where the Dog Control PSPO's apply and what improvements might be made to the same.

N.B – The Deputy Leader abstained from voting on this item as she left the meeting during the debate.

44 Local Cost of Living Support Scheme 2023

The Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services provided the Cabinet with details of a further Local Cost of Living Support Scheme (2023).

The Leader took the opportunity to thank officers for putting together the substantial package of funding for Members' consideration, following his request at a full Council meeting. The Leader advised that had the Council delivered Free School Meals during the school summer holidays, it would have cost close to £1M but the package before Members amounted to approximately £4.3M, which was the biggest financial package announced by any Local Authority in South Wales.

The Leader spoke of the Community Facilities Energy Support Grant of £540 per organisation, which would financially support not for profit organisations such as churches and community centres, where activities and food banks take place. The Leader explained that such organisations are lifelines for some individuals and that the payment would provide support during winter pressures. The Leader welcomed the short-term package of localised support and hoped that further support would be provided by Welsh Government and/or UK Government.

The Deputy Leader was fully supportive of the recommendations and was pleased that the Local Authority were considering the package of support for communities, despite financial pressures.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services echoed earlier comments and welcomed the package of funding.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note and agree the detail of the proposed Local Cost of Living Support Scheme (2023); and
2. To note and agree the implementation arrangements and delegation to the Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services as detailed at section 9 of the report.

45 Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-24 to 2026-27

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services provided the Cabinet with an update on the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023/24 to 2026/27, based on current modelling assumptions in advance of formulating the detailed budget strategy proposals for 2024/25 during the autumn.

The Leader thanked the Group Director for the update. The Leader sought to provide clarity on the Council's use of its reserve fund by explaining that the Capital Programme was four times bigger than a decade ago; that there was significant investment in the modernisation of the social services provision; and that new 21st Century Schools and other funded projects, such as flood alleviation schemes, require match funding. The Leader stated that the budget would need to be managed year by year based on funding available; and that it was right to use the reserve funding, where possible.

The Leader feared that the small service changes, which had previously been made by the Council would not be sustainable in next year's budget, if UK Government do not release additional funding in the Autumn.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services commented on her frustration that the Council had to undertake such reviews of services in order to close the budget gap but had every confidence in the Council's financial team.

The Deputy Leader echoed earlier comments and thanked officers for their sound financial management in what was described as 'dire' times. The Deputy Leader agreed that 'invest to save' was the correct mantra and commented that the Council's Capital Programme was one to be envied.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the current position modelled in respect of the 'Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27' and receive further updates in the autumn as part of the annual budget setting process; and
2. To note that the MTFP will be presented to Council in September and will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in line with their terms of reference alongside our budget consultation arrangements.

46 Council Corporate Plan - Investment Priorities

The Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services set out the position regarding the opportunity for Cabinet to propose to Council to further invest in the Council's priority areas, aligned to the Corporate Plan, "Making a Difference" 2020 – 2024.

The Leader referred to the table at section 4.1 of the report and explained that the areas identified for investment were in line with the Corporate Plan and priorities for residents. The Leader stated that the Council would not be able to bring forward almost three quarter of a million pounds of investment in addition to the £4M agreed for the Local Cost of Living Support Scheme (Minute No. 44), if it wasn't for the good financial management of the reserve fund.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To review and propose the additional Corporate Plan investment priorities and funding arrangements as set out in the report at Appendix A to Council at its meeting on 20th September 2023.

47 Council Performance Report - 30th June 2023 (Quarter 1)

The Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services provided the Cabinet with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first three months of this financial year (to the 30th June 2023).

The Deputy Leader thanked the Service Director for the update and was pleased to note the decrease in sickness absence rates. The Deputy Leader advised that she and the Leader engage regularly with the Director of Human Resources and the Trade Union representatives in relation to sickness absence and other staff wellbeing related matters.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services acknowledged the difficult financial situation in which the Council services continue to operate. The Cabinet Member was pleased with the amount of investment and progress made during quarter 1 and was happy to support the recommendations contained within the report.

The Leader noted that the report indicated a potential overspend of approximately £2.5M but emphasised that Local Authorities across the country are significantly overspending due to inflation and social services pressures. The Leader advised that one Local Authority had a projected overspend of £23.8M, which was almost 10 times that of RCT.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

Revenue

1. To note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 30th June 2023 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary).
2. To request that Cabinet approve the virements listed in Sections 2a - e of the Executive Summary that exceed the £0.100M threshold as per the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

Capital

3. To note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 30th June 2023 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
4. To note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 30th June 2023 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary)

Corporate Plan Priorities

5. To note the Quarter 1 progress updates for the Council's Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – c of the Executive Summary) that include updates in respect of the Council's on-going work to deliver its Climate Change ambitions..

48 To consider Passing the Following Resolution:

It was **RESOLVED:** "That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act".

49 Acquisition of Land to the East of Cenarth Drive Cwmbach, Aberdare

The Director of Corporate Estates sought authority to acquire the Freehold interest of land to the east of Cenarth Drive, Cwmbach, Aberdare comprising land immediately adjacent. The land is also known as Tunnel Tip, Cwmbach.

Following consideration of the exempt report, the Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the contents of the report; and
2. To approve the purchase of the Freehold Interest of approximately 5.22 Ha/12.90 acres of primarily woodland situated to the east of Cenarth Drive, Cwmbach, Aberdare, CF44 0NH from the sellers, Minecom Limited.

This meeting closed at 11.50 am

**Councillor A Morgan
Chair.**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

COMMISSIONING OF DOMICILIARY HOME CARE SERVICES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR CAPLE

Author: Neil Elliot, Director of Social Services
Sian Nowell, Interim Service Director, Care and Support
Delivery, Integration and Transformation

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to make recommendations with regards to the commissioning of domiciliary home care services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Considers the information provided in this report, the Equality Impact Assessment (including Socio-Economic Duty) and Welsh Language Impact Assessment.
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1 above, approves that **all** reablement and intermediate care services continue to be delivered by the Council's in-house 'Support@Home' Service as set out in paragraph 5.1 of this report.
- 2.3 Subject to 2.1 above, approves that **all** long-term home care is commissioned from external home care providers as part of a full retender of the current framework contract and a new contract awarded from 1st October 2024 as set out in paragraph 5.2 of this report.
- 2.4 Subject to 2.3 above, approves the retender of the long-term home care on the basis of outcomes to be achieved and organised within specified geographical zoned areas as set out in paragraph 5.6 of the report.
- 2.5 Subject to 2.3 and 2.4 above, the Director of Social Services is

delegated authority, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to award contracts following completion of the retender process and to make all necessary arrangements for the subsequent transfer.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The proposals recommended will ensure that Adult Services:

- continues to support people to be as independent as possible by continuing to provide an in-house reablement and intermediate care service.
- commissions a sustainable model of long-term home care that achieves best value and sustainability of our care offer in the future without reducing the availability of service provided to people in need of home care support.
- improves the long-term home care service specification and commissioning arrangements to enhance individuals and home care workers experience.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 In Rhondda Cynon Taf, we have two well established approaches to providing and commissioning domiciliary home care services:

4.2 Reablement and intermediate care

Reablement and intermediate care is considered to be best practice in terms of a preventative service. A priority service for Welsh Government. The service provided is a short-term programme that helps the person to restart doing things for themselves and become more independent. Often the person has this service because they have lost some ability after an illness or accident and they need to recover their strength and function, learn how to use aids and adaptations, or learn how to help themselves differently with the function they have remaining. The key aim is for the person to be able to live without any ongoing service at the end of the programme although for some an equally successful outcome would be to significantly reduce their reliance on formal care.

In 2022/23, 1089 new people completed a reablement and intermediate care programme, of which 62.8% were independent as a result of the service intervention.

4.3 Long-term home care

Long-term home care provides personal care and support for people who can no longer undertake these tasks for themselves, with the aim of keeping people safely in their own home for as long as possible despite many health and disability challenges. In the main, tasks include washing, bathing, dressing, helping people to use the toilet, help with moving about their home, continence and skin care, help to eat and drink, take medication and facilitate shopping.

The long-term home care service is extensive, and care is provided throughout the day and week to make sure people can access help from first thing in the morning when people are getting up to last thing at night when they go to bed. Continuity and reliability are especially valued in the long-term home care service, and it works particularly well where there is a consistent team of care workers assigned.

The long-term home care service is delivered according to an estimate of call times and a detailed description of the tasks required as established at the point of the social work assessment. This leaves very little flexibility to change the pattern of care day to day or month to month and runs contrary to the principle of empowering people to have choice and control over their lives and care and support arrangements.

4.4 The Council's in-house 'Support@Home' service currently delivers both approaches, employing 304 staff:

- 81 reablement and intermediate care workers.
- 173 long-term home care workers
- 50 indirect supervisory and planning staff across reablement and intermediate care and long-term home care.

4.5 External providers are commissioned to deliver the long-term home care service provision only.

4.6 As of 23rd September 2023, approximately 1475 people were receiving domiciliary home care support, 182 in reablement intermediate care and 1293 in long term care (135 internally and 1158 externally).

4.7 In Adult Services, we currently commission around 915,720 hours of domiciliary home care per annum through these two approaches, of which 94.5% are long term home care hours. Long-term home care is provided from a mixed economy of both internal and external service providers, with just under 90% of provision provided by the external providers. At present 84.4% of the total hours of care are commissioned from external providers. The table below shows the split by approach between internal and external service provision:

Provider	Reablement and intermediate services		Long-term home care services		Total domiciliary home care services	
	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%
In-house	50,336	100	92,820	10.7	143,156	15.6
External	-	-	772,564	89.3	772,564	84.4
Total	50,366	100	865,384	100	915,720	100

- 4.8 The demand for long-term home care has steadily increased over recent years, and as is the case across social care, there is an increase in the intensity, complexity and unpredictability of need for people that are living longer at home with more significant illness, disability and expectation. Domiciliary home care capacity is not increasing in line with the increase in demand and therefore capacity remains a risk across all providers including the in-house service with regards to the Council's obligation to meet the demand.
- 4.9 Adult Services has substantial experience of commissioning long-term home from external home providers. The current long-term home care framework contract with 7 external providers commenced in October 2016 and has 2 'break clauses', the first at year 6, in October 2022, which was invoked and the second in October 2024. The external framework providers vary in their capacity to deliver but all require partnership support and good relationships with services, the purchasing and commissioning team, social work teams and the social care workforce development team to support ongoing contract compliance and quality assurance.
- 4.10 Due to well documented workforce constraints during and following the pandemic the original geographic lots for the framework contract providers have eroded. The number of framework providers were increased from 5 to 7 in 2021 and 4 non-framework "spot" external providers are currently used to ensure the Council is able to discharge its duty of care when there are peaks in demand. It is expected that Adult Services will need to continue to use these providers until a new Framework contract is procured.
- 4.11 Despite the additional capacity, external providers are working across patches often resulting in different providers delivering services to people living in the same street and also the expectation on workers to operate across wider geographic areas requiring longer travel distances between calls. This deployment creates inefficiencies for the service overall and has led to a reduction in capacity and a lack of flexibility in the workforce.

5 REVISED COMMISSIONING PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Reablement and intermediate care will remain a priority service for Adult Services in order to ensure we continue to deliver the Council's aspirations to improve people's ability to be independent. The reablement and intermediate care service is currently only provided by the Council's in-house 'Support@Home' service, and it is proposed that this commissioning approach continues.
- 5.2 It is proposed that all long-term home care is commissioned by external providers as part of a full retender of the current framework contract and a new contract award from 1st October 2024. If agreed by Cabinet, this will mean that all in-house long-term home care delivered by the Council's 'Support@Home' service is transferred to external providers. The proposed commissioning change of long-term home care will help achieve best value and sustainability of commissioned care in the future.
- 5.3 It is important to note that any service transfer for any individual between care provider will maintain their current care package, subject to the usual review arrangements. TUPE requirements mean that eligible staff employed by 'Support@Home' to provide long-term home care and any current commissioned external provider prior to transfer will transfer to the new provider on retender. This will help to maintain stability for the service user and continuity of staff support around the maintenance of activities and support for health and wellbeing during any transition.
- 5.4 It will be a requirement of both the Council as the existing provider and any new provider to work together to manage any anxiety or worries that service users and their families have about the change of provider users and inform commissioners of any issues that may arise.
- 5.5 The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 promotes outcome-based care commissioning that is more focussed on what the person wants to achieve (within agreed financial parameters) for example:

Mrs Jones is 90 years old and suffers with arthritis and general frailty. She has a home care worker call at 9am each morning for 30 minutes to help her get up, washed, dressed, have breakfast and a cup of tea.

On good days she can do this herself and doesn't need the full 30 minutes but on bad days she needs longer – this poses a problem for the worker as on the good days she still has to stay for the 30 minutes and on the bad days she is rushing and Mrs Jones is struggling to keep up.

The outcome that matters for Mrs Jones is to be up and ready for the day and this could be better achieved if the worker could focus on that rather than how long she is able to spend on the call. An outcome-based commission would focus on the average time required overall (say over the period of a month) rather than on the rigid daily slot.

5.6 Whilst the specification for our existing framework contract sets out in detail Adult Services expectations of quality and control the contract is based on the purchase of times and tasks. There are many perceived benefits of moving to an outcome-based commissioning approach, like the example above, which is in line with the Welsh Government direction at this time. It is therefore recommended that the service specification for our retendered framework contract, if agreed, includes the requirement to deliver services according to the achievement of personal outcomes and that any procurement process is tendered on the basis of specific geographical zones to improve the efficiency and logistics for staff deployment locally, leading to increased staff recruitment and retention and improved user experience.

5.7 Subject to agreement of the recommendations in Section 2 above, these commissioning proposals will require engagement with all people in receipt of long-term home care and their families and staff. In addition, all staff, service users and carers will receive regular communications on how they will be involved in the retender long-term care home services.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed (attached at Appendix 1) reviewing the impact of the proposal to commission a model of long-term home care that achieves best value and sustainability without reducing the availability of service provided to individuals, as recommended in Section 2 above.

6.2 The recommended proposal has some disproportionate impacts on people who are older, have disabilities, are carers, and are women. Adult Services will take account of the challenges which all affected individuals, their families and staff may face, both in terms of participation in engagement activity and in ensuring that the impact of any changes is mitigated as detailed in the impact assessment, if they are to be implemented.

6.3 Following any procurement process and contract award the service would engage with all affected individuals, their families and staff to address any concerns or questions they may have, and the impact assessment will be reviewed and updated to include any further mitigated risks identified during ongoing engagement activity.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications associated with implementing the recommendations set out in Section 2 above.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 Subject to the agreement of the recommendations in Section 2 above, all people supported by the Council's 'Support@Home' service and their families will be kept fully informed of the process and timescales for service transfer. Following any procurement process and contract award the service would engage with all affected individuals to address any concerns or questions they may have. There would also be opportunities for individuals to meet with the new providers to discuss any queries they may have. Should a person be unbefriended then an individual advocate will be offered to support.
- 8.2 Similarly, Council's 'Support@Home' staff would be kept fully informed of progress at each stage of the tender and transfer process and updated in relation to key milestones and timescales. Further work is required with Human Resources to determine which staff will be eligible for TUPE as part of the retender process. Under TUPE there would be no changes to staff terms and conditions of employment, noting that support, as appropriate, would be available to staff throughout the process.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 The total domiciliary home care budget for 2023/24 totals £21.52m comprising of £3.165m for reablement and intermediate care and £18.355m for long term care, of which £4.941m is for the Council's in-house provision and £13.412m for commissioned external care.
- 9.2 The unit cost of our commissioned external providers is, on average, estimated at £21.81 per hour, which is lower than the Council's in-house long-term home care service, estimated at £38.04 per hour. The high hourly rate of the in-house service is due to a number of factors but primarily the management costs, local authority pension and other terms and conditions.
- 9.3 Subject to the agreement of the recommendations in Section 2 above, any financial implications resulting from the commissioning changes of domiciliary home care will be factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan in due course. Whilst the proposals would provide a

more cost-effective solution to the current arrangements, the cost will be subject to competition and other wider market forces.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 Domiciliary home care services have been provided as part of the Councils service provision to meet assessed needs under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, but it is not a specific statutory provision.

10.2 Subject to the agreement of the recommendations in Section 2 above, all existing individuals will continue to be offered support on an individual basis ensuring their assessed needs continue to be met in line with our statutory obligations.

11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

11.1 This report supports two of the Council's corporate priorities, namely:

- People - promoting independence and positive lives for everyone.
- Living within our means - where services are delivered efficiently to achieve value for money for the taxpayer.

11.2 In addition, the report considers the following Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 wellbeing goals of: A Healthier Wales and more equal Wales.

12 ELECTORAL WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 This applies to all electoral wards.

13 CONCLUSION

13.1 It is important that the Council reviews its adult social care provision to ensure its current care and support offer continues to meet assessed need and remains cost effective. Through the implementation of recommended proposals in Section 2 above, Adult Services will:

- continue to support people to be as independent as possible by continuing to provide an in-house reablement intermediate care service.
- commission a sustainable model of long-term home care that achieves best value and sustainability of our care offer in the future without reducing the availability of service provided to people in need of home care support.

- improve the long-term home care service specification and commissioning arrangements to enhance the service user and home care worker experience.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

FUTURE COMMISSIONING OF DOMICILIARY HOME CARE

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS
WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR CAPLE**

Background Papers

None

Officer to contact: Sian Nowell

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

(Revised March 2021)

Please refer to the current Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this document. If you would like further guidance, please contact the Diversity and Inclusion Team on 01443 444529.

An equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken at the outset of any proposal to ensure robust evidence is considered in decision making. This documentation will support the Council in making informed, effective and fair decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

This document will also contribute towards our duties to create a More Equal Wales within the

- Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

The [‘A More Equal Wales – Mapping Duties’](#) guide highlights the alignment of our duties in respect of the above-mentioned legislation.

SECTION 1 – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Lead Officer: Sian Nowell

Service Director: Neil Elliott

Service Area: Adult Services

Date: September 2023

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

Strategy/Plan	Service Re-Model/Discontinuation of Service	Policy/Procedure	Practice	Information/Position Statement
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.b) What is the name of the proposal?

Commissioning of Domiciliary Home Care Services

1.c) Please provide an overview of the proposal providing any supporting links to reports or documents.

The proposals recommended to Cabinet include:

- **all** reablement and intermediate care services continue to be delivered by the Council's in-house 'Support@Home' Service
- that **all** long-term home care is commissioned from external home care providers as part of a full retender of the current framework contract and award of a new contract from 1st October 2024
- the retender of the long-term home care on the basis of outcomes to be achieved and organised within specified geographical zoned areas as set out in paragraph 5.6 of the report.

Through the implementation of the proposals, Adult Services will:

- continue to support people to be as independent as possible by continuing to provide an in-house reablement intermediate care service.
 - commission a sustainable model of long-term home care that achieves best value and sustainability of our care offer in the future without reducing the availability of service provided to people in need of home care support
 - improves the long-term home care service specification and commissioning arrangements to enhance the service user and home care worker experience.
- Any service transfer for any individual between care provider will maintain their current care package, subject to the usual review arrangements. TUPE requirements mean that eligible staff employed by 'Support@Home' to provide long-term home care and any current commissioned external provider prior to transfer will transfer to the new provider on retender. This will help to maintain stability for the service user and continuity of staff support around the maintenance of activities and support for health and wellbeing during any transition.

1.d) Please outline where delivery of this proposal is affected by legislation or other drivers such as code of practice.

All Registered long term home care services are subject to the Regulation and Inspection of social care in Wales 2016 Act. And as a consequence, must adhere to the statutory guidance for providers attached here and are subject to inspection by Care Inspectorate Wales with regards to their compliance. In particular under section 25 Registered providers are required and ensure that individuals are treated with respect and sensitivity. Including but not limited to respecting the individual's privacy and dignity; respecting the individual's rights to confidentiality; promoting the individual's autonomy and independence and having regard to any relevant protected characteristics (as defined in section 4 of the Equality Act 2010) of the individual.



guidance-for-provi
ders-and-responsibl

Further to the above Care Inspectorate Wales have emphasised their commitment to promoting the rights of social care users in their work to Register and Inspect regulated social care organisation in their public commitment published 4 May 2023

[Our commitment to promoting and upholding the rights of people who use social care and childcare services \(HTML document\) | Care Inspectorate Wales](#)

The domiciliary care workforce is regulated by Social Care Wales All Regulated domiciliary care service are required to adhere to the requirements of Social Care Wales and particularly the social Care code of practice (socialcare.wales). There are specific Registration requirements for Domiciliary Care workers and for the management arrangements within each provider organisation. There is in addition practice guidance for managers and staff and specific vetting and training requirements at induction.

Any Social Care service procured by the council is subject to a rigorous procurement process and ongoing contract management and monitoring and as a public authority the Council has due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The transfer of the service will require adherence to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) that ensures the rights of employees when their employment changes when a business is transferred to a new owner.

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Service users | x |
| <input type="radio"/> Employees | x |
| <input type="radio"/> Wider community | |

SECTION 2 – SCREENING TEST – IS A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

Screening is used to determine whether the initiative has positive, negative or neutral impacts upon protected groups. Where negative impacts are identified for protected groups then a full Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Please provide as much detail as possible of how the proposal will impact on the following groups, this may not necessarily be negative, but may impact on a group with a particular characteristic in a specific way.

Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups. Please take an intersectional approach in recognising an individual may have more than one protected characteristic.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Age (<i>Specific age groups i.e. young people or older people</i>)	Negative	<p>SERVICE USERS The largest group to access home care services are older people as they are most likely to be affected by age related frailty and disability.</p> <p>Whilst the in-house service only provides services to 10.4% of people affected by the transfer will experience some distress and uncertainty</p>	<p>SERVICE USERS We are aware from surveys and research that older people value continuity of care and personalised care therefore the transfer will have an impact until new relationships and routines are re-established - see action plan for plan to engage with people about what matters to them with regards to the transfer</p> <p>What older people want from home care services – Commissioning home care for older people (scie.org.uk)</p> <p>The WCCIS database allows only for the recording of one category. Given the age profile of service users it is likely that people recorded as having a physical disability suffer with frailty the British Geriatric society provides information about frailty see here Introduction to Frailty British Geriatrics Society (bgs.org.uk)</p> <p>Of note the risk to people with frailty is different to others with physical disabilities as people with frailty are more at risk of falls, infections, delirium, incontinence and the associated effect on skin integrity but equally the impact of injury and disease is more significant and long lasting. People with frailty are vulnerable when services change and it is important to make sure communications with family and friends, carers, advocates and care managers are effective and co-ordinated. See action plan for the engagement approach.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?																																	
		<p>during the transfer process as their regular care worker and timetable of calls may be affected</p> <p>STAFF The social care workforce is ageing and this is reflected in the age data for the affected workforce in Support@Home staff affected by the transfer.</p>	<p>There will also be a secondary concern of a cognitive impairment including a diagnosed dementia amongst this older group. Plans for the transfer of service users to new providers will need to ensure effective arrangements are in place to support peoples best interests including the use of advocates where people are unbefriended and specific care management and OT oversight of people identified as vulnerable - See action plan .</p> <p><u>Age profile – service users currently accessing home care from external providers. (please note data changes frequently)</u></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Group</th> <th>Total</th> <th>Percentage:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>18 to 30</td> <td>30</td> <td>2.07%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>31 to 40</td> <td>33</td> <td>2.27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>41 to 50</td> <td>38</td> <td>2.62%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>51 to 60</td> <td>119</td> <td>8.20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>61 to 70</td> <td>172</td> <td>11.85%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>71 to 80</td> <td>353</td> <td>24.31%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>81 to 90</td> <td>481</td> <td>33.13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Over 90</td> <td>224</td> <td>15.43%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not recorded</td> <td>2</td> <td>0.14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>1452</td> <td>100.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age Group	Total	Percentage:	18 to 30	30	2.07%	31 to 40	33	2.27%	41 to 50	38	2.62%	51 to 60	119	8.20%	61 to 70	172	11.85%	71 to 80	353	24.31%	81 to 90	481	33.13%	Over 90	224	15.43%	Not recorded	2	0.14%	Total	1452	100.00%
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			<p>To ensure staff have good access to information and advice regarding their rights and entitlements, access to information and wellbeing support, good advice and engagement in the TUPE process and opportunity to discuss their individual concerns with appropriately trained and informed Council officers– see action plan</p> <p><i>Age profile - Support @ Home staff affected (please note this data changes over time)</i></p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>18-25</td> <td>7.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26-35</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>36-45</td> <td>11.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>46-55</td> <td>28.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>56-65</td> <td>40%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>65+</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	18-25	7.5%	26-35	9%	36-45	11.5%	46-55	28.5	56-65	40%	65+	4%
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<p>Disability <i>(people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions)</i></p>	Negative	<p>SERVICE USERS Younger people with disabilities group also access home care services.</p> <p>Whilst the in-house service only provides</p>	<p>SERVICE USERS The cohort of service users affected by the transfer are listed as having the following disabilities/long term conditions in the WCCIS database. required to manage the transfer issues raised by the information below</p> <p><i>Disability profile – service users of all home care services (inc. in-house)</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Disabilities</th> <th>Percentage:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Frailty and or temporary illness</td> <td>0.40%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Disabilities	Percentage:	Frailty and or temporary illness	0.40%								
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		<p>services to 10.4% of people affected by the transfer will experience some distress and uncertainty during the transfer process as their regular care worker and timetable of calls may be affected.</p> <p>STAFF There are staff within the affected Support@Home service with recorded disabilities. Some of these have reasonable adjustments in place.</p>	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Learning Disability</td> <td>4.28%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mental Health</td> <td>8.37%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mental Health Dementia</td> <td>5.80%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Physical Disability</td> <td>81.02%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sensory Loss</td> <td>0.13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>100.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Learning Disability	4.28%	Mental Health	8.37%	Mental Health Dementia	5.80%	Physical Disability	81.02%	Sensory Loss	0.13%	Total	100.00%			
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Total	155																	

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>Person focussed service plans to accurately document care requirements are a regulatory requirement for each service user and essential for staff reference. Staff working in regulated home care are required to undertake moving and handling training as part of their induction and to refresh on a regular basis but in addition in some situations more individual support may be required.</p> <p>The physical disabilities and medical conditions of service users will be wide ranging. Social care staff are not required to have a sophisticated knowledge of medical or health conditions but the person-centred service plan should ensure the impact of the disability is clarified with regards to how this affects the care and support delivered</p> <p>Home care in some circumstances administers medication. This is only supported with specific safeguards in place. All service users that have medication as part of their care and support plan will be identified and their transfer given specific management oversight.</p> <p>The WCCIS database allows only for the recording of one category. As previously noted given the age profile of service users it is likely that people recorded as having a physical disability suffer with frailty the British Geriatric society provides information about frailty see here Introduction to Frailty British Geriatrics Society (bgs.org.uk)</p> <p>Of note the risk to people with frailty is different to others with physical disabilities as people with frailty are more at risk of falls, infections, delirium, incontinence and the associated effect on skin integrity but equally the impact of injury and disease is more significant and long lasting. People with frailty are vulnerable when services change and it is important to make sure communications with family and friends, carers, advocates and care managers are effective and co-ordinated.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>The age profile suggests that whilst the most pressing issue for the person is a physical disability – there may also be a secondary concern of a cognitive impairment including a diagnosed dementia. Plans for the transfer of service users to new providers will need to ensure effective arrangements are in place to support peoples best interests including the use of advocates where people are unbefriended</p> <p>All social care staff in regulated services are required to undertake the induction framework for health and social care (SCW). Domiciliary care staff are Registered with SCW and their achievement against this framework is monitored as part of their Registration. Induction framework for health and social care Social Care Wales</p> <p>STAFF HR records show there are some staff within the in-house service with recorded disabilities. They may or may not have reported this disability to their manager and to avoid disclosure of sensitive information in the public domain no specific breakdown or statistics can be provided.</p> <p>Some staff have reasonable adjustments in place to support them with their disability in work.</p> <p>As part of the transfer process we will encourage open discussions with disabled staff so relevant support can be provided by any new employer. For those with reasonable adjustments currently in place we will discuss specifically with them how we can ensure these are in place with any new employer.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Gender Reassignment <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth including non-binary identities)</i>	Neutral	There is no evidence to currently suggest that individuals who share the protected characteristic of gender reassignment would be impacted directly. Should officers be made aware of any impact arising, this EIA will be updated to reflect these.	<p>SERVICE USERS Social Care does not routinely capture data on gender identity for service users.</p> <p>STAFF The workforce data has been reviewed and analysis does not indicate a disproportionate impact for this characteristic.</p> <p>There will be a requirement on all providers at tender and during ongoing contract monitoring to demonstrate a robust policy and training arrangements for Equality and Diversity to support inclusive practice.</p>
Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	Neutral	There is no evidence to currently suggest that individuals who are married or in a civil partnership will be directly impacted by the proposal.	<p>Social Care does not routinely capture data on married or civil partnership status for staff or service users.</p> <p>There will be a requirement on all providers at tender and during ongoing contract monitoring to demonstrate robust policy and training arrangements for Equality and Diversity to support inclusive practice.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		Should officers be made aware of any impact arising, this EIA will be updated to reflect these	
Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i>	Neutral	There is no evidence to currently suggest that this impact will have a disproportionate negative effect on women who are pregnant or on maternity leave. Should officers be made aware of any impact arising, this EIA will be updated to reflect this	There will be a requirement on all providers at tender and during ongoing contract monitoring to demonstrate robust employment policy arrangements that support Equality and Diversity and inclusive workforce terms and conditions.
Race <i>(ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority)</i>	Neutral	There is currently no evidence or data held to suggest that this impact will have a	SERVICE USERS There will be a requirement on all providers at tender and during ongoing contract monitoring to demonstrate robust policy and training for Equality and Diversity to support inclusive practice.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?																						
<i>ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)</i>		disproportionate negative impact on a specific ethnic or racial group. However, if officers are made aware of an impact, this EIA will be updated accordingly.	<p>There will also be a requirement on all providers at tender and ongoing through contract monitoring to demonstrate how they provide a safe and nurturing workplace for ethnic minority people to thrive and flourish in their work.</p> <p>Communication with service users will be according to the needs and wishes of the person. Where an interpreter is required including for BSL this will be commissioned as required.</p> <p><u><i>Ethnicity profile – all service users of home care (inc. in-house):</i></u></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ethnicity</th> <th>Percentage:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Any other ethnic background</td> <td>0.14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any other White background</td> <td>5.85%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any White Background, including Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish</td> <td>81.82%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Asian or Asian British-Indian</td> <td>0.07%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chinese or Chinese British</td> <td>0.07%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Information not obtained</td> <td>5.58%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Information Refused</td> <td>0.96%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not stated</td> <td>5.44%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White and Black African</td> <td>0.07%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>100.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Ethnicity	Percentage:	Any other ethnic background	0.14%	Any other White background	5.85%	Any White Background, including Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish	81.82%	Asian or Asian British-Indian	0.07%	Chinese or Chinese British	0.07%	Information not obtained	5.58%	Information Refused	0.96%	Not stated	5.44%	White and Black African	0.07%	Total	100.00%
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			<p><u><i>Ethnicity profile – in-house service users</i></u></p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Asian or Asian British Indian</td> <td>0.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White British</td> <td>58.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White other</td> <td>27.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not stated</td> <td>13.8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The ADSS commissioned research to support anti racist Wales see here DTG 2022-23 Anti-racist Wales Final report_FINAL.d2839695bfec9c3126ec87fa70d1b5968bef2d903e580a5012c7694db9d8a96c(1).pdf</p> <p>STAFF The workforce data has been reviewed and analysis does not indicate a disproportionate impact for this characteristic.</p>	Asian or Asian British Indian	0.6%	White British	58.5%	White other	27.7%	Not stated	13.8%
Asian or Asian British Indian	0.6%										
White British	58.5%										
White other	27.7%										
Not stated	13.8%										
Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and</i>	Neutral	There is currently to evidence to suggest that this transfer of care will have a direct	SERVICE USERS Social Care does not routinely capture data on religion or beliefs status for service users.								

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?								
<i>philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>		impact on those with a religion or belief, including those with no beliefs. Should officers be made aware of any potential impacts related to this protected characteristic, this impact assessment will be updated accordingly.	<p>There will be a requirement on all providers at tender and during ongoing contract monitoring to demonstrate robust policy and training arrangements for Equality and Diversity to support inclusive practice.</p> <p>STAFF The workforce data has been reviewed and analysis does not indicate a disproportionate impact for this characteristic.</p>								
Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i>	Negative	This transfer will have a disproportionate effect on women both in terms of staff and service users and carers .	<p>SERVICE USERS <u><i>Gender profile – all home care service users (inc. in-house):</i></u></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Gender</th> <th>Percentage:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>62.26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Male</td> <td>37.74%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>100.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Gender	Percentage:	Female	62.26%	Male	37.74%	Total	100.00%
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			<p><i>Gender profile – in-house service users:</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Gender</th> <th>Percentage:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>69.66%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Male</td> <td>30.34%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>No information or research was available to explain why there are so many more women receiving home care than men but this may be because women in some communities live longer than men who previously worked in heavy industry. – It could also relate to more carers being women - Key facts and figures Carers UK 59% of unpaid carers are women (Census 2021). Women are more likely to become carers and to provide more hours of unpaid care than men. More women than men provide high intensity care at ages when they would expect to be in paid work (Petrillo and Bennett, 2022)</p> <p>The action plan sets out the engagement plan for implementation. Consideration to the specific needs of female service user and carers will be sought to ensure what matters to them is acknowledged and addressed.</p> <p>STAFF Of the staff identified in the service 92.5% are women and only 7.5% are men</p> <p>The workforce of primarily female and as noted above also ageing - this is a concern as the physical and mental demands on people working in adult social care generally, and on people working in frontline of home care services in particular are significant see Microsoft Word - evidence women's health in the social care workforce.docx (londonadass.org.uk)</p>	Gender	Percentage:	Female	69.66%	Male	30.34%
Gender	Percentage:								
Female	69.66%								
Male	30.34%								

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>The impact on workers is evidenced in sickness levels, staff turnover and on the long term health impact for individuals.</p> <p>Social Care Wales and HEIW has set a health and social care workforce strategy for Wales Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care Final (nhs.wales) that sets out the vision, ambition and approaches that are needed to put wellbeing at the heart of our plans for the workforce but the action plan attached includes a commitment to ensure social care providers are required to specifically identify their health and wellbeing arrangements for their workforce at the tender evaluation and this will be monitored during ongoing contract monitoring arrangements.</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation (<i>bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight</i>)</p>	Neutral	<p>Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that this group will be disproportionately affected by the introduction of this proposal. Should officers be made aware of any potential impacts related to this protected characteristic, this EIA will be updated accordingly.</p>	<p>SERVICE USERS Social Care does not routinely capture data on the sexual orientation of service users.</p> <p>There will be a requirement on all providers at tender and during ongoing contract monitoring to demonstrate robust policy and training arrangements for Equality and Diversity to support inclusive practice.</p> <p>STAFF The workforce data has been reviewed and analysis does not indicate a disproportionate impact for this characteristic.</p>

In addition, due to Council commitments made to the following groups of people we would like you to consider impacts upon them:

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?		
<p>Armed Forces Community <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i></p>	Negative	<p>Veterans could be indirectly impacted through the transfer of care Evidence suggests that veterans in RCT are older and likely to have disabilities or long-term health or mobility conditions. There may therefore be veterans within the cohort of affected services users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.2% of people in RCT have previously served in the UK regular armed forces • 0.7% of people in RCT have previously serviced in the UK reserve armed forces • 0.2% of people in RCT have previously served in both regular and reserve UK armed forces <p>(Census 2021, Population Maps)</p> <p>During the engagement process adult services will link in with the Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer to assist with the identification of veterans in the service users cohort and for advice specifically for the communication and support to veterans See action plan.</p>		
<p>Carers <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i></p>	Negative	<p>As the groups most affected by the transfer of care are older and disabled people it is very likely that their unpaid carers will equally experience disruption from the transfer of care</p>	<p>SERVICE USERS</p> <p>Of all the people currently receiving home care services in RCT, whether provided by external provider or the in-house service, only 18% are reported as having an unpaid carer involved in this care. This is likely an underrepresentation:</p> <p><i>Unpaid carers – all home care service users (inc. in-house):</i></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Does the person have a carer?</td> <td>Percentage:</td> </tr> </table>	Does the person have a carer?	Percentage:
Does the person have a carer?	Percentage:				

		<p>Whilst the in-house service only provides services to 10.4% of people affected by the transfer will experience some distress and uncertainty during the transfer process as their regular care worker and timetable of calls may be affected</p> <p>We are aware from surveys and research that people including unpaid carers value continuity of care and personalised care therefore the transfer will have an impact until new relationships and routines are re-established</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>81.68%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>18.32%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>100.00%</td> </tr> </table>	No	81.68%	Yes	18.32%	Total	100.00%	<p>Of the total cohort of service users in the in-house service, 34 are listed in our WCCIS database as having an unpaid carer involved in their care. It is expected that this too is an underrepresentation.</p> <p>Carers will be treated the same as service users during the engagement process. However as part of the engagement, the RCT Carers Support Project will assist with specific communications, support and advice to unpaid carers See plan</p> <p>STAFF</p> <p>There is currently no workforce data available regarding the proportion of in-house staff who are also unpaid carers. However, 40% of the in-house workforce is aged 56-65 and age is a contributing factor to the likelihood of unpaid caring responsibilities. A large proportion of them are also women, which is another factor making unpaid caring more likely. It would therefore be reasonable to assume many affected staff are also unpaid carers.</p> <p>As part of the transfer process we will make sure staff are supplied with relevant information from the Carers Support Project and RCT Council's Working Carers team to support them in managing their unpaid caring responsibilities alongside paid work. We will encourage open discussions with any new employers to ensure staff continue to be supported in relation to their unpaid caring responsibilities.</p>
No	81.68%									
Yes	18.32%									
Total	100.00%									

If the initial screening test has identified negative impacts, then a full equality impact assessment (section 4) **must** be undertaken. However, if after undertaking the above screening test you determine a full equality impact assessment is not relevant, please provide an adequate explanation below:

Are you happy you have sufficient evidence to justify your decision? Yes No

Name: Sian Nowell

Position: Interim Service Director

Date: September 2023

SECTION 3 – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY (STRATEGIC DECISIONS ONLY)

The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. Socio-economic disadvantage means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services.

Please consider these additional vulnerable groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

- Single parents and vulnerable families
- Pensioners
- Looked after children
- Homeless people
- Students
- Single adult households

- People living in the most deprived areas in Wales.
- People with low literacy and numeracy
- People who have experienced the asylum system.
- People misusing substances.
- People of all ages leaving a care setting
- People involved in the criminal justice system

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p>Low Income/Income Poverty <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i></p>	neutral	<p>Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that service users in low income or income poverty will be disproportionately affected by the introduction of this proposal as their service will continue with a new provider.</p> <p>Any staff on low income or income poverty affected by the transfer will be subject to TUPE with continuity of employment and protection of their terms and conditions (inc, pension).</p> <p>The service once transferred will remain Regulated by CIW and the workforce training and registration requirements of Social Care Wales</p> <p>Any procurement process for home care will include requirements to comply with the SCW health & social care workforce strategy that includes requirements for inclusion fairness and equity.</p> <p>As staff are relatively low income, primarily female and part time the staff engagement process will include cost of living information, access to information and advice for their rights and entitlements and advice regarding skills development.</p>	<p>64% of households in RCT are single-family households. Of this group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8.8% are single-family households of a lone parent family with dependent children. • 4.8% are single-family households of a lone parent family with non-dependent children. <p>(Census 2021: Population Maps)</p> <p>“There were 16.9 million families in England and Wales in 2021 – 18.7% were lone parents.”</p> <p>(Families in England and Wales: Census 2021)</p>

<p>Low and / or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that service users with no or low wealth will be disproportionately affected by the introduction of this proposal as their service will continue with a new provider.</p> <p>The staff with no or low wealth affected by the transfer will be subject to TUPE with continuity of employment and protection of their terms and conditions (including pension).</p> <p>The service once transferred will remain Regulated by CIW and the workforce training and registration requirements of Social Care Wales</p> <p>Any procurement process for home care will include requirements to comply with the social care Wales health and social care workforce strategy that includes requirements for inclusion fairness and equity</p> <p>As staff are relatively low income, primarily female and part time the staff engagement process will include cost of living information, access to information and advice for their rights and entitlements and advice regarding skills development.</p>	<p>64% of households in RCT are single-family households. Of this group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8.8% are single-family households of a lone parent family with dependent children. • 4.8% are single-family households of a lone parent family with non-dependent children. <p>(Census 2021: Population Maps)</p> <p>“There were 16.9 million families in England and Wales in 2021 – 18.7% were lone parents.”</p> <p>(Families in England and Wales: Census 2021)</p>
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<p>Material Deprivation (Unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</p>	<p>Neutral:</p>	<p>Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that service users with material deprivation will be disproportionately affected by the introduction of this proposal as their service will continue with a new provider.</p> <p>The staff with material deprivation affected by the transfer will be subject to TUPE with continuity of employment and protection of their terms and conditions (including pension).</p> <p>The service once transferred will remain Regulated by CIW and the workforce training and registration requirements of Social Care Wales</p> <p>Any procurement process for home care will include requirements to comply with the social care Wales health and social care workforce strategy that includes requirements for inclusion fairness and equity</p> <p>As staff are relatively low income, primarily female and part time the staff engagement process will include cost of living information, access to information and advice for their rights and entitlements and advice regarding skills development.</p>	<p>64% of households in RCT are single-family households. Of this group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8.8% are single-family households of a lone parent family with dependent children. • 4.8% are single-family households of a lone parent family with non-dependent children. <p>(Census 2021: Population Maps)</p> <p>“There were 16.9 million families in England and Wales in 2021 – 18.7% were lone parents.”</p> <p>(Families in England and Wales: Census 2021)</p>
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<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p><u>Area Deprivation</u> <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport))</i></p>	neutral	<p>Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that service users living in areas that cause area deprivation will be disproportionately affected by the introduction of this proposal as their service will continue with a new provider under a zoned contract .</p> <p>The staff affected by the transfer will be subject to TUPE with continuity of employment and protection of their terms and conditions (including pension).</p> <p>The transfer proposal includes recommendation to procure the home care service according to geographic zones which will support people to work closer to their own community and reduce travel requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Socio-economic background <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i></p>	Neutral:	<p>Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that service users from any specific socio-economic background will be disproportionately affected by the introduction of this proposal as their service will continue with a new provider.</p> <p>Advocacy for people needing someone to speak out or correspond on their behalf to secure their rights and entitlement will be arranged as is</p>	

		<p>required in social care for this this situation.</p> <p>The staff affected by the transfer will be subject to TUPE with continuity of employment and protection of their terms and conditions (including pension).</p> <p>The service once transferred will remain Regulated by CIW and the workforce training and registration requirements of Social Care Wales</p> <p>Any procurement process for home care will include requirements to comply with the social care Wales health and social care workforce strategy that includes requirements for inclusion fairness and equity</p> <p>The council has a policy for the management of change that includes the full involvement of the trade unions who will advocate for staff who may not feel confident to speak out on their concerns about their rights and entitlements</p>	
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<p>Socio-economic disadvantage <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>	<p>Neutral:</p>	<p>Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that service users will be disproportionately affected by the introduction of this proposal as their service will continue with a new provider.</p> <p>The staff affected by the transfer will be subject to TUPE with continuity of employment and protection of their terms and conditions (including pension).</p> <p>The service once transferred will remain Regulated by CIW and the workforce training and registration requirements of Social Care Wales</p> <p>Any procurement process for home care will include requirements to comply with the social care Wales health and social care workforce strategy that includes requirements for inclusion fairness and equity</p>	
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SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

You should use the information gathered at the screening stage to assist you in identifying possible negative/adverse impacts and clearly identify which groups are affected.

- 4.a) **In terms of disproportionate/negative/adverse impacts that the proposal may have on a protected group, outline the steps that will be taken to reduce or mitigate the impact for each group identified. Attach a separate action plan where impacts are substantial.**

Action Plan STAFF

Specific action required as part of the overall programme plan

- **TUPE plan** required at the earliest possible stage to include genuine dialogue with employees throughout. All employees identified as employed in the service (or part) that are transferring will be entitled to carry on working for the appropriate new organisation with their existing terms and conditions of employment and continuity of service including LGPS
- **Procurement plan** required at the earliest possible stage to ensure procurement requirements, contract terms and conditions and service specifications include the requirement to co-operate with the Local Authority in respect of its obligations to comply with statutory equality duties. The Service Provider to be required also to promote equality and diversity, including (but not limited to) race equality, equality of opportunity for disabled people, gender (including gender reassignment) equality, and equality relating to religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and age in the provision of the Services. Providers will be required as part of the tender process to demonstrate robust Equality and Diversity Policies that include their commitment to provide training for their staff and managers in the organisation.

Questions for tender

- Do you have a published equality and diversity policy? (Please attach as evidence)
- What structures are in place in your organisation to manage and implement your equalities and diversity policy? including arrangements to assure a safe and nurturing workplace for ethnic minority people?
- What is your training plan for staff and managers to support equality and diversity for the workforce and for developing inclusive practice?
- Staff engagement plan required to ensure staff and their representatives are

- In receipt of written information around the decision and what will happen and when (to include response to frequently asked questions) October 2023
- Access to a helpline and designated email in-box monitored daily by senior officer to ensure prompt responses to concerns and queries.
- Face to face staff information surgeries in localities in **November 2023, March 2024 and July 2024** to access advice and information regarding.
 - Their rights and entitlements with regards to TUPE
 - Cost of living support and information
 - Wellbeing advice, information and access to support including occupational health if required.
 - To share information
 - Engage workers with regards to what matters to them in terms of the transfer process to inform the planned approach.
 - Managing unpaid caring alongside paid work and receiving information and advice related to unpaid caring.

Action Plan SERVICE USERS and CARERS

Specific action required as part of the overall programme plan

- **Procurement plan** required at the earliest possible stage to ensure procurement requirements, contract terms and conditions and service specifications include the requirement to co-operate with the Local Authority in respect of its obligations to comply with statutory equality duties.

The Service Provider to be required also to promote equality and diversity, including (but not limited to) race equality, equality of opportunity for disabled people, gender (including gender reassignment) equality, and equality relating to religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and age in the provision of the Services.

Providers will be required as part of the tender process to demonstrate robust Equality and Diversity Policies that include their commitment to provide training for their staff and managers in the organisation.

Questions for tender

- Do you have a published equality and diversity policy? (Please attach as evidence)
- What structures are in place in your organisation to manage and implement your equalities and diversity policy? including arrangements to assure a safe and nurturing workplace for ethnic minority people?
- What is your training plan for staff and managers to support equality and diversity for the workforce and for developing inclusive practice?

- **Engagement plan** A Service user engagement plan is required to ensure good communication with service users, carers and families throughout the process that supports good practice and addresses what matters to people with regards to their home care service

Initial communication by letter to inform them of the Cabinet report. October 2023

Throughout February 2024 4 weeks engagement events in each of the localities for service users, carers and families to discuss the proposed new service specification and the timescales for the procurement process. These event will also

1. Establish with service users and carers 'What matters to them' with regards to how we manage the transfer of cases from one provider to another so that the key issues raised can be accommodated in our plans. The response of women will be specifically encouraged
2. Refresh with service users and carers 'what matters to them' with regards to home care service delivery (e.g., continuity of care, communication with the office staff etc.) to ensure these areas are addressed in the service specification prior to the issue of the final tender documentation. The response of women will be specifically encouraged.

For the 4 weeks of February 2024 for those unable to attend the events above information will be forwarded and invitation to contribute will be sought in writing.

February 2024 for those unable to attend the events above a sample of service users and carers will be contacted by phone to determine 'what matters to them' with regards to home care service delivery (e.g., continuity of care, communication with the office staff etc.) to ensure these areas are addressed in the service specification prior to the issue of the final tender documentation.

February 2024 – work to identify veterans amongst the home care service user and carers will progress with the council Veterans service and information advice and support offered as required

April 2024 Carers Project contact with carers affected by the transfer of contracts and information advice and support offered as required

By July 2024 unbefriended service users assigned an advocate prior to the start of the transfer process.

By July 2024 people that are identified as needing re-assessment or Review prior to transfer will be assigned a care manager as appropriate prior to the start of the transfer process.

By July 2024 service users or carers identified by the services to be particularly vulnerable (e.g., lack mental capacity, medication required, complex care plans) will be assigned care manager / OT oversight to support their best interests during the transfer to aid communication and co-ordination.

By July 2024 service users or carers where appropriate will be allocated the support of an interpreter to assist during the transfer process will

From May July 2024

- Individual notification to service users with regards to their specific service transfer arrangements will be issued in writing based on their individual communication requirements following the award of the contracts this will include a timetable for transfer.

Detailed handover plans will be in place for outgoing and incoming providers to manage the communications required to transfer service users and carers safely.

From May July 2024

A helpline and specific email inbox into the council adult services will be available for service users and staff to use if they have concerns regarding the transfer arrangements. – details of which will be included in the notification letters above and carers around the specific changes they will experience.

4.b) If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible, please explain why they are not possible.

None identified at this point but should officers become aware of an adverse impact where no way of reducing it is identified this section will be re-visited and escalated.

4.c) Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning, in particular, the sources used for establishing the demographics of service users/staff.

- Staff data – ITRENT staff database
- Service user and carer data WCCIS social care database
- Articles used from the following (actual articles embedded as links in text above) British Geriatrics society, Social Care Wales, Social Care Institute for excellence, Association of Directors of social Services Wales, Association of Directors of Social Services London, Carers UK and the Census 2021

4.d) **Give details of how you engaged with service users/staff on the proposals and the steps taken to avoid any disproportionate impact on a protected group. Explain how you have used feedback to influence your decision.**

Please see engagement plan above with details of planned engagement with staff and service user to mitigate the identified adverse effects of service transfer.

Engagement and staff communication will also align with the council management of change and according to the Legal requirements of TUPE

All engagement and consultation will consider the communication needs of the service users and staff including support to Welsh speaking workers and service users and carers, interpreters including BSL will be commissioned to support people as appropriate as will independently advocates.

All communications with staff will be alongside full cooperation with the trade unions

4.e) Are you satisfied that the engagement process complies with the requirements of the Statutory Equality and Socio-economic Duties?

Yes x No

SECTION 5 – MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING

5a) Please outline below how the implementation of the proposal will be monitored:

The implementation of the proposal will be monitored as follows.

- Establishment of a program board to oversee the following project activity to include relevant decision makers across the council.
- The establishment of an agreed management of change and TUPE plan to manage the staff communications and transfer requirements.
- The establishment of a procurement plan to manage the tender process including the development of the updated service specification.
- The establishment of a communication and engagement plan to manage the transfer arrangements for service users from the initial notifications to the detailed transfer plans.
- To establish an evaluation criterion to measure the impact on staff and service users to include the following outcomes.

Initial PI's for the project

- No of staff TUPE over to the new provider
- Average quality scores for tender evaluations
- Quality of responses from successful tender applications to the questions
 - Do you have a published equality and diversity policy? (Please attach as evidence)
 - What structures are in place in your organisation to manage and implement your equalities and diversity policy? including arrangements to assure a safe and nurturing workplace for ethnic minority people
 - What is your training plan for staff and managers to support equality and diversity for the workforce and for developing inclusive practice?
- No of service users transferred to a new provider time.
- No of compliments and complaints related to the engagement process and communications.

5b) **When is the evaluation of the proposal due to be reviewed?**

Following the agreement of Cabinet to progress this proposal on the 23/10/23 The evaluation criteria will be enhanced as the development of the detailed plans are completed.

5c) **Who is responsible for the monitoring and review of the proposal?**

Sian Nowell Interim director of Social Services

5d) **How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?**

An end of program report will be completed to set out lessons learned with regards to the management of a large-scale social care outsourcing program

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not, you are required to forward this assessment to Diversity and Inclusion team – equality@rctcbc.gov.uk and the Consultation and Engagement team – consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.

As part of the Welsh Language, Equalities and Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment Process all proposals that fall within the definition of Significant Key Decision should present at the Officer Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your report is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Strategic Decision please forward your completed impact assessment, policy proposal/report and consultation report to CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for an Officer Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. See our guidance document for more information on what a Significant Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in equality/Socio economic considerations wherever possible. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below in collaboration with the relevant departments

Diversity and Inclusion team Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Diversity and Inclusion team consideration
	September 2023	The comments of the Diversity and Inclusion team have been incorporated into the EIA.
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation
N/A		
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
		An officer Review Panel will take place during the week commencing 16th October 2023 and the feedback will be

		presented to Cabinet prior to its meeting on 23rd October 2023.
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SECTION 7 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment, to include some of the main positive and negative impacts along with an overview of actions taken since the impact assessment to better contribute to more positive impacts. This summary must be included in the Equality Considerations section of the SLT/Cabinet report template. It is not suitable to only write ‘please see full report at Appendix x’ in the body of the report. The impact assessment must be published alongside the report.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and the main findings are as follows:-

The proposal to commissions a sustainable model of long-term home care that achieves best value and sustainability of our care offer in the future without reducing the availability of service provided to people in need of home care support has some disproportionate impacts on people who are older, have disabilities, are carers, women and on low income

For service users many of the mitigating actions to support the identified concerns will be addressed through an effective engagement programme that will focus primarily on:

- Consideration to What matters to the service users and carers in terms of how the transfer is managed.
- Good quality and timely information and communications to make sure people are aware of how the process will affect them and when.
- Specific consideration to carers, Veterans, unbefriended people and the most vulnerable (e.g., who lack capacity) and those with specific communication needs.

For staff the mitigating actions to support identified concerns will be addressed through

- Examination of the equality and diversity performance of a prospective new provider at tender stage and subsequent contract monitoring post contract award

- The engagement and communication plan with inhouse staff to ensure good access to information, advice regarding TUPE, their rights and entitlements and cost of living advice.
- The engagement and communication plan within house staff to ensure access to wellbeing advice and support throughout the process.

SECTION 8 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer:

Name: Sian Nowell

Position: Interim Service Director Care and support, transformation and integration

Date: 12/10/2023

I recommend that the proposal:

- Is implemented with no amendments
- ~~Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined~~
- ~~Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on protected groups or socio-economic disadvantage~~

Head of Service/Director Approval:

Name: Neil Elliott

Position: Director of Social Services

Date: 13/10/2023

Please submit this impact assessment with any SLT/Cabinet Reports.

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WELSH LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

This Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIS) tool enables RCT Council to consider the principles and requirements of the [Welsh Language Standards \(No.1\) Regulations 2015](#) to ensure compliance with the [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#).

Stage 1 – Information Gathering	
NOTE: As you complete this tool you will be asked for evidence to support your views . Please see Welsh Language Impact Assessment Guidance for more information on data sources.	
Proposal Name:	COMMISSIONING OF DOMICILIARY HOME CARE SERVICES
Department	Adult Services
Service Director	Neil Elliott
Officer Completing the WLIA	Sian Nowell
Email	Sian.nowell@rctcbc.gov.uk
Phone	
Brief Description	It is recommended that following consideration of the information provided in the report that Cabinet approves: that all long-term home care is commissioned from external home care providers as part of a full retender of the current framework contract and award of a new contract from 1 st October 2024.
Date	12 October 2023
Please outline who this proposal affects? (Service Users, Employees, Wider Community)	Long term home care service users Service user family, carers and friends

	Employees
What are the aims of the policy, and how do these relate to the Welsh Language?	Aims of the process will be to establish a long term home care service across the borough based on identified zones. Once the zones are identified the framework contract for each zone will be awarded through competitive tender to a single provider who will be responsible for all home care services delivered in that zone for the duration of the contract including the delivery of any identified provision regarding the Welsh in line with the Welsh Language Standards in the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 and the Welsh Government's More than Just Words Strategy.
Who will benefit / Could the policy affect Welsh language groups? If so, list them here.	Welsh language groups such as service users, employees and the wider community will continue to be able to contact the Council in the Welsh language, if they choose to do so, as this will provide continuity of service delivery. Furthermore, language choice will also be noted following any correspondence with members of the community for future reference. All documentation relevant to the proposed service change will be available in bilingual formats.
Current linguistic profile of the geographical area(s) concerned	<p>The 2021 Census figures regarding the Welsh language show a decrease in the percentage of Welsh speakers across Wales to 17.8%. There was, however, a small increase in RCT – the percentage of the population of the county borough who can speak Welsh increased from 12.3% to 12.4%. Numerically, RCT saw a 2.8% increase in the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough, from 27,779 speakers to 28,556 speakers. RCT was also one of only four LAs in Wales to see an increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers – the others were Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tudful. All of these are neighbouring county boroughs, which could demonstrate that our region is seeing some positive trends in terms of increases in Welsh speakers, and that there may be a resulting increase in demand for services through the medium of Welsh. As further, more detailed, data from the Census becomes available for RCT (e.g. LSOA data), we will need to consider what impact it may have on the services we provide.</p> <p>In addition, the latest Welsh language data from the Annual Population Survey: July 2022 to June 2023 state that 1 in 5 persons in RCT can speak Welsh. Any commissioned service will therefore need to build in capacity for future growth of Welsh language service delivery.</p>
Other relevant data or research	There are no service users listed who have recorded preference for Welsh through their assessment and pro-active offer dealings. There are 3 staff members who are Welsh speakers.

Mwy Na Geiriau 2022 -2027 ('More than Just Words') is the Welsh Government's strategic framework for improving and promoting Welsh language services in health, social services and social care. The aim of the framework is to ensure that organisations recognise that language is an intrinsic part of people's care and the pro-active offer of Welsh language services to people is so important. Ensuring positive well-being outcomes for individuals, is something which underpins the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. The Codes of Practice under the Act require local authorities to ensure Welsh language services are built into service planning and delivery and that services are offered in Welsh, to Welsh speakers, without them having to request it as required by the 'Active Offer'.

Legislation and policy in Wales require that Welsh language services in social care are:

- Of the same standard and are as easily and promptly available as English medium services
- As wide-ranging and thorough
- Organisations shouldn't assume English as the default languages when providing their services.

Welsh speakers should not be required to ask for a service in Welsh.

As the independent sector will be providing this service on the Council's behalf and therefore, will be bound by the same requirements/standards as the Council,

Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

In this section you need to consider the impact, the evidence and any action you are taking for improvement. This is to ensure that the opportunities for people who choose to live their lives and access services through the medium of Welsh are not inferior to what is afforded to those choosing to do so in English, in accordance with the requirement of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Please note there is a separate impact assessment for Equality and Socio-Economic duty that must also be completed for policy proposals.

Remember that effects that are positive for some groups could be detrimental to others - even among Welsh language groups. Consider the effects on different groups. For example, a proposal may be beneficial to Welsh learners, but not to Welsh speakers.

Previous Welsh Language Impact Assessments can be found on Inform by [clicking here](#).

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language</p> <p>e.g. staff, residents and visitors</p> <p>The rights of Welsh speakers and learners to use Welsh when dealing with the council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	Neutral	<p>A new outcome-based commissioning model will ensure increased focus on people's needs and wishes, which will include the use of Welsh language and the proactive offer.</p> <p>Staff will be able to transfer to new providers via TUPE and will</p>	<p>Outcome-based commissioning will require a more in-depth exploration by providers of what individuals who receive care needs from the service compared to the current time and task-based system, and this could include opportunities to use the Welsh language via a</p>	<p>Clear inclusion in the framework agreement in relation to compliance with Welsh Language standards and 'More Than Just Words'</p> <p>Include requirements for staff and individuals who use services to be able to learn and use Welsh regularly if</p>

		<p>be able to continue using Welsh in work as they may do now.</p> <p>All regulated social care services in Wales are required to follow the 'More Than Just Words' framework as referenced above. Care Inspectorate Wales check their ability to meet these requirements at the point of Registration and monitor compliance during the inspection programme. Compliance will also be monitored through the Council's contract monitoring procedures.</p>	<p>pro-active officer of service delivery in Welsh.</p> <p>Welsh language Level 1 skills/ training forms part of the Social Care Wales Induction Framework, the Council's general induction programme and is also incorporated into the Social Care Wales registration process. (All social care staff must complete the above as part of their registration process, this also applies to staff working for Independent Provider organisation</p> <p>-</p>	<p>they want to, based on a pro-active offer, in the service delivery specification and performance indicators which will reviewed as part of contract monitoring arrangements.</p> <p>To pro-actively offer Welsh language services to ensure that people's needs are understood and met, and those who access and work in home care services can rely on being treated with dignity and respect they deserve. As outlined in 'More than Just Words' is the Welsh Government's strategic framework for improving and promoting Welsh language services in health and social care.</p> <p>RCT's Training Department lead on training for council and provider staff. All supported living staff are registered, and Welsh Language is part of our induction training for registration.</p>
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Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Numbers and / or percentages of Welsh speakers e.g. Welsh Medium Education / Study Opportunities. Links with the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy / RCTCBC Five Year Welsh Language Strategy</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>This proposal will not have any effect on Welsh-medium education or study opportunities.</p> <p>Nevertheless, it will provide an opportunity for commissioned partners to ensure their staff are upskilled in order to deliver services in line with their statutory duties. Any such learning will also benefit the community as whole and increase the number off Welsh speakers in the area.</p>	<p>There are no links between domiciliary care provision and Welsh-medium education.</p> <p>Inclusion and adherence to Welsh language legislation e.g. Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 will ensure the same freedom and opportunity for staff and individuals to continue to use and improve their Welsh.</p> <p>All new staff who don't already meet Level 1 Welsh requirements undertake online Level 1 training, (2-hour online course). This process is incorporated into our Employee Induction Framework. We will work with the Council's internal Welsh tutor to develop this process.</p>	<p>Include requirements for staff and individuals who use services to be able to learn and use Welsh regularly if they want to in the service delivery specification and performance indicators which will reviewed as part of contract monitoring arrangements.</p>

			This training is also a requirement for our independent Provider organisations the Council commissions.	
<p>Opportunities to promote the Welsh language e.g. status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work and in the community</p> <p>Actively encourage and promote the use of our services in Welsh to see an increase in demand over time</p>	Neutral	<p>The proposal will have a neutral effect on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.</p> <p>We would look to promote the use of Welsh across the service, as part of the Mwy Na Geiriau 2022 -2027 policy. Furthermore, as part of the Welsh 25 Language Standards, we would look to manage any impact of service change on the Welsh Language.</p> <p>If there were to be future service users that could speak Welsh or who expressed an interest in learning Welsh, we would look to undertake activities through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Legislation places a duty on Council's to consider the Welsh language in accessing, commissioning, and delivering care to individuals in order to ensure that they experience the best possible outcomes</p>	<p>Our proposed new outcome-based commissioning approach will require a more in-depth exploration by providers of what individuals who receive care needs from the service compared to the current time and task-based system, and this could include opportunities to use the Welsh language.</p> <p>Welsh language Level 1 skills/ training forms part of the Social Care Wales Induction Framework, the Council's general induction programme and is also incorporated into the Social Care Wales registration process. (All social care staff must complete the above as part of their registration process, this also applies to staff working for Independent Provider organisation</p>	<p>Clear inclusion in the framework agreement in relation to compliance with Welsh Language standards and 'More Than Just Words'</p> <p>Include requirements for staff and individuals who use services to be able to learn and use Welsh regularly if they want to, based on a pro-active offer, in the service delivery specification and performance indicators which will reviewed as part of contract monitoring arrangements.</p>

Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Compliance with the <u>Council's Statutory Welsh Language Standards</u> e.g. increasing or reducing the Council's ability to deliver services through the Medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Consider the rights of Welsh speakers to use Welsh when dealing with the Council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Welsh Language is embedded into the Social Care Wales Induction Framework. Any meetings with staff or service users that relates to their well-being will adhere to Standards 24, 24A, 26 and 26A to ensure an active offer of Welsh is made. These Standards form an integral part of the framework mentioned.</p> <p>Continue to monitor and improve systems in place to ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language.</p>	<p>Staff will be able to transfer to new providers via TUPE and will be able to continue using Welsh in work as they may do now.</p> <p>All regulated social care services in Wales are required to follow the 'More Than Just Words' framework as referenced above. Care Inspectorate Wales check their ability to meet these requirements at the point of Registration and monitor compliance during the inspection programme. Compliance is also monitored through the Council's contract monitoring procedures.</p>	<p>Clear inclusion in the framework agreement in relation to compliance with Welsh Language standards and 'More Than Just Words'</p> <p>Include requirements for staff and individuals who use services to be able to learn and use Welsh regularly if they want to, based on a pro-active offer, in the service delivery specification and performance indicators which will reviewed as part of contract monitoring arrangements.</p>

<p>Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably than the English language</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>The framework agreement contract will set out requirements to comply with Welsh Language Standards as it currently does.</p> <p>All regulated social care services in Wales are required to follow the 'more than just words framework. Care Inspectorate Wales check their ability to meet these requirements at the point of Registration and monitor compliance during the inspection programme. Compliance will also be monitored through the Council's contract monitoring procedures.</p> <p>All service communications, whether via letter, website or telephone is bilingual, with Welsh text first or to the left of English text - this will remove the risk of isolating individuals, families and staff who communicate in Welsh by failing to provide services in their preferred language.</p>	<p>There is no evidence to suggest Welsh is treated less favourably than English in the domiciliary care sector and this proposed change will have no impact.</p>	<p>Monitor via framework contract to ensure that Welsh is treated less favourably than English by providers in the provision of home care.</p>
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Stage 3 - Strengthening the proposal

Having listed actions in section 2 which may mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts – please record below which ones you will imbed into the policy proposal and who will be responsible for them.

Also consider is the proposal necessary? Would it be possible to meet demand without any new developments? Could other existing provision be used? Where should the development be?

What are you going to do?	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible?
Clear inclusion of Welsh language expectations in the framework agreement regarding the more than just words framework for social care.	Include in the service specification of the new framework contract and monitor accordingly in the contract monitoring approach post award	Gwyneth Elliott
Include requirements for staff and individuals who use services to be able to learn and use Welsh regularly if they want to in the service delivery specification and performance indicators.	Included in PQQ during tender exercise and in the ongoing contract monitoring approach post award	Procurement

If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible to implement, please explain why. Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning.

What was identified?	Why is it not possible?

Stage 4 – Review

For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not, you are required to forward this assessment to Welsh Language services – welshlanguageofficer@rctcbc.gov.uk and the Consultation and Engagement team – consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.

As part of the Welsh Language, Equalities and Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment Process all proposals that fall within the definition of Significant Key Decision should present at the Officer Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your report is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Strategic Decision please forward your completed (Stage 1>6) impact assessment, policy proposal/report and consultation report to CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for an Officer Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. [See our guidance document](#) for more information on what a Significant Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable Welsh language considerations wherever possible. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below in collaboration with the relevant departments.

Welsh Language Services Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Welsh Language Services feedback
	September 2023	The comments of the Welsh Language Services have been incorporated into the WLIA.
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
		An officer Review Panel will take place during the week commencing 16 th October 2023 and the feedback will be presented to Cabinet prior to its meeting on 23 rd October 2023.
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation
N/A		

Stage 5 – Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing

How and who will you monitor the impact and effectiveness of the proposal?

We will continue to monitor, evaluate and review impact by ensuring EIAs are continually updated in line with decision making and engagement. There will be on going project monitoring of overarching project plan to ensure project is delivered in line with objectives and any adverse impacts mitigated.


Stage 6 – Summary of Impacts for the Proposal

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment, to include some of the main positive and negative impacts along with an overview of actions taken since the impact assessment to better contribute to more positive impacts. This summary must be included in the Welsh Language Considerations section of the SLT/Cabinet report template. It is not suitable to only write 'please see full report at Appendix x' in the body of the report. The impact assessment must be published alongside the report.

A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed and the main findings are as follows -

The proposal for future commissioning of the Council's domiciliary home care service does not have any direct impact on the Welsh Language. The report outlines the rationale to support the decision. Opportunities for the service to continue to promote and upskill Welsh speaking staff will remain a high priority.

Mwy Na Geiriau 2022 -2027 ('More than Just Words') is the Welsh Government's strategic framework for improving and promoting Welsh language services in health, social services and social care. The aim of the framework is to ensure that organisations recognise that language is an intrinsic part of people's care and the offer of Welsh language services to people is so important. Ensuring positive well-being outcomes for individuals, is something which underpins the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. The Codes of Practice under the Act require local authorities to ensure Welsh language services are built into service planning and delivery and that services are offered in Welsh, to Welsh speakers, without them having to request it as required by the 'Active Offer'.

Stage 7 – Sign Off			
Name of Officer completing the WLIA	Sian Nowell	Service Director Name:	Neil Elliott
Position	Service Director	I recommend that the proposal: (Highlight decision)	Is implemented with no amendments
			Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
			Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on the Welsh language
Signature		Service Director Signature	
Date	12 October 2023	Date	13 October 2023

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

COMMISSIONING OF SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR CAPLE

**Author: Neil Elliott, Director of Social Services
Jill Bow, Head of Service Accommodation Services**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to make recommendations with regards to the commissioning of Supported Living Services for people with a learning disability.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Considers the information provided in this report, the Equality Impact Assessment (including Socio-Economic Duty) and Welsh Language Impact Assessment.
- 2.2 Approves the transfer of the Council's remaining nine Supported Living Services for people with a learning disability to specialist providers through the retender of the Council's current Supported Living contract and commence from April 2024.
- 2.3 Subject to 2.2 above, the Director of Social Services is delegated with the authority, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to award contracts following completion of the retender process and to make all necessary arrangements for the subsequent transfer.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council's Strategy for Supported Living Services is the provision of high-quality sustainable services for people with a learning disability,

which maximises support and independence for the individual. To continue to achieve this, it is proposed that Adult Services re-shape its focus from the current mix of commissioning and provider functions to a commissioning role for Support Living Services that:

- continues to support people with a learning disability to be as independent as possible by commissioning good quality care and support from specialist providers.
- commissions a sustainable model of supported living for people with a learning disability that achieves best value and sustainability without reducing the availability or quality of service provided to people in need of supported living.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 There is currently a well-established Supported Living Service in Rhondda Cynon Taf, with 3 commissioned specialised providers providing services to around 245 people with a learning disability in 78 properties across the County Borough. This represents over 90% of the local Supported Living Service market in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 4.2 The Council also currently manages a small Supported Living Service that supports 27 people with a learning disability in nine houses, employing 54 staff.
- 4.3 Adult Services has substantial experience of commissioning Supported Living Services. As part of our contract, we require our specialist commissioned providers to demonstrate financial stability whilst offering value for money based on quality and price, sound governance of their affairs, and a good track record in delivering quality services of this type.
- 4.4 The current independent sector Supported Living contract is due to end this year after a period of 10 years, and work is already underway to retender the contract and commence new contracts from April 2024.
- 4.5 Care experienced individuals have been involved in the development of the procurement documentation, such as the service specification and the evaluation methodology. This helps to ensure the right service is being commissioned to provide person centred support to all individuals concerned.

5 REVISED COMMISSIONING PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Based on the information above, it is proposed that the Council's nine remaining Supported Living Services for people with a learning disability are transferred to specialist providers through the retender of

the Council's current Supported Living contract and commence from April 2024 in order to achieve best value and sustainability of our commissioned care.

- 5.2 It is important to note that any transfer, if agreed, involves no change in housing for those affected individuals and Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) requirements mean that eligible staff in place prior to transfer will transfer to the new commissioned specialist provider. This will help to maintain stability for the individual and continuity of staff support around the provision of activities and support for health and wellbeing during any transition.
- 5.3 It will also be a requirement of both the Council as the existing provider and the new provider to work together to manage any anxiety or worries that service users and their families have about the change of provider and inform commissioners of any issues that may arise.
- 5.4 Subject to Cabinet agreement above, this proposal will require engagement and regular communications with all people supported by the Council's Supported Living Service, their families and staff on how they will be involved in the transfer.
- 5.5 Right-sizing work on all Supported Living schemes as part of the "Just Checking Project" is being undertaken to ensure that care hours being commissioned are in line with assessed need prior to the commencement of the new contract from April 2024.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed (attached at Appendix 1) reviewing the impact of the transfer of the Council's remaining nine Supported Living Services for people with a learning disability to specialist providers, as recommended in Section 2 above.
- 6.2 Proceeding with the proposal would have an impact on existing and future individuals, as the proposal indicates that in future, they will not be able to choose supported living services provided directly by the Council. Individuals would continue to remain in their existing home and eligible staff would TUPE over to the respective provider, providing continuity of care. Eligible staff current terms and conditions will continue in line with the TUPE which would result in a neutral impact for individuals and the staff.
- 6.3 The Council will take account of the challenges which the individuals affected by the proposals in this report may face, both in terms of participation in engagement activity and in ensuring that the impact of

any changes is mitigated as detailed in the impact assessment, if they are to be implemented.

- 6.4 Following any procurement process and contract award the service would engage with all affected individuals to address any concerns or questions they may have, and the impact assessment will be reviewed and updated to include any further mitigated risks identified during ongoing engagement activity.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared (attached at Appendix 2) and confirms there are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications associated with implementing the recommendations set out in Section 2 above.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 Subject to the agreement of the recommendations in Section 2 above, all people supported by the Council's Supported Living Service and their families will be kept fully informed of the process and timescales for service transfer. Following any procurement process and contract award the service would engage with all affected individuals to address any concerns or questions they may have. There would also be opportunities for them to meet with the new providers to discuss any queries they may have. Should a person be unbefriended then an individual advocate will be offered to support.
- 8.2 Similarly, staff would be kept fully informed of progress at each stage of the tender and transfer process and updated in relation to key milestones and timescales. Further work is required with Human Resources to determine which staff will be eligible for TUPE as part of the retender process. Under TUPE there would be no changes to staff terms and conditions of employment, noting that support, as appropriate, would be available to staff throughout the process.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 The total budget for supported living services for people with a learning disability in 2023/24 is £21.95m comprising of £1.95m for the Council's in-house provision and £20m for commissioned services.
- 9.2 The cost of each individual supported living scheme is driven by the complexity of need and hours delivered in each scheme and typically on average the hours and care needs of individuals supported through our external contract are greater but are provided at a more cost-effective rate per hour. For example, the unit cost for the Council's Supported Living Service is estimated at £28.26 per hour, which is

higher than in the independent sector, estimated at £18.90 per hour. The high hourly rate of the in-house service is due to a number of factors but primarily the management costs, local authority pension and other terms and conditions.

- 9.3 Subject to the agreement of the recommendations in Section 2 above, any financial implication resulting from the commissioning of Supported Living Services for people with a learning disability will be factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan in due course. Whilst the proposal would provide a more cost-effective solutions to the current arrangements, the cost will be subject to competition and other wider market forces.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The Council's Supported Living Service for people with a learning disability has been provided as part of the Council's service provision to meet assessed needs under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.
- 10.2 Subject to the agreement of the recommendations in Section 2 above, all existing individuals will be offered support on an individual basis to transfer to a new specialist provider ensuring their assessed needs continue to be met in line with our statutory obligations.

11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 11.1 This report supports two of the Council's corporate priorities, namely:
- People - promoting independence and positive lives for everyone.
 - Living within our means - where services are delivered efficiently to achieve value for money for the taxpayer.
- 11.2 In addition, the report considers the following Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 wellbeing goals of: A Healthier Wales and more equal Wales.

12 ELECTORAL WARDS AFFECTED

- 12.1 This applies to all electoral wards.

13 CONCLUSION

- 13.1 It is important that the Council reviews its adult social care provision to ensure its current care and support offer continues to meet assessed

need and remains cost effective. Through the implementation of recommended proposal in Section 2 above, Adult Services will:

- continue to meet assessed need and support people with a learning disability to be as independent as possible by commissioning good quality care and support from specialist providers.
- commissions a sustainable model of supported living for people with a learning disability that achieves best value and sustainability without reducing the availability or quality of service provided to people in need of supported living.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

**COMMISSIONING OF SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICES FOR PEOPLE
WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS
WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR CAPLE**

Background Papers

None

Officer to contact: Neil Elliott

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App 1

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

(Revised March 2021)

Please refer to the current Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this document. If you would like further guidance please contact the Diversity and Inclusion Team on 01443 444529.

An equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken at the outset of any proposal to ensure robust evidence is considered in decision making. This documentation will support the Council in making informed, effective and fair decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

This document will also contribute towards our duties to create a More Equal Wales within the

- Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

The '[A More Equal Wales – Mapping Duties](#)' guide highlights the alignment of our duties in respect of the above-mentioned legislation.

SECTION 1 – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Lead Officer: **Jill Bow**
 Service Area: **Adult Services**
 Date: September 2023

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

Strategy/Plan	Service Re-Model/Discontinuation of Service	Policy/Procedure	Practice	Information/Position Statement
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.b) What is the name of the proposal?

Commissioning of the Council’s Supported Living service for people with a learning disability

1.c) Please provide an overview of the proposal providing any supporting links to reports or documents.

It is recommended that following consideration of the information provided in the report that Cabinet approves:

- the transfer of the Council’s remaining nine Supported Living Services for people with a learning disability to specialist providers through the retender of the Council’s current Supported Living contract and commence from April 2024 in order to achieve transparency and best value.
- that the Director of Social Services is delegated authority, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to award contracts following completion of the retender process and to make all necessary arrangements for the subsequent transfer.

It is important that the Council reviews its adult social care provision to ensure its current care and support offer continues to meet assessed need and remains cost effective. Through the implementation of recommended proposal, Adult Services will:

- continue to meet assessed need and support people with a learning disability to be as independent as possible by commissioning good quality care and support from specialist providers.
- commissions a sustainable model of supported living for people with a learning disability that achieves best value and sustainability without reducing the availability or quality of service provided to people in need of supported living.

As of 2021, there were 13,676 individuals^[1] with a learning disability living in Wales (Stat Wales Dataset), 1,139 of which resided within Rhondda Cynon Taf – making up 8.3% of all individuals with a learning disability in Wales. People with a learning disability and their families are increasingly looking to live independently. People want opportunities to live and socialise in their communities.

According to the 2021/2022 data, 220 individuals within Rhondda Cynon Taf currently access lodgings/supported living, as noted by Stat Wales. With 220 individuals, this makes RCT the second largest local authority in Wales of individuals accessing lodgings/supported living and makes up almost 10% of all individuals accessing this accommodation type across Wales. This further emphasises the significance of developing our Supported Living arrangements in order to keep alignment with anticipated increased demand and need locally.

In Welsh Governments' publication, Learning Disability Improving Lives Programme (2018), Welsh Government note that data on people with a learning disability are recognised as being poor. Which is further reinforced by an anticipated 60,000 individuals with a learning disability across Wales not being known to social services.

Changing demographics show that people with a learning disability are living longer than before and as a result, have more complex needs.

Mencap's 2012 report (https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-08/2012.108-Housing-report_V7.pdfnotes) that "89% of parents whose son or daughter lives with them want to see greater independence for them."

1.d) Please outline where delivery of this proposal is affected by legislation or other drivers such as code of practice.

In considering this proposal, the Council will need to meet its requirements under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and accompanying Part 4 code of practice.

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users
- Employees
- Wider community x

SECTION 2 – SCREENING TEST – IS A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

Screening is used to determine whether the initiative has positive, negative or neutral impacts upon protected groups. Where negative impacts are identified for protected groups then a full Equality Impact Assessment is required. Please provide as much detail as possible of how the proposal will impact on the following groups, this may not necessarily be negative, but may impact on a group with a particular characteristic in a specific way.

Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 - All social care staff undertake Equality and Diversity training as part of the Social Care Wales Induction Framework.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups. Please take an intersectional approach in recognising an individual may have more than one protected characteristic.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Age (Specific age groups i.e. young people or older people)	Neutral (service users will continue to remain in their existing home, but the service will be delivered by an established independent provider. Positive – Continuity of care with existing staff	Staff current terms and conditions will continue in line with the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) transfer legislation. There will be no changes to staff terms and conditions if the proposal is agreed, in line with TUPE legislation. Continuity of care will support a seamless transition for service users.	ITrent - employee profile data 5 supervisors/managers, 38 social care workers supported by a peripatetic team of 11 social care workers) are employed to run the Council's Supported Living Service Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) – Service user data.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
	transferring to the new provider.	We will ensure that the involvement and encouragement of individual's and their families is embedded throughout the process and will ensure development of transitional plans for all individuals'.	<p>28 individuals with a learning disability will be affected by the proposal.</p> <p>Ages profile of individual's residing in supported living. Under 50 = 4 Over 50 =24</p> <p>Age profile of staff working in the service.</p> <p>Under 50 =15 staff members Over 50 =36 Staff members</p> <p>Welsh Governments' publication, Learning Disability Improving Lives Programme (2018),</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Disability (people with visible and non-visible disabilities or lo-term health conditions)	<p>Immediate Negative</p> <p>Future - Neutral</p>	<p>All individuals affected by this proposal have a learning disability as their primary care need however some of these individuals may also have physical and sensory disabilities or mental health problems.</p> <p>The proposal indicates that in future service users will not be able to choose supported accommodation services provided directly by the Council.</p> <p>People with a learning disability may feel a lack of control or involvement in key decisions.</p> <p>Individuals with disabilities and their families may experience uncertainty and anxiety with changes to current service they receive as they are unclear of the implications.</p> <p>Provide service users and families with information and support to ensure effective transition is managed.</p>	<p>All service users with a learning disability who have a statutory entitlement to Adult Social Care and who need accommodation provided to meet their needs, will continue to receive services.</p> <p>Previous consultations.</p> <p>An <u>Easy Read</u>, accessible format of the information booklet and questionnaire will be created and supplied during the meetings</p> <p>Learning disability needs analysis and transformational plan.</p> <p>In terms of equality this ensures the council can offer provision with contractual arrangements which obligate providers to comply with equality legislation.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>To ensure that there will be continual dialogue with individuals /families throughout the consultation period. Where a service user could not make an informed choice or has no family, an independent advocate would be made available with decisions required in selecting and moving to a suitable alternative service.</p> <p>Through the procurement process service users will be invited to be part of the evaluation panel when prospective providers have submitted their proposals in line with best practice</p> <p>An Easy Read format will be devised to ensure the service users are fully engaged in the procurement process.</p>	<p>Contract monitoring and quality performance requirements provide added assurance for service users that any provider commissioned by the council will have demonstrated their capacity and experience of delivering support services within a robust equality framework.</p>
Gender Reassignment (anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth including non-binary identities)	Immediate Neutral Future - Positive	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic. Providers will be expected to offer opportunities

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>Support providers will be expected to provide opportunities and be responsive to the needs of transgender people.</p> <p>Whilst we have no information on this characteristic within this proposal specifically, we understand that a person may transition at any point in their life.</p>	and be responsive to the needs of transgender people.
Marriage / Civil Partnership (people who are married or in a civil partnership)	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic.</p> <p>There are no married/civil partnership individual's residing in supported living</p>
Pregnancy and Maternity (women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic.</p> <p>There is currently no individual pregnant or on maternity leave that live or work in the supported living service.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Race (ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)	Future – positive	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic. Support providers will be expected to provide opportunities and be responsive to the needs of anyone of Race.	Providers employ staff from ethnic minority groups and will continue to support employment and admissions for individuals that share this characteristic. RCT and Commissioned Providers attend a joint quarterly Provider Forum, and staff profiles are provided as part of their reviews. Review of service users' needs take place on an annual basis, but if there are any changes to their needs that require a review, this will be undertaken outside of the annual review process.
Religion or Belief (people with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic.
Sex (women and men, girls and boys)	Neutral – staffing perspective. Workforce is	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	Women are more prominent within care sector workforce.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
	predominately female.	<p>Women are more prominent within care sector workforce.</p> <p>Female service users are more significant than men.</p> <p>Through the apprenticeship programme the service has been able to employ additional Male staff.</p>	<p>I Trent – employee profile data.</p> <p>Female service users are more significant than men.</p> <p>There are currently 17 Males and 37 Females working within the supported living service.</p>
Sexual Orientation (bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)	Future - Positive	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	The Independent provider service has a range of sexual orientation employees and will continue to support employment for people who share this characteristic.
Armed Forces Community (anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	There are currently no Armed Forces Veterans supported within our supported living service.
Carers (anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)	Neutral	The proposal would have a neutral impact on carers as their loved one will remain in their existing home and will continue to have continuity of care and support by their existing staff team.	The outcome of previous consultations and reports, together with supporting information from local adult social care records, learning

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>disability needs analysis transformational plan, Regulation 73 and Regulation 80 reports and current service provision has informed the proposal, along with national policy and national and local strategy developments.</p> <p>There will be an assessment of impact on carers during and following the consultation stage.</p>

If the initial screening test has identified negative impacts then a full equality impact assessment (section 4) **must** be undertaken. However, if after undertaking the above screening test you determine a full equality impact assessment is not relevant please provide an adequate explanation below:

Not applicable

Are you happy you have sufficient evidence to justify your decision?

Yes

No

Name: Jill Bow

Position: Head of Service

Date: 02/08/2023

SECTION 3 – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY (STRATEGIC DECISIONS ONLY)

The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. Socio-economic disadvantage means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services. Please consider these additional vulnerable groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single parents and vulnerable families • Pensioners • Looked after children • Homeless people • Students • Single adult households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living in the most deprived areas in Wales • People with low literacy and numeracy • People who have experienced the asylum system • People misusing substances • People of all ages leaving a care setting • People involved in the criminal justice system
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All individuals are means tested prior to accessing supported living. Most of our current service users' care and support costs are funded via this method. The supported living service provides 24/7 care and support for people to live independently in their own home. They are supported to access the community and get involved in activities of their choice within the home and in the wider community. The supported living service also support people with:

- Understanding tenancy agreements
- Paying rent and household bills
- Getting help with their personal care needs.

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<u>Low Income/Income Poverty</u> <i>(cannot afford to maintain</i>	Neutral	It is not envisaged that there would be any financially adverse impact on affected service users as a result of	All current service users will have been financially

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<i>regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>		any decision(s) made in respect of the proposals. There will be no changes to staff terms and conditions if the proposal is agreed, in line with TUPE legislation	assessed to determine any contribution required. Staff current terms and conditions will continue in line with the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) transfer legislation.
Low and / or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i>	Neutral	It is not envisaged that there would be any financially adverse impact on affected service users because of any decision(s) made in respect of the proposals.	All current service users will have been financially assessed to determine any contribution required. There will be assessment of impact during and following consultation stage. Data following the outcome of the consultation
Material Deprivation <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i>	Neutral	It is not envisaged that there would be any financially adverse impact on affected service users as a result of any decision(s) made in respect of the proposals.	All current service users will have been financially assessed to determine any contribution required. There will be assessment of impact during and following consultation stage.

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<u>Area Deprivation</u> <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport))</i>	Neutral	It is not envisaged that there would be any financially adverse impact on affected service users as a result of any decision(s) made in respect of the proposals.	All current service users will have been financially assessed to determine any contribution required in line with financial assessment procedures.
<u>Socio-economic background</u> <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i>	Neutral	It is not envisaged that there would be any financially adverse impact on affected service users as a result of any decision(s) made in respect of the proposals.	All current service users will have been financially assessed to determine any contribution required. There will be assessment of impact during and following consultation stage.
<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u> <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i>	Neutral	It is not envisaged that there would be any financially adverse impact on affected service users as a result of any decision(s) made in respect of the proposals.	All current service users will have been financially assessed to determine any contribution required. There will be assessment of impact during and following consultation stage.

SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

You should use the information gathered at the screening stage to assist you in identifying possible negative/adverse impacts and clearly identify which groups are affected.

- 4.a) In terms of disproportionate/negative/adverse impacts that the proposal may have on a protected group, outline the steps that will be taken to reduce or mitigate the impact for each group identified.

An action plan to reduce/mitigate these impacts will be collated during and following the engagement and procurement process. Proposed mitigation, subject to the engagement and procurement process, includes:

- The welfare of service users would be the primary consideration in the event of any transfer of service outlined in the delegation of service report. It would be approached in a planned and carefully managed way, in line with Procurement regulations and national best practice guidance. This would include the involvement of residents, families, friends, and staff in the Supported Living Service.
- Where a service user could not make an informed choice or has no family, an independent advocate would be made available with decisions required in selecting and moving to a suitable alternative service.
- The Service Provider will be required to submit an annual report summarising the performance data as per contractual requirements and a forward business plan for the following year.

- 4.b) If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible, please explain why they are not possible.

- Staff to be kept fully updated throughout the TUPE process. Meetings with HR, Union reps, management and prospective providers. The welfare of staff would be the primary consideration in the event of any transfer of service outlined in the delegation of service report. It would be approached in a planned and carefully managed way, in line with Procurement regulations and national best practice guidance. This would include the involvement of residents, families, friends, and staff in the Supported Living Service.

- 4.c) Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning, in particular, the sources used for establishing the demographics of service users/staff.

The outcome of previous consultations (Annual Quality Assurance reports), Regulation 73 reports and Regulation 80 Quality of Care Review, together with supporting information from local adult social care records, learning disability needs analysis transformational plan and current service provision has informed the proposal, along with national policy and national and local strategy developments.

- 4.d) Give details of how you engaged with service users/staff on the proposals and the steps taken to avoid any disproportionate impact on a protected group. Explain how you have used feedback to influence your decision.

Engagement plan will be in place, if proposal agreed, of planned engagement with staff and service users to mitigate the identified adverse effects of service transfer.

Engagement and staff communication will also align with the council management of change and according to the Legal requirements of TUPE.

All engagement and consultation will consider the communication needs of the service users and staff including support to Welsh speaking workers and service users and carers, interpreters including BSL will be commissioned to support people as appropriate as will independently advocates.

All communications with staff will be alongside full cooperation with the trade unions

- 4.e) Are you satisfied that the engagement process complies with the requirements of the Statutory Equality and Socio-economic Duties?

Yes

No

SECTION 5 – MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING

5a) Please outline below how the implementation of the proposal will be monitored:

Following the consultation, the impact assessment will be updated, and Cabinet will receive a further report on the outcome of the consultation.

Implementation of a robust transition plan.

Service satisfaction will be monitored through the service providers' quality assurance framework, contract monitoring visits, and regular monitoring and review of residents and staff.

EIAs to be continually updated in line with decision making and ongoing engagement.

Implementation of the proposed service model and affected processes to be mapped and planned appropriately.

5b) When is the evaluation of the proposal due to be reviewed?

To be determined following the outcome of the stakeholder engagement.

5c) Who is responsible for the monitoring and review of the proposal?

Director of Adult Services.

5d) How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?

To be determined following the outcome of the procurement process with prospective independent providers and respective housing providers

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not, you are required to forward this assessment to Diversity and Inclusion team – equality@rctcbc.gov.uk and the Consultation and Engagement team – consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.

As part of the Welsh Language, Equalities and Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment Process all proposals that fall within the definition of Significant Key Decision should present at the Officer Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your report is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Strategic Decision please forward your completed impact assessment, policy proposal/report and consultation report to CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for an Officer Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. See our guidance document for more information on what a Significant Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built-in equality/Socio economic considerations wherever possible. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below in collaboration with the relevant departments.

Diversity and Inclusion team Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following the Diversity and Inclusion team consideration
	September 2023	The comments of the Diversity and Inclusion team have been incorporated into the EIA.
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation
N/A		
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
		An officer Review Panel will take place during the week commencing 16 th October 2023 and the feedback will be

		presented to Cabinet prior to its meeting on 23 rd October 2023.
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SECTION 7 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment. This summary should be included in the equality and socio-economic impact section of the Cabinet report template. The impact assessment should be published alongside the report.

Proceeding with the proposal would have an impact on existing and future supported living individuals, as:

Proceeding with the proposal would have an impact on existing and future supported living individuals, as the proposal indicates that in future service users will not be able to choose supported accommodation services provided directly by the Council. Service users would continue to remain in their existing home and staff would TUPE over to the respective provider, providing continuity of care. Staff current terms and conditions will continue in line with the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) transfer legislation which would result in a neutral impact for service users and the staff team.

The Council will take account of the challenges which the people affected by the proposals in this report face, both in terms of participation in the consultation and in ensuring that the impact of any changes is mitigated as detailed in the impact assessment, if they are to be implemented.

Following any procurement process and contract award the service would engage with all affected service users to address any concerns or questions they may have and the impact assessment will be reviewed and updated to include any further mitigated risks following the consultation process.

SECTION 8 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer: Jill Bow

Position: Director of Adult Services

Date: 2 October 2023

I recommend that the proposal:

- Is implemented with no amendments
- Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
- Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on protected groups or socio-economic disadvantage

Head of Service/Director Approval:

Name: Neil Elliott

Position: Director of Social Services

Date: 3 October 2023

Please submit this impact assessment with any SLT/Cabinet Reports.

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WELSH LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

This Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIS) tool enables RCT Council to consider the principles and requirements of the [Welsh Language Standards \(No.1\) Regulations 2015](#) to ensure compliance with the [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#).

Stage 1 – Information Gathering

NOTE: As you complete this tool you will be asked for **evidence to support your views**. Please see [Welsh Language Impact Assessment Guidance](#) for more information on data sources.

Proposal Name:	COMMISSIONING OF THE COUNCIL’S SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICE FOR PEOPLE WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY
Department	Adult Social Services
Service Director	Neil Elliott
Officer Completing the WLIA	Jill Bow
Email	Jill.bow@rctcbc.gov.uk
Phone	07786523926
Brief Description	<p>It is recommended that following consideration of the information provided in the report that Cabinet approves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the transfer of the Council’s remaining nine Supported Living Services for people with a learning disability to specialist providers through the retender of the Council’s current Supported Living contract and commence from April 2024 in order to achieve transparency and best value.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the Director of Social Services is delegated authority, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to award contracts following completion of the retender process and to make all necessary arrangements for the subsequent transfer. <p>It is important that the Council reviews its adult social care provision to ensure its current care and support offer continues to meet assessed need and remains cost effective. Through the implementation of recommended proposal, Adult Services will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue to meet assessed need and support people with a learning disability to be as independent as possible by commissioning good quality care and support from specialist providers. • commissions a sustainable model of supported living for people with a learning disability that achieves best value and sustainability without reducing the availability or quality of service provided to people in need of supported living.
Date	2 October 2023
Please outline who this proposal affects? (Service Users, Employees, Wider Community)	<p>Current and future service users</p> <p>Service user family, carers and friends</p> <p>Employees</p>

<p>What are the aims of the policy, and how do these relate to the Welsh Language?</p>	<p>The aim of the proposal is to consider future changes to current service delivery as part of the future commissioning of the Council’s Supported Living service for people with a learning disability. As part of the changes we will engage with service users, families and employees, and will be undertaken in both Welsh and English and in accordance with the requirements of the Council’s compliance notice served under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.</p> <p>The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires all public authorities to consider the needs of protected characteristics when designing and delivering public services, including where this is done in partnership with other organisations or through procurement of services. The Welsh 25 Language Standards also require all public authorities to consider the effects of any policy decision, or change in service delivery, on the Welsh language, which includes any work done in partnership or by third parties. We must also ensure we consider the Socio-economic Duty when planning major procurement and commissioning decisions to consider how such arrangements can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.</p>
<p>Who will benefit / Could the policy affect Welsh language groups? If so, list them here.</p>	<p>Welsh language groups such as service users, employees and the wider community will continue to be able to contact the Council in the Welsh language, if they choose to do so, as this will provide continuity of service delivery. Furthermore, language choice will also be noted following any correspondence with members of the community for future reference. All documentation relevant to the proposed service change will be available in bilingual formats.</p>
<p>Current linguistic profile of the geographical area(s) concerned</p>	<p>The 2021 Census figures regarding the Welsh language show a decrease in the percentage of Welsh speakers across Wales to 17.8%. There was, however, a small increase in RCT – the percentage of the population of the county borough who can speak Welsh increased from 12.3% to 12.4%. Numerically, RCT saw a 2.8% increase in the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough, from 27,779 speakers to 28,556 speakers. RCT was also one of only four LAs in Wales to see an increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers – the others were Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tudful. All of these are neighbouring county boroughs, which could demonstrate that our region is seeing some positive trends in terms of increases in Welsh speakers, and that there may be a resulting increase in demand for services through the medium of Welsh. As further, more detailed, data from the Census becomes available for RCT (e.g. LSOA data), we will need to consider what impact it may have on the services we provide.</p> <p>Mwy Na Geiriau 2022 -2027 ('More than Just Words') is the Welsh Government’s strategic framework for improving and promoting Welsh language services in health, social services and social care. The aim of the framework is to ensure that organisations recognise that language is an intrinsic part of people’s care and the</p>

	<p>pro-active offer of Welsh language services to people is so important. Ensuring positive well-being outcomes for individuals, is something which underpins the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. The Codes of Practice under the Act require local authorities to ensure Welsh language services are built into service planning and delivery and that services are offered in Welsh, to Welsh speakers, without them having to request it as required by the 'Active Offer'.</p> <p>Legislation and policy in Wales require that Welsh language services in social care are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the same standard and are as easily and promptly available as English medium services • As wide-ranging and thorough • Organisations shouldn't assume English as the default languages when providing their services. <p>Welsh speakers should not be required to ask for a service in Welsh.</p>
<p>Other relevant data or research</p>	<p>There are currently no Welsh speaking service users residing within the Council's Supported Living schemes, but there are two Welsh speaking members of staff working within the service.</p>

Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

In this section you need to consider the impact, the evidence and any action you are taking for improvement. This is to ensure that the opportunities for people who choose to live their lives and access services through the medium of Welsh are not inferior to what is afforded to those choosing to do so in English, in accordance with the requirement of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Please note there is a separate impact assessment for Equality and Socio-Economic duty that must also be completed for policy proposals.

Remember that effects that are positive for some groups could be detrimental to others - even among Welsh language groups. Consider the effects on different groups. For example, a proposal may be beneficial to Welsh learners, but not to Welsh speakers.

Previous Welsh Language Impact Assessments can be found on Inform by [clicking here](#).

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language</p> <p>e.g. staff, residents and visitors.</p> <p>The rights of Welsh speakers and learners to use Welsh when dealing with the council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	Neutral	<p>The proposal will have a neutral impact on service users and will allow opportunities for staff and the wider community to use the Welsh language.</p> <p>Existing and new staff are and will continue to be encouraged to begin Welsh language lessons and continue on their</p>	Welsh language Level 1 skills/ training forms part of the Social Care Wales Induction Framework, the Council's general induction programme and is also incorporated into the Social Care Wales registration process. (All social care staff must complete the above as	To pro-actively offer Welsh language services to ensure that people's needs are understood and met, and those who access and work in Supported Living services can rely on being treated with dignity and respect they deserve. As outlined in Mwy Na Geiriau 2022 -2027

		<p>language journey. Two staff have recently completed The Welsh Language Level 1 training as part of the Social Care Wales Induction Framework for social care workers.</p> <p>Staff would also be encouraged to progress on to level 2 training, as part of their continuous professional development being supported by our internal Welsh tutor.</p> <p>Recruit Welsh speakers to increase face-to-face Welsh language service provision. All of our job descriptions and adverts are bilingual, to encourage Welsh speakers to apply for these roles. This is also compliant with the Welsh Language Act.</p>	<p>part of their registration process, this also applies to staff working for Independent Provider organisation</p>	<p>('More than Just Words') is the Welsh Government's strategic framework for improving and promoting Welsh language services in health and social care.</p> <p>RCT's Training Department lead on training for council and provider staff. All supported living staff are registered, and Welsh Language is part of our induction training for registration.</p>
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Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive,	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or
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	negative or neutral impacts?			better contribute to positive impacts?
<p style="text-align: center;">Numbers and / or percentages of Welsh speakers</p> <p>e.g Welsh Medium Education / Study Opportunities. Links with the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy / RCTCBC Five Year Welsh Language Strategy</p>	Neutral	<p>The proposal would have a neutral impact on the numbers and/or percentages of Welsh speakers with service users, employees, and the wider community.</p> <p>We currently have no Welsh speaking service user's that reside in the Council's supported living service. However, we do have two Welsh speaking staff that would TUPE over if the proposal is agreed.</p> <p>Staff are actively encouraged and supported to learn Welsh and speak Welsh in work. As a result of having two Welsh speaking staff that would TUPE over, if in the future there would be a service user that could speak Welsh – we would actively encourage staff to speak Welsh with the individual.</p> <p>Welsh language preference is incorporated in our commissioned Provider</p>	<p>All new staff who don't already meet Level 1 Welsh requirements undertake online Level 1 training, (2-hour online course). This process is incorporated into our Employee Induction Framework. We will work with the Council's internal Welsh tutor to develop this process.</p> <p>This training is also a requirement for our independent Provider organisations the Council commissions.</p> <p>Welsh speaking service users, families and staff will also be able to access all documentation in Welsh.</p> <p>Welsh speaking service users/families and staff will have the option of these resident's/staff engagement meeting being discussed with them in the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>RCTs 5-year strategy requires the Council to increase Welsh language skills of our workforce.</p>	<p>Staff training to enhance learners' bilingual skills.</p> <p>Work with the relevant departments/ services to Provide online course for beginners that's tailored to those working in care.</p> <p>Advise residents of the homes that have Welsh speaking staff, so they have an opportunity to converse in the medium of Welsh if they choose to do so.</p> <p>Recruiting Welsh speakers will contribute to creating this environment and would increase opportunities to use the Welsh language.</p> <p>All new staff who don't already meet Level 1 Welsh requirements undertake online Level 1 training, (2-hour online course). This process is</p>

		<p>application process and language preference will be noted and added to staff records for future reference.</p> <p>Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection reports are available bilingually.</p>	<p>In addition, the Welsh Government Cymraeg 2050 strategy wants a million Welsh Speakers by 2050.</p> <p>The Supported Living service currently has two staff who speak Welsh and there are no service users who are able to communicate in Welsh.</p> <p>Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS)</p> <p>I Trent – employee profile data</p>	<p>incorporated into our Employee Induction Framework.</p> <p>This training is also a requirement for our independent Provider organisations the Council commissions.</p>
<p>Opportunities to promote the Welsh language e.g. status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work and in the community</p> <p>Actively encourage and promote the use of our services in Welsh to see an increase in demand over time</p>	Positive	<p>The proposal will have a positive effect on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.</p> <p>We would look to promote the use of Welsh across the service, as part of the Mwy Na Geiriau 2022 -2027 policy. Furthermore, as part of the Welsh 25 Language Standards, we would look to manage any impact of service change on the Welsh Language.</p>	<p>All documentation is published in hard copy and online in both Welsh and English and includes a response proforma to enable collection of the views of stakeholders.</p> <p>All communication is bilingual. Enquiries / comments/ complaints, emails /out of office notifications are bilingual, and if Welsh is the preferred language, they will be responded to in Welsh.</p>	<p>Service Users, staff and the wider community will be able to use the Welsh language, when they are given the opportunity to express their views on the proposal during our engagement.</p> <p>Supporting access to Welsh language for service users/staff via radio, television, and books.</p> <p>Review promotional materials when</p>

		<p>If there were to be future service users that could speak Welsh or who expressed an interest in learning Welsh, we would look to undertake activities through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Legislation places a duty on Council's to consider the Welsh language in accessing, commissioning, and delivering care to individuals in order to ensure that they experience the best possible outcomes.</p> <p>Welsh language preference has been incorporated into our pre-admission checklist for individuals' who access the service.</p>		<p>consulting with service users, families and staff in order to ensure compliance with Welsh Language Standards.</p>
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Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Compliance with the Council's Statutory Welsh Language Standards e.g increasing or reducing the Council's ability to deliver services through the Medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Consider the rights of Welsh speakers to use Welsh when dealing with the Council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Continue to monitor and improve systems in place to ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language.</p> <p>Welsh Language is embedded into the Social Care Wales Induction Framework. Any meetings with staff or service users that relates to their well-being will adhere to Standards 24, 24A, 26 and 26A to ensure an active offer of Welsh is made. These Standards form an integral part of the framework mentioned.</p>	<p>The engagement process will adhere to the Welsh Language standards as will all correspondence with service users and staff.</p> <p>Job descriptions / advertisements are presented in a bilingual format.</p> <p>Social care staff participate in the Welsh language training sessions in line with the SCW Induction Framework</p>	<p>The service supports Welsh speaking staff to communicate with Welsh speaking colleagues in their preferred language.</p> <p>Staff are encouraged to greet service users in Welsh and use the Welsh Language in work</p>

<p>Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably than the English language</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>All service communications, whether via letter, website or telephone is bilingual, with Welsh text first or to the left of English text - this will remove the risk of isolating individuals, families and staff who communicate in Welsh by failing to provide services in their preferred language.</p>	<p>Promotional materials, website, and all subsequent correspondence available bilingually.</p> <p>All signage throughout the supported living schemes is bilingual.</p>	<p>Ensure greater consistency in terms of the Welsh language services on offer and improve their quality across the service.</p> <p>All supported living schemes have been provided with laptops, the service will utilise this technology to promote and deliver Welsh language sessions to staff, this will enable them to access the training in a more flexible and convenient means. This is also the case in our Provider schemes.</p> <p>The proposal outlines that individual's will remain in their current accommodation.</p> <p>Staff will also remain in their current place of work and will continue to access information in Welsh if it is their preferred language.</p>
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Stage 3 - Strengthening the proposal

Having listed actions in section 2 which may mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts – please record below which ones you will imbed into the policy proposal and who will be responsible for them.

Also consider is the proposal necessary? Would it be possible to meet demand without any new developments? Could other existing provision be used? Where should the development be?

What are you going to do?	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible?
All Supported Living services have been provided with laptops, the service will utilise this technology to promote and deliver Welsh language sessions to staff, this will enable them to access the training in a more flexible and convenient means.	On-going	Head of Service
To ensure equal regard is given to both Welsh and English language on commissioning specialised services.	Through the retender of the Council's commissioned independent sector Supported Living Service	Commissioning/Procurement team

If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible to implement, please explain why. Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning.

What was identified?	Why is it not possible?

Stage 4 – Review

For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not, you are required to forward this assessment to Welsh Language services – welshlanguageofficer@rctcbc.gov.uk and the Consultation and Engagement team – consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.

As part of the Welsh Language, Equalities and Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment Process all proposals that fall within the definition of Significant Key Decision should present at the Officer Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your report is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Strategic Decision please forward your completed (Stage 1>6) impact assessment, policy proposal/report and consultation report to CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for an Officer Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. [See our guidance document](#) for more information on what a Significant Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable Welsh language considerations wherever possible. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below in collaboration with the relevant departments.

Welsh Language Services Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Welsh Language Services feedback
	September 2023	The comments of the Welsh Language Services have been incorporated into the WLIA.
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
		An officer Review Panel will take place during the week commencing 16 th October 2023 and the feedback will be presented to Cabinet prior to its meeting on 23 rd October 2023.
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation
N/A		

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Stage 5 – Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing

How and who will you monitor the impact and effectiveness of the proposal?

We will continue to monitor, evaluate and review impact by ensuring EIAs are continually updated in line with decision making and engagement. There will be on going project monitoring of overarching project plan to ensure project is delivered in line with objectives and any adverse impacts mitigated.


Stage 6 – Summary of Impacts for the Proposal

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment, to include some of the main positive and negative impacts along with an overview of actions taken since the impact assessment to better contribute to more positive impacts. This summary must be included in the Welsh Language Considerations section of the SLT/Cabinet report template. It is not suitable to only write ‘please see full report at Appendix x’ in the body of the report. The impact assessment must be published alongside the report.

A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed and the main findings are as follows

The proposal for future commissioning of the Council’s Supported Living service for people with a learning disability does not have any direct impact on the Welsh Language. The report outlines the rationale to support the decision and to engage with stakeholders to the potential service change. Opportunities for the service to continue to promote and upskill Welsh speaking staff will remain a high priority.

Mwy Na Geiriau 2022 -2027 (‘More than Just Words’) is the Welsh Government’s strategic framework for improving and promoting Welsh language services in health, social services and social care. The aim of the framework is to ensure that organisations recognise that language is an intrinsic part of people’s care and the offer of Welsh language services to people is so important. Ensuring positive well-being outcomes for individuals, is something which underpins the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. The Codes of Practice under the Act require local authorities to ensure Welsh language services are built into service planning and delivery and that services are offered in Welsh, to Welsh speakers, without them having to request it as required by the ‘Active Offer’.

Stage 7 – Sign Off			
Name of Officer completing the WLIA	Jill Bow	Service Director Name:	Neil Elliott
Position	Head of Accommodation Services	I recommend that the proposal: (Highlight decision)	Is implemented with no amendments
			Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
			Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on the Welsh language
Signature	<i>J Bow</i>	Service Director Signature	
Date	2 October 2023	Date	3 October 2023

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

PRE- SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the feedback and comments of the items that were pre-scrutinised by the Council's thematic Scrutiny Committee's following its last Committee cycle.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the comments and observations of the Scrutiny Committees following pre-scrutiny of the items listed within section 5 of the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need for Members to be aware of the comments and observations of the Council's Scrutiny Committees prior to their consideration of the items listed within the Cabinet agenda for the 23rd October 2023.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In response to the [Local Government & Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#), where there is now a requirement for greater consideration of Cabinet decisions in Scrutiny, the Council's Scrutiny Committees place a greater emphasis on identifying items for pre-scrutiny to support and improve the decision making process
- 4.2 Members are reminded that the purpose of pre- scrutiny activity is to provide the key "critical friend" challenge and influence the decisions before they are made to contribute to policy and service improvement.
- 4.3 The Council's Scrutiny Committees continue to have the opportunity to scrutinise and comment on a number of reports in advance of Cabinet's consideration to bring a different perspective to the decisions being made and enabling Cabinet decisions to

be more informed. Effective scrutiny helps support the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements within the Council's services.

5. ITEMS CONSIDERED FOR PRE-SCRUTINY

5.1 Outlined below are the items that have been pre-scrutinised in line with each Committees Terms of reference for Cabinet consideration:

Committee	Report	Comments
Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee – 14th September 2023.	Proposals to develop a new School in Rhondda Cynon Taf.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Education Committee acted as a consultee on this item and the Committees views formed part of the consultation response. The comments of the Committee are attached in full as Appendix 4 to Agenda item 10 • Members were overall supportive of the proposal before them and look forward to seeing any future developments and welcomed any future opportunities to undertake scrutiny on the proposal • Members felt reassured that following engagement and consultation with parents, pupils, governors, School Councils and special schools staff that overall the response so far to the proposal had been positive • Members were encouraged to hear of the Council's commitment to becoming carbon neutral • Concern was raised in respect of the proposal having a potential negative impact on the Welsh Language • Members recommended officers visit other out of county provisions to draw on best practice to ensure the primary consideration is its design and safety. • Members of the Committee also highlighted the importance of recruiting a highly skilled and trained workforce
Community Services Scrutiny Committee – 25th September 2023	Representations, Compliments and Complaints Procedures Annual Report – 2022/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members queried the lessons learnt from the compliments and complaints received to the service and quality assurance process. • Members requested further data in relation to any trends in the complaints received
Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee – 18th October 2023.	Community Infrastructure Levy Annual Monitoring Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal Feedback will be provided at the meeting

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

7.1 Details of the Scrutiny involvement and consultation are highlighted within section 5 of the report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 None

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 none

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

10.1 The work of all Councillors, through pre-scrutiny of Cabinet decisions is fundamental to the work of the Council and subsequently the delivery of the Corporate Plan

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 It is recognised that scrutiny is a vital component of good governance and improves Councils' decision making, service provision and cost effectiveness.

11.2 The undertaking of pre-scrutiny by the relevant Scrutiny Committee will strengthen accountability and assist Cabinet Members in taking any future decisions on these matters.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd October 2023

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND
COMMUNICATION**

Item: **PRE – DECISION SCRUTINY**

Background Papers



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

CWM TAF MORGANNWG SAFEGUARDING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR CAPLE

Author: Neil Elliott

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present Cabinet with the 2022/23 Annual Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Notes and endorses the content of the 2022/23 Annual Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Report, attached at Appendix 1.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure Cabinet is fully aware of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Board's arrangements for safeguarding children and adults at risk and is satisfied that these arrangements are effective.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board (Board) is a statutory partnership made up of the agencies that are responsible for safeguarding children and adults at risk in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend. The aim of the Board is to ensure that people of all ages are protected from abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm. This also involves preventing abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm from happening.
- 4.2 The work of the Board is delivered via a Sub-Group structure, which aims to support multi-agency safeguarding in Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

Rhondda Cynon Taf employs the staff of the Board Business Unit and holds the Board budget, to which the statutory partner agencies contribute.

- 4.3 The Board has a statutory responsibility to publish an Annual Report on 31st July each year, to demonstrate its effectiveness in exercising its functions in the preceding financial year.
- 4.4 The 2022/23 Annual report, attached at Appendix 1, looks at how the Board has achieved its objectives as set out in its [Annual Plan](#) which was published in March 2022 and what the key achievements were.
- 4.5 The Board has a performance framework in place to capture safeguarding data and monitor performance and data trends. The framework was subject to development in 2022/23, to ensure that it had a more consistent, regional, multi-agency framework and this work will continue into 2023/24. Data reported demonstrated an overall increase in demands in the year, and quality assurance work was undertaken where a greater understanding on the reasons for this were required.
- 4.6 In 2022/23, there was a continued strong focus on developing Cwm Taf Morgannwg's approach to exploitation, both in relation to children and adults at risk and this will continue into 2023/24. The impact of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis continued to affect services and the community. Through its work in 2022/23, the Board recognised that early intervention and preventative services were crucial in meeting the needs of the people we support and to address the increasing demands on statutory services.
- 4.7 In November 2022, the publication of the Logan Mwangi Child Practice Review highlighted some aspects of safeguarding that needed to be improved. The Board fully accepted the recommendations from the review and have taken actions to address these, on a local, regional and national basis. It is essential that the Board and its partner agencies ensure that they do their utmost to prevent tragic cases like this happening in the future.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 There are no equality and diversity or socio-economic implications arising directly from this report.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no Welsh Language implications arising directly from this report. A Welsh version of the Annual Report will be available on the Board's website.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 The Annual Report has been developed in conjunction with all statutory partners of the Board. It has been approved by the Board and shared with the Welsh Government and the National Independent Safeguarding Board.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 sets out the responsibilities and the functions of the Regional Safeguarding Boards, which includes the publication of an Annual Report on the 31st July each year.

10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 10.1 The Board contributes to elements of the work of the Public Service Board by reporting on safeguarding activity.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The 2022/23 Annual Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Report, attached at Appendix 1, offers valuable assurance in relation to the arrangements for safeguarding children and adults at risk and provides updates on the progress made in implementing the Board's objectives and priorities.
- 11.2 The Board's 2023/24 Annual Plan was published on 31st March 2023 and the priorities within will be reported back to a future Cabinet meeting in 2024.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

**CWM TAF MORGANNWG SAFEGUARDING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
2022-23**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS
WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR CAPLE**

Background Papers

None

Officer to contact: Neil Elliott



Cwm Taf Morgannwg
Bwrdd Diogelu
Safeguarding Board



Annual Report

2022/2023



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Cwm Taf Morgannwg
University Health Board



BAVO



Contents

1. Introduction and Foreword - Chair of the Board	P3
2. Safeguarding in Cwm Taf Morgannwg	P4
3. Members of the Safeguarding Board	P7
4. What did the Board do in 2022-2023 to meet its outcomes?	P8
5. How did we implement our Annual Plan and what were our key achievements?	P12
6. Safeguarding Themes	P19
7. Information, Training and Learning	P22
8. How have we collaborated with others?	P25
9. Participation and Involving	P27
10. Contributions of Board Members	P30
11. Managing our Resources	P33
12. Other Board Activities	P34
Appendix 1 Board Membership	P37
Glossary	P40

Introduction and Foreword - Chair of the Regional Safeguarding Board

Welcome to the 2022-2023 Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Annual Report.

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board is a statutory partnership made up of the agencies that are responsible for safeguarding children and adults at risk in Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

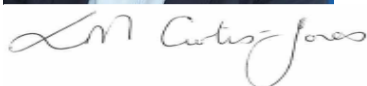
In March 2022, the Board published a [Plan](#) setting out its priorities for the coming year. There was a strong focus this year on developing our strategic approach to exploitation, both in relation to children and adults at risk. Partner agencies have worked together to develop our governance arrangements and agreeing appropriate tools to support with the identification and assessment of all forms of exploitation. This will continue into 2023-2024.

The impact of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis continues to affect services and the community. The Board has recognised that early intervention and preventative services are crucial in meeting the needs of the people we support and to address the increasing demands on statutory services.

We have faced challenges along the way. The publication of the Child Practice Review in relation to Child T has shone a spotlight on some aspects of safeguarding that needed to be improved. We have fully accepted the recommendations from this review and have taken actions to address these, on a local, regional and national basis. We must ensure that we do our utmost to prevent tragic cases like this happening in the future and we want to provide assurances to Child T's family that we will do everything we can to make sure that this is the case.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff who work tirelessly across the region to protect our most vulnerable people. Their wellbeing remains a priority for the Board and we continue to seek assurances from partner agencies that this is addressed.

If anyone is interested in finding out more about the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board, or if you'd like to get involved in informing our priorities, please contact our Business Unit by e-mailing: ctmsafeguarding@rctcbc.gov.uk



Lisa Curtis-Jones
Chair of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board

1. Safeguarding in Cwm Taf Morgannwg

The region of Cwm Taf Morgannwg covers the local authority areas of Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf with a combined population of approximately 428,000¹

The **Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board** is a statutory partnership made up of the agencies that are responsible for safeguarding children and adults at risk in Cwm Taf Morgannwg. The aim of the Board is to ensure that people of all ages are protected from abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm. This also involves preventing abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm from happening.

The two key **safeguarding** objectives of **protection** and **prevention** underpin the work of the Board and inform the priorities each year.

The responsibilities and functions of the Board are set out in the statutory guidance under Part 7 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. It has an overall responsibility for challenging relevant agencies so that:

- There are effective measures in place to protect children and adults at risk who are experiencing harm or who may be at risk as the result of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm; and
- There is effective inter-agency co-operation in planning and delivering protection services and in sharing information.

Safeguarding Children

Section 130 (4) of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 defines a child at risk as a child who:

Is experiencing or is at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm;

- a) Has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs).



What do we mean by Harm?

Harm is defined as:

- ill treatment - this includes sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and psychological abuse
- the impairment of physical or mental health (including that suffered from seeing or hearing another person suffer ill treatment).
- the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development (including that suffered from seeing or hearing another person suffer ill treatment).

¹ Source: Office for National Statistics (Census 2021)

Types of Harm

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples for each of the categories of harm, abuse and neglect included in vol 5 Working Together to Safeguard People: Volume 5 – Handling Individual Cases to Protect Children at Risk:

- **physical abuse** - hitting, slapping, over or misuse of medication, undue restraint, or inappropriate sanctions;
- **emotional/psychological abuse** - threats of harm or abandonment, coercive control, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks, witnessing abuse of others
- **sexual abuse** - forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening, including: physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts; non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways;
- **financial abuse** - this category will be less prevalent for a child but indicators could be:
 - not meeting their needs for care and support which are provided through direct payments; or
 - complaints that personal property is missing.
- **neglect** - failure to meet basic physical, emotional or psychological needs which is likely to result in impairment of health or development.

Safeguarding Adults

S126(1) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 defines an adult at risk as an adult who:

- a) is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect,
- b) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs), and
- c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against abuse or neglect or the risk of it.



Abuse can be physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial (includes theft, fraud, pressure about money, misuse of money) and can take place in any setting, whether in a private dwelling, an institution or any other place.

Neglect describes a failure to meet a person's basic needs physical, emotional, social or psychological needs, which is likely to result in an impairment of the person's well-being (for example, an impairment of the person's health). It can take place in a range of settings, such as a private dwelling, residential or day care provision.

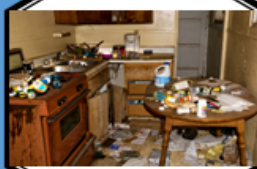


Case Example: Adult Services Multiagency work

1. Background

Miss X lives alone following the death of her parents a number of years earlier. Miss X was referred to the Social Services, Community Health and Wellbeing team by a neighbour expressing concerns in relation to her safety and general welfare because she had been found lying on the floor in the middle of the road and appeared to be dishevelled, and confused.

The social worker visited Miss X at her home address and during the visit, it was evident that she had been neglecting her personal hygiene for some time. Her home appeared unclean, cluttered and cold. There was no hot water or heating at the property. There was also extensive unopened mail on the floor.



2. What did we do?

The social worker called the GP as she was so concerned about Miss X's presentation. Not only was she unkempt and cold but she was also very confused and was having delusions.

The GP arranged for Miss X to be admitted to hospital where she was treated for a number of physical ailments and diagnosed with vascular dementia.

3. How we worked co-productively with Miss X

As Miss X's condition began to improve she told the social worker she had cared for both her mother and father before they passed away and had neglected her own social and physical health needs as a result. She had no extended family or friends to support her. Before becoming unwell Miss X was very active and wanted to be so again.

The social worker referred Miss X to an Independent Mental Health Advocate who would support Miss X to share her views, wishes and feelings about her care and support.

Regular multiagency meetings were held to consider Miss X's care and support needs. Professionals involved with Miss X from Health and Social Care felt that Miss X's needs would be better met in a residential setting. However, initially Miss X disagreed and wanted to return home.

Miss X was encouraged to share her views about where she wanted to live, however, this was not felt to be a safe option for Miss X from the perspective of professionals.

4. What happened next?

The social worker asked Miss X to visit the care home to have a look around as Miss X had a very traditional view about life in a care home.

Following the visit Miss X changed her mind and it was agreed that she would move into the care home following another visit.

Miss X moved into the care home but was not settling well and was having aggressive outbursts towards staff. This is not uncommon in people who have vascular dementia.

The social worker referred Miss X to the Specialist Dementia Intervention Team who provided advice and guidance for staff about how to manage the periods of distress Miss X was experiencing.

Outcome

Miss X has now settled well in the care home, making friends and taking part in activities that she likes. She goes out shopping. Her sleep pattern is better and she has gained weight. This example shows that despite the Local Authority's desire to support people to live in their own homes, living in a care home can be a positive alternative when it is not safe to do so and can still promote people's independence and support them to have fulfilled lives. This is also a good example of multiple teams working together to achieve the best outcome for Miss X.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs

In the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region there are two Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) that report to the Board:

The Cwm Taf (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf) Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Bridgend Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The purpose of the MASH is to act as the single point of contact for all professionals to report safeguarding concerns. MASH provides the opportunity for a higher standard of safeguarding by providing all professionals with more information on which to make better, more informed, and more timely decisions. This enables the effective sharing of information between agencies, helping to protect children and adults from abuse and neglect.

Although the concept of the MASH involves co-location, partner agencies have responded to the different ways of working over the past three years, including remote working, without compromising the need for prompt information sharing and actions to safeguard people. The MASH are developing hybrid models, utilising new communication / information sharing technologies that support both in-person and remote working.

The collaboration of both Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs continues to be a key focus of the Board to streamline multi-agency safeguarding across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region. Recent collaborative projects include:

- A multi-agency working group established to agree a consistent approach and shared understanding of child protection threshold decision making across the three local authority areas in CTM;
- Ongoing work to establish clear pathways for signposting and referrals for professionals (for both Children and Adults);
- Merging the Cwm Taf and Bridgend MASH Quality Assurance and Performance Groups in August 2022, with a joint Terms of Reference agreed, a combined audit programme, and joint work plan; and a new performance framework in development.
- A multi-agency working group set up to identify a replacement MASH information sharing system that is fit for purpose for both Cwm Taf and Bridgend, to be implemented in Summer 2023 across both MASH.

2. Members of the Safeguarding Board

The Lead Partner for the Board is Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and the membership complies with the statutory guidance issued under Part 7 of the Social Services and Well Being Act 2014.

The lead partner hosts the Board's Business Unit and holds the Board budget on behalf of the statutory partner agencies.

A list of Board members is attached as Appendix 1.

3. What did the Board do in 2022-2023 to meet its Outcomes?

Governance

The Safeguarding Board has a robust governance structure in place (Appendix 2) that enables it to carry out its functions and achieve positive outcomes for children and adults at risk in Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

Challenge and Scrutiny

The Board holds partner agencies to account in relation to their safeguarding activities through effective monitoring and challenge. This is carried out via the Board and Sub Group meetings, reviews, inspection reports and audit activity.

The Board encourages partner agencies to share individual inspections and reviews that relate to safeguarding. In 2022-2023, the Board received and reviewed the following reports and improvement plans from agencies:

- Improvement Action Plan from Health in relation to children's mental health provision
- A report from Education colleagues in response to an Estyn report on peer on peer sexual harassment
- Youth Custody Service Safeguarding Forum
- Winter Pressures and Hospital Discharge Pressures
- Parc Prison HMI Inspection Report
- Care Inspectorate Wales performance evaluation inspection in Bridgend
- NHS Wales Safeguarding Network Annual Plan

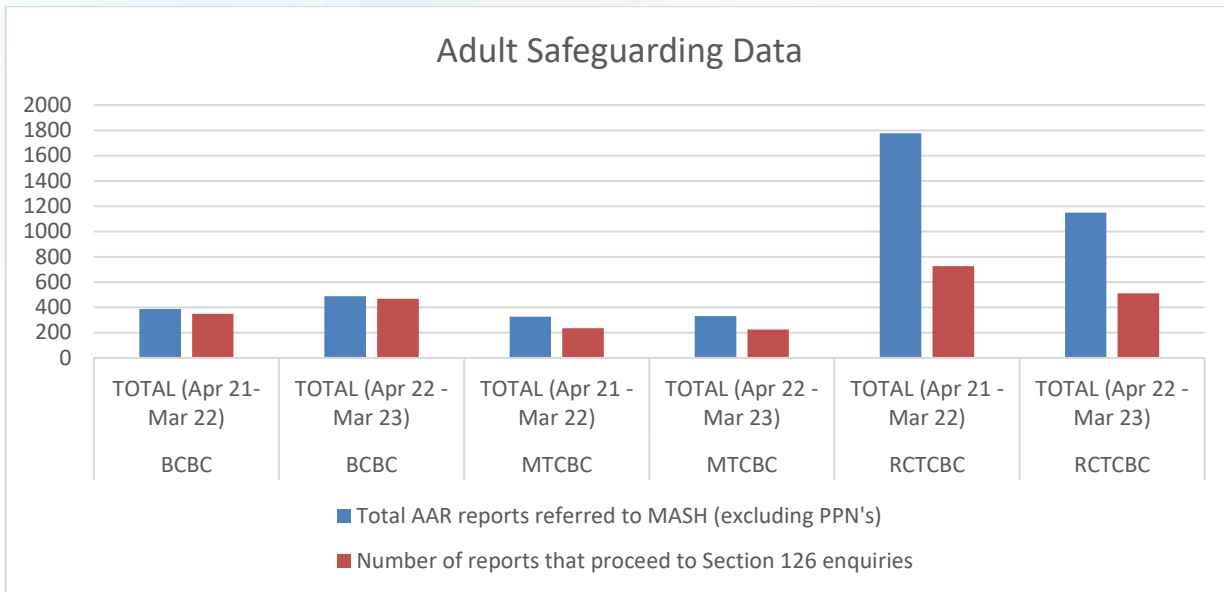
Performance

The Board has a performance framework in place to capture safeguarding data. This has been subject to further development this year, to ensure that we have a consistent, regional, multi-agency framework.

Adult Safeguarding

Overall, there has been an increase in the number of reports received by Bridgend, a slight decrease in Merthyr and an apparent significant decrease for RCT in 2022-2023 compared with 2021-2022. However, RCT changed its recording practice in 2022-2023 to align better with Bridgend and Merthyr. In fact, the total number of contacts received by RCT's Safeguarding Team increased by 400.

The percentage of Reports proceeding to S126 enquiries continued to differ markedly between the three local authorities. The overall percentage for 2022-2023 for Bridgend was nearly 96%, whilst it was 68% for Merthyr and 45% for RCT. There appears to be a real difference in initial decision-making across the three local authorities that will need some comparative audit work in 2023-24.



Escalating Concerns

Reports from Local Authority Commissioning Departments were received each quarter in relation to service providers in escalating concerns. On average, just over 4 Providers were discussed each quarter across the region.

Case Study

A 93-year-old lady was admitted to an RCT care home from a Gwent hospital. She was admitted with pressure sores, which were reported by the Home to the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Team. Subsequent to this, a further Safeguarding Report was received by RCT Safeguarding Team as instructed by the Tissue Viability Nurse because there were concerns about whether the Home had produced a robust treatment plan to prevent further damage to her skin and whether there had been further damage since her admission there. Initially, there were various cross-boundary issues to overcome, but the 2 Safeguarding Co-ordinators worked together to ensure that there was a robust investigation within the Health Board that could inform the investigation into the care home's practice. The RCT Safeguarding Co-ordinator commented that 'there was good multi-agency involvement by Aneurin Bevan UHB, Caerphilly Adult Safeguarding Team, the CTMUHB Tissue Viability Nurse, the Care Home Manager, Police, CIW and the GP'.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

In RCT and Merthyr, the number of DoLS assessments increased significantly this year because of a decision by both Authorities to out-source less complex assessments. As a result, the waiting list at the end of the year was the lowest number since 2014.

In Bridgend, the number of assessments decreased compared with the two previous years and the Health Board increased the number of assessments completed. with increased Best Interests Assessor capacity.

There is currently a waiting list of 144 assessments, to resolve this Bridgend has employed a number of agency Best Interest Assessors and Section 12 Doctors to support the completion of these assessments.

Good Practice

In preparation for the Liberty Protection Safeguards (prior to the announcement by the UK Government that implementation would be further delayed, the Health Board recruited a Mental Capacity Practice Facilitator. This role has facilitated significant awareness raising and training for all health staff with regards to mental capacity within clinical practice. The positive repercussions of this have been reflected in the quality of referrals and assessments within the DoLS and MCA team.

Children's Safeguarding

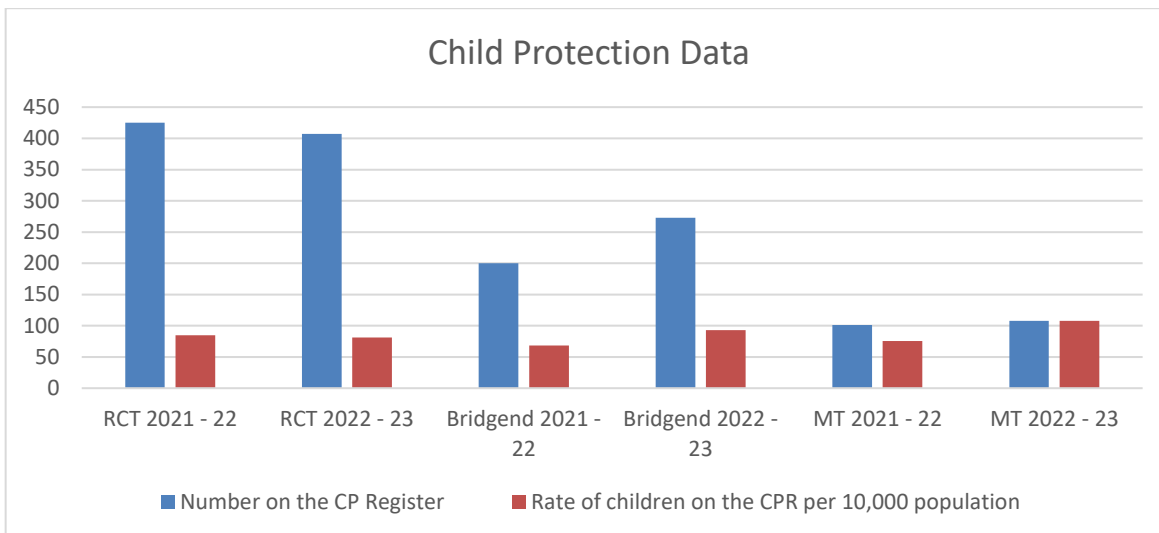
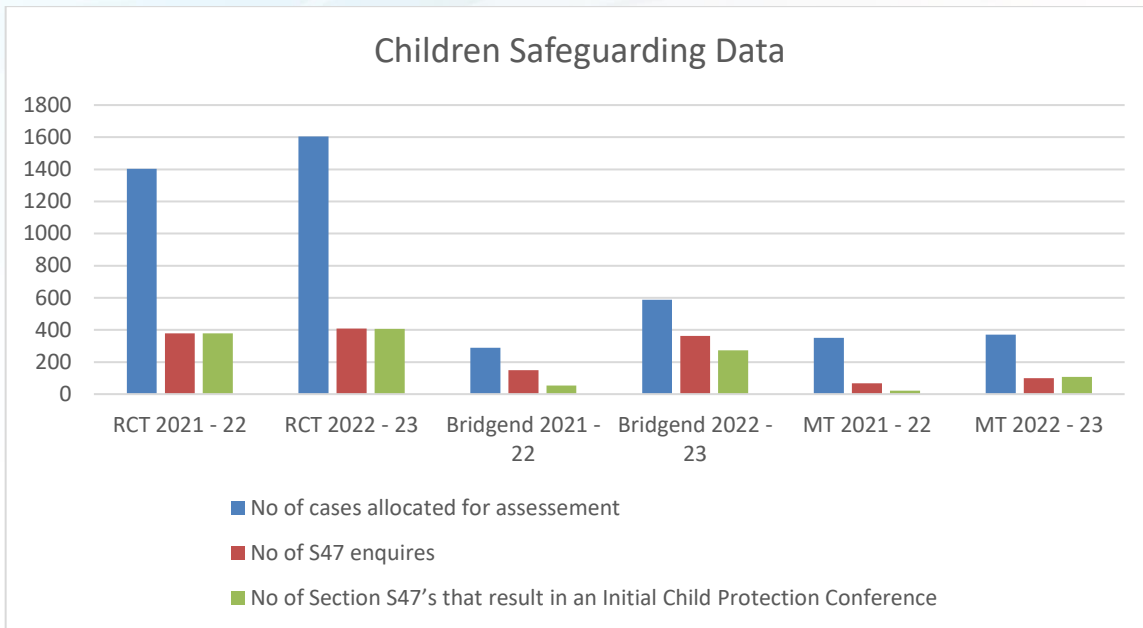
In 2022-2023, there was an increase in demand at the 'front door' across the region.

In RCT there was a large increase in contacts made and cases allocated for assessment compared to the previous year. This evidences a continued increase in demand at the 'front door'. Despite this, cases meeting the threshold to proceed to child protection enquiries and initial conferences remained fairly stable.

Bridgend has seen a significant increase in demand in child protection assessments, enquiries and cases proceeding to an initial conference. This is reflective of the increased professional and public awareness following the publication of the Child T Child Practice Review alongside challenges following the pandemic and cost of living crisis.

In Merthyr Tydfil, figures have remained fairly stable, with more referrals have been sent to early help which has been the desired outcome.

With regards the number of children on the Child Protection Register, again this has increased across the region. This will continue to be monitored closely.



Professional Disagreements

The Board's [Concerns Regarding Interagency Safeguarding Practice \(CRISP\) protocol](#) supports practitioners in finding a resolution when they have a professional disagreement or concern in relation to another agency's safeguarding practice.

In 2022-2023, there were 8 cases escalated to the Board for resolution. All of these were RCT cases. Further work will be carried out in 2023-2024 to ensure that the process is consistent across the region.

4. How did we implement our Annual Plan and what were our key achievements?

The Board published an Annual Plan on the 31st March 2022, setting out its priorities for safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk in 2022/2023.

The Annual Plan for 2022/2023 can be accessed at: www.ctmsb.co.uk

In relation to the Board's Strategic Priorities, a summary of the work carried out is below.

Strategic Priority 1: Keeping our Communities Safe by Working Together

The focus on Exploitation has continued through a regional multi-agency governance structure which has developed draft Practice, Screening and Assessment toolkits and a Strategy for child exploitation.

The Cwm Taf and Bridgend multi-agency exploitation groups joined to become a regional group and this approach will continue to be embedded into the Board structure, along with an exploitation dashboard to monitor activity.

The Board, through RCT Children Services, has undertaken consultation with young people from Pontypridd High School who not only contributed to the strategy, but also participated in National Safeguarding Week in November 2022, presenting some of the key work they have undertaken in their pursuit to create a safer community. In Merthyr, a youth/student conference was held on exploitation and there was good engagement from a wide range of schools. In Bridgend, two specialist exploitation senior social worker posts were created within Childrens Social Care and continued engagement of an experienced interim group manager with an expertise in exploitation to embed new ways of working. Bridgend has successfully introduced an Exploitation Screening document and this informs which cases are discussed at the monthly Exploitation Panel. The panel implementation is in the early stages but feedback has been very positive in how it supports collaborative working and supports a coordinated response to exploitation.

Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service delivered a workshop in primary schools in RCT to educate them to stay clear from behaviours in the community that could bring them to the attention of the Community Safety Partnership and to enable them to stay safe.

We continue to work in partnership to support with this work. For example, Anti-Social Behaviour leads have been invited to attend the Board's Children Quality Assurance and Performance Sub Group so that we are able to triangulate some of the work of the Community Safety Partnership and the Safeguarding Board in ensuring interventions are effective safeguarding children, their families, and the community. A multi-agency approach has been adopted across partner agencies to scope the extent of exploitation, consider any immediate protective action and prevent harm through common understanding. Using a contextual safeguarding approach (this is an approach that considers risk in the context in which it occurs i.e. outside of the family home), we have been able to identify some key locations and swift action has been taken to disrupt some of the locations that presented a high risk to children.

Strategic Priority 2: A Renewed Focus on Prevention and Early Intervention

The COVID pandemic and the cost of living crisis has been continuing to have an impact on our services and the needs of our community. In 2022-2023, we wanted to ensure that there was robust early intervention and prevention services to support children, young people and adults, to prevent them from becoming at risk of abuse or neglect.

To support this, we aimed to raise awareness of preventative services across all partner agencies and by attending events to share information with the public.

In RCT, Adult Services worked with South Wales Police to develop an 'Early Help' option to which police officers can refer when on calls to vulnerable people in our communities. The project has demonstrated real added value since it commenced as a pilot in September 2022. It is now established as an ongoing service option.

RCT Children Services has also brought together its early help services alongside the Enquiry and Assessment teams. This facilitates closer working relationships across early help and assessment services and supports safe arrangements for families when needs require cases to either step up or step down. During 2022 the Resilient Families Service underwent a post pandemic review and renewed the focus and working arrangements across its various teams. It continues to support increasing numbers of families to build resilience and better manage the day-to-day challenges that they face. 98% of families who complete the intervention and have provided feedback report increased resilience.

Bridgend early help services continue to offer a locality based model of provision with a range of co-located family intervention workers. Team around the family interventions closing with a positive outcome was reported at 73% in 2022-2023, despite a clear increase in the complexity of cases this service is working with.

Parc Prison set up an Interdepartmental Risk Management Meeting and Release Planning Board. This ensures that through the gate planning between the prison and external agencies is completed and robust to manage the risk posed. This has recognised good practice by the probation Senior Leads in other Welsh Prisons.

WAST developed and implemented a Fire Service Referral pathway during the pandemic to enable staff to identify individuals and/or residences who or which would benefit from an assessment from the South Wales Fire & Rescue Service Home Safety Team. An electronic safeguarding reporting system enabled them to strengthen the referral pathway between WAST and the Live Fear Free organisation. During this reporting period, WAST submitted 110 child at risk reports and 182 adult at risk reports. In terms of supporting prevention and early intervention, WAST staff have submitted 114 needs for care and support reports for children and 478 needs for care and support reports for adults during this reporting period.

The Health Board has introduced collaborative working with other health services to produce policies and guidance that will enhance early intervention and prevention strategies.

South Wales Police has developed an Early Help Referral pathway to ensure that children, young people, adults, and families 'in need', who do not meet the statutory safeguarding threshold, get the right help as early as possible, via social care support or intervention. This new initiative means that they can work collectively with partners to put in place sustainable solutions to people experiencing difficulties or crises to prevent them from escalating into safeguarding concerns.

Good Practice

This year, the Wales Ambulance Services Trust (WAST) has further developed the capability of the electronic safeguarding reporting system through collaborative work with WAST's Dementia Lead and the Alzheimers organization. A new pathway will be implemented which will allow WAST staff to refer individuals, families and caregivers directly to a specialist organisation that can support them where there are concerns of dementia/Alzheimers diagnosis.

Strategic Priority 3: Moving Beyond the Pandemic – Recovery and Reflection

The Board continues to seek opportunities to become a more streamlined, effective, evolving, and challenging to enable us to prepare and respond promptly to risks, issues and opportunities to improve.

This year we have:

- Reviewed the structure, Terms of Reference, membership, purpose, role profiles and remit of the Board and all of its Sub-Groups, in line with the statutory guidance
- Established/strengthened our escalation processes and how we challenge each other constructively
- Reviewed and improved our existing and performance frameworks
- Reviewed the current MASH arrangements and processes and agreed key performance information that needs to be reported to the Board
- Implemented a new Regional Learning Framework
- Trained more people to become independent Panel Chairs and Reviewers
- Set up a Task and Finish Group to oversee the implementation of the Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR) process and manage the impact on the Board

Our partner agencies have supported with this priority. The effectiveness of remote working in terms of inclusivity and time-efficiency have been recognised and retained post-Covid for many of our services. Some agencies have transitioned fully out of the operating models that were used during the pandemic. In addition the lessons identified during the pandemic in relation to safeguarding have been embedded to allow for a much more effective safeguarding response in the event of any future pandemics requiring similar workplace restrictions.

The introduction of a new Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR) process later in 2023 will strengthen the review landscape within Wales by creating a single review process which incorporates a multi-agency approach where the criteria for one or more of the following

reviews is met: Adult Practice Review; Child Practice Review; Domestic Homicide Review; Mental Health Homicide Review and Offensive Weapons Homicide Review. This will eliminate the need for families to take part in an onerous and traumatising cycle of information-giving and waiting. The Board will have responsibility for this process and has been actively involved in its development through various meetings and groups facilitated by Welsh Government. This will continue into the coming year.

Other Board Priorities

Staff Wellbeing

Staff wellbeing has remained a priority across all agencies, with an increased number of health and wellbeing support services and groups being available.

Six-monthly reports have been presented to the Board's Joint Operational Committee to demonstrate every agencies commitment to supporting staff wellbeing. Initiatives have included:

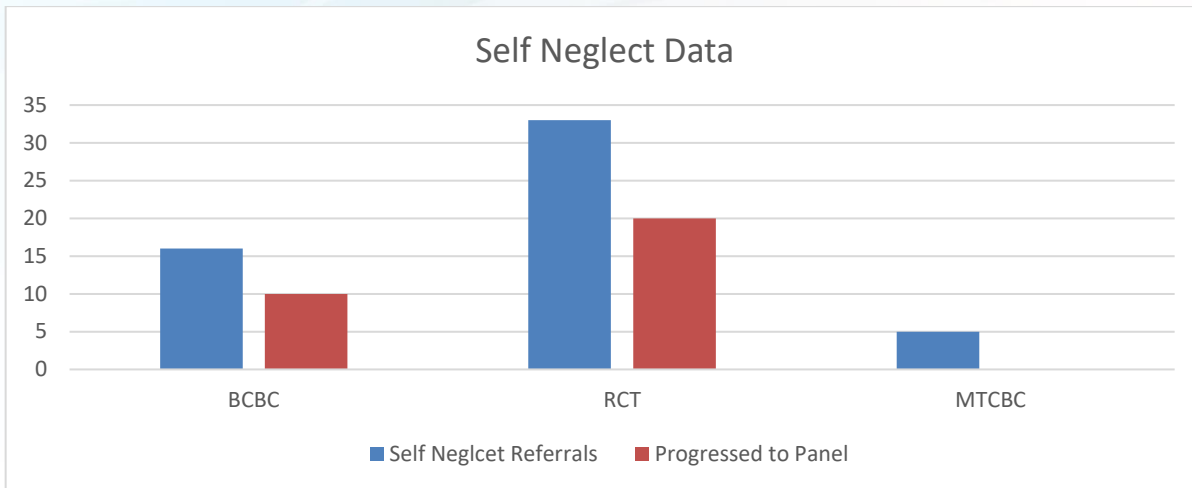
- Managing caseloads
- Counselling support
- Wellbeing apps and webpages
- Employee Assistance programmes
- Staff briefings and development sessions
- Staff supervision
- Wellbeing strategies

Self Neglect

The Board introduced it's regional approach to managing cases of self neglect in adults in October 2021. This has proved to be an effective mechanism in making a real difference to people experiencing severe self-neglect.

The Self-Neglect Partnership Panels are well-established, particularly in RCT and this is beginning to become embedded in the other local authority areas.

Across the Region, 49 referrals were made to the Self-Neglect panels in 2022-2023, and outcomes demonstrate that it is making a real difference to the people referred and to the professionals supporting them.



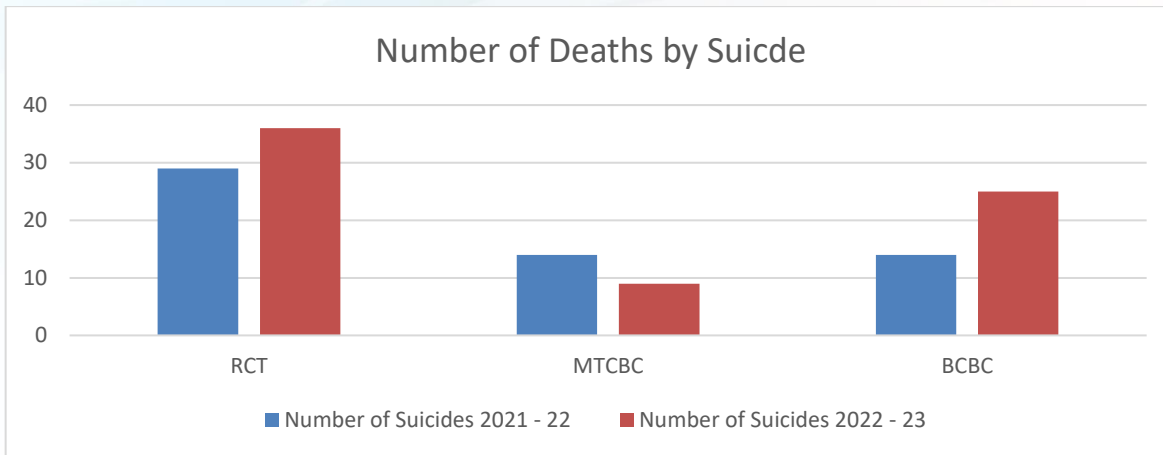
Case Study

Sarah, aged 48, lives alone in a housing association adapted flat and has no informal support networks. She has osteoarthritis and has mobility problems: she uses a mobility scooter to access the community. She presented to her GP surgery with severely infected flea bites. Sarah’s flat was infested with fleas from her 5 cats. She was prescribed antibiotics and attended her GP surgery for frequent dressing changes by the practice nurse. There was an attempt by the Housing Association to fumigate the flat but there was so much clutter that it was only partially effective. She was offered refuge at the local Community Hub whilst the fumigation took place. She was struggling with managing her personal care, but no agencies would enter the property whilst the infestation continued. With support from her Housing Support worker, Sarah managed to dispose of the worst of the clutter in her flat so the next fumigation was successful. Discussion at Panel resulted in a social worker being allocated to complete a well-being assessment with Sarah in person and with the support of her housing support worker, rather than a proportionate assessment over the phone. This resulted in Sarah having a reablement package from Adult Services that focused on enabling her to recover her independence.

Suicide Prevention

The Board continues to work on a regional, cross-partnership basis to support the prevention of suicide and self harm agenda. A multi-agency Suicide Review Group receives information held by the Board in respect of suspected completed suicides managed under the Immediate Response Protocol, which allows us to identify themes, demographics and triggers that can support us in tackling this very important agenda.

Although the rate of suspected suicides has increased in RCT and Bridgend this year compared to 2021-2022, the Board and its partners continue to develop a strategic, preventative response. This will include the identification of significant ‘near misses’ so that interventions can be put in place at an earlier stage.



In Bridgend, a Cluster Responsive Review was set up, following a number of completed suicides across Bridgend. This was facilitated by the Welsh Government’s regional suicide and self-harm lead.

Protocols and Procedures

The following Board protocols and guidance documents were reviewed and updated during 2022-2023:

- [Child Protection Conference Protocol for Practitioners](#)
- [Child Protection Register Enquiry Protocol](#)
- [Core Group Resolution Process](#)
- [Disclosure of Childhood Abuse by a Person who is now an Adult: Guidance for Practitioners](#)
- [Multi Agency Chronology Guidance](#)
- [Protocol for the Immediate Response to Critical Incidents](#)
- [Working with People who are Resistant to Engaging in the Safeguarding Process](#)

Partner Agency Achievements

In addition to the joint work that is undertaken as a multi-agency Board, individual partner agencies also share their achievements in relation to safeguarding.

South Wales Police has made a significant investment in delivering a programme of training called “Domestic Abuse Matters” to all of its frontline staff and officers. The Crown Prosecution Service also participated in the delivery of the training. This will be further rolled out to Police enabling functions who may not directly encounter victims of domestic abuse, such as firearms licensing officers, to give them the tools to effectively identify domestic abuse and how to tackle it.

Bridgend Council Adult Services has developed an escalation response to ensure critical care and support services for adults are prioritised, where the Health Board has declared

Business Continuity Emergency status. Bridgend Adult Services supported the regional response to the UK and Welsh Government's consultation on changes to the Mental Capacity Act and secondary legislation in preparation for the implementation of the Liberty Safeguards.

Bridgend Council Children's Services has developed Team champions have been introduced in the areas of supporting people from Ukraine, Domestic Violence and Mental Health. The introduction of Peer Supervision in provides a supportive peer forum for practitioners to reflect and gain advice from their peers. This has been well received and has been rolled out across Children's Social Care Safeguarding Teams. Finally, a new Quality Assurance & Learning Framework has been implemented. Our Joint Operational Group is held on a fortnightly basis and has proved valuable in resolving challenges between partner agencies and strengthening multiagency working.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Adults Services has led work to implement new Safeguarding Procedures documentation across the Region. RCT also led on developing a regional response to the UK and Welsh Government's consultation on changes to the Mental Capacity Act and secondary legislation in preparation for the implementation of the Liberty Safeguards (now further delayed).

Merthyr Education has introduced a database in order to scrutinise the information provided by schools within Merthyr Tydfil from the annual safeguarding audit. This has allowed them to identify areas of concern quickly and support the identified school to put plans in place to reduce the risk and address the concern.

Wales Ambulance Services Trust has recruited three Safeguarding Specialists into the Safeguarding Team to improve visibility at a local level.

Parc Prison has developed an Interdepartmental Risk Management Meeting and Release Planning Board. This ensures that through the gate planning between prison and external agencies is completed and robust to manage the risk posed. This has recognised as good practice by the probation Senior Leads in other Welsh Prisons.

Bridgend Education use safeguarding audits as a key tool that assists schools in responding to the changes in the inspection framework and protecting children from harm. All schools in Bridgend (60) completed their audits and shared these with the local authority. In comparison to last year, there was an improvement in the overall rating with a slight increase in those rated green (increase of 2) and no schools rated red (1 last year). Ongoing work with schools will explore how they can demonstrate the impact of their safeguarding work and embed this practice across the whole school site.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board has appointed a Health Independent Domestic Violence Adviser which has promoted improved collaboration between health, statutory partners and third sector in the support for victims of domestic violence. Emergency Department safeguarding meetings have facilitated joined up learning, development of pathways and an emergency department safeguarding booklet. The Child Protection Medical HUB continues to provide a consistent, child centered approach for all children requiring a medical from three Local Authorities across Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Children Services is continuing to improve edge of care support for families to safely prevent children from needing to become looked after. The service delivery

pathway will improve both the quality and timeliness of decisions that need to be made for those children most at risk. There has been an increasing rate of referrals to the Resilient Families Service, resulting in an increase in preventative work which is achieving a high rate of improved resilience within families. Quality assurance at the front door has continued to take place to ensure consistent decision making.

Merthyr Tydfil Children’s Services has undertaken quality assurance work that has provided evidence that the reduction in the number of children on the child protection register and children looked after has been achieved safely through careful management of risk. An overview of recent quality assurance work highlighting areas of strength and priority learning is leading to a plan for further improvement through input across all levels of the management team.

Merthyr Tydfil Adults Services appointed to a Senior Practitioner Post within Adult Safeguarding. This has increased resilience within the service and enabled development of processes and stronger regional consistency in this area. Cross regional quality assurance work shows positive adult safeguarding decision making judged by an objective regional partner. Adult safeguarding has strengthened its work to ensure the person is at the centre of the services and ensured closer work with our Health safeguarding partners in some areas despite the challenges of the pandemic.

5. Safeguarding Themes

Audit Activity

Achieving improvement in safeguarding policy, systems, and practice is a core function of the Board. Audit work is carried out via task and finish groups set up by the Quality and Performance Sub Groups. Any recommendations made by case audits are monitored by these groups to identify how practice is adapted to reflect any learning. The key learning themes from four completed audits are summarised below:

AUDIT ACTIVITY	THEMES IDENTIFIED
Non-Accidental Injuries in children under 5 (Bridgend)	<p>Not all decision making was informed by thorough consideration of the available information and the rationale was not always recorded with cases within certain times.</p> <p>Physical harm as a sole risk issue is usually managed well, but if the risk issues needing addressing are more diffuse and associated with parental neglect, complacency could be demonstrated.</p> <p>Better use of chronologies as a tool to aid practice and risk assessment needed.</p>



<p>De-Registrations at first review (RCT)</p>	<p>All, but one case, followed timescales. The average working day for completing a Section 47 enquiry is 17 working days, which is outside the guidelines of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. When developing the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, there was a significant change made states that conference should be convened within 15 days from the initial strategy discussion, as opposed to the outcome strategy discussion which was the case previously. It was noted that quality is compromised by doing this due to timescales.</p>
<p>Review of strategy discussions that did not proceed to Section 47 (RCT, Merthyr and Bridgend)</p>	<p>Timeliness of strategy discussions from the point of Child Protection being identified and MASH being alerted. All cases were held within a 24-hour period.</p> <p>Children Services and Police achieved 100% attendance at strategy discussions.</p> <p>Generally good attendance at all the strategy discussions where there was a representative from other Local Authority social work teams where children from other Authorities were being discussed.</p> <p>Information stored against records was consistent and generally comprehensive to review.</p> <p>It is felt that all of the strategy discussions that were reviewed were appropriate to be discussed within that forum and therefore no concerns identified with the initial decision making to hold a strategy discussion despite threshold for Section 47 enquiries not being met.</p>
<p>Arrangements for risk assessment and escalation when repeat PPNs are received (RCT)</p>	<p>All cases were well-known to Social Care and only 2 were not allocated to a social worker during the audit timeframe and this was because the subject declined services pre or post-assessment.</p> <p>CMHTs were involved with 7 cases & Care & Support service with 3 cases.</p> <p>Reasons for police contact were principally for mental health incidents</p> <p>The Escalation Process was being utilised but still not consistently.</p> <p>Good screening and information-sharing by MASH with SW teams.</p> <p>Robust response to receipt of PPNs on most occasions.</p>

Adult Practice Reviews and Child Practice Reviews

In 2022-2023, the Board published 2 Child Practice Reviews and 2 Adult Practice Reviews:

[CPR CTMSB 04/2021](#)

[CPR CTMB 5/2020](#)

[APR 06/2020](#)

[APR 02/2021](#)

The learning from these Reviews were cascaded across all partner agencies and the action plans arising from the recommendations contained in these Reviews continue to be monitored. All partner agencies have demonstrated that they have shared the learning widely via a variety of different means. This includes 7-minute briefings, staff briefings, face-to-face workshops and via web updates. Partner agencies have also assured the Board that the learning has informed training.

All four reviews have acted as a reminder to all partner agencies on the importance of supervision and management oversight, the need for clear risk assessments, the challenges for professionals in recognising coercive control and disguised compliance and the importance of good record keeping, including the use of chronologies.

Some key actions have been undertaken in response to the learning, including:

- The adoption of a new Signs of Safety practice framework in Bridgend Children Services, which provides a strength-based, solution focused approach to safeguarding and child protection practice.
- The development of a new information sharing platform for both MASH, supported by Teams channels. This will improve the timeliness of strategy discussions and record agency interventions all in one place.
- Improvements to Quality Assurance and Learning Frameworks.
- Safe sleeping guidance and resources have been updated and re-circulated. A seven minute briefing, video and QR code leaflet has been developed and shared with partners.
- The delivery of additional training including domestic abuse and coercive control, professional curiosity and conferences and core groups.
- Anti-Social Behaviour guidance for staff has been reviewed and amended.
- Implementation of the Public Law Outline Reform
- The introduction of a repeat PPN escalation process

Complaints

The Board's [Complaints Procedure](#) provides families with the opportunity to make a complaint with regards to the multi-agency child protection conference process and procedures, and the multi-agency adult protection meetings process and procedures.

This year, there were 4 complaints received in relation to the child protection conference process. Of the 4 complaints received, the following outcomes were made by the Board's Independent Complaints Panel:

- 1 complaint was upheld
- 1 complaint was not upheld
- 2 complaints were partly upheld

The Board also dealt with one complaint regarding a professional concern which was partly upheld.

The learning from complaints is fed in to the Board's Quality Assurance and Performance Groups so that appropriate improvements can be made.

6. Information Training and Learning

Board partner agencies are required to review the training needs of practitioners in the area and the Board ensures that there is a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding training, taking into account themes and learning arising from the delivery of the Board's functions. This work is monitored by the Board's Training and Learning Sub Group.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Training

The Local Authority Workforce Development teams (Cwm Taf and Bridgend) are the main source of reporting on safeguarding training, although all partner agencies ensure that adequate safeguarding training is delivered to staff.

On-line training has continued alongside face to face opportunities where it has been identified as being the best forum for learning.

Cwm Taf Social Care Workforce Development Service continued to deliver Safeguarding training during the course of 2022-2023. On-line learning training has continued to be delivered for a great part of the L3/Group C training offer, although the situation has remained challenging and courses were cancelled due to staffing issues.

There has been an increase in face to face delivery for certain groups of the workforce and these have again been impacted by staffing issues.

167 courses were planned and 15 courses were cancelled during this period, this was linked to continuing staffing pressures.

2653 people completed safeguarding training through the workforce development service. This was lower than expected as we did not reach maximum numbers on some courses.

The range of agencies accessing the training besides internal social care staff, included education, health, voluntary sector, foster carers and housing.

Wales Ambulance Services Trust has embedded safeguarding situations into clinical scenarios which are a component of the face-to-face mandatory in-service training (MIST) within WAST. The safeguarding themes included domestic abuse, adult at risk, professional curiosity and PRUDiC. The inclusion of safeguarding into these scenarios has been well received by staff with evaluations indicating that 99% of staff thought the inclusion useful and recommended that it should be continued for future MIST programmes.

In Bridgend, the mandatory safeguarding training programme 'Back to Basics – Strengthening Social Work Practice' is designed to create a solid foundation and consistency of practice across Children's Social Care, Early Years and Family Support.

Welsh Government grant funding was utilised to deliver preparatory training in both services to Adults and Children in Liberty Protection Safeguards awareness, assessing mental capacity, best interests, and preparing for the Court of Protection, and court skills.

There is a tiered approach to raising awareness around the impact of trauma when working with children and young people

Bridgend Education Governing bodies continues to be a theme that schools highlight as an area to develop. Last year, schools highlighted that safeguarding training for governors was a gap and needed to be addressed. In response, the local authority has offered additional governor training sessions and attendance has improved. Feedback from these sessions by governors has been that it is easier for them to access and attend virtual sessions.

An increasing number of Chair of Governors have requested attendance at the 1-day DSL training as per the recommendation in 'Keeping Learners Safe'. This is a direct result of the audit process and many schools rating themselves as red or amber in Section 4, 'Has the DSP and relevant Governor/s had recent safeguarding training which is relevant to their role?'

National Training Framework on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

The table below outlines Cwm Taf Morgannwg's progress regarding the VAWDASV National Training Framework in 2022-2023.

Group	Numbers completed
1 Elearning	2184
2 Ask and act	638
3 Ask and act champions	33
4 Specialist provider training	64
5 Specialist managers	2
6 Senior leaders	0

Welsh Government Training Grant

The Board receives an annual grant from the Welsh Government to support additional safeguarding training activities. This year the grant enabled us to support additional training arising from the recommendations of our Practice Reviews. This involved over 300 members of staff across all partner agencies and included:

- Conference and Core groups
- Professional Curiosity
- A series of Coercive Control workshops
- Working with Hostile, Uncooperative or Resistant Families
- Workind with Disguised or Non-Effective Compliance
- Hidden Men – Working with Men in Child Protection

Multi Agency Practitioner Events (MAPF)

A Practitioner Event was held during Safeguarding Week in November 2022. The event took place at the University of South Wales' Conference Centre at the Nantgarw Campus. The event was on the theme of exploitation, with the morning session focussing on types of exploitation which affect children and young people and the afternoon session looking at the types of exploitation that adults may be at risk of.



Other Safeguarding Training

Two online Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board induction training sessions took place in January and February 2023, with 33 people attending.

The sessions were aimed at people whose work involved the Safeguarding Board, as well as those wishing to know more about the purpose and structure of the Board.

Safeguarding training at HMP & YOI Parc encourages all staff and volunteers to not only consider the safeguarding of our service users whilst in prison but the safeguarding of service users' families, for example when family / members of the community are visiting their loved ones. In doing this there has been an increase in staff reporting and information that is shared with the MASH.

Dissemination of Information

As part of developing a positive culture of learning, the Board uses a range of methods to disseminate best practice and learning within the workforce, including Multi-Agency

Practitioner Forums, information within the Board's e-bulletin, Safeguarding Updates, use of Twitter, Facebook and the Safeguarding Board's website.

Some of the information shared includes reports and learning outcomes from Adult/Child Practice Reviews and audits.

Two bulletins were produced in 2022-2023 and circulated amongst the Board and its partners and placed on the Board's communications platforms, as listed above.

The Spring 2022 e-bulletins can be accessed by selecting this [link](#).

An e-bulletin was also produced on the Welsh Government's National Action Plan on Preventing and Tackling Child Sexual Abuse. The bulletin contains a number of resources aimed at children and young people, parents and carers and professionals on child sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour.

Select this [link](#) to access the bulletin.

Safeguarding Updates

A section has been created on the Safeguarding Board's website called '[Safeguarding Updates](#)' and the information on this webpage is used to generate e-mails to the Board and partners, with encouragement for these updates to be shared widely. Such information includes:

- Recently published policies and protocols
- Recently published practice review reports
- Safeguarding campaigns
- New legislation
- Consultations

7. How have we collaborated with others?

Working in partnership with others is integral to the work of the Board. We do this in a number of ways, with individuals, agencies, partnerships and organisations both within and external to Cwm Taf Morgannwg. Regional partnership working across Cwm Taf Morgannwg has remained strong, whether it involves planning workforce needs and training requirements, safeguarding, integrating service provision or responding to region-wide challenges. The need for this became even more evident during the COVID 19 pandemic to ensure that agencies worked effectively together to meet the needs of our communities.

Public Service Board

The Public Services Board (PSB) acts as the principal strategic leadership forum for the planning, commissioning, and delivery of public services across organisational boundaries to achieve better outcomes for people. Members of the Safeguarding Board sit on the PSB to seek to understand the major issues faced by each partner organization in the region.

Community Safety Partnerships

The Board works closely with the Community Safety Partnerships on common areas of interest, such as domestic violence, substance misuse, anti-social behaviour and domestic homicide reviews.

Together for Mental Health Partnership

Close working between the Board and the Together for Mental Health Partnership continues to address suicide and self harm prevention.

Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board

Members of the Board participate in the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (WSP) Project Board to ensure that the WSP for children and adults, along with the accompanying practice guides, remain fit for purpose and are adopted appropriately.

Welsh Government

The Board works closely with the Safeguarding and Advocacy Division of the Welsh Government on matters including Adult and Child Practice Reviews, safeguarding-related legislation and policies and as part of wider networks across Wales. This includes other Welsh Safeguarding Boards.

We also work closely with the Welsh Government's Regional Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Co-ordinator, who sits on the Board's suicide prevention groups and has worked alongside partner agencies to develop our strategic response.

National Independent Safeguarding Board (NISB)

A member of the NISB attends each Board meeting and provides advice and guidance in relation to safeguarding from a national, independent perspective.

Social Care Wales

The Board has contributed to the development of the National Training Framework, led by Social Care Wales and launched during Safeguarding Week 2022.

Advocacy Providers

Advocacy providers sit on the Board's Adult Quality Assurance and Performance Sub Group to ensure that the voices of adults at risk are heard.

Third Sector

We continue to seek opportunities to work with the third sector to improve safeguarding approaches in the region. This has been particularly evident in our work to tackle suicides, through a third sector engagement group.

Department of Work and Pensions

This year we have engaged with the DWP to enhance our approaches to suicide prevention, with DWP officers attending the suicide prevention groups and feeding into our strategic response.

8. Participation and Involving

Children, young people or adults who are affected by the exercise of the Safeguarding Board's functions should be given the opportunity to participate in the work of the Board.

The information below highlights some of the work that has been carried out during 2022-2023.

Exploitation

The Safeguarding Board's Communications and Engagement Officer and partners of the Board met with Merthyr Tydfil Youth Forum to discuss exploitation and to find out their views on exploitation, in order to help to inform the regional Exploitation Strategy which is being developed.



The Board's Communications and Engagement Officer met with a group of young people at Interlink to speak about Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board and also exploitation.



Colleagues from RCTCBC's Children Services and Community Safety Department met with pupils from Pontypridd High School to discuss exploitation and feeling/keeping safe. The group of young girls produced a presentation which they delivered during Safeguarding Week at the practitioners' event on 'Safeguarding Children and Young People from Exploitation'.

Other Engagement

Members of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board attended community engagement events, referred to as 'Hackathons' which were arranged by the Regional Partnership Board.

Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service

Through their 'Right Hook' project, Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service has been raising awareness and educating young people in their service on:

- Exploitation, safety and wellbeing
- Reducing violence, offending and anti-social behaviour
- Substance misuse

- In addition to engaging with the young people, staff have also been engaging with the family and carers before and after sessions.

This Project has created a safe space for young people to feel comfortable to engage in constructive activities, which has led to improved self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as providing opportunities for the young people to speak with YOS staff about any issues they may want to discuss. This has helped to break down barriers to engagement.

Bridgend College

Bridgend College arranged for three Forum Theatre sessions to be delivered for students on the child sexual and criminal exploitation.

RCT Children's Services

RCTCBC's Children's Services Participation Officer has been working with Voices from Care to carry out a number of events for care experienced young people to seek their views on various issues.

Some positives comments that were given by the young people are that they felt they had secure placements with trusting adults and carers.

The things they thought that could be improved, include:

- More wellbeing activities
- Anti-bullying advice
- CLA issue-based training for teachers and support staff.

The Participation Officer has liaised with the CLA Education Team Head Teacher and Voices from Care regarding these comments, to see what can be done to address them.

Action Research Project for Safeguarding Older People from Suicide in Cwm Taf Morgannwg

Work is continuing on this project, with the aim to capture and analyse the voices of older people across the region, with the focus being on older people with suicidal thoughts.

It is hoped that one of the outcomes of this project is to be able to understand that risk factors that contribute to people attempting suicide and to identify gaps in services and support. In addition, the project will try to interview family members who are either in a caring role or who have been or are affected by suicide in some capacity.

Case Study - Child Protection Conference – Parental Advocacy Pilot

With the support of grant funding from Welsh Government, MTCBC Children's Services commissioned a pilot of parental advocacy. This included an issue based parental advocacy offer along with a standard offer of parental advocacy for all parents attending Child Protection Conferences.

The initial pilot phase considered a control group which did not access parental advocacy and a cohort that access parental advocacy and analysed their experiences of attending a Child Protection Conference. The methodology of evaluation included:

- Consultation with all stakeholders
- Analysis of conference minutes from conferences involving parents who were offered an advocate and those who were not, in the same timeframe.

Feedback and analysis of conference minutes in this small scale project overwhelmingly indicated that having a parent advocate has enabled parents to engage with the conference process better and to feel more confident in sharing their views, wishes and feelings. Their understanding of the process also appears to have improved as a result.

Based on the positive feedback funding was identified for a 12 month project of parental advocacy where there is a standard offer of parental advocacy for all parents and person with parental responsibility for initial and Review Child Protection Conferences.

Social Media

Throughout the year, information on a range of safeguarding issues for both the public and professionals was shared on the Board's Facebook page and its Twitter account, and posts from other organisations were also shared and retweeted, providing information and signposting to various support services.

The Safeguarding Board supported a number of awareness days, including:

- Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week
- White Ribbon Day
- World Mental Health Day
- World Suicide Prevention Day

Safeguarding Week

Safeguarding Week took place from 14th until 18th November and the theme for Cwm Taf Morgannwg was exploitation.

A multi-agency task group was set up to plan for the week and a programme of events was developed, which included events on training on various forms of exploitation affecting children, young people and adults in our communities.

The programme can be viewed by selecting this [link](#).

One of the key events that took place was the 'Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults from Exploitation' event that was aimed at practitioner and took place face-to-face at the University of South Wales' Conference Centre in Treforest. There were a numbers of speakers delivering presentations on a range of topics relating to exploitation. The event was well attended and the presentations were well received.

9. Contributions of Board Members

Each Safeguarding Board partner has a responsibility to ensure that the Board is operating effectively. There are clearly defined Terms of Reference as well as role profiles for Board members.

The Board continues to review the effectiveness of measures taken by partners and other bodies in relation to safeguarding via quality assurance, audits, and performance management. All the required statutory partner agencies in Cwm Taf Morgannwg are represented on the Board, Operational Committees, and Sub Groups, and attendance is monitored at these meetings.

Attendance at the Board and Joint Operational Committee meetings is presented in the table below:



AGENCY	ATTENDANCE AT BOARD (6 meetings)	ATTENDANCE AT OPERATIONAL COMMITTEE (4 meetings)
Director (RCT)	6	Not applicable
Director (MT)	6	
Director (BCBC)	6	
RCT Children Services	6	4
RCT Adult Services	6	4
RCT Public Protection	2	0
RCT Education	4	3
MT Children Services	6	4
MT Adult Services	5	2
MT Public Protection	1	0
MT Education	4	1
Bridgend Children Services	6	3
Bridgend Adult Services	6	3
Bridgend Public Protection	2	1
Bridgend Education	3	2
Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board	6	3
South Wales Police	6	4
National Probation Service	5	4
Parc Prison	4	N/A

Partner agencies also provide the Board with an annual report demonstrating their contribution and commitment to safeguarding. This is summarised below.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC)

Representatives from MTCBC are actively involved in all meetings and Sub Groups of the Board, including the chairing of the Board, Executive Board, Strategic Suicide Group and the Protocols and Procedures Sub Group. Statistics indicate that MTCBC contributes by Chairing and participating in Board and subgroup/task and finish group meetings above the expected percentage. Attendance at all groups can be challenging given that there is only a small number of people in the MTCBC structure of a sufficient level to contribute to the work of the Board. This has been included in the Local Authority's Corporate Risk Register.

The Education Department within Merthyr Tydfil has attended Board and relevant subgroup meetings throughout the year and contributed when required. Recruitment into key posts within the tail end of the financial year has provided a greater scope for further contribution and participation with consistent personnel moving forward.

Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC)

Representatives from BCBC are actively involved in all meetings and Sub Groups of the Board. The Director acts as the vice chair of the Board and chairs the Exploitation Steering Group. Representatives have attended workshops, planning days and team meetings which have contributed to the setting of actions to meet the boards priorities for its annual plan.

BCBC has also contributed fully to participating in Child and Adult practice reviews, learning events and provided Panel members and Chairs where required. There was a robust contribution to the significant child practice review in relation to Child T, assisting an extremely challenging and difficult review but ensuring information was shared to support any areas of good practice and those for future learning

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC)

RCT Adult Services have representation on all of the Board's sub-groups and have an excellent track record in attendance. The Director chairs the Joint Operational Committee. The Service Manager for Safeguarding chairs the Adult Safeguarding Quality Assurance & Performance sub-group and the RCT Self-Neglect Panel and vice-chairs the Engagement, Participation & Communication sub-group. Adult Services have had a Panel member on all relevant Adult Practice, Domestic Homicide and Mental Health Homicide Reviews. The Service Manager has also acted as Chair on one Adult Practice Review and has been a Reviewer for one recently completed Child Practice Review.

RCT Children Services continues to provide a high level of contribution to the work of the Board through regular attendance at and participation in the work of all of the Subgroups to the Board. In 2022-2023 RCTCBC has chaired the Children Quality Assurance Panel and vice chaired the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) sub-group alongside undertaking the lead role in the development of the Exploitation Strategy. Children Services have also contributed to Immediate Response Groups and Adult and Child Practice Reviews in the roles of Chair and/or Reviewer.

South Wales Police

South Wales Police have provided panel members for all CPRs, APRs and DHRs undertaken in Cwm Taf Morgannwg in 2022-2023. In addition, South Wales Police have provided staff to act as the Reviewer and Chair in several reviews. A member of the police staff acts as vice-chair of the Joint Review Group, vice-chair of the Suicide Review Group and chairs the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) sub-group, alongside supporting the development of the Exploitation Strategy.

Her Majesty's Prison and Young Offenders Institute Parc

Prison staff attend the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board meetings, as well as other Sub Group meetings. The Adult Safeguarding Lead undertook the Child Practice Review training in November 2022 and the Offensive Weapon Review training.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB)

CTMUHB are active participants in all of the Board and sub group work. Both the Head and Deputy have undertaken chairing arrangements for the MASH QA and Suicide Review Group. Health attended and contributed to the CTMSB Development Day and subsequent Annual Plan. Representatives from Health take on the role of Chairs, reviewers and consistent panel members for Reviews. The Health Board were very active in this year's Safeguarding Week, promoting training and resources on a variety of safeguarding issues affecting both children and adults

WAST

During 2022-2023, WAST Safeguarding Team contributed 3 Adult Practice Reviews, 1 Child Practice Review and 7 PRUDICs. WAST was also involved in information sharing for 19 Section 126 Adult at Risk Strategy discussions. Representatives attended the Joint Review Group, Policies & Procedures Group and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board

10. Managing our Resources

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board uses the funding formula set out in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2016 statutory guidance. This allows us to assess and identify annual financial contributions from statutory partner agencies.

This is calculated as follows:

Agency	% Split	% Split
Rhondda-Cynon-Taf CBC	60%	55%
Bridgend CBC		32%

Merthyr Tydfil CBC		13%
Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB		25%
South Wales Police		10%
Probation Service		5%
Totals		100%

In 2022-2023 expenditure was as follows:

Staff	£355,955
Premises	£8,890
Other	£51,400
WG Grant Income (SUSR)	-£10,500
Total	£405,745

Training costs are not included as this sits outside the Board budget.

11. Other Board Activities

Adult Protection and Support Orders (APSOs)

Adult Protection and Support Orders have been available since the 2016 implementation of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 but have been used rarely. There were no APSO applications APSOs in 2022-2023.

Guidance and Advice received from the Welsh Ministers and/or the National Board

The Board continues to work closely with Welsh Government and the National Board and responds promptly to requests for information. A good relationship has been established with the NISB member for the region, and support has been provided on a number of occasions when seeking to commission independent reviewers or to influence national processes and guidance.

Section 137 requests for information

Section 137(1) of the Act provides a Safeguarding Board with the power to request



specified information from a qualifying person or body provided that the purpose of the request is to enable or assist the Board to perform its functions under the Act.

In 2022-2023 the Board did not use its Section 137 powers to access information.

Are You Concerned About Someone?

If you suspect that a **child or young person** is being harmed or is at risk of being harmed then you have a duty to report it immediately. All calls concerning worries about children are treated seriously. Contact your local Safeguarding Team on the numbers provided below:

In Rhondda Cynon Taf: 01443 425006
In Merthyr Tydfil: 01685 725000
In Bridgend: 01656 642320

Opening Hours:

Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm
Friday - 8.30am - 4.30pm

If you suspect that an **adult** is being harmed or is at risk of being harmed then you have a duty to report it immediately. All calls concerning worries about vulnerable adults at risk are treated seriously. Contact your local Safeguarding Team on the numbers provided below:

In Rhondda Cynon Taf: 01443 425003
In Merthyr Tydfil: 01685 725000
In Bridgend: 01656 642477

Opening Hours:

Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm
Friday - 8.30am - 4.30pm

To contact Children or Adults Services outside office hours, at weekends and bank holidays, call:

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Emergency Duty Team on **01443 743665**.

If you suspect that a child, young person or an adult is at immediate risk of harm call 999 and speak to the Police.

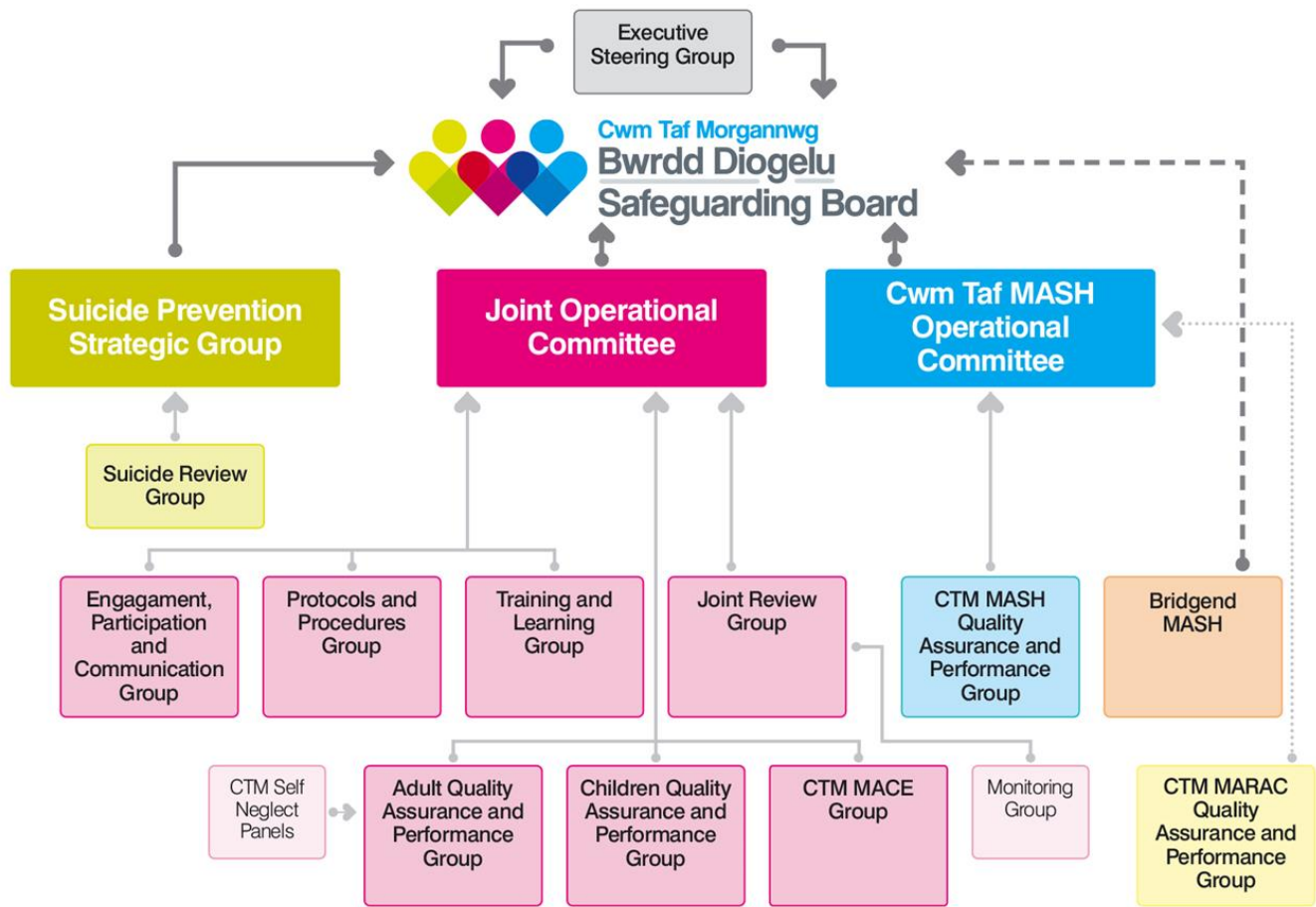
If you would like to report a non-urgent incident, or have a problem or general query, you can call 101, the 24 hour non-emergency number for the police. **Use 101 when the incident is less urgent than 999.**

APPENDIX 1 - BOARD MEMBERSHIP

TITLE	AGENCY
Director of Social Services (Chair)	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Director of Social Services and Wellbeing (Vice Chair)	Bridgend County Borough Council
Director of Social Services (Chair of the Joint Operational Committee)	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Adult Safeguarding Service Manager	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Director, Public Health	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Head of Partnerships (Children)	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Director of Education and Inclusion Services	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Service Director, Children Services	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Head of Legal - Community Care and Children	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Prison Director	Parc Prison
Head of Safeguarding	Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
Named Doctor	Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
Deputy Executive Nurse Director	Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
Head of Service	Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service
Head of Service	Youth Justice Service, Bridgend
Named Lead for Safeguarding	Public Health Wales
Designated Nurse (National Safeguarding Team)	Public Health Wales
Head of Probation	Probation Service
Director of Education	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Head of Public Protection	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Head of Adult Services	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Principal Safeguarding Manager	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Head of Children Services	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Head of Adult Social Care	Bridgend County Borough Council
Head of Children's Social Care	Bridgend County Borough Council
Head of Education and Family Services	Bridgend County Borough Council
Group Manager	Bridgend County Borough Council
Head of Public Protection	Bridgend County Borough Council
Head of Adult Safeguarding and Secure Estate	Bridgend County Borough Council
Superintendent	South Wales Police
Head of Protecting Vulnerable Persons	South Wales Police
Assistant Director Quality, Safety & Patient Experience	Welsh Ambulance Service Trust
NISB Member	National Independent Safeguarding Board
Safeguarding Lead Officer	South Wales Fire & Rescue Service

APPENDIX 2 – BOARD STRUCTURE



Glossary of Terms

Adult Practice Review (APR)

The Regional Safeguarding Board must commission an Adult Practice Review in cases where an adult at risk has died, sustained potentially life threatening injury or sustained serious and permanent impairment of health.

Child Practice Review (CPR)

The Regional Safeguarding Board must commission a Child Practice Review in cases where a child has died, sustained potentially life threatening injury or sustained serious and permanent impairment of health.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Children in exploitative situations and relationships receive something such as gifts, money or affection as a result of performing sexual activities or others performing sexual activities on them.

Children Looked After (CLA)

A child is looked after by a local authority if a court has granted a care order to place a child in care, or a council's children's services department has cared for the child for more than 24 hours.

Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

Statutory partnership to develop and implement strategies to tackle crime and disorder including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment.

Domestic Homicide Review (DHR)

A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is a locally conducted multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by: a person to whom he or she was related, or with whom he or she was or had been in an intimate personal relationship; or, a member of the same household as himself or herself.

Exploitation

Exploitation is a type of abuse. Exploitation involves being groomed, forced or coerced into doing something that you don't want to do for someone else's gain.

Immediate Response Groups (IRG)

A group which is convened to provide a rapid, multi-agency response to managing the consequences of a critical incidents, such as the unexpected death of an adult and is led by the Police Superintendent (or a suitable deputy).

MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment

A weekly risk management meeting where professionals share information on high risk cases of domestic violence and abuse and put in place a risk management plan.

Modern Slavery

The illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. It covers a wide range of abuse and exploitation including sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced labour, criminal exploitation and organ harvesting.

Multi-Agency Practitioner Forum (MAPF)

Multi-agency professional forums are a mechanism for producing organisational learning, improving the quality of work with families and strengthening the ability of services to keep children safe. They utilise case information, findings from child protection audits, inspections and reviews to develop and disseminate learning to improve local knowledge and practice and to inform the Board's future audit and training priorities.

Public Protection Notice (PPN)

The forms have two main purposes. One is for police officers to make referrals to partner agencies when they have concerns about vulnerable people. The PPN is also used as a risk assessment tool for victims of domestic abuse and stalking and harassment (DASH).

PRUDIC (Procedural Response to Unexplained Deaths in Infants and Children)

This procedure sets a minimum standard for a response to unexpected deaths in infancy and childhood. It describes the process of communication, collaborative action and

information sharing following the unexpected death of a child.

Quality Assurance and Performance Groups

Two separate groups for adults and children whose objectives are to monitor the effectiveness of agencies' practice within the processes of safeguarding and encourage high standards of practice by all those involved in safeguarding work, promoting agency and individual accountability through the monitoring and evaluation of performance.

Self Neglect

Self-neglect is a general term used to describe a vulnerable adult living in a way that puts his or her health, safety, or well-being at risk.

Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act is the law for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support.

Strategy Discussion/Meeting

A meeting for social workers and other professionals to plan what they are going to do next about a case.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 focusses on the prevention of these issues, the protection of victims and support for those affected by such issues.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES ANNUAL REPORT – 2022/23

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH COUNCILLOR GARETH CAPLE, CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

**Author: Jayne Thomas, Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints
Manager. Tel. No. 01443 281475**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the Council's statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.
- 1.2 The report contains information on the background of the Social Services statutory complaints procedure, information on lessons learnt from complaints and performance data for Adults and Children's Social Services, together with achievements for 2022/23 and future developments.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the content of this report and the Social Services Annual Representations and Complaints report for 2022/23, attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Note the work undertaken by the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is a requirement of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations Procedure 2014 that the Local Authority produce an annual report and that the report is considered by the appropriate Committee.

4. **BACKGROUND**

4.1 Social Services has a statutory requirement to operate a complaints procedure that follows the legislative requirements of the regulations specified above. The guidance requires an annual report to be produced relating to the operation of the complaints procedure.

4.2 The Social Services complaints procedure is available to:

- All service users or their representatives
- Any child with a care and support plan
- A parent of a child with a care and support plan.
- A local authority foster parent
- A person who the Authority consider to have sufficient interest in the child's/adult's welfare

It is based upon the principle that people have a right to complain; to have the complaint examined and resolved as quickly as possible.

4.3 The complaints process was amended in August 2014 in line with the new Complaints Regulations and Guidance issued by the Welsh Government and became a two stage process:

Stage One: Local Resolution – The emphasis at this stage of the process is to resolve the complaint by means of discussion and problem solving, whilst adhering to the 15 working days response time that has been imposed under the Regulations.

Stage Two: Formal Consideration – If the complainant remains dissatisfied after completion of stage one, they may request that the complaint proceeds to stage two of the process. This involves a formal investigation of the complaint with a report being produced by the investigating officer appointed to the case. The timescale for dealing with this stage is 25 working days.

4.4 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage two investigation, they may progress their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.

5. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

5.1 There are no equality and diversity or socio-economic implications arising directly from this report.

6. **WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no Welsh Language implications arising directly from this report. The Annual Report is available in Welsh.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

7.1 This report includes feedback from service users directly in the form of compliments, complaints and contacts to the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team.

7.2 The [Community Services Scrutiny Committee – 25th September 2023](#) were provided with the opportunity to pre-scrutinise the Annual report. Members queried the lessons learnt from the compliments and complaints received to the service and quality assurance process. Members requested further data in relation to any trends in the complaints received.

7.3 The report has also been considered by the Council's [Governance and Audit Committee on 12th October 2023](#).

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 The work of the Complaints and Representation Unit is underpinned by the requirements of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. This report has been produced in line with the legislative requirements contained within those procedures.

10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

10.1 The function of the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team and the collation of service user feedback through both complaints and compliments provide a quality assurance mechanism by which Adults and Children's Services can measure their performance against the corporate priorities to:

- Improve the experience of those using Health and Social Care Services.
- Engage with and use Customer Feedback to redesign our services.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Social Services continue to provide a robust and effective complaints procedure in line with the statutory requirements. Complaints are seen as providing valuable customer feedback, with the information from complaints providing valuable lessons learnt when planning and improving services to meet the needs of our customers.
- 11.2 Further details and analysis about the number and nature of complaints and compliments for 2022/23 and the service areas where these have been made are provided in Appendix 1. The annual report also outlines some of the achievements and developments undertaken by the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team during the year.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

**SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS
PROCEDURES ANNUAL REPORT – 2022/23**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE
RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR CAPLE.**

Background Papers

Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations Procedure 2014

[Social services complaints procedure | GOV.WALES](#)

**Officer to contact: Jayne Thomas, Customer Feedback, Engagement and
Improvement Manager. Tel. No. 01443 281475**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

SOCIAL SERVICES

REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

ANNUAL REPORT

2022/23



1. INTRODUCTION

It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to have in place a representations and complaints procedure for Social Services.

Each local authority is required to produce an annual report concerning the operation of its representation and complaints procedure.

This annual report provides information about the operation of the Social Services Representation and Complaints Procedure between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. The report contains information about the number and type of complaints received and also provides details of the activities undertaken by the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team during that period to develop the representation and complaints service.

2. BACKGROUND

Social Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf adopts a positive attitude towards complaints and views them as a valuable form of feedback, which assists in the development and improvement of services. Complaints also provide an opportunity to learn lessons where a service has fallen short of an expected standard.

The representation and complaints procedure is widely publicised generally and specifically to people who use our services and provides them with an opportunity to:

- ❖ Voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied in order that the issue can be rectified to their satisfaction, wherever possible
- ❖ Make compliments
- ❖ Suggest improvements
- ❖ Challenge decisions

The aim is for our representation and complaints procedure to secure a better service for all the people using social care services and is underpinned by the following key principles:

- ❖ Commitment to providing quality services
- ❖ Accessible and supportive to those with particular needs
- ❖ Prompt and responsive with resolution at the earliest possible opportunity
- ❖ Strong problem solving element
- ❖ Operated without prejudice or discrimination
- ❖ Adheres to the principle of equal opportunity

The representation and complaints procedure also provides an opportunity for service users to address concerns in relation to independent sector providers

where they remain dissatisfied following implementation of the agencies own internal complaints procedures.

The Social Services complaints process has two stages:

Stage One: Local Resolution – The emphasis at this stage of the process is to resolve the complaint by means of discussion and problem solving. The complainant will be offered a discussion about the issues they have raised and this can either be done by telephone or face to face in an attempt to resolve the issues. This must be done within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint. Following this discussion and any further investigation that is necessary, a written response will be provided within 5 working days.

Stage Two: Formal Consideration – If the complainant remains dissatisfied after completion of stage one, they may request that the complaint proceeds to stage two of the process. This involves a formal investigation of the complaint with a report being produced by an independent investigating officer. The timescale for dealing with this stage is 25 working days.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage two investigation, they may progress their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.

3. STAGE 1 'INFORMAL' COMPLAINTS

In 2022/23 there were a total of 129 recorded complaints during the year, compared with 110 in the previous year. Children's services have seen a 53% increase with adult services seeing a 9.5% decrease in numbers of complaints received.

Of the Stage 1 complaints that were received across both service areas 45.74%(59) were responded to within statutory timescales which is an increase from 42% in 2021/22. Whilst this is an improvement it does not meet the Complaints Standards Authority suggested target of 75%. This year has seen particular difficulties in Children's Services with higher numbers of complaints, staff vacancies and subsequent pressure on teams resulting in only 35% of complaints dealt within timescales.

Adult Services received less complaints in this period and achieved 60% of complaints closed within the statutory 15 working day period.

Ongoing support to teams from the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team has been provided throughout this period and where possible the team have sought to resolve low level complaints and queries outside of the complaints process. This is reflected in the number of contacts recorded (228) which represents a 38% increase compared with figures for 2021/22. Of the contacts dealt with only 2 contacts progressed to complaints.

Adult Services

57 complaints were received for Adult Services during the year. This represents a slight decrease on the total amount received in 2021/22 when 63 complaints were received.

Of the complaints made about Adult Services, 2 (3.5%) were made by the service users themselves and 55 (96.5%) were made by their representatives e.g. carers, family members and advocates. These figures highlight the reliance of many adults on their family and carers to raise issues on their behalf and remains consistent with comments received as part of the Social Services Performance Measures Survey undertaken in January 2023.

Details of complaints received recorded by Service Area are summarised in Table 1 and compares them with the previous year.

Table 1: Summary of complaints by Service Area

Service Area	2021/22	2022/23
Long Term Assessment - Locality Teams	22	26
Short Term Intervention Support @ Home	2	0
Short Term Intervention - ACE	4	5
Short Term Intervention – Sensory Services	1	0
Mental Health	4	2
Finance/Grants	2	1
Residential Care RCT	5	3
Independent Sector Residential Care	1	1
Independent Sector Domiciliary Care	18	6
Short Term Intervention – Short Term Care Management	0	3
Community Reviewing Team	3	2
Day Services	0	1
Cross cutting	0	3
Complex Learning Difficulty Team	1	4
Total	63	57

The highest number of complaints were received by the Long Term Assessment Teams which is consistent with Children's Services and reflects the complex nature of providing longer term care and support.

Table 2 sets out in more detail what the complaints were about and compares them with the previous year.

Table 2: Summary of what complaints were about

Nature of Complaint	2021/22	2022/23
Failure to provide a service	6	5
Financial issues	3	1
Lack of information/communication	19	13
Staff issues	1	6
Quality of care	14	13
Quality of service	13	10
Care and Support Plan	1	1
Change in Call times	1	1
Issues Around Standards	1	1
Missed Calls	1	1
Waiting for Assessment	3	1
Adaptations	0	4
Total	63	57

Of the 57 Stage 1 complaints received for Adults Services, 55 were resolved locally, and one complaint was withdrawn. 1 complaint progressed to Stage 2 of the process.

Children's Services

72 Complaints about Children's Services were received during the year. This represents a 53% increase compared to 2021/22 when 47 complaints were received. 71 complaints made about Childrens Services were made by Parents/Carers/Representatives with 1 complaint being made by two young people. Table 3 sets out the complaints received recorded by service area and compares them with the previous year.

Table 3: Summary of complaints by Service Area

Service area	2021/22	2022/23
Safeguarding	1	0
Miskin Project	1	0
Intensive Intervention	28	42
IAA and Safeguarding	1	0
16+ Team	2	2
IAA	1	2
Enquiry and Assessment	6	18
Enquiry and Assessment and DCT	1	0
DCT 11+	2	5
DCT 0-11	2	2
Information Management	1	1
OT	1	0
Total	47	72

Of the 72 complaints received 5 progressed to Stage 2 Complaints.

Representations

There was 1 representation received from children in this reporting period relating to the failure of a commissioned provider to provide services in line with their ethnic and religious beliefs. The complaint was raised on the young people's behalf by their translator/advocate and was immediately resolved.

The Council commissions an Independent Advocacy Provider for children and young people in line with the requirements of the Social Services Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 and the National Approach to Advocacy. This involves all children over the age of 5yrs being offered the support of an advocate when they become a Child Looked After or subject to Safeguarding arrangements.

The Advocacy Service supports children and young people to have their say and effectively supports children and young people to raise any concerns about their care and support. Whilst it is positive to see representations by children and young people it is reassuring that the commissioned advocacy service is supporting young people to resolve issues successfully outside of the complaints procedure.

Table 4: Summary of complaints from Parents/Carers

Nature of complaint	2021/22	2022/23
Failure to provide a service	4	3
Lack of information/communication	13	29
Quality of Care/Service	9	14
Staff issues	15	18
Contact Issues	3	1
Information Governance	2	5
Safeguarding	1	0
Challenge to information	0	1
Equality	0	1
Total	47	72

Lack of information/communication complaints are higher this year and again reflect the challenges face by Children's Services over the past 12 months. Staff issues also remain consistent and often relate to less positive outcomes for families with responsible workers often the subject of complaints relating to assessment and court decisions.

It is often the case that complaints in relation to lack of information are resolved following a discussion and an explanation of the situation/process. It is noted that advocacy can and does assist in helping parents to work through and understand statutory interventions and it may be beneficial for Children's Services to consider the use of parental advocacy in these situations.

4. CONTACTS AND CONCERNS

This year the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team has again focused on attempting to resolve issues at source where this is considered appropriate and have worked collaboratively with managers across both services resulting in a reduction in complaints being passed to front line services.

In 2022/23 the Team dealt with a total of 228 contacts compared with 165 in 2021/22. Of the contacts received only 2 complaints progressing to Stage 1. 106 contacts related to Adult Services and 122 contacts were received for Children's Services. The Team also received 25 concerns where the subject specified that they did not wish to make a complaint but where action was identified as necessary. These were recorded and passed to the relevant service area where they were successfully resolved.

5. STAGE 2 'FORMAL' COMPLAINTS

Overall, there were 9 Stage 2 complaints made during 2022/23 which remains consistent with last year.

Adult Services

There were 4 stage 2 complaints received for Adult Services, as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Summary of complaints made at Stage 2

Nature of complaint	2021/22	2022/23
Failure to Provide a Service	1	1
Quality of Service	1	2
Quality of Care	0	1
Total	2	4

Children's Services

There were 5 Stage 2 complaints received relating to Children's Services, as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Summary of complaints made at Stage 2

Nature of complaint	2021/22	2022/23
Quality of Service/Care	5	4
Failure to provide a Service	1	0
Staff Issues	0	0
Lack of Information/Communication	1	0
Safeguarding Issues	0	1
Total	7	5

6. OMBUDSMAN Enquiries/Complaints

In 2022/23, 21 complaints were made to the Public Services Ombudsman, 13 for Children's Services and 8 for Adult Services.

There were no Ombudsman investigations with all complaints being closed or directed back to the council for resolution.

7. LEARNING THE LESSONS

A number of recommendations for improvements have been identified following complaints made at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Complaints process. Some of these have already been actioned and resulted in service change, training for staff and informing wider service planning. Learning themes will contribute to the overall quality assurance, learning and improvement process in both adult and children's services.

- ❖ Exploring how Children's Services can adapt services and/or develop services to meet the needs of carers of and young people with neuro diverse conditions.
- ❖ Need to Improve case recordings to accurately reflect and differentiate between unsubstantiated and substantiated concerns in assessments and court reports.
- ❖ Exploring with practitioners how work with absent fathers can be improved to ensure they are fully involved in the care planning and review processes.
- ❖ Training for staff of Resilient Families Service on judgments relating to unlawful chastisement.
- ❖ Ensuring individuals with additional needs and their families are clear about the Henregwilym assessment flat provision and its purpose.
- ❖ Support@Home training and instruction for staff on planning system and completing home files.
- ❖ Staff reminded to ensure service users aware of the right of appeal when providing information relating to Continuing Health Care Assessments.
- ❖ Ensure complaints literature is up-to-date and available in a range of formats.
- ❖ Miskin service to arrange training for staff in relation to working with individuals with sensory impairments.
- ❖ Improved public information on the Miskin project to be developed to include details of the project, use of Welsh language and identification of protected characteristics.
- ❖ Review of arrangements for sharing relevant documents with families as part of the child Protection process.

8. COMPLIMENTS

Compliments provide valuable information regarding the quality of services that are provided and identify where they are working well. The number of compliments recorded in 2022/23 was 144 compared to 182 received in 2021/22.

Adult Services

In 2022/23 there were 74 compliments received for Adult Services, this is a slight increase on figures for 2021/22. (66 compliments received). Table 7 sets out the number of compliments recorded by Service Area.

Table 7: Summary of compliments received.

Service areas	Number	Percentage
Long Term Assessment - Locality Teams	21	28.38%
Mobile Responder Team and Lifeline	1	1.35%
Mobile Responder Team	3	4.05%
Short Term Care Management	4	5.41%
Community Review Team	5	6.76%
Hospital Discharge Team	7	9.46%
Support@ Home H/C	29	39.19%
Residential Care RCT	4	5.41%
Total	74	100%

The following are examples of some of the compliments received for Adult Services during 2022/23

- *Son and family wanted to thank this person for all his help at during a very difficult time and said that he "is credit to his role".*
- *Family of SU wanted to formally thank SW for the care and support given and truly have gone about and beyond.*
- *Compliment received from SU "Your service has been tremendous, I can't thank you all enough".*
- *Daughter wanted to pass on thanks when assessor has been working with her mother and stated that "She is so lovely and helpful".*
- *Gifts were received from Service User's daughter for each carer that looked after her mother and will be sending a special thank you to the funeral service.*
- *Daughter had observed carers while they were working with mam and wanted to pass on positive comments on how professional they both were and that they are doing an "Excellent " job.*

- *Service user and daughter wanted message of thanks to be passed on because of everything that has been done to help them after a telephone assessment was completed.*
- *Family has sent an email to team thanking social worker "Over the last 3 months Ruth as gone above and beyond. At a time of desperate need.*
- *Husband and Servicer User wants to thank Team Manager and Team for their kindness and help when receiving help following a hospital discharge.*
- *Family wanted to pass on how thankful and grateful they are for the quick thinking of carer and has been brilliant.*
- *Service User and son said that service received was "Epic and thank you"*
- *Service User has thanked SW for all the effort to resolve a issues raised following a complaint made and they will be "Eternally grateful."*
- *Granddaughter has sent email to team so that the social worker can be recognised for her hard work and how "Extremely grateful" they are to them.*

Children's Services

The number of compliments recorded in 2022/23 was 70 compared to 116 received in 2021/22. Table 8 sets out the number of compliments recorded by Service Area.

Table 8: Summary of compliments received

Service areas	Number	Percentage
Miskin Project	9	12.86%
Disabled Children's Team	5	7.14%
Intensive Intervention	21	30%
Enquiry & Assessment	1	1.43%
Carers Support	28	40%
Fostering Support	1	1.43%
Resilient Families	2	2.86%
Kinship Care	2	2.86%
16+ Team East	1	1.43%
Total	70	100%

The following are examples of some of the compliments received for Children's Services during 2022/23.

- *compliments received from facebook regarding the Tai Chi and Tea event that took place with the carers support project saying " It was lovely to take part today, thank you!"*
- *Mother passed on a lovely comment saying that Miskin Worker has "been an amazing help".*

- *Carer wanted to say thank you for making her aware of the carers grant on social media and that she has already received it.*
- *Foster parent wanted to highlight the "fantastic" work Social worker had provided from Resilient Families since day one.*
- *Young person wanted to thank and show appreciation for the love and support and mentioned that "I seriously wouldn't be where I am today with everything I have if I didn't have your support".*
- *Service User wants to thank the "Dynamic Duo" who has felt like family while helping mum through challenging times without judgement.*
- *Mother has sent a card to the Intensive Intervention team to thank them for the support and for "turning their life around".*
- *Service user has sent a text to miskin worker saying that "you've done so much for us and will hold a special place in our hearts"*

9. WORK PROGRAMME, PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- ❖ The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team has continued to provide support and advice to managers on complaint handling and has provided guidance on writing complaints responses for managers where need has been identified.
- ❖ The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team continues to support service areas with the management of unreasonable and persistent customers and provides advice on early interventions and appropriate use of the Council's UPC policy.
- ❖ In 2024 the Team will focus on undertaking refresher training for new managers and staff in both Children's and Adults Services as well as providing ongoing complaint induction sessions for all new social care staff.
- ❖ The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team has assisted with training for Advocates from Llais Complaints Advocacy Service, a new service to support individuals who wish to make a complaint about health or social care services.
- ❖ Complaints information on the Council's website is being reviewed to ensure individuals are clear as to the Social Services complaints process and what support is available to assist with making a complaint.
- ❖ Complaints information for Children and Young People to be reviewed and to updated to coincide with the review of information currently available on the 2sides website.
- ❖ All complaints literature to be reviewed to ensure information is up-to-date and available in a range of formats.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23 OCTOBER 2023

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK SCHEME – COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT – 2022/23

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES

Author: Jayne Thomas, Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager. Tel. No. 01443 281475

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the Council's Customer Feedback Scheme (CFS) between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report, the Customer Feedback Scheme (CFS) Annual Report for 2022/23 (Appendix 1) and the work undertaken by the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Whilst there is no current statutory requirement for the Local Authority to produce an Annual Report, it is important that customer feedback information and how it has been acted upon by the Council is reported to Members, as part of demonstrating sound governance arrangements in the delivery of services.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Management of the Customer Feedback Scheme merged with the existing management arrangements for the Social Services statutory process on January 1st 2019.
- 4.2 The Customer Feedback Scheme records all Comments, Compliments and Complaints received by both residents of RCT and those people visiting RCT

who access our facilities. The scheme does not cover complaints where there are other statutory arrangements in place such as complaints about Social Care or School complaints.

- 4.3 The complaints process is a two-stage process, as set out below, and is in line with the Public Services Ombudsman’s Model Complaints Policy. The Complaints Standards Authority has confirmed Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council’s compliance with this policy.

Stage One: Local Resolution – The emphasis at this stage of the process is early resolution of the complaint either by providing an explanation, putting things right or agreeing a way forward which may include identifying where improvements to services are necessary. The timescale for local resolution is 10 working days.

Stage Two: Formal Consideration – If the complainant remains dissatisfied after completion of stage one, they may request that the complaint proceeds to stage two of the process. This involves a formal investigation of the complaint with a report being produced by a Senior Council Officer. The timescale for dealing with this stage is 20 working days.

- 4.4 If the claimant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage two Investigation, they may progress their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.
- 4.5 Alongside the above arrangements, the Public Services Ombudsman Act 2019 provides the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) with investigative powers and, through the development of the Complaint’s Standards Authority, a role in monitoring standards, trends and patterns across public service delivery in Wales. The Council is, as part of this legislation, required to report on complaints activity to the PSOW.

5. **PROGRESS & IMPROVEMENT**

5.1 **Complaints Awareness and Training**

Training for staff was provided in 2023 by the PSOW Complaints Standards Authority on complaints handling and managing unreasonable customers. The 2023/24 training programme provided by the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team will focus on ‘what is a complaint’ and further improving data quality in respect of customer feedback. Targeted training sessions will also be provided to Services to inform service improvements as an outcome of complaints for areas such as “you said, we did”.

5.2 **System and Process Development**

The implementation of a new customer relationship management system provided an opportunity to review the complaints process and update service area information as part of an on-going programme of work to improve data quality and reporting. In parallel, the development of data dashboards have

further improved management information and are enabling monitoring reports for each service area to support service planning and delivery.

5.3 Improved Customer Feedback

Work will continue with services on how feedback is provided to residents and visitors to Rhondda Cynon Taf about how services have made improvements based on customer experiences. The 'You said, we did' webpage will be launched in Autumn 2023 in line with the revised and updated web information for the CFS.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 There are no equality and diversity or socio-economic implications arising directly from this report.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no Welsh Language implications arising directly from this report. The Annual Report is available in Welsh.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

8.1 No consultation has been undertaken in relation to this report as it provides information on the operation of the Customer Feedback Scheme and direct feedback from service users in relation to how well services are delivered through the monitoring of compliments, comments and complaints.

8.2 This report has also been considered by the Council's [Governance and Audit Committee on 12th October 2023](#), where the Committee determined that the arrangements supported the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively during 2022/23.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

9.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 The Customer Feedback Scheme is not a requirement of specific legislation; however, the administration of the work of the Complaints Feedback and Engagement Team is underpinned by the standards and expectations set by the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) and is subject to scrutiny under the powers afforded to the PSOW under the Public Services Ombudsman Act 2019.



11. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL- BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 11.1 The effective capture, review and use of customer feedback is a key part of informing service planning and delivery arrangements across all Council Services and, in doing so, supports all Corporate Plan priorities and underpins the principles as set out within the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 All customer feedback provides valuable information from which services can improve and develop. This data also enables services and the Council, as a whole, to better understand the needs of its residents and to assist in both the planning and delivery of services.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

**CUSTOMER FEEDBACK SCHEME – COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND
COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT – 2022/23**

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR OF
FINANCE, DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES**

Background Papers.

None.

**Officer to contact: Jayne Thomas, Customer Feedback, Engagement and
Improvement Manager. Tel. No. 01443 281475**

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**RHONDDA CYNON TAF CUSTOMER FEEDBACK
ANNUAL REPORT**

1ST APRIL 2022 – 31ST MARCH 2023



FOREWORD

This report provides an overview of the operation of the Customer Feedback Scheme (CFS) including details of the level of feedback received, as well as developments and improvements to the scheme for the year 2022/23.

Overall, customer contacts to the Council for 2022/23 have increased by almost 19% in comparison to 2021/22, with the number of CFS items remaining low and account for only 0.14% of contacts received. This position will be built on in 2023/24 to further improve the use of the CFS through encouraging customer interaction and the continual use of feedback to determine how well services are delivered and whether they are meeting customers' needs and their intended objectives.

Work to this end has already begun within service areas to improve how customer comments are captured and how developments and improvements can be fed back as part of 'you said we did'. Work to promote 'you said, we did' is currently being undertaken as part of the review of the Customer Feedback webpages along with exploring the potential for exploiting wider digital channels. In parallel, work this year has focused on further developing the CFS and also progressing digital improvement through the use of the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) GOSS digital platform, where all customer interactions including comments, compliments and complaints are recorded. The outcome of this work will support further improvement to monitoring and reporting arrangements, and also communication updates to customers who have provided feedback.

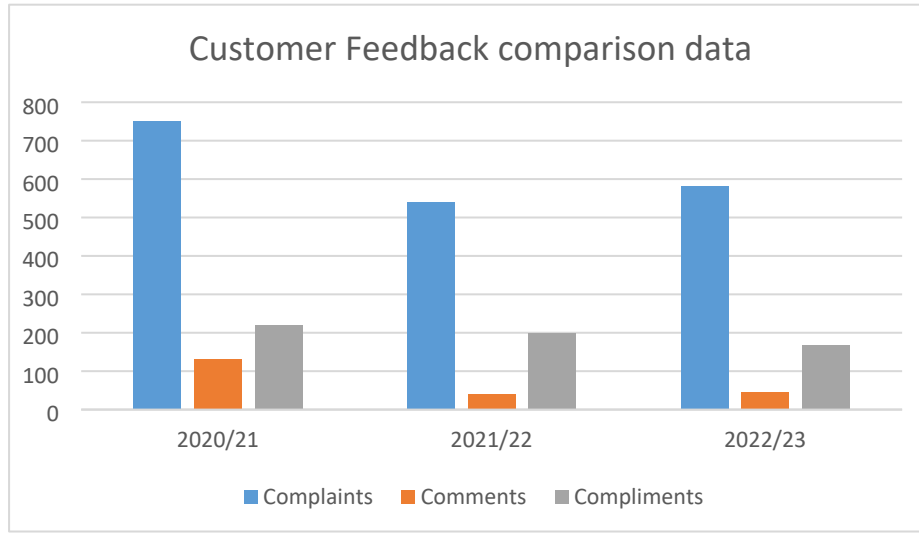
The Customer Feedback and Engagement Team continue to monitor customers interaction with the Council to ensure that the CFS offers a varied range of options that provide customers opportunity to feedback on services and make suggestions for improvements. The Team also continue to review and consider learning identified by other Councils through Ombudsman case books and direct contact with complaints officers across Wales and through regional and national forums.

Jayne Thomas, Service Improvement, Customer Feedback and Engagement Manager

SUMMARY OF CUSTOMER FEEDBACK FOR 2022/2023

Service Area	Complaints by Stage		Total complaints	Comments	Compliments	Total Feedback
	1	2				
Arts and Theatres	1	0	1	0	0	1
Benefits Council Tax	56	2	58	1	0	59
Customer Care	10	0	10	0	0	10
Corporate Estates	9	1	10	0	7	17
Cross Service Cases (Multiple services)	27	1	28	3	5	36
Education	13	0	13	2	7	22
E-Access	0	0	0	0	0	0
ESG, Highways and Street care	315	17	332	28	115	475
Information management	0	0	0	0	0	0
Legal (including elections and insurance)	1	0	1	0	0	1
Leisure	12	0	12	2	2	16
Libraries	0	0	0	0	2	2
Parks and Countryside	23	1	24	2	3	29
Prosperity and Development /Housing	25	1	26	1	1	28
Public Health and Protection	37	7	44	3	11	58
Strategy/Events	4	0	4	1	9	14
Cases falling outside of CFS	19	0	19	3	6	28
Total	552	30	582	46	168	796

KEY THEMES FOR CUSTOMER FEEDBACK



	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
• Complaints	750	540	582
• Comments	132	41	46
• Compliments	221	200	168
TOTAL	1103	781	796

Key Themes

- A total of 796 feedback items were logged for 2022/23 which is consistent with 2021/22 and lower than 2020/21.
- Customer comments remain low in this period representing 6% of all customer contacts received, with on-going focus being afforded to this area particularly for services where customer footfall is high.
- Customer feedback through the Council’s website and e-mail remains the preferred option for customers to communicate with 46% received through the Council’s webpage and 36% received directly via e-mail.
- There will be continued close working with services to support the on-going capture of customer feedback and its use to inform service planning and delivery.
- Where service areas have specific complaint management and reporting arrangements, for example, the Pension Service, this information has been excluded from this report.

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS

In 2022/23 the Council received 582 complaints through the Customer Feedback Scheme, 95% of which were resolved at Stage 1 with only 5% dealt with at Stage 2. This is a 1% improvement on the number dealt with at Stage 1 in 2021/22. The charts in Figures 1 and 2 detail the category of complaint where these were recorded on the CRM system and the complaint outcome.

Figure 1 – Complaint Categories 2022/23

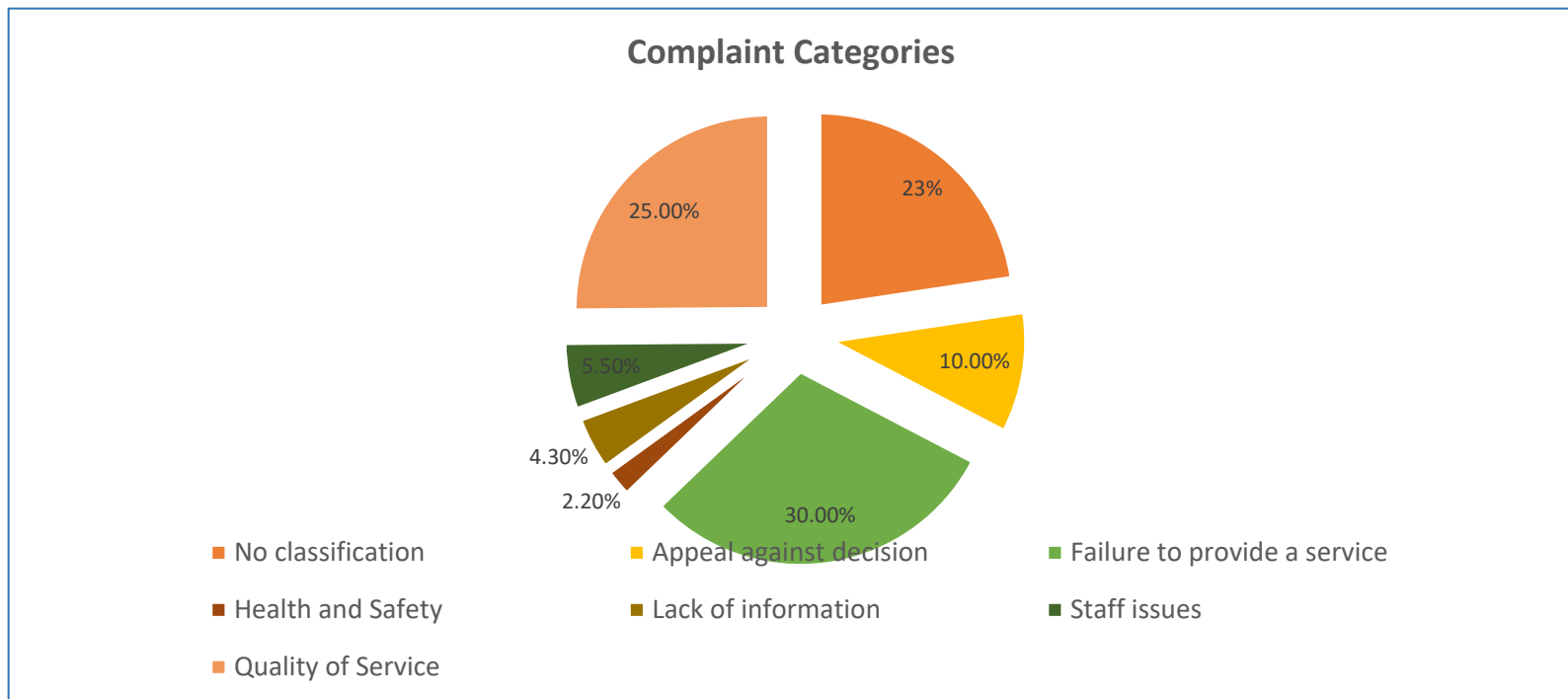
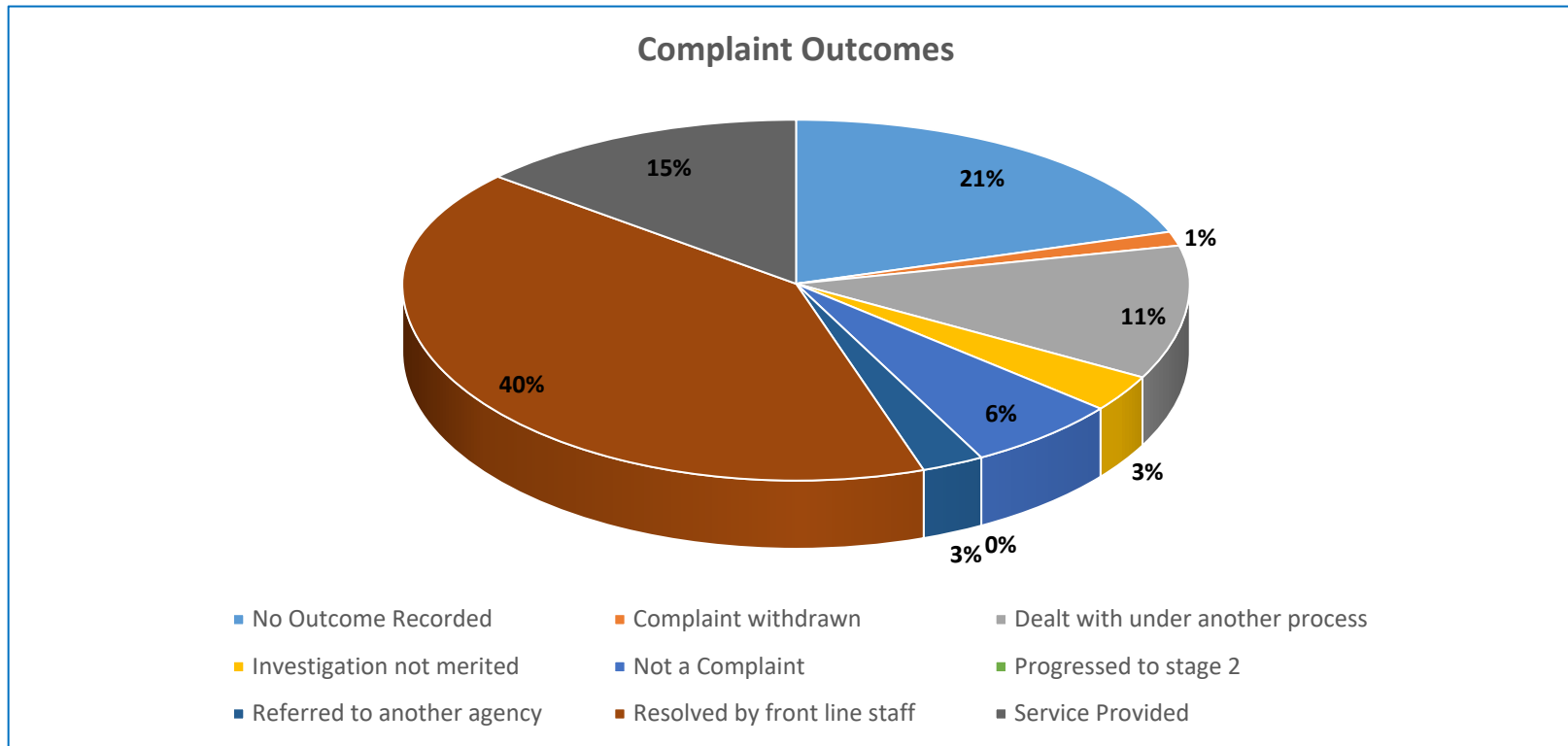


Figure 2 – Complaint Outcomes 2022/23



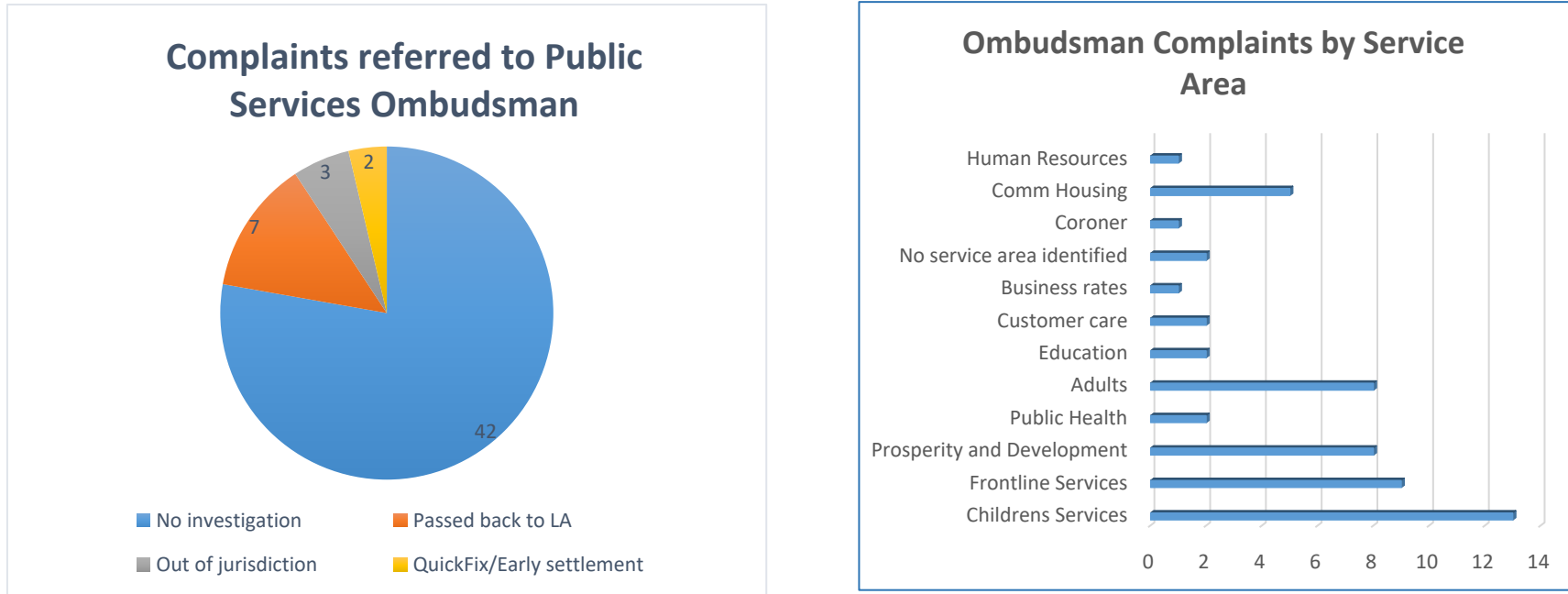
NB: Outcome categories have been changed to support improvements in reporting and will be kept under on-going review.

COMPLAINTS KEY THEMES

- Complaints in this period made up just 0.09% of all customer contacts made to the Council.
- 54% of Stage 1 complaints were dealt with within 10 working days with 18% being resolved within 20 working days. Combined, performance is 72%, slightly lower than the performance target of 75%. 11% were resolved within 3 months with 17% closed within 3-6 months or remaining unclosed on the system.
- 41.5% of Stage 2 complaints were dealt with within the designated 20 working days with 25% of those responded to within a 10-day period.
- The highest number of complaints were categorised as 'failure to provide a service' (30% / 175 complaints), with 40% of these being resolved by frontline staff.
- Positively, of all complaints received, 95% were resolved at Stage 1 with only 5% progressing to Stage 2 of the process - this being an improvement on previous years.
- 44% of complaints were determined to be not upheld with 39% being upheld or partially upheld* and 17% having no determination recorded. *(Whilst we continue to record those complaints that are partially upheld the Complaints Standards Authority no longer accepts this as a valid finding and all partially upheld complaints for their recording purposes will be considered upheld).
- 84% (128) of upheld complaints identified required action to make improvements to services; however only 12 (9.3%) of those complaints recorded learning or areas for identified improvements. This is an area for improvement in 2023/24.
- 10 complaints received identified equality issues, 3 identified Welsh language issues and 10 identified issues relation to Data Protection. Across all 3 areas the figures remain consistent with those in 2021/22 and information continues to be shared with the relevant teams within the Council in order for identified themes to be addressed.
- Whilst this report identifies some areas for improvement, Council officers demonstrate commitment to resolving customers concerns and this is evidenced by both the small percentage of complaints that escalate to Stage 2 and the low number of complaints referred to the Public Services Ombudsman.
- 54 complaints were referred to the Public Services Ombudsman, details of outcomes for these complaints are detailed in Figure 3.

COMPLAINTS REFERRED TO THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

Figure 3 – Complaints Referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (2022/23)



KEY THEMES

- The number of Ombudsman complaints received in 2022/2023 (54) remains consistent with previous years and (not including complaints for Social Care).
- There are no identified themes or concerns as to a particular service area or service provision with 42 complaints requiring no investigation, 7 being referred back to the relevant service area for resolution and 2 recommending a quick fix / early settlement.
- The highest numbers of Ombudsman complaints are for Adult and Children’s Social Care followed by Frontline Services.
- The total number of complaints received by the Ombudsman for Rhondda Cynon Taf make up 0.07% of all interventions received across Wales.

EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Complaint area	Complaint detail	Service Improvement
Leisure	Complaint regarding the reaction of staff to a lady breastfeeding in the lido pool. Also lack of policy in relation to breastfeeding.	New breastfeeding policy statement being developed in consultation with the complainant and training to be provide to all Lido staff.
Leisure	Complaint regarding safety of inflatable equipment and supervision at children's party in leisure centre.	Review to be undertaken of set up procedures in conjunction with a review by the Health & Safety team.
Leisure	Complaint regarding access to poolside and lack of changing facilities for people with additional needs.	Technical assessment to be undertaken in regard to electric motorised doors for ease of access and for possible private changing area for people with additional needs.
Crosscutting	Complaint regarding safe route to school due to restricted access.	Additional signage in area to ensure public are aware that route is still accessible.
Parks Maintenance	Complaint regarding cutting of the conifer trees in the playground which allows a direct view into complainant's property and lack of communication for this proposal.	Better communication in future to keep customer informed of any future work on shared boundary.

*Complaints where there are potential for service improvements, once identified, will inform 'You said We did' and will be fed back to the public via the Council's web page.

EXAMPLES OF COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS

Service Area	Detail of Compliments (Total received 168) Comments (Total received 46)
Frontline services/recycling	<p><i>I would like to ask that the council consider adding a skip to the recycling centre for silage plastic and agricultural feed bags.Would the Council consider this option for local smallholders, farmers and anyone who has plastic waste from feed bags (such as horse owners)? Even if we had to pay a fee to drop this waste at the recycling centre.....</i></p>
Leisure	<p><i>I visited Rhondda Fach Sports centre today on bicycle. There was nowhere to lock my bike so had to leave it in the foyer. Would be good to have somewhere secure to lock bikes.</i></p>
Frontline service/recycling and household waste	<p><i>Hello, over the last few days I needed to use the RCT recycling site at Dinas, Porth on a couple of occasions to dispose of household, garden and wood waste. I would like to say well done to RCT for providing and running a first-class facility. All the members of staff working there were professional and helpful.</i></p>
School transport	<p><i>I am writing to show my appreciation to school transport team , thank you for quick action to add a bus stop for my son. It definitely releases my frustration about his safety . We are so grateful for your team understanding and empathy to our situation. Thank you so much !</i></p>
Pest control	<p><i>I would like to commend a member of the Pest Control team. His name is XXXX and he recently attended my parent's property to deal with rats in the garden. This coincided with my dad being rushed to hospital so as you can imagine it was a very stressful time. I was amazed at having submitted a request online, to be called within an hour by XXXX, customer care was exemplary. What an asset he is to Rhondda Cynon Taf Council. He was extremely diligent and I was felt reassured that the rat issue could be sorted.</i></p>

You said we did.

The following information demonstrates how services have used customer comments received either through service engagement (SE) or direct feedback (DF), to review their services and consider what improvements can be made to better meet the needs of residents and visitors to Rhondda Cynon Taf. The information will be made available through the Council's website and will be periodically updated.

Service Area	Feedback source *	You said	We did
Arts and Culture	SE	You told us about your love for Treorchy's green spaces and your want for more free community activity to take place outside.	We partnered with Friends of Treorchy Park and delivered free lantern making workshops to support their Halloween 'Park in the Dark' event. Free entrance to the event was given to all those who attended with lanterns.
Arts and Culture	SE	Young people in Treorchy told us about their love for local and grassroots sport.	We worked with the Worker's Gallery owner to deliver 'Cymru in the World Cup' themed making workshops at Ton & Gelli Boys & Girls Club and The Play Yard, where young people explored the different careers on offer in the football industry through creativity.
Transformation, Children's Services	SE	Care experienced children and young people told us that they wanted more well-being initiatives, activities with nature and theatre plays to attend.	We have been working with National Organisation Voices from Care Cymru to develop wellbeing initiatives for children and young people with our 'Sky's the Limit' group for 8- to 13-year-olds and our Local RCT group for ages 14-22 years old. Some of the activities have included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theatre shows for 'Snow White' and 'Sleeping Beauty.' • Nature walks • Sporting activities • Arts and crafts.
Heritage Services	DF	You said war memorials need to be better looked after.	We implemented a plan to ensure war memorials are inspected annually and any necessary maintenance undertaken.

Service Area	Feedback source *	You said	We did
Heritage Services	DF	You would like more accessibility to archaeology in the Heritage Park Museum.	We set up a free, monthly, afterschool club where different archaeological topics are looked at.
Leisure	DF	Class and Pool timetables are always changing and not visible online.	All webpages are now live and updated via the website and APP – when amendments are made, all timetables are updated.
Leisure	DF	You said you would like new classes such as KO8.	We have trained leisure staff and added new classes to our timetables.
Leisure	DF	You asked for more outdoor classes during the summer months.	We teamed up with Sport RCT and purchased outdoor equipment adding more outdoor classes to our timetables and more choice to customers who wish to train outdoors in the summer.
Leisure	DF	Customers with a visual impairment reported feeling unable to visit and use leisure facilities.	We have worked alongside the charity Sight Life Wales to improve accessibility for people with sight loss to our centres e.g. Sight life Wales will support us in training staff and identifying other measures that can improve the experience of sight impaired customers who wish to benefit from RCT leisure services.
Leisure	DF	You told us that the leisure app is very busy, not easy to navigate, and you get lost when using it.	We have reviewed and redesigned the App making information more accessible and the App easier to navigate.
Transport planning (Active Travel)	DF	Residents of RCT said barriers to active travel routes were preventing access for disabled cyclists using specially adapted bikes preventing them cycling safely and free from traffic.	We looked at barriers at specific locations across RCT and removed barriers where it was safe to do so, subject to consultation.
Armed Forces	DF	Veterans told us during the Coronavirus outbreak that they were feeling lonely and	We developed a new project ‘Veterans connected’ to help Veterans stay in touch with family and social connections

Service Area	Feedback source *	You said	We did
		isolated and that they missed attending their weekly groups	<p>through digital technology. 80 tablets were made available along with the offer of training and support to enable Veterans to participate in online/virtual events and meetings in their community.</p> <p>Veteran Advice Service Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (rctcbc.gov.uk)</p>

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND PRIORITIES

Following the review of the Customer Feedback process and analysis of the data presented in this report, below are some of the priorities for 2023/24:

Complaints Awareness & Training

Virtual training for staff was provided in 2023 by the Ombudsman's Complaints Standards Authority on both complaints handling and managing unreasonable customers. Further awareness sessions will be undertaken in 2023/24 by the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team focusing on 'what is a complaint' and ensuring all feedback received is correctly recorded. Additionally specific targeted sessions will be provided to Services that may benefit from embedding current processes for areas such as "you said, we did" and informing service improvements as an outcome of complaints.

Digital System development and workflow

Continue process improvement enabled by digital through the new CRM to be more effective and efficient. Building upon the implementation of the new customer feedback system, we will seek to improve data capture, analysis and reporting. This should in turn support the more effective allocation and timeliness of complaint management as well as ensuring service areas continue to capture accurate information.

Other improvements have been identified to meet the needs of frontline services areas and these will be undertaken in line with the ongoing development of the new system. This includes the ability to provide management reports for each service area, providing both qualitative and quantitative data to support service planning and delivery.

Improved customer feedback

There will be on-going work with services on how we feedback to both residents and visitors about how services have made improvements based on customer experiences. Also, the 'You said, we did' webpage will be launched in the Autumn 2023 in line with the revised and updated web information for the CFS.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES - ANNUAL REPORT AND LETTER 2022–2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR M. WEBBER, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL BUSINESS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To advise Cabinet of the publication of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' ('PSOW') Annual Report and Annual Letter to this Council for 2022-2023.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Cabinet considers and notes the 2022-2023 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Report and Annual Letter to this Council.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The PSOW is independent of all government bodies and has legal powers to investigate complaints about public services and independent care providers in Wales. They also investigate complaints that Members of local government bodies have breached their authority's Code of Conduct. Following commencement of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 the office has powers aimed at:

- Providing a seamless mechanism for complaint handling when a patient's NHS care is inextricably linked with private healthcare;
- Allowing the PSOW to undertake own initiative investigations when required in the public interest (e.g. where PSOW suspects potential systemic failures of services or where residents feel unable to complain due to the fact that they are dependent on health/council services or because they are vulnerable);
- Ensuring that complaints data from across Wales may be used to drive improvement in public services for citizens in Wales; and
- Improving access to the PSOW office.

3.2 The Council has adopted the Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy. This is a two-stage process with Stage 1 complaints being seen as informal. Stage 2 complaints are seen as formal complaints. A complainant is entitled to escalate any matter to the PSOW if they remain unhappy following receipt of a Stage 2 response.

3.3 The number of complaints now being dealt with by the PSOW is double the number of complaints her office received a decade ago.

4. ANNUAL REPORT & LETTER 2022-2023

4.1 The PSOW has published her Annual Report for 2022-2023 ('AR') pursuant to the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005. The AR has been combined with the annual accounts for the PSOW as it was last year. The purpose of the AR is to report on the performance of the PSOW's office over the year, provide an update on developments and to deliver any key messages arising from their work carried out during the year.

4.2 The Executive Summary to the Annual Report is attached at Appendix 1. Attached at Appendix 2 is the complaints data broken down by sector extracted from the full report. The full Annual Report can be accessed via the PSOW website via the following link:

[Annual Report 2022-2023 CYMRAEG](#)

4.3 The PSOW also issues an Annual Letter (AL) to each Local Authority in Wales with a summary of complaints received that relate specifically to that Local Authority. The 2022-2023 AL for this Council is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.

4.4 The AR sets out the workload that has been dealt with by the PSOW during 2022-2023. It breaks the workload down into the number of enquiries received and the number of complaints received, and also breaks down the complaints into those received about services (public body complaints) and those received in relation to Member Code of Conduct Complaints.

4.5 During the reporting period the overall number of complaints about public bodies totalled 2790. This was an increase of 2% compared to 2021-22. The proportion of interventions – cases where the PSOW finds maladministration or service failure remained consistent at 19% (18% 2021-2022). During 2022-2023 the PSOW closed 2,858 complaints about public bodies – 11% more than 2021-2022. The PSOW intervened in 19% of those complaints - 75% of those interventions were achieved by early resolution of a complaint. The intervention rate for local authorities was 13% - consistent with the previous reporting period.

4.6 Of the 2790 complaints received about public bodies 37% related to health 18% to housing, 18% to complaint handling, 15% to 'other', 7% to social services (7%) and 4% to planning and building control. Complaints relating to COVID-19 were categorised into their own category and contributed to 1% of the total number of complaints (form 3% in the previous year).

4.7 In the most serious cases there was a decrease in the number of [public interest reports](#) issued (5 as against 7 previously – 4 related to Health Boards

and 1 to [Wrexham CBC](#) who were found not to have adequately supported a vulnerable adult with learning disabilities in supported living accommodation). There was 1 special report issued relating to Bannau Brycheiniog NPA as a result of its failure to twice put right the same complaint previously investigated by the PSOW.

- 4.8 The number of complaints about local authorities (including school appeal panels) across Wales was 1020. This is a decrease of 11% compared to the previous year (1143 in 2021-22). There was a 21% increase in the number of complaints about Health Boards (19% increase in respect of Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB). There was also a 15% increase in the number of complaints about housing associations – 48% of those complaints related to repair and maintenance issues.
- 4.9 The PSOW issued 1259 recommendations to public service providers in 2022-2023. As in previous years the PSOW most commonly recommended was that the relevant organisation should apologise. On occasions the PSOW does recommend some financial redress for the complainant's time and trouble. About 9% of the PSOW recommendations during 2022-2023 were about steps to make sure that services improve for example through staff training or review of current practice.
- 4.10 During 2022-2022 54 complaints were received by the PSOW relating to this Authority (51 for 2021-2022). 2 of those complaints were received in respect of the South Wales Parking Group, administered by RCT CBC. The total number of complaints equates to 0.23 complaints per 1000 residents. Notably this represents the second lowest total in Wales out of the 22 local authorities. 0.33 complaints per 1000 residents was the average across the 22 LA's.
- 4.11 The highest number of complaints for this Council, by subject, related to how it handled complaints (24%), Children's Social Services (20%) followed by Housing (13%):

SUBJECT	COMPLAINTS 21/22	COMPLAINTS 22/23
Adult Social Services	6	4
Benefits Administration	0	0
Children's Social Services	11	11
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	0	0
Complaints Handling	4	13
Covid-19	0	0
Education	1	1
Environment & Environmental Health	9	4
Finance and Taxation	1	1
Housing	3	7
Licensing	0	0
Planning and Building Control	7	5
Roads and Transport	4	2
Various Other	5	4
TOTAL	51	54

- 4.12 Of the 54 complaints closed by the PSOW during the period, 22 (41%) were closed after initial consideration, 14 (26%) were considered to be out of jurisdiction and 16 (30%) premature. Those considered to have been premature related to cases where the complainant had not exhausted the Council's complaints policy. 2 (4%) complaints were resolved through the PSOW 'early resolution' process, meaning that the Council agreed to undertake actions to resolve matters without the need for a formal PSOW investigation – see Appendix C of Appendix 3.
- 4.13 In total 4% of the Council's cases during the period required PSOW intervention, compared against 7% as reported in the previous period. The average intervention rate for local authorities was 13% so the Council compares favourably against this measure – see Appendix D of Appendix 3
- 4.14 The PSOW now publishes summaries of recent investigations' outcomes and reports undertaken on the 'our findings' section of the website, which is updated on a monthly basis:

<https://www.ombudsman.wales/findings/> [CYMRAEG](#)

Appendix 4 contains the extracts for the 2022-2023 period from the 'our findings' listings relating to this Council.

- 4.15 RCT CBC has adopted the PSOW model complaints policy for local authorities. A model complaints policy has also been adopted by health boards in Wales and extended to Housing Associations and Natural Resources Wales.
- 4.16 Local Authorities continue to submit data to the PSOW about complaints they handle to the [Complaints Standards Authority](#). Data submitted by Local Authorities in [2022/2023](#) showed:
- 15,525 complaints recorded by Local Authorities
 - Equated to 5 complaints for every 1000 residents
 - 41.12% of those complaints were upheld
74% were investigated within 20 working days
 - 7% of all complaints closed were then referred onto the PSOW for consideration
 - 4.23% of those complaints were upheld by the PSOW
- 4.17 In respect of this Authority 721 complaints were received during 2022-2023. That equates to 3.08 complaints per 1000 residents. 27.10% of the total number of complaints were upheld. 78.45% were investigated within 20 working days and 8.75% were referred to the PSOW.

Councillor Code of Conduct Complaints

- 4.18 Compared to 2021/22 the Ombudsman received 283 complaints across Wales about the Code of Conduct. This was 4% fewer than 2021-2022. Over half (56%) of those complaints related to members of Town and Community Councils. This does however represent a decrease on previous years. 61% of the total number of complaints were about the promotion of equality and respect (compared to 51% last year). 12 complaints about breaches of the Code of Conduct were referred to Standards Committees or the Adjudication

Panel for Wales. This amounted to 4.3% of total complaints compared to 6.8% the previous year.

4.19 There was 1 Code of Conduct complaint made about a Member in relation to their role as a RCT County Borough Councillor during the period, compared against 8 in 2020-2021. That complaint was discontinued after investigation.

4.20 6 complaints were received in relation to Town and Community Councils within RCT as against 9 in the previous reporting period. All 6 were discontinued after investigation .

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 The PSOW requests that the Annual Letter to the Council is presented to Cabinet to assist Members in their scrutiny of the Council's performance. The Annual Letter will also be considered by the Governance & Audit Committee as part of its responsibilities under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, namely to have oversight of the Council's complaints handling processes and procedures.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

8. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report however it should be noted that the PSOW has legal powers to require the Council to make payments to complainants where they have suffered financial loss or compensation as a consequence of maladministration.

9. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT

9.1 Learning from complaints, and customer feedback, can contribute to the development of services that meet the needs and expectations of the Council's residents and service users. In this way residents and service users can be involved in improving services and ensuring that they meet long-term needs in a sustainable way. The ability to identify the causes of complaint and service failure presents an opportunity to have a preventative impact – particularly where services manage wellbeing issues.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The PSOW has requested that the Annual Letter for this Council be presented to Cabinet for consideration the details of which have been set out in this report.

10.2 Cabinet also receives an Annual Report in respect of complaints, compliments and comments received during the relevant period in respect of both the Statutory Social Services complaints process and those handled through the

Council's corporate Customer Feedback Scheme. These reports enable Cabinet to further review and assess how the Council is managing, and learning from, the feedback it receives.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR M. WEBBER, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL BUSINESS

Background Papers:

Public Services Ombudsman For Wales – Annual Report & Accounts 2022-2023

Contact: Andy Wilkins – Director of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer –

Report Consultees:

Jayne Thomas - Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager

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A year of change - a year of challenge

Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

July 2023



We can provide a summary of this document in accessible formats, including Braille, large print and Easy Read.
To request, please contact us:

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
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CF35 5LJ

Tel: 0300 790 0203

Email: communications@ombudsman.wales

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.



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A year of change - a year of challenge **Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23**

of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
for the year ended 31 March 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our role

We have three main roles.



We investigate complaints about public services.



We consider complaints about councillors breaching the Code of Conduct.



We drive systemic improvement of public services and standards of conduct in local government in Wales.

Our ambition



People of Wales feel that public services treat them fairly and respond when things go wrong.



Welsh public services listen to individuals and use their complaints to learn and improve.



Welsh local government is trusted to deliver the highest standards of conduct.



The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales continues to be an influential and respected voice in public service improvement.

Our principles

We are independent, impartial, fair and open to all who need us.

A word from the Ombudsman

This annual report reflects my first year in office. It has been a year of many successes and positive change, but also some challenges.

We have had fewer new complaints about breaches of the Code of Conduct by Welsh councillors. We also closed a record number of complaints about public services, delivering justice to many more people. During the year, we have continued to help public services improve. We delivered over 180 free training sessions to public bodies on good complaint handling. We also consulted on our next 'own initiative investigation' – which will look at carers needs assessments. Internally, we launched our new Service Quality process and celebrated removing our median gender pay gap.

Despite these and other positives, it has also been a very challenging year. We are seeing more and more complaints about public services. Health continues to be the subject of over 80% of our investigations overall and these investigations are often lengthy and complex. This workload meant that some people have had to wait longer for an outcome, and impacted the well-being of our staff.

We trust that our new Strategic Plan will help us work more efficiently


and have more impact, while also allowing us to remain a supportive and healthy workplace. Nevertheless, our increasing caseload pressures are a growing concern and we will be realistic about the resources and capacity available to us to deliver change as we embark on this new chapter in our service to the people of Wales.

Michelle Morris






Strategic Aim 1: Deliver justice

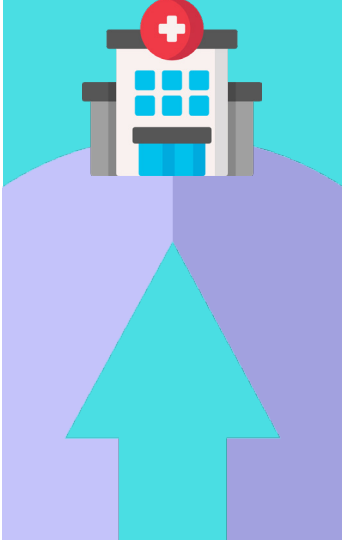
We received **2%** more new complaints about public services and Code of Conduct.




We had **2%** more new public service complaints:

-  37% were about healthcare
-  18% were about housing
-  18% were about complaint handling

We saw a **21%** increase in complaints about Health Boards.



We closed **10%** more complaints about public services and Code of Conduct.



We intervened (found that an organisation got things wrong and should put things right) in **19%** of complaints about public services...


... and 3 out of 4 times, we intervened early, without having to conduct a full investigation.



Organisations complied with **90%** of our recommendations due during the year.



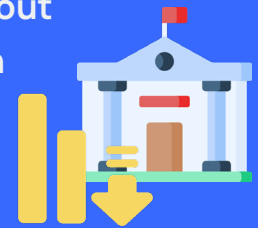
We issued **1** Special Report about an organisation not complying with our recommendations.



We received **4% fewer** new complaints about the Code of Conduct.

 **61%** of these new complaints were about promotion of equality and respect.

We received fewer new complaints about councillors at Town and Community Councils.



12

We made 12 referrals of Code of Conduct complaints made to the Adjudication Panel for Wales or local Standards Committees.

The Adjudication Panel for Wales and Standards Committees upheld and found breaches in **96%** of our referrals they considered in 2022/23.



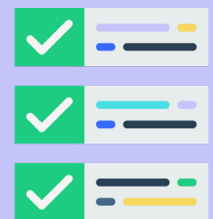
We upheld only **7%** of requests for review of our decisions, which gives us confidence that our process is sound.



We launched our new Service Quality process, through which we will look at how well we meet our service standards.



48% of people - and **95%** of those satisfied with the outcome of their complaint - were happy with our service.



Strategic Aim 2: Promote improvement

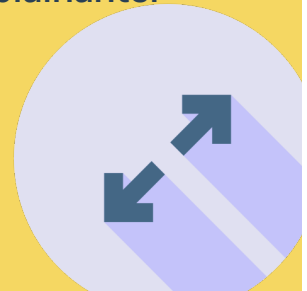
We delivered 183 training sessions on good complaint handling.



“ Since the training I am trying to change my behaviour so that I listen to incoming calls with an open mind and not type up the log notes before they have finished speaking.

” My many thanks for the training sessions. They really did make me think very deeply about how we respond to clients.

We completed 2 extended investigations, when we are already investigating a problem and we extend the investigation to other issues or complainants.



We published 5 Public Interest Reports, about serious cases related to healthcare.



We completed public consultation on our next 'Own Initiative' investigation - which will look at carers' needs assessments.

For the fourth time, we published a casebook in which we highlight complaints where human rights or equality issues have either been raised as part of the complaint or have been central to our findings.



Strategic Aim 3: Use resources wisely

We had no median gender pay gap.



It cost us 16% less to consider each complaint this year.



We avoided 134kg of CO2 in emissions.



Cymraeg

A higher proportion of our staff told us that they had good or fluent Welsh language skills.

We developed our new Strategic Plan, which sets out 4 aims:

1. Delivering justice with a positive impact for people and public services
2. Increasing accessibility and inclusion
3. Increasing the impact of our proactive improvement work
4. Ensuring that we are a healthy, efficient and accountable organisation.





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Complaints data

Public services - new complaints

Subject	2022/23	2021/22
Health	37%	34%
Housing	18%	16%
Complaints Handling	18%	14%
Social Services	7%	8%
Planning and Building Control	4%	8%
COVID19	1%	3%
Other	15%	17%
Grand Total	100%	100%

Sector	2022/23	2021/22
NHS Bodies (including Health Boards, NHS Trusts, Dentist, GPs, Opticians and Pharmacists)	1288	1115
Local Authorities (including County/ County Borough Councils and School Appeal Panels)	1032	1162
Social Housing sector (housing associations)	348	302
Welsh Government and its sponsored bodies	61	74
Community Councils	30	31
Other	31	42
All sectors	2790	2726

Health Board	2022/23		2021/22	% change from 2021/22
	Number	Received per 1000 residents	Number	
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	166	0.28	142	17%
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	225	0.33	213	6%
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	137	0.28	89	54%
Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board	134	0.30	113	19%
Hywel Dda University Health Board	104	0.27	88	18%
Powys Teaching Health Board	23	0.17	10	130%
Swansea Bay University Health Board	137	0.36	110	25%
All Health Boards	926	0.30	765	21%



County and County Borough Council	2022/23		2021/22	% change from 2021/22
	Number	Received per 1000 residents	Number	
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	16	0.24	14	14%
Bridgend County Borough Council	55	0.38	55	0%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	49	0.28	60	-18%
Cardiff Council (Incl. Rent Smart Wales)	142	0.39	182	-22%
Carmarthenshire County Council	53	0.28	54	-2%
Ceredigion County Council	35	0.49	52	-33%
Conwy County Borough Council	31	0.27	27	15%
Denbighshire County Council	32	0.33	34	-6%
Flintshire County Council	65	0.42	99	-34%
Cyngor Gwynedd	36	0.31	39	-8%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	25	0.36	29	-14%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	17	0.29	27	-37%
Monmouthshire County Council	23	0.25	20	15%
Neath Port Talbot Council	39	0.27	45	-13%
Newport City Council	42	0.26	40	5%
Pembrokeshire County Council	44	0.36	39	13%
Powys County Council	38	0.29	55	-31%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (Incl South Wales Parking Group)	54	0.23	51	6%
Swansea Council	94	0.39	71	32%
Torfaen County Borough Council	16	0.17	18	-11%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	49	0.37	61	-20%
Wrexham County Borough Council	65	0.48	71	-8%
All County and County Borough Councils	1020	0.33	1143	-11%

Housing Association	2022/23	2021/22	% change from 2021/22
Adra	15	10	50%
Aelwyd Housing Association Ltd	1	2	-50%
Ateb Group Ltd	2	4	-50%
Barcud	4	3	33%
Bro Myrddin Housing Association	0	1	-100%
Bron Afon Community Housing Ltd	17	17	0%
Cadwyn Housing Association Ltd	6	0	
Cardiff Community Housing Association	7	15	-53%
Caredig	3	0	
Cartrefi Conwy	6	14	-57%
Charter Housing Association (part of the Pobl Group)	7	4	75%
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	10	10	0%
Coastal Housing Group Ltd	6	14	-57%
Cynon Taf Community Housing Group	4	6	-33%
Derwen (part of the Pobl Group)	0	0	
Family Housing Association (Wales) Ltd	0	5	-100%
First Choice Housing Association Ltd	1	0	
Grwp Cynefin	5	4	25%
Hafan Cymru	0	1	-100%
Hafod Housing Association	62	28	121%
Linc Cymru Housing Association	14	9	56%
Melin Homes Ltd	3	5	-40%
Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association Ltd	1	5	-80%
Merthyr Valleys Homes	8	4	100%

Complaints data

Monmouthshire Housing Association	2	6	-67%
Newport City Homes	19	8	138%
Newydd Housing Association	9	9	0%
North Wales Housing	4	8	-50%
Pobl	23	19	21%
Rhondda Housing Association Ltd	9	1	800%
Taff Housing Association	4	3	33%
Tai Calon Community Housing	10	5	100%
Tai Ceredigion Ltd	0	0	
Tai Tarian	21	15	40%
Trivallis	13	17	-24%
Ty Gwalia (part of Pobl Group)	3	3	0%
United Welsh Housing Association	16	16	0%
Valleys To Coast Housing	19	20	-5%
Wales & West Housing Association	14	11	27%
All Housing Associations	348	302	15%

Public services - closed complaints

Health Board	2022/23			2021/22		
	No. of Interventions	No. of Closures	Intervention rate	No. of Interventions	No. of Closures	Intervention rate
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	48	160	30%	42	125	34%
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	80	231	35%	61	193	32%
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	30	129	23%	18	81	22%
Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board	37	141	26%	30	99	30%
Hywel Dda University Health Board	41	100	41%	23	82	28%
Powys Teaching Health Board	5	23	22%	3	6	50%
Swansea Bay University Health Board	33	134	25%	29	105	28%
All Health Boards	274	918	30%	206	691	30%



County and County Borough Council	2022/23			2021/22		
	No. of Interventions	No. of Closures	Intervention rate	No. of Interventions	No. of Closures	Intervention rate
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	16	0%	0	13	0%
Bridgend County Borough Council	5	57	9%	7	54	13%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	6	52	12%	7	58	12%
Cardiff Council (Incl Rent Smart Wales)	26	154	17%	46	175	26%
Carmarthenshire County Council	7	60	12%	7	49	14%
Ceredigion County Council	13	44	30%	13	46	28%
Conwy County Borough Council	5	35	14%	2	24	8%
Denbighshire County Council	2	33	6%	4	33	12%
Flintshire County Council	5	70	7%	15	94	16%
Cyngor Gwynedd	5	33	15%	6	41	15%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	5	25	20%	3	28	11%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	1	18	6%	2	26	8%
Monmouthshire County Council	1	22	5%	2	21	10%
Neath Port Talbot Council	7	38	18%	5	45	11%
Newport City Council	8	48	17%	4	36	11%
Pembrokeshire County Council	3	45	7%	2	40	5%
Powys County Council	8	44	18%	7	55	13%

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (Incl South Wales Parking Group)	2	56	4%	3	45	7%
Swansea Council	10	99	10%	10	76	13%
Torfaen County Borough Council	1	17	6%	2	20	10%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	15	53	28%	9	62	15%
Wrexham County Borough Council	6	67	9%	4	67	6%
All County and County Borough Councils	141	1086	13%	160	1108	14%



Housing Association	2022/23			2021/22		
	No. of Interventions	No. of Closures	Intervention rate	No. of Interventions	No. of Closures	Intervention rate
Adra	2	16	13%	1	9	11%
Aelwyd Housing Association Ltd	0	1	-	0	2	-
Ateb Group Ltd	0	2	-	2	4	50%
Barcud	0	4	-	0	3	-
Bro Myrddin Housing Association	0	0	-	0	1	-
Bron Afon Community Housing Ltd	2	18	11%	3	18	17%
Cadwyn Housing Association Ltd	1	6	17%	0	0	-
Cardiff Community Housing Association	0	8	-	1	14	7%
Caredig	0	3	-	0	0	-
Cartrefi Conwy	2	7	29%	0	13	-
Charter Housing Association (Part of the Pobl Group)	0	7	-	1	5	20%
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	0	9	-	0	10	-
Coastal Housing Group Ltd	0	6	-	1	14	7%
Cynon Taf Community Housing Group	0	4	-	1	6	17%
Family Housing Association (Wales) Ltd	0	0	-	0	5	-
First Choice Housing Association Ltd	0	1	-	0	0	-
Grwp Cynefin	0	5	-	1	4	25%
Hafan Cymru	0	1	-	0	0	-
Hafod Housing Association	15	59	25%	7	27	26%
Linc Cymru Housing Association	2	13	15%	2	10	20%
Melin Homes Ltd	0	3	-	0	6	-
Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association Ltd	0	1	-	1	7	14%
Merthyr Valleys Homes	1	8	13%	1	5	20%

Monmouthshire Housing Association	0	4	-	3	6	50%
Newport City Homes	2	18	11%	0	8	-
Newydd Housing Association	1	10	10%	1	9	11%
North Wales Housing	1	5	20%	1	8	13%
Pobl	3	22	14%	1	17	6%
Rhondda Housing Association Ltd	0	8	-	1	1	100%
Taff Housing Association	2	5	40%	0	1	-
Tai Calon Community Housing	0	9		0	5	-
Tai Tarian	0	22	-	2	14	14%
Trivallis	2	15	13%	3	17	18%
Ty Gwalia (Part Of Pobl Group)	0	3	-	0	3	-
United Welsh Housing Association	2	18	11%	2	14	14%
Valleys To Coast Housing	5	17	29%	3	22	14%
Wales & West Housing Association	1	14	7%	2	13	15%
Grand Total	44	352	13%	41	301	14%



Code of Conduct - new complaints

Subjects	2022/23	2021/22
Accountability and openness	10%	5%
Disclosure and registration of interests	9%	11%
Duty to uphold the law	8%	9%
Integrity	6%	8%
Objectivity and propriety	3%	11%
Promotion of equality and respect	61%	51%
Selflessness and stewardship	3%	5%

Body	2022/23	2021/22	% change from 2021/22
Town and Community Councils	158	171	-8%
County and County Borough Councils	122	114	7%
National Parks	3	5	-40%
Fire Authorities	0	0	n/a
Police and Crime Panels	0	4	-100%
Total	283	294	-4%

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Communications



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Date: 17 August 2023

Cllr. Andrew Morgan
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
By Email only: andrew.morgan2@rctcbc.gov.uk

Annual Letter 2022/23

Dear Councillor Morgan

I am pleased to provide you with the Annual letter (2022/23) for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council which deals with complaints relating to maladministration and service failure, complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for Councillors and the actions being taken to improve public services.

This letter coincides with my Annual Report – “[A year of change – a year of challenge](#)” – a sentiment which will no doubt resonate with public bodies across Wales. My office has seen another increase in the number of people asking for our help – up 3% overall compared to the previous year, and my office now receives double the number of cases we received a decade ago.

In the last year, I have met with public bodies across Wales – speaking about our casework, our recommendations, and our proactive powers. The current climate will continue to provide challenges for public services, but I am grateful for the positive and productive way in which local authorities continue to engage with my office.

1,020 complaints were referred to us regarding local authorities last year - a reduction of 11% compared to the previous year. During this period, we intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) 13% of local authority complaints.

We received fewer Code of Conduct complaints in 22/23 compared to the previous year, relating to both Principal Councils and Town and Community Councils. My role is such that I do not make final findings about breaches of the Code of Conduct. Instead, where investigations find the most serious concerns, these are referred to the Standards Committee of the relevant local authority, or the

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Adjudication Panel for Wales. In 2022/23, the Ombudsman made 12 such referrals – a welcome reduction from 20 last year.

Supporting improvement of public services

Despite the challenges of last year, we have pushed forward with our proactive improvement work and launched a new Service Quality process to ensure we deliver the standards we expect.

Last year, we began work on our second wider Own Initiative investigation – this time looking into carers assessments within local authorities. This investigation will take place throughout the coming year, and we look forward to sharing our findings with all local authorities – not just those involved in the investigation.

The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) continued its work with public bodies in Wales last year, with more than 50 public bodies now operating our model policy. We've also now provided more than 400 training sessions since we started, with local authorities, in September 2020.

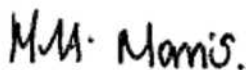
We continued our work to publish complaints statistics into a second year, with data now published twice a year. This data allows us to see information with greater context – for example, last year 9% of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's complaints were referred to PSOW.

I would encourage Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, and specifically your Audit and Governance Committee, to use this data to better understand your performance on complaints and consider how well good complaints handling is embedded throughout the Authority.

Further to this letter can I ask that your Council takes the following actions:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance and Audit Committee at the next available opportunity and notify me of when these meetings will take place.
- Continue to engage with our Complaints Standards work, accessing training for your staff, fully implementing the model policy, and providing accurate and timely complaints data.
- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Morris
Public Services Ombudsman

cc. Paul Mee, Chief Executive, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.
By Email only: chiefexecutive@rctcbc.gov.uk



Factsheet

Appendix A - Complaints Received

Local Authority	Complaints Received	Received per 1000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	16	0.24
Bridgend County Borough Council	55	0.38
Caerphilly County Borough Council	49	0.28
Cardiff Council*	142	0.39
Carmarthenshire County Council	53	0.28
Ceredigion County Council	35	0.49
Conwy County Borough Council	31	0.27
Denbighshire County Council	32	0.33
Flintshire County Council	65	0.42
Cyngor Gwynedd	36	0.31
Isle of Anglesey County Council	25	0.36
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	17	0.29
Monmouthshire County Council	23	0.25
Neath Port Talbot Council	39	0.27
Newport City Council	42	0.26
Pembrokeshire County Council	44	0.36
Powys County Council	38	0.29
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**	54	0.23
Swansea Council	94	0.39
Torfaen County Borough Council	16	0.17
Vale of Glamorgan Council	49	0.37
Wrexham County Borough Council	65	0.48
Total	1020	0.33
* inc 9 Rent Smart Wales		
** inc 2 South Wales Parking Group		



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Appendix B - Received by Subject

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Complaints Received	% share
Adult Social Services	4	7%
Benefits Administration	0	0%
Children's Social Services	11	20%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	0	0%
Complaints Handling	13	24%
Covid19	0	0%
Education	1	2%
Environment and Environmental Health	4	7%
Finance and Taxation	1	2%
Housing	7	13%
Licensing	0	0%
Planning and Building Control	5	9%
Roads and Transport	2	4%
Various Other	4	7%
Total	54	

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We are happy to accept and respond
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Appendix C - Complaint Outcomes
(* denotes intervention)

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council		% Share
Out of Jurisdiction	14	26%
Premature	16	30%
Other cases closed after initial consideration	22	41%
Early Resolution/ voluntary settlement*	2	4%
Discontinued	0	0%
Other Reports - Not Upheld	0	0%
Other Reports Upheld*	0	0%
Public Interest Reports*	0	0%
Special Interest Reports*	0	0%
Total	54	



Appendix D - Cases with PSOW Intervention

	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	16	0%
Bridgend County Borough Council	5	57	9%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	6	52	12%
Cardiff Council	25	145	17%
Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales	1	9	11%
Carmarthenshire County Council	7	60	12%
Ceredigion County Council	13	44	30%
Conwy County Borough Council	5	35	14%
Denbighshire County Council	2	33	6%
Flintshire County Council	5	70	7%
Cyngor Gwynedd	5	33	15%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	5	25	20%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	1	18	6%
Monmouthshire County Council	1	22	5%
Neath Port Talbot Council	7	38	18%
Newport City Council	8	48	17%
Pembrokeshire County Council	3	45	7%
Powys County Council	8	44	18%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	2	54	4%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - South Wales Parking Group	0	2	0%
Swansea Council	10	99	10%
Torfaen County Borough Council	1	17	6%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	15	53	28%
Wrexham County Borough Council	6	67	9%
Total	141	1086	13%



Ombwdsmon Ombudsman

Cymru · Wales

Appendix E - Code of Conduct Complaints

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Decision not to investigate	0
Discontinued	1
No evidence of breach	0
No action necessary	0
Refer to Adjudication Panel	0
Refer to Standards Committee	0
Total	1

Investigations

Page 249

ombwdsmon.cymru
holwch@ombwdsmon.cymru
0300 790 0203
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ
Rydym yn hapus i dderbyn ac
ymateb i ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg.

ombudsman.wales
ask@ombudsman.wales
0300 790 0203
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ
We are happy to accept and respond
to correspondence in Welsh.



Appendix F - Town/Community Council Code of Complaints

Town/Community Council	Decision not to investigate	Investigations				Total
		Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Adjudication Panel	
Llanharan Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llantwit Fardre Community Council	4	0	0	0	0	4
Pontypridd Town Council	1	0	0	0	0	1
Taff's Well & Nantgarw Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ynysybwl & Coed-y-cwm Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0



Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2022/23. These complaints are contextualised by the population of each authority.

Appendix B shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix C shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2022/23. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix D shows Intervention Rates for all Local Authorities in 2022/23. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

Appendix E shows the outcomes of Code Of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2022/23. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix F shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area in 2022/23. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.

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1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ
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We are happy to accept and respond
to correspondence in Welsh.

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SUMMARY OF REPORTS FROM PSOW WEBSITE ('OUR FINDINGS' SECTION) RELATING TO RCT CBC 2022-2023

Housing Applications. allocations. transfer and exchanges : Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Report date

03/02/2023

Outcome

Early resolution

Case ref number

202205414

Mrs S complained that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council failed to support her, and her husband's housing needs which resulted in her husband having to seek accommodation in his vehicle.

The Ombudsman concluded that the Council failed to act in accordance with its statutory complaints procedure and failed to provide its procedure with her. She said this caused frustration to Mrs S.

As an alternative to an investigation, the Ombudsman sought and gained the Council's agreement to apologise to Mrs S for not providing her with sufficient information on its complaint's procedure, issue a stage 2 response, and remind its housing team of the model complaints procedure. It was agreed that the Council would action this within 30 working days

Other : Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Report date

26/08/2022

Outcome

Early resolution

Case ref number

202202881

Ms Q complained that the Council refused to tell her about the health and whereabouts of her late partner, Mr X, from February 2021 onwards, and failed to inform her about his death until several months after the event. She also complained that the Council failed to arrange for the administration of his estate, leaving her to attend to matters.

The Ombudsman considered that Ms Q's desire to receive information about her partner engaged her right to a private and family life under Article 8 of the Human Rights Act. The Ombudsman was satisfied that it was not unreasonable in the circumstances for the Council to withhold information about Mr X from Ms Q in the

weeks leading up to his death. However, after Mr X died, the Council showed a lack of urgency in establishing that information about his death could be passed to Ms Q.

This resulted in a 5-month delay in telling Ms Q that Mr X had died, which was likely to have caused her avoidable additional distress.

The Ombudsman was also concerned that, in the circumstances, the Council should have provided appropriate advice and support to Ms Q in relation to the settlement of Mr X's estate following his death, in as far as it affected her. As a result, Ms Q was left to resolve matters on her own without support, which put her to avoidable time and trouble.

In the interests of resolving the complaint, the Council agreed to apologise to Ms Q for the failings identified and to make a payment of £750 to her for the injustice and avoidable time and trouble caused to her. The Council also agreed to contact Ms Q to offer her appropriate support and advice (itself, or through an expedited referral to an appropriate external agency) with any ongoing concerns relating to Mr X's estate.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

PROPOSALS TO DEVELOP A NEW SPECIAL SCHOOL IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE (COUNCILLOR R LEWIS)

AUTHOR(S):

Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposal to:

1.1.1 Open a new 3 to 19 special school in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) and introduce catchment areas for all 3 to 19 special schools across RCT, these are:

- Park Lane Special School
- Ysgol Hen Felin
- Ysgol Ty Coch.

1.1.2 Where the Council decides to vary the catchment areas for a school (Welsh, English, dual language or voluntary aided (faith) mainstream school or special school / class as appropriate), existing transport arrangements will be protected for the pupils living in the areas affected for the duration of their attendance at the school or until they reach the end of that phase. In exceptional circumstances, consideration may be given to transporting siblings to the same school. The assessment of whether the circumstances are exceptional will be made by the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services in partnership with the Council's Integrated Transport Unit.

1.1.3 Note that children and young people who wish to remain in their existing special school placement following the catchment changes can continue to do so. However, all new special school placements will be informed by the revised catchment areas once the changes are implemented so that pupils attend their local special school.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

2.1.1 Note the content of this report.

2.1.2 Note the information contained within the attached Consultation Report, attached as Appendix A to this Cabinet Report, which includes a summary of correspondence received during the consultation, including the full response from Estyn, feedback received from the online survey, and notes of the meetings held.

2.1.3 Agree to progress the proposals to the next stage of the consultation process by issuing an appropriate Statutory Notice which will trigger the start of the Objection Period.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To progress the proposal in accordance with the process outlined in Welsh Government legislative guidance [School Organisation Code \(2nd Edition\) \(011/2018\)](#).

3.2 To continue to meet our statutory duty and appropriate special school provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and avoid long-term budgetary pressures for the Council.

3.3 To better meet and manage the demand for special school places across RCT, helping to ensure that pupils are allocated places in the special school nearest their home.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Members will recall that, at the meeting of the Cabinet held on [28th June 2023](#), approval was given to begin a statutory process to formally consult on a proposal to open a new 3 to 19 special school in RCT and to introduce catchment areas for all 3 to 19 special schools across RCT (as listed in paragraph 1.1.1). The justifications for doing so were:

4.1.1 To acknowledge that the statutory duties placed upon the Council to deliver the obligations of the [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018 \(ALNET Act 2018\)](#) will compound the pressures placed on special schools and the Council's capacity to provide a statutory provision for the pupils who require it.

4.1.2 To secure appropriate special school provision for pupils with ALN and mitigate against potential long-term budgetary pressures for the Council resulting from out of county and independent placements.

4.1.3 To better meet and manage the demand for special school places across RCT, helping to ensure that pupils are allocated places in the special school nearest their home.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of the proposal and published on the Council's website together with a Consultation Document that outlined the proposal in further detail in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Government's [School Organisation Code \(2nd Edition\) \(011/2018\)](#).

5.2 The outcome of Equality Impact Assessment identified positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts, upon the protected characteristics and so it was deemed that approval would be sought to continue to implement the proposal. To confirm, the Action Plan included within the Equality Impact Assessment will continue to be reviewed throughout the duration of the project delivery period.

5.3 In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. So as part of seeking views on the proposal, the consultation also included the following question:

1. How would the Council's proposal affect you because of your:

- Sex
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Sexuality
- Religion/Belief
- Gender Identity
- Relationship Status
- Pregnancy
- Preferred Language.

5.4 All those that responded to this question, apart from one, stated that there would be a positive or no impact on them as a result of implementing the proposals. Further information on this can be found in the Consultation Report.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment was prepared in respect of the proposal and was published on the Council's website together with a Consultation Document that outlined the proposal in further detail in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Government's [School Organisation Code \(2nd Edition\) \(011/2018\)](#).

6.2 The outcome of the Welsh Language Impact Assessment found that the proposal could assist with delivering the targets outlined in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC's) Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

(WESP) and could support the aim of the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 target of one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.

6.3 In accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 and in compliance with the Council's statutory obligations, the consultation included the following questions:

1. Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative)?
2. Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?
3. How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

6.4 A summary of the responses received in relation to these questions can be found in the Consultation Report.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

7.1 The consultation processes in respect of the proposal has been undertaken under the arrangements outlined in the Welsh Government's [School Organisation Code \(2nd Edition\) \(011/2018\)](#). These arrangements stipulate that a Consultation Report must be prepared prior to the publication of any Statutory Notice which will progress the proposal. It further states that Statutory Notices be published within 26 weeks of the end of the consultation.

7.2 The Consultation Report, prepared in respect of this proposal contains:

- Information in respect of meetings held to discuss the proposal, with copies of the notes taken at these meetings.
- Estyn's full response to the proposal and the clarification to the response.
- A summary of the online survey responses received during the consultation period and where required the appropriate clarification to any issues raised.

7.3 46 written responses were received during the consultation, one in writing and 45 via the online survey, which was available for the duration of the consultation phase.

7.4 Governing Body and staff meetings outlined in the Consultation Report were held virtually via Microsoft Teams. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached as Appendix 2 (A to C) to the Consultation Report.

7.5 School Council meetings outlined in the Consultation Report were held in the corresponding schools. Pupils were given a children and young people's version of the Consultation Document and the Consultation Response Form was developed using a Picture Education System (PECs). Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached as Appendix 3 (A to C) to the Consultation Report.

- 7.6 A drop in session was also arranged so that members of the public could discuss the proposal with Officers from the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services and provide any feedback at the session. This took place on Tuesday 22nd August 2023 between 15:00 to 18:30 at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX. Attendees were asked to complete and submit a Consultation Response Form.
- 7.7 In addition, the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee also formed part of the consultation process, and considered the proposal at its meeting on the [15th September 2023](#). The response from the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee is contained within the responses detailed in paragraph 7.3, and the minutes of the meeting are included as an appendix to the Consultation Report.
- 7.8 Out of the 46 written responses 26 (56.0%) were in favour of the proposal, 17 (38.0%) were against the proposals and 3 (7.0%) were unsure. This is outlined in the following table:

Summary of Consultation Responses		
Determination	Number	Percentage
In Favour	26	56.5%
Against	17	37.0%
Unsure	3	6.5%
Total	46	100.0%

Overall, the response to the consultation was positive with 56.5% of respondents in favour of the proposal. To confirm, all of the comments and issues raised during this consultation have been reviewed by Cabinet Members.

- 7.9 The table that follows outlines a breakdown of respondent category for those who were against the proposal:

Breakdown of Respondent Category for those Against the Proposal		
Respondent Category	Number	Percentage
Local Resident	5	29.4%
Parent / Carer of pupils attending primary school within the catchment area	3	17.6%
Parent / Carer of the	7	41.2%

respective schools		
Staff of the respective schools	1	5.9%
Stakeholder	1	5.9%
Total	17	100.0%

7.10 Of the 58.8% (combined) of respondents categorised as either parent / carer of pupils attending primary school within the catchment area or parent / carer of the respective schools, when looking at the reasons given for being against the proposal, 11.7% gave no response, whilst 88.3% are likely to have misunderstood the proposal.

7.11 Those respondents who are likely to have misunderstood the proposal, gave responses that are included under Section 5 – Summary of Consultation Responses contained within the attached Consultation Report, attached as Appendix A to this Cabinet Report.

8. THE STATUTORY PROCESS

8.1 The Statutory Notice for this proposal will refer to:

Opening a new 3 to 19 special school in RCT and introducing catchment areas for all 3 to 19 special schools across RCT, these are:

- Park Lane Special School
- Ysgol Hen Felin
- Ysgol Ty Coch.

8.2 If agreed, and subject to the matter not being called in for consideration by Scrutiny, the Statutory Notice will be published on 6th November 2023, and will allow for a minimum 28 day period for objections, ending on 4th December 2023.

8.3 If any objections are received during this period, in accordance with the Welsh Government's [School Organisation Code \(2nd Edition\) \(011/2018\)](#), an Objection Report will be prepared. This matter will then be reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet for Members to consider.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Should the proposal go ahead a significant capital investment would be required. Funding will be secured via the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme at an intervention rate of 75.0%. Costs will be developed alongside the consultation process and approvals sought in line with the Council's decision-making procedures.

9.2 Any revenue implications resulting as a consequence of the new 3 to 19 special school, including the school's delegated budget and any potential increases in home to school transport costs will be identified as the proposal is developed.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 Section 315 of the [Education Act 1996](#) requires Councils to ensure that ALN provision is kept under review. In addition, the [ALNET Act 2018](#) requires Councils to keep under review the arrangements for supporting pupils with ALN within their area and consider whether these are sufficient.
- 10.2 Powers for Councils to develop school organisation proposals are governed by the:
- [The School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#).
 - The Welsh Government's [School Organisation Code \(2nd Edition\) \(011/2018\)](#).
- 10.3 Council's must, when exercising functions under Part 3 of the [School Standards and Organisation \(Wales\) Act 2013](#), act in accordance with any relevant requirements contained in the Welsh Government's [School Organisation Code \(2nd Edition\) \(011/2018\)](#) and must have regard to any relevant guidelines contained in it.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN, NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

- 11.1 There are links to Making a Difference, the Council's Corporate Plan for the years between 2020 and 2024, specifically:
- **People:**
 - Encouraging all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing:
 - Delivering new indoor and outdoor sporting facilities and enhancing existing sporting facilities such as changing rooms and outdoor play areas.
 - Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do:
 - Improving the social, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people by increasing the range of specialist services available.
 - **Places:**
 - Ensuring RCT is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion where residents feel safe:
 - Supporting the voluntary, community and faith sectors to help build active communities, creating the capacity for meeting the needs of residents within their communities.
 - **Prosperity:**
 - Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education:
 - Improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

- Helping people into work and better paid employment:
 - Offering employment schemes and apprenticeships in the Council, on the regeneration sites, and through other Council contractors.
- 11.2 There are links to the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services Strategic Plan for the years between 2021 and 2024, specifically:
- **Strategic Priority 3:**
 - Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable pupils and their families.
 - **Strategic Priority 5:**
 - Delivering 21st century learning environments and innovative services for our pupils and communities.
- 11.3 Due regard has been made to all seven well-being goals and the five ways of working, as contained within the [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) which requires the Council to think about the long term impact of decisions, on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
- 11.4 The proposal could contribute towards achieving some of the seven well-being goals by:
- **A Prosperous Wales** - Should the proposal proceed, construction will be competitively tendered, thereby achieving best value for money. Main contractors will be asked to advertise work on Sell2Wales which could provide opportunities for local businesses to tender for the construction. This could provide opportunities for local business to engage with the main contractor for inclusion in their supply chain, via 'Meet the Buyer' events. This would support economic activity in the area.
 - **A Resilient Wales** – The proposal could improve the sustainability of school buildings in the Council's portfolio through a commitment to achieving zero-carbon buildings and building to BREEAM excellent standards.
 - **A Healthier Wales** – The new school will be a fully accessible and integrated community school with a dedicated area designed within so that the local community will be allowed to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day. Accommodation will consist of enhanced outdoor spaces to support the full range of curriculum activities.
 - **A More Equal Wales** – The new school and the way in which it will be used will bring neutral or positive socio-economic impacts to all of the vulnerable groups.
 - **A Wales of More Cohesive Communities** – Fully accessible and integrated community school with a dedicated area designed within so that the local community will be allowed to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.

- **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language** – Although the new school will be English medium, Welsh is taught as part of the curriculum and all pupils will benefit from having the opportunity to be taught in brand new facilities fit for the 21st century.
- **A Globally Responsive Wales** – The new school could build upon the good working practices and initiatives already have in place to further develop extra-curricular activities to encourage healthy lifestyles for the school community. zero-carbon buildings and building to BREEAM excellent standards.

11.5 The proposal could contribute towards achieving some of the five ways of working by:

- **Long Term** – The proposal forms a part of the Council's wider 21st Century Schools Investment Programme and contributes to the delivery of sustainable schools fit for the 21st century and supports the better strategic management of the Council's education estate. Given the considerable changes in Wales in relation to the statutory provision required to meet the needs of pupils with ALN, with the implementation of the [ALNET Act 2018](#), building a new 3 to 19 special school in RCT, and creating further capacity in our current provision, will ensure that the Council can continue to meet its statutory obligations.
- **Prevention** – The Council believes that the proposal represents the best opportunity to safeguard and sustain educational standards for the future and provides a platform for further improvement through significant investment in permanent and fit for purpose facilities.
- **Integrations** – The new school will be a fully accessible and integrated community school. A dedicated area will be designed within so that the local community will be allowed to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.
- **Collaboration** – The Council will continue to work effectively with internal and external partners to ensure the new 3 to 19 special school meets the short and long term needs of pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community.
- **Involvement** – The proposal is made in accordance with the [School Organisation Code \(2nd Edition\) \(011/2018\)](#) and seeks the views of a prescribed list of stakeholders including pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community. As such face to face meetings have been undertaken with the staff, school councils and governing bodies.

11.6 As stated in 6.1 to 6.4, an Equality Impact Assessment which further details the contribution of the proposal to the [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) was prepared.

12. **STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS**

12.1 Given the considerable changes in Wales in relation to the statutory provision required to meet the needs of pupils with the implementation of the [ALNET Act 2018](#) the proposal to build a new 3 to 19 special school in RCT, creating further capacity in our current provision, will ensure that the Council can continue to meet its statutory obligations and as such is a strategic proposal relevant to all wards.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 In accordance with Section 315 of the [Education Act 1996](#), councils are required to ensure that ALN provision is kept under review. In addition, the [ALNET Act 2018](#) requires Councils to keep under review the arrangements for supporting pupils with ALN within their area and consider whether these are sufficient. Building a new 3 to 19 special school in RCT, and creating further capacity in our current provision, will ensure that the Council can continue to meet its statutory obligations.

13.2 The proposed investment to open a new 3 to 19 special school in RCT on a new site provides the opportunity for more pupils with ALN to benefit from improved educational facilities and learning environments.

13.3 Members are asked to consider the contents of the attached Consultation Report, and to give officers approval to publish an appropriate Statutory Notice on 4th November 2023 to progress this proposal.

Other Information:

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer(s):

Andrea Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Lisa Howell, 21st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

A DISCUSSION PAPER FOR CABINET

23RD OCTOBER 2023

**Item: PROPOSALS TO DEVELOP A NEW SPECIAL SCHOOL IN RHONDDA
CYNON TAF**

Background Papers:

Appendix A – Consultation Report.

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21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS



CONSULTATION REPORT

CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO OPEN A NEW 3 TO 19 SPECIAL SCHOOL IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

The Consultation Report and Appendices are also available on the 'Get Involved' page on Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's website.

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh.



Table of Contents

		Page
1.	Proposal	2
2.	Purpose of the Consultation Report	2
3.	Who Have We Consulted With?	3
4.	Consultation Process	4
5.	Summary of Consultation Responses	5
6.	Response from Estyn	9
7.	Assessment of Consultation	16
8.	Conclusion	17
Appendices		
1 (A)	Response from Estyn (English)	
1 (B)	Response from Estyn (Welsh)	
2 (A)	Minutes of Meetings with Governing Body and Staff Members of Park Lane Special School	
2 (B)	Minutes of Meetings with Governing Body and Staff Members of Ysgol Hen Felin	
2 (C)	Minutes of Meetings with Governing Body and Staff Members of Ysgol Ty Coch	
3 (A)	Minutes of Meetings with School Council of Park Lane Special School	
3 (B)	Minutes of Meetings with School Council of Ysgol Hen Felin	
3 (C)	Minutes of Meetings with School Council of Ysgol Ty Coch	
4	Minutes of Education and Inclusion Services Scrutiny Committee: Thursday 14 th September 2023	

1. Proposal

The proposal is to open a new English medium 3 to 19 special school in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) for 180 pupils, however, this will be subject to undertaking further feasibility and progressing with the detailed design of the new school. The new special school will provide education for pupils with a range of additional learning needs (ALN) including autistic spectrum disorders, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties, and sensory impairment.

It is proposed that the new school will be built in the Clydach Vale area of Tonypany, and it will open no later than the 2026 academic year. The new school is in addition to the four special schools already open in RCT.

It is also proposed to introduce catchment areas for all 3 to 19 special schools across RCT, these are:

- Park Lane Special School.
- Ysgol Hen Felin.
- Ysgol Ty Coch.

Details of the proposal and the rationale behind it are fully outlined in the Consultation Document and Impact Assessments that were circulated to all the stakeholders. The link to these documents is below:

[Proposal to develop a new 3 to 19 special school in Rhondda Cynon Taf | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/consultation/develop-a-new-3-to-19-special-school-in-rhondda-cynon-taf)

2. Purpose of the Consultation Report

This Consultation Report is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018. Its purpose is to inform the stakeholders listed below of the outcome of the consultation held between 4th July 2023 and 15th September 2023.

3. Who Have We Consulted With?

A copy of the Consultation Document, which fully outlined and explained our proposal, was sent to the following stakeholders. The Consultation Document was also published on the Council website.

We are seeking the views of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Bodies of:
 - Park Lane Special School.
 - Ysgol Hen Felin.
 - Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel.
- Parents/carers, prospective parents/carers (where possible), and staff members of:
 - Park Lane Special School.
 - Ysgol Hen Felin.
 - Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel.
- Pupils of:
 - Park Lane Special School.
 - Ysgol Hen Felin.
 - Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel.
- Neighbouring local authorities.
- The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan authorities.
- Welsh Ministers.
- Members of the Senedd for the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf constituencies and regional Members of the Senedd for the area.
- Members of Parliament for the Rhondda, Cynon, and Taf constituencies
- Estyn.
- Teaching and staff trade unions.
- Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.
- Police and Crime Commissioner for the area.
- Childcare providers.
- Mudiad Meithrin.
- Menter Iaith.
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.
- Children and Young People's Partnership.
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
- Welsh Language Commissioner.

4. Consultation Process

All stakeholders identified were sent a link to electronic copies of the Consultation Document, and those that requested paper copies received them. The table that follows also outlines the meetings that were convened with the Governing Bodies and Staff Members and School Councils of Park Lane Special School, Ysgol Hen Felin and Ysgol Ty Coch.

Governing Body and Staff Members and School Council Meetings			
School	Group	Time / Date	Venue
Park Lane Special School	Governing Body and Staff Members	20 th July 2023 at 15:30	Virtually via Microsoft Teams
Ysgol Hen Felin		19 th July 2023 at 15:30	
Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel		17 th July 2023 at 15:30	
Park Lane Special School	School Council	18 th July 2023 at 10:00	Park Lane Special School
Ysgol Hen Felin		19 th July 2023 at 10:00	Ysgol Hen Felin
Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel		17 th Ysgol Ty Coch at 13:30	Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel

All governing body and staff meetings outlined in the previous table were held virtually via Microsoft Teams. Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached at Appendix 2 (A to C). These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meetings, with the responses provided where appropriate.

All School Council meetings outlined in the previous table were held in the corresponding schools. Pupils were given a children and young people's version of the Consultation Document and the Consultation Response Form was developed using a Picture Education System (PECs). Notes of the meetings were taken and are attached at Appendix 3 (A to C). These notes record questions raised, comments and statements made during the meetings, with the responses provided where appropriate.

A drop in session was also arranged so that members of the public could discuss the proposal with Officers from the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services and provide any feedback at the session. This was held on Tuesday 22nd August 2023 between 15:00 to 18:30 at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX. Attendees were asked to complete and submit a Consultation Response Form.

In addition, the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee also formed part of the consultation process, and considered the proposal at its meeting on the [15th September 2023](#). The response from the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee is contained within the responses detailed in Section Five – Summary of Consultation Responses and the minutes of the meeting are attached at Appendix 4.

5. Summary of Consultation Responses

Responses to the questions raised at the governing body and staff meetings and School Council meetings are summarised in the notes of the meetings attached at Appendix 2 (A to C) and Appendix 3 (A to C) respectively.

In addition, 46 written responses were received. 26 (56.0%) were in favour of the proposal, 17 (38.0%) were against the proposals and 3 (7.0%) were unsure. This is outlined in the table that follows.

Summary of Consultation Responses		
Determination	Number	Percentage
In Favour	26	56.5%
Against	17	37.0%
Unsure	3	6.5%
Total	46	100.0%

The table that follows outlines a breakdown of respondent category for those who were against the proposal:

Breakdown of Respondent Category for those Against the Proposal		
Respondent Category	Number	Percentage
Local Resident	5	29.4%
Parent / Carer of pupils attending primary school within the catchment area	3	17.6%
Parent / Carer of the respective schools	7	41.2%
Staff of the respective schools	1	5.9%
Stakeholder	1	5.9%
Total	17	100.0%

Of the 58.8% (combined) of respondents categorised as either parent / carer of pupils attending primary school within the catchment area or parent / carer of the respective schools, the following reasons for being against the proposal were received:

Reasons for Being Against the Proposal		
Reasons	Number	Percentage
Likely to have misunderstood the proposal	15	88.3%
No response	2	11.7%
Total	17	100.0%

Those respondents who are likely to have misunderstood the proposal, gave responses that included:

“RCT is too large an area for one school. three year old children could potentially have to travel long distances to get to school. It will also mean that, as many SEN children travel by mini bus with multiple pick-ups, that children are going to be on the road from very early morning to get to their schools which will have an impact on their wellbeing when they arrive at school. There is an RCT wide shortage of accessible transport and of passenger assistants already. One school will mean more children becoming eligible for school transport which will impact an already overloaded system.”

“Too many children in one place and also moved to far away.”

“My son currently attends Park Lane Special School. He is in the local area, he lives in Aberaman and goes to school in Trecynon. I would not be happy about his school day being extended to also include an additional hour a day drive minimum. Also, if he is unwell then it means family who can pick him up when I’m working wouldn’t be able to get to him by bus like they can now. Essentially meaning my child would be left until I could get there. As a nurse who also works in theatres at times this doesn’t sit well with me as I’d not pick up messages until hours sometimes after the fact.”

“My son attends Park Lane School in Aberdare, and this is the first I’ve heard of this proposal and the meeting which takes place today. I’m extremely unhappy with the proposal and the expectation that my son, with the difficulties he has would be expected to travel in excess of half an hour to get to school every day.”

“My granddaughter goes to Park Lane. Clydach Vale is miles away. It would mean an hour travelling to school and an hour back every day. That’s ridiculous for a child with special needs.”

“This would mean that children from outside the area, for example Aberdare, would have further to travel.”

“I very much oppose to this on the grounds that this will disrupt the education of these children who need routine and stability in their lives. For some of these children, travelling far each day, will be unbearable and a huge hurdle to overcome. Also, by localising a special school to just the Rhondda Valley will limit access for children in the Cynon Valley to provision they desperately need. Some families of these schools do not drive and would therefore struggle to attend the school if there is a need to fetch their child.”

“One school will cause too much transport time for pupils across borough.”

These comments suggest that respondents are concerned that the proposal would potentially result in their child moving school and traveling excessive distances. However, the proposals are based on pupils attending their nearest special school in order to reduce travel times. Furthermore, the proposal enables all pupils to remain in their existing special school placement if they and their families so wish.

In compliance with the Welsh Government’s School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018, a summary of the written responses received during the consultation are detailed in the table that follows along with clarification (where required).

Summary of Written Responses	
Response	Clarification
There is a clear lack of provision in the County Borough. Some children are having to travel a long way each day which is hardly ideal for those with extra needs. This must be a significant expense in home to school transport costs.	<p>There is a statutory duty placed upon all local authorities in Wales to provide pupils with free transport to their nearest suitable school if they reside beyond safe ‘walking distance’ to that school.</p> <p>Any revenue implications resulting as a consequence of the new 3 to 19 special school, including the school’s delegated budget and any potential increases in home to school transport costs will be identified as the proposal is develops.</p>
The special schools in the RCT are oversubscribed. A new special school will allow countless opportunities for our children.	Noted.
Will Maesgwyn Special School be included in these changes?	<p>Given the age range of the pupils at the school and the education provided which differs from the other special schools, Maesgwyn Special School is <u>not</u> considered to be affected by these proposals.</p> <p>Maesgwyn Special School is a 11 to 19 school, and these proposals seek to open a new 3 to 19 special school.</p>
The three 3 to 19 special schools in RCT are oversubscribed. The introduction of catchment areas would be welcomed. However, would pupils who are not in their nearest special school stay where they are or move to their catchment school?	Pupils who wish to remain in their existing special school following the catchment changes can continue to do so. However, all new placements will be informed by the revised catchment areas once the changes are implemented (no later than the 2026 academic year) so that pupils attend their local special school.
I currently work in one of the three 3 to 19 special schools in the County Borough. The number of pupils has increased significantly over recent years, resulting in specialist rooms being lost to create additional classrooms. The pupils are missing out.	<p>The new special school will create a highly specialist 21st century special school environment which will enable the Council to meet the needs of pupils who require access to highly specialist therapeutic facilities, equipment and resources required to meet all ALN, including complex medical and health needs.</p> <p>We would expect all of our special schools to be adequately serviced with equipment and resources to meet the ALN of all pupils equitably.</p> <p>The expectation is that this proposal will have a positive impact upon the capacity of the existing special schools, so that those specialist areas, now</p>

Summary of Written Responses	
Response	Clarification
	being used for teaching, can be reintroduced where at all possible.
Children in special schools need a quiet, safe and familiar place. Building one big special school will create a loud, noisy and crowded environment.	The proposal will involve the creation of an additional 3 to 19 special school in the Clydach Vale area of Tonypany, increasing the number of 3 to 19 special schools in RCT from three to four. All other special schools will remain open. The size of the proposed school is not excessively large and will provide a calm but stimulating learning environment.
This would mean that children from outside the area, for example Aberdare, would have further to travel.	It is likely the respondent has misunderstood the proposal. The proposal will involve the creation of an additional 3 to 19 special school in the Clydach Vale area of Tonypany, increasing the number of 3 to 19 special schools in RCT from three to four. All other special schools will remain open. Pupils who wish to remain in their existing special school following the catchment changes can continue to do so. However, all new placements will be informed by the revised catchment areas once the changes are implemented (no later than the 2026 academic year) so that pupils attend their local special school.
I would like to see more children who currently attend special school be a part of their community.	The new special school will be a fully accessible and fully integrated community school. A dedicated area will be designed within so that the local community will be allowed to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day.
I do not support the building of the new 3 to 19 special school on the site proposed. Clydach Vale is crying out for more employment opportunity, the area is losing a large employer shortly and there has been no publicity or campaigning by local politicians to save this factory. In addition to the employment issue, Cwm Clydach Primary is in bad need of redevelopment and is not fit for purpose for the 21 st century. This site could be considered for this purpose. In fact, if a school is going to be located on this site, it would be more beneficial to incorporate the	The private sector contractor involved in the creation of the new special school will be delivering community benefits by means of apprenticeships, training and job opportunities, bringing local jobs for local people and opportunities for the long term unemployed. They will also engage in community volunteering and in kind donations to the benefit of the local community. They will also engage with the school community, giving pupils the opportunity to engage with the contractor in activities. The identified site is not big enough to house both a special school and a mainstream school. The Council has invested considerably in Cwm Clydach Primary School over the last few years and will continue to invest in the learning environment as part of the Council's Capital Programme in the future.

Summary of Written Responses	
Response	Clarification
mainstream school along with the special school.	
I think the location would be perfect, as it would not cause congestion on main routes but is easily accessible and pupils will be able to engage with the local community.	Noted.
I believe that the current special schools in RCT require more funding and major improvements.	<p>The new special school will create a highly specialist 21st century special school environment which will enable the Council to meet the needs of pupils who require access to highly specialist therapeutic facilities, equipment and resources required to meet all ALN, including complex medical and health needs.</p> <p>Whilst learning environments differ, we would expect all special schools to be adequately supplied with equipment and resources to meet the ALN of all pupils equitably.</p> <p>Significant investment has already been spent on improvements and upgrades to our special schools over the last few years, including extensions, classroom upgrades, providing canopies, external improvements and the provision of ICT and resources across the estate.</p> <p>This investment is continuing as we are currently providing an additional two-classrooms to Park Lane School along with canopies, external play area upgrades and an office, and designs are underway to provide an extension and upgrades to Maesgwyn.</p> <p>The Council will continue to prioritise investment in our specialist provisions, and we fully expect further projects to improve these important settings to be delivered via the Council's Capital Programme if agreed by the Council's Cabinet Members.</p>

In accordance with the Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 and in compliance with the Council's statutory obligations, the consultation included the following questions:

1. Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative)?
2. Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?
3. How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

The table that follows provides a summary of the responses received.

Welsh Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015: Summary of Consultation Responses						
Questions	Responses					
Do you think the proposal could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language?	No		Yes		Not Sure	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
	25	54.4	9	19.6	12	26.0
Do you think the proposal in any way treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language?	No		Yes		Not Sure	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
	27	58.7	6	13.0	13	28.3
How positive effects on the Welsh Language could be increased, or negative effects be decreased.	Positive Effects Increased		Negative Effects Decreased		Not Sure	
	• Should offer Welsh or bilingual special schools.		• Use Welsh language at suitable opportunities.		Number	%
					27	60.0

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. So as part of seeking views on the proposal, the consultation also included the following question:

1. How would the Council's proposal affect you because of your:

- Sex
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Sexuality
- Religion/Belief
- Gender Identity
- Relationship Status
- Pregnancy
- Preferred Language.

All those that responded to this question, apart from one, stated that there would be a positive or no impact on them as a result of implementing the proposals. The one respondent that stated there would be a negative impact on them as a result of implementing the proposals we think may have misunderstood the proposal and believed that it would severely affect their child and their disabilities as the length of time travel to school would increase. A response to this concern has been clarified in the table above.

6. Response from Estyn

In compliance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018 the response to the proposal from Estyn has been provided in full at Appendix One. Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018 and the School Standards and Organisation Act 2013 places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and have produced a response to the information provided. It is Estyn's opinion that the proposals are likely to maintain or improve the standard of education provision in the area.

In accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code, statutory document 011/2018, the areas of the response from Estyn that require clarification are documented in the table that follows.

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
<p>The Council has given a clear rationale for the proposal to build a new 3 to 19 special school, demonstrating increased demand for special school places. The proposal will add a further 180 places to the capacity of the special school sector in the County Borough.</p> <p>The proposal is less clear about what the rationale is for introducing catchment areas for the existing and proposed new special schools. The general reason given is to 'better manage' the allocation of special school placements. However, it is not clear what the problem is with the current arrangement in which the majority of pupils attending special schools go to the school closest to where they live. Also, Maesgwyn Special school is not included on the catchment maps in the proposal. However, if parents of pupils at Maesgwyn who live in the catchment area of another school decide they want their children closer to home, that will impact on pupil numbers in Maesgwyn.</p>	<p>Rational for Catchment Changes</p> <p>Placement into special schools is currently agreed by the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Service Panels. Where possible, pupils are placed in the nearest suitable special school to their home. However, to better manage the allocation of special school places, the proposal seeks to define catchment areas for all 3 to 19 special schools in the County Borough. This will enable more effective forward planning of special school placements.</p> <p>The proposed catchment areas are based on existing secondary school catchment areas (with a few exceptions), as outlined within the Consultation Document. Estyn are correct in that the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Service Panel currently places children to their nearest school, however on occasions there can be challenges to this process. Having defined catchment areas will make this a much clearer and more defined process that will remove any ambiguity.</p>

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
<p>It would be helpful if the school were included fully in the proposal.</p>	<p>Maesgwyn Special School Despite data and information from Maesgwyn Special School being included within the Consultation Document for consistency, given the age range of the pupils (11 to 19) and the education provided, which differs from the other special schools across RCT, Maesgwyn Special School is <u>not</u> considered to be affected by the proposals.</p>
<p>RCT appears to have provided a detailed description of the proposal to date. The projected timetable and process for statutory procedures are set out clearly, including how children and young people will be consulted. However, the date for the proposed drop-in session falls within the summer holiday period, and this could stop some staff, parents / carers and learners from contributing.</p> <p>There is no clear timeline given for the subsequent phases of the proposal beyond the aspiration that the new school will be built by no later than the academic year 2026.</p>	<p>Drop-In Session Face to face meetings have been held with the School Councils of Park Lane Special School, Ysgol Hen Felin and Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel, to discuss the proposal. Likewise, virtual meetings have been arranged and held with the governing bodies and staff of Park Lane Special School, Ysgol Hen Felin and Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel, to discuss the proposal. In addition, all parents / carers of pupils attending Maesgwyn Special School, Park Lane Special School, Ysgol Hen Felin and Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel, have been provided with information relating to the proposal.</p> <p>A drop in session was arranged so that members of the public had the opportunity to discuss the proposal with Officers from the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services 21st Century Schools Team and provide any feedback at the session. This was held on Tuesday 22nd August 2023 between 15:00 to 18:30 at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX. To confirm, no negative feedback was received regarding the timing of the drop in sessions during the consultation period.</p> <p>If the proposal is to proceed, the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services 21st Century Schools Team will ensure that suitable arrangements are made to seek the views of the stakeholders outlined within the Consultation Document as active participants throughout the implementation process.</p>

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
	<p>Timeline of Subsequent Phases A provisional project plan for the proposal is currently being developed. This will form part of the business case process in order to secure funding via the Welsh Governments Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and will ensure the successful delivery of the project in accordance with best practice.</p> <p>When appropriate, key dates will be made available to key stakeholders.</p>
<p>The local authority has set out clearly and fairly the expected benefits and disadvantages when compared with the status quo. It is not clear, however, why the proposer considers that there is a risk of increased transport costs from the proposal.</p>	<p>Transport Costs The Council is already experiencing an increase in transport costs across the board, and having to renegotiate contracts with transport providers could have a negative impact upon the associated revenue costs.</p> <p>Revenue implications resulting as a consequence of the new 3 to 19 special school, including the schools' delegated budget and any potential increases in home to school transport costs will be identified as the proposal is developed and incorporated into the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.</p>
<p>The proposer has considered alternatives to the proposal and given reasons as to why they have discounted these. However, while stating that a range of other sites were considered for the new school and that a number of appropriate criteria were used to identify sites near Tonypany as the favoured sites, there is insufficient information about where the other sites are or why they were discounted. This makes it difficult to reach an objective conclusion as to whether the proposed site is the best one.</p>	<p>Discounted Sites The proposed site has been selected as the preferred location following a site appraisal process. A number of vacant sites were appraised using the following appraisal criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership. • Have an adequate site area. • Have satisfactory access which is capable of being improved. • Is free from any visual incumbents. • Is a viable development opportunity subject to a detailed feasibility study. <p>On applying the appraisal criteria listed above, to the identified sites, and following several site visits undertaken by Officers from the Council's Directorate of Corporate Estates and the Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services, all the other sites were discounted, with the Council's Headquarters in Clydach</p>

Response from Estyn																			
Estyn Response	Clarification																		
	Vale, Tonypandy, being identified as the preferred location for the new 3 to 19 special school in RCT.																		
<p>The local authority explains suitably how the proposal supports the targets in the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) in its Welsh Language Impact Assessment. The proposed new school will be English medium. The proposal explains the benefits of teaching Welsh in state-of-the-art facilities and the opportunities for community use, which might include Welsh language classes. However, the proposal does not make clear what proportion of the 670 pupils currently attending special schools in RCT are Welsh speakers, whether their numbers are increasing or not, and how their language needs are being met.</p>	<p>Data</p> <p>The proportion of the pupils who attend special schools that are Welsh speakers is not recorded as part of PLASC. The table that follows uses PLASC data for the 2020 to 2022 academic years. It demonstrates the language medium of the previous school attended (if appropriate).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Year</th> <th rowspan="2">Total Pupils</th> <th colspan="2">Language Medium of Previous School Attended</th> </tr> <tr> <th>English</th> <th>Welsh</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2023</td> <td>670</td> <td>654</td> <td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022</td> <td>616</td> <td>600</td> <td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021</td> <td>574</td> <td>560</td> <td>14</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>How Language Needs are Being Met</p> <p>Currently Welsh medium pupils with significant ALN who would meet the criteria for a place in a special educational needs learning support class (SEN LSC) within English medium primary and secondary schools are supported by a specialist peripatetic team, the Welsh Complex Needs Team. The Welsh Complex Needs Team, which includes a Welsh medium specialist teacher and two learning support assistants, provide support through an inclusive delivery model whereby pupils are provided with specialist support within their mainstream Welsh medium settings.</p> <p>PLASC data for the 2022 academic year outlines that the Welsh Complex Needs Team supported twelve pupils with an age range of reception to year eleven of which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One pupil attended reception to year two. • Four pupils attended years three to six. • Seven pupils attended years seven to eleven. <p>However, despite positive feedback regarding the provision made by the Welsh Complex Needs Team, primary school aged pupils with</p>	Year	Total Pupils	Language Medium of Previous School Attended		English	Welsh	2023	670	654	16	2022	616	600	16	2021	574	560	14
Year	Total Pupils			Language Medium of Previous School Attended															
		English	Welsh																
2023	670	654	16																
2022	616	600	16																
2021	574	560	14																

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
	<p>significant and complex ALN are unable to access full time specialist Welsh medium provision.</p> <p>The Council has one dedicated SEN LSC to support pupils with ALN via the medium of Welsh. Since September 2021, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) (ALNET) Act 2018 has placed a statutory duty upon Local Authorities to work proactively towards establishing a fully bi-lingual ALN system.</p> <p>Therefore, the Council has recently outlined plans to establish two Welsh medium primary school SEN LSC's at the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin for pupils with significant ALN. It is anticipated the proposal will take effect from the academic year 2024. Outcome Six of the Council's WESP focuses on increasing the provision of Welsh medium education for pupils with ALN in accordance with the duties imposed by the ALNET Act 2018. The Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Team has carried out reviews of the sufficiency of Welsh medium ALN provision in education settings to support pupils with ALN.</p> <p>The Council has a dedicated sub-group focussing solely on this WESP outcome. The Head of the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Team leads this sub-group and membership includes internal Officers from the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services Access and Inclusion Team, representation from Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and representation from Welsh medium primary and secondary schools.</p>
<p>The proposal estimates that the cost of designing and building the new school will be £53.3 million. Up to 75% of the funding for the new school comes from the Welsh Government through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, and up to 100% of costs</p>	<p>Building Costs Should the proposal go ahead, a significant capital investment would be required. As mentioned, Funding will be secured via the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme at an intervention rate of 75.0%. Costs will be</p>

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
<p>directly associated with making the school net zero carbon. There is no further mention about how the local authority will fund its share of the building costs or subsequent revenue costs. There are council offices on the proposed site, which are soon to be vacated. It is not clear from the proposal whether the existing buildings will be demolished to allow the new school to be built or whether they will be refashioned and repurposed.</p>	<p>developed alongside the consultation process and in relation to the Council's contribution funding approvals will be sought in line with the Council's internal decision-making procedures.</p> <p>Revenue Implications Revenue implications resulting as a consequence of the new 3 to 19 special school, including the schools' delegated budget and any potential increases in home to school transport costs will be identified as the proposal is developed and incorporated into the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.</p> <p>Project Design A number of design options for the new 3 to 19 special school are currently being considered. Demolition of the existing buildings and building a brand new provision is one such option. Decisions will be made collaboratively with key stakeholders and will be led by the potential educational benefits of each design option.</p>
<p>RCT has considered the impact of the proposal on the quality and standards of education within the new school for each of the five areas of Estyn's common inspection framework. The building of news facilities, especially those taking into account the complex needs of special school pupils, is likely to have a beneficial impact on their learning and wellbeing. The proposal includes a brief summary of the outcomes and recommendations from the last Estyn inspection reports for the existing three special schools. However, it does not include any consideration of how the new school may have a positive impact on the special school sector overall within RCT, for example through the sharing of good practice and professional learning.</p>	<p>Positive Impact Overall It is anticipated that the new 3 to 19 special school will have a positive impact on the special school sector overall across the County Borough.</p> <p>The current sharing of good practice and professional learning across the special school sector across the County Borough, and wider, will continue to be an ongoing priority.</p>
<p>The local authority is seeking to ensure that the disruption to learners is</p>	<p>Over Subscribed/ Under Utilised</p>

Response from Estyn	
Estyn Response	Clarification
<p>minimised. As this is a new school, on a new site, there is no disruption to learning during the design and building phases. When the new school is opened and the proposed catchment areas are in place, there will be no mandatory transfer of pupils from one school to another. Parents of pupils living within the catchment area of the new school will have the option to move their children if they wish. It is envisaged that the new school will 'grow organically' over time. However, no consideration has been given as to what might happen if the school is oversubscribed, or underutilised either immediately or a later point.</p>	<p>On opening, pupils already attending other 3 to 19 special schools that will then reside within the catchment area of the new 3 to 19 special school in RCT, will be given the option to relocate to the new 3 to 19 special school. This will <u>not</u> be mandatory; the decision will be parental/carer choice. However, once the catchment changes come into effect, the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services' Access and Inclusion Service Panel will place new pupils into new 3 to 19 special school according to the newly defined catchment boundaries.</p> <p>Given that the expectation is that the school will 'grow organically' there should not be a point at which the school is considered to be under-utilised as we fully expect there to be surplus capacity on opening. The trend data for our special school show a steady increase in pupil numbers and we anticipate that this growth will continue and the pupil numbers at the school will steadily increase.</p> <p>As Estyn will be aware, and in accordance with Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales 2011 (021/2011), the capacity assessment method applied to all community, voluntary aided, voluntary controlled and foundation schools in Wales does not apply to nursery, special schools, or pupil referral units. Pupils are placed in special schools based on an assessment of their needs; therefore, special schools can never be classed as 'at capacity.' The Council has a statutory obligation to continually keep the capacity of its schools under review, and this assessment will continue. Should, at any time in the future, the school become oversubscribed, further action to mitigate the impact will be taken.</p>

7. Assessment of Consultation

In view of the responses and comments received during the consultation, a further assessment of the proposal, which is included within the Consultation Document, has been undertaken. The proposal has been revisited and the following matters have been reassessed:

- The likely impact of the proposal on the other 3 to 19 special schools in the County Borough.
- The likely impact of the proposal to introduce catchment areas for all 3 to 19 special schools across RCT.

After further consideration, the proposals remain to be the most appropriate and as such no amendments to the proposal have been made.

The recommendation of this report is that a statutory notice be published, as consulted upon with no modifications, in order to progress this proposal.

8. Conclusion

No information that has been presented during the consultation is deemed to necessitate a change to the Consultation Document, as such the information remains unchanged. Therefore, it is considered that this proposal should be wholly implemented with no amendments.

The recommendation of this report is that a Statutory Notice be published, as consulted upon with no modifications, in order to progress this proposal.

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Estyn response to consultation from Rhondda Cynon Taf to open a new 3-19 special school and introduce catchment areas for the special schools in the county.

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However, Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore, as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer.

Summary/Conclusion

The proposals are likely to maintain or improve the standard of education provision in the area.

Description and benefits

Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) local authority has given a clear rationale for the proposal to build a new 3-19 special school, demonstrating increased demand for special school places. The proposal will add a further 180 places to the capacity of the special school sector in RCT.

The proposal is less clear about the rationale is for introducing catchment areas for the existing and proposed new special schools. The general reason given is to 'better manage' the allocation of special school placements. However, it is not clear what the problem is with the current arrangement, in which the majority of pupils attending special schools go to the school closest to where they live. Also, Maesgwyn Special School is not included on the catchment maps in the proposal. However, if parents of pupils at Maesgwyn who live in the catchment area of another school decide that they want their children closer to home, that will impact on pupil numbers at Maesgwyn. It would be helpful if the school was included fully within the proposal.

RCT appears to have provided a detailed description of the proposal to date. The projected timetable and process for statutory procedures are set out clearly, including how children and young people will be consulted. However, the date for the proposed drop-in session falls within the summer holiday period, and this could stop some staff, parents/carers and learners from contributing. There is no clear timeline given for the subsequent phases of the proposal beyond the aspiration that the new school will be built no later than the 2026 academic year.

The local authority has set out clearly and fairly the expected benefits and disadvantages when compared with the status quo. It is not clear, however, why the proposer considers that there is a risk of increased transport costs from the proposal.

The proposer has considered alternatives to the proposal and given reasons as to why they have been discounted these. However, while stating that a range of other sites were considered for the new school and that a number of appropriate criteria were used to identify the site near Tonypany as the favoured site, there is insufficient information about where the other sites are or why they were discounted. This makes it difficult to reach an objective conclusion as to whether the proposed site is the best one.

The local authority explains suitably how the proposal supports the targets in the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) in its Welsh language impact assessment. The proposed new school will be English medium. The proposal explains the benefits of teaching Welsh in state-of-the-art facilities and the opportunities for community use, which might include Welsh language classes. However, the proposal does not make clear what proportion of the 670 pupils currently attending special schools in RCT are Welsh speakers, whether their numbers are increasing or not, and how their language needs are being met.

The proposal estimates that the cost of designing and building the new school will be £53.3 million. Up to 75% of the funding for new special schools comes from the Welsh Government through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, and up to 100% of costs directly associated with making the school net zero carbon. There is no further information about how the local authority will fund its share of the building costs or subsequent revenue costs. There are council offices on the proposed site, which are soon to be vacated. It is not clear from the proposal whether the existing buildings will be demolished to allow the new school to be built or whether they will be refashioned and repurposed.

Educational aspects of the proposal

RCT has considered the impact of the proposals on the quality and standards in education within the new school for each of the five areas of Estyn's common inspection framework. The building of new facilities, especially those taking into account the complex needs of special school pupils, is likely to have a beneficial impact on their learning and well-being. The proposal includes a brief summary of the outcomes and recommendations from the last Estyn inspection reports for the existing four special schools. However, it does not include any consideration of how the new school may have a positive impact on the special school sector overall within RCT, for example through the sharing of good practice and professional learning.

The local authority is seeking to ensure that the disruption to learners is minimised. As this is a new school, on a new site, there is no disruption to learners during the design and build phases. When the new school is opened and the proposed catchment areas are in place, there will be no mandatory transfers of pupils from one school to another. Parents of pupils living within the catchment area of the new school will have the option to move their children there if they wish. It is envisaged that the new school will 'grow organically' over time. However, no consideration has been given as to what might happen if the school is oversubscribed, or underutilised either immediately or a later point.

Minutes of Meetings with Governing Body and Staff Members of Park Lane Special School

Date	20 th July 2023
Time	15:30 to 16:00
Mode	Microsoft Teams

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education & Inclusion Services
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director - 21 st Century Schools & Transformation
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Grace Zecca-Hanagan	GZH	21 st Century Schools Officer
Bethan Davies	BD	Human Resources Manager
Paul Hughes	PH	Human Resources Officer
Diane Llewellyn	DL	Assistant Headteacher of Park Lane Special School
N/A	N/A	Governing Body and Staff Members of Park Lane Special School

1. Welcome and Introductions

GD welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

AR provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document.

3. Staff and Governor Questions

The Governing Body and staff members of Park Lane Special School were invited to ask questions. The questions from the Governing Body and staff members and the responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

Number	Question	Response
1.	Will the catchment changes affect the numbers at Park Lane Special School?	GD: We are seeing increased growth across all our special schools and predict this trend to continue. The catchment changes that form part of this

Number	Question	Response
		<p>proposal will not affect Park Lane Special School greatly and we do not envisage pupil numbers declining.</p> <p>However, this will be routinely monitored.</p>
2.	<p>Numbers at Park Lane Special School are increasing, resulting in a need for additional accommodation to be added to the site. Will there be any investment in Park Lane Special School?</p>	<p>GD: We cannot invest in all our schools at the same time, there has to be a programme of gradual investment. Investment will continue in schools to ensure pupils have a quality learning environment. A collaborative approach with the Governing Body will be essential to ensure that future investment in the school building is well planned and co-ordinated.</p> <p>LH: By October 2023, an additional two-classrooms will be added to Park Lane Special School, along with outdoor canopies and an office.</p> <p>There may be additional opportunities for funding from the Welsh Government's Additional Learning Needs Capital Grant to potentially invest further in the school.</p> <p>AR: The Council is aware that Park Lane Special School requires investment. Future investment in Park Lane Special School will be considered, along with other priorities, as part of the Council's school</p>

Number	Question	Response
		modernisation programme.
3.	This is an incredibly positive project.	GD: This is an extremely exciting opportunity for the Council, to continue to support our pupils and families to receive their education in their local communities, and we will see £54.3 million invested in a new special school.
4.	Would there be opportunities for pupils who attend the special schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf to form part of the process?	<p>AR: The Council has acknowledged that the voice of children and young people is about involving them as active participants in the development, delivery, management, and improvement of their educational experience.</p> <p>Children and young people have a right to express their views in all matters affecting them and for their views to be heard and considered in accordance with their age and maturity. As such, we have ensured that suitable arrangements have been made to involve children and young people as active participants throughout this consultation process.</p> <p>We have attended School Council meetings with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Lane Special School. • Ysgol Hen Felin. • Ysgol Ty Coch, including Buarth y Capel.

Number	Question	Response
		<p>In addition, we have produced a children and young people's version of the Consultation Document and Consultation Response Form.</p> <p>If approval to progress is agreed, all pupils of our special schools will have an active role and will be invited to help shape and design our proposed new school.</p>

4. Closing Remarks

The Governing Body were thanked for their contribution. Governors and staff members were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The Governing Body and staff members were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed.

Minutes of Meetings with Governing Body and Staff Members of Ysgol Hen Felin

Date	19 th July 2023
Time	15:30 to 16:15
Mode	Microsoft Teams

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director - 21 st Century Schools & Transformation
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Grace Zecca-Hanagan	GZH	21 st Century Schools Officer
Ellen Williams	EW	Human Resources Manager
Aron Bradley	AB	Headteacher of Ysgol Hen Felin
N/A	N/A	Governing Body and Staff Members of Ysgol Hen Felin

1. Welcome and Introductions

AR welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

AR provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document.

3. Staff and Governor Questions

The Governing Body and staff members of Ysgol Hen Felin were invited to ask questions. The questions from the Governing Body and staff members and the responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

Number	Question	Response
1.	What will the Governing Body look like?	AR: If the proposal is approved by, there will be temporary Governing Body established for the new special school. This will be established early in the process.
2.	What will the Senior Leadership team look like?	EW: The structure of the new special schools Senior Leadership Team is yet to be decided. Based on previous

Number	Question	Response
		Sustainable Communities for Learning (previously known as 21 st Century Schools) projects delivered by the Council, the Headteacher will be appointed prior to the new special school opening. The Headteacher will then work with the temporary Governing Body to establish a structure for the new special school that will fit the budget allocated.
3.	What will the recruitment process look like?	<p>AR: No posts will be ring fenced, opportunities will be open for all. Applicants will be welcomed from across the whole of Rhondda Cynon Taf.</p> <p>EW: Recruitment would begin with the appointment of the Headteacher, followed by the Senior Leadership Team and so on with a view to recruitment being complete by the new school opening.</p>
4.	What is the plan to ensure that the new special school is built large enough to future proof against the need for expansion in the future?	<p>AR: At present, we anticipate the new special school will be built for around 180 pupils, however this will be subject to undertaking further feasibility and progressing with the detailed design of the new special school.</p> <p>The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET Act 2018) requires Councils to keep under review the arrangements for</p>

Number	Question	Response
		supporting pupils with additional learning needs within their area and consider whether they are sufficient, hence we need to ensure that we maximise the space available on the proposed site.
5.	Will the resources mirror what is in place at Ysgol Hen Felin, or will they be different?	<p>AR: The resources will be similar to those resources at Ysgol Hen Felin.</p> <p>LH: A Working Group will be established to lead on identifying best practice across the special school sector.</p>
6.	Is the building going to be single or double story?	<p>AR: This will be subject to undertaking further feasibility and progressing with the detailed design of the new special school. However, it is anticipated that it will be a two storey building to maximise the external facilities for pupils.</p>
7.	Will the dining hall be separate to the main hall?	<p>AR: This will be considered as part of the further feasibility studies and progressing with the detailed design of the new special school.</p>
8.	Will the community facility mentioned in the Consultation Document be open access during the day?	<p>AR: The new special school will be a fully accessible and fully integrated community school. A dedicated area will be designed within so that the local community will be allowed to safely use the facilities, both during and after the school day. The Council will be actively promoting community school usage.</p>

Number	Question	Response
9.	Will a space for pre-school/play group facilities be provided?	AR: This again will form part of the feasibility and detailed design process.
10.	Will pupils be able to move without applying for a place?	AR: Children and young people who wish to remain in their existing special school following the catchment changes can continue to do so. However, all new placements will be informed by the revised catchment areas once the changes are implemented (no later than the 2026 academic year) so that pupils attend their local special school. Decisions regarding requests for new school placements will follow the Council's school admission arrangements.
11.	Will there be shared outdoor spaces or individual years?	AR: This will also be subject to undertaking further feasibility and progressing with the detailed design of the new special school. LH: A Working Group will be established to lead on identifying best practice across the special school sector.
12.	Will there be provision for pupils aged 14 to 19 based around independent living skills which are so important for their transition into adulthood?	AR: This will also be subject to undertaking further feasibility and progressing with the detailed design of the new special school. The Council will ensure that we collaborate with our staff in our schools at the design stage to ensure we have the best facilities to support our young people transition into adulthood.

Number	Question	Response
13.	Will there be a forest schools' areas?	AR: This will also be subject to undertaking further feasibility and progressing with the detailed design of the new special school. The Council would like to maximise the green space available and provide opportunities for outdoor learning.
14.	Will class rooms have cooking areas so pupils can prepare food?	AR: This will also be subject to undertaking further feasibility and progressing with the detailed design of the new special school.
15.	Parent(s)/carer(s) drop off and pick up.	LH: The new special school will include traffic management systems including on-site pupil bus drop off and pick up, and on-site staff parking. We may look at a dual function space that can be used as on-site pupil bus drop off and pick up at allocated times, with the potential for alternative use include trikes, bikes, scooters etc outside allocated times. Again, this will be discussed during the design process.
16.	Will there be fobbed internal and external doors, air conditioning and high external fences?	Safeguarding arrangements will be a priority. Internal and external doors will be fobbed, and the new special school will have air conditioning. The new school will be designed to comply with 'Secure by Design' which will ensure that amongst other things, the school boundary and buildings are fully secured and

Number	Question	Response
		protected with CCTV. Designs will be developed in conjunction with the local Designing Out Crime Officer ensuring that school and community safety are key principles embedded within the process.

4. Closing Remarks

The Governing Body were thanked for their contribution. Governors and staff members were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The Governing Body and staff members were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed.

Minutes of Meetings with Governing Body and Staff Members of Ysgol Ty Coch

Date	17 th July 2023
Time	15:30 to 16:10
Mode	Microsoft Teams

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Gaynor Davies	GD	Director of Education & Inclusion Services
Andrea Richards	AR	Service Director - 21 st Century Schools & Transformation
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Grace Zecca-Hanagan	GZH	21 st Century Schools Officer
Bethan Davies	BD	Human Resources Manager
Ellen Williams	EW	Human Resources Manager
Joanna Croad	JC	Human Resources Officer
Samantha Andrews	SA	Human Resources Officer
David Jenkins	DJ	Headteacher of Ysgol Ty Coch
N/A	N/A	Governing Body and Staff Members of Ysgol Ty Coch

1. Welcome and Introductions

GD welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

GD provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document.

3. Staff and Governor Questions

The Governing Body and staff members of Ysgol Ty Coch were invited to ask questions. The questions from the Governing Body and staff members and the responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

Number	Question	Response
1.	What size will the new special school be?	GD: We intend to maximise the space available on the proposed site without forfeiting external space. At present, we anticipate the new special school

Number	Question	Response
		<p>will be built for around 180 pupils, however this will be subject to undertaking further feasibility and progressing with the detailed design of the new special school.</p> <p>The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET Act 2018) requires councils to keep under review the arrangements for supporting pupils with additional learning needs within their area and consider whether they are sufficient, hence we need to ensure that we maximise the space available on the proposed site.</p> <p>AR: It should also be noted that the capacity assessment method outlined in Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales (021/2011) applies to all English, Welsh, dual language or voluntary aided mainstream primary and secondary schools in Wales, it does not apply to nursery and special schools, or Pupil Referral Units. Pupils are placed in special schools by the Council's Directorate of Education and Inclusion Services Access and Inclusion Service Panels based on an assessment of their need; as such, special schools do not have a capacity calculation.</p>

Number	Question	Response
2.	We welcome this proposal; however, we need to ensure that appropriate workforce planning is carried out alongside the proposal.	<p>GD: Special schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf have a proven track record of working collaboratively and we need to continue this approach to ensure the children and young people living in Rhondda Cynon Taf who have additional learning needs are given the best opportunities possible.</p> <p>We need to ensure that the best staff are appointed to all special schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.</p>
3.	Will the new catchment areas be enforced?	<p>GD: Children and young people who wish to remain in their existing special school following the catchment changes can continue to do so. However, all new placements will be informed by the revised catchment areas once the changes are implemented (no later than the 2026 academic year) so that pupils attend their local special school.</p>
4.	Will the highly specialist 21 st century special school environment be available to all pupils with additional learning needs in Rhondda Cynon Taf?	<p>GD: The new special school will create a highly specialist 21st century special school environment which will enable the Council to meet the needs of pupils who require access to highly specialist therapeutic facilities, equipment and resources required to meet all additional learning needs, including complex medical and health needs.</p>

Number	Question	Response
		Whilst the Council cannot replicate this across the existing special schools, we would expect them to be adequately serviced with equipment and resources to meet the additional learning needs of all pupils equitably.
5.	Will the new special school provide residential care?	GD: No, the new special school will not provide residential care.
6.	Could pupils who attend the other special schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf access the highly specialist 21 st century special school environment?	<p>GD: The other special schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf would have the same placement criteria as they essentially provide the same provision to pupils with additional learning needs.</p> <p>From the 2026 academic year, all new placements will be informed by the revised catchment areas once the changes are implemented so that pupils attend their local special school.</p>
7.	Will this proposal involve a review of Buarth y Capel?	GD: We are currently investigating options to create additional capacity at Buarth y Capel.
8.	Could the Council look at introducing satellite sites to expand specialist provision?	GD: We currently work in partnership with Coleg y Cymoedd to provide specialist provisions for post-16 pupils. This specialist post-16 provision frees up much needed space across our special schools whilst also providing pupils with the opportunity to gain experience of college life and to transition into a setting at post-16.

Number	Question	Response
		<p>The Council, in partnership with Coleg y Cymoedd, currently provides three separate specialist provisions for post-16 pupils: one for pupils at Maesgwyn Special School at Coleg y Cymoedd's Aberdare campus, and shortly to include Parklane pupils; one for pupils at Ysgol Hen Felin at Coleg y Cymoedd's Llwynypia campus; and one for pupils from Ysgol Ty Coch at Coleg Y Cymoedd' s Nantgarw campus.</p> <p>In addition, there are currently 46 Special Educational Needs Learning Support Classes co-located in mainstream primary and secondary schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf.</p>

4. Closing Remarks

The Governing Body were thanked for their contribution. Governors and staff members were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The Governing Body and staff members were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed.

Minutes of Meetings with School Council of Park Lane Special School

Date	18 th July 2023
Time	10:00 to 10:45
Mode	Face to Face at Park Lane Special School

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Grace Zecca-Hanagan	GZH	21 st Century Schools Officer
Diane Llewellyn	DL	Assistant Headteacher of Park Lane Special School
Representative pupils of school	N/A	School Council of Park Lane Special School

1. Welcome and Introductions

LH welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

LH provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document. It was also confirmed that the pupils had all received a hard copy of the children's version of the Consultation Document.

3. School Council Questions

The School Council of Park Lane Special School were invited to ask questions. The questions from the School Council and the responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
1.	The School Council commented that the new special school should include the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A forest schools' area. • A hydrotherapy pool. • A large hall/dining area. • Allocated parking spaces outside 	The School Council were informed that some of these suggestions could be incorporated into the design process.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
	<p>classrooms for walking frames.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An allotment/ horticultural area. • An area to showcase pupils' work. • Larger dining tables. • Lots of outdoor space. • Multiple sensory rooms to provide multiple sensory experiences to pupils. • Quiet/breakout areas with comfortable seating. • Trampolines that are sunk into the ground, both inside and outside. • Vibrant classrooms. 	
2.	The School Council commented that the new special school should have lots of areas for drop off at the start of the school day and pick up at the end of the school day.	The School Council were informed that this would be incorporated into the design process.
3.	The School Council asked who would be going to the new special school?	The School Council were informed of the catchment areas. The School Council were informed that children and young people who wish to remain in their existing special school following the catchment changes can continue to do so. However, all new placements will be informed by the revised catchment areas once the changes are implemented (no later than September 2026) so that pupils attend their local special school.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
4.	The School Council asked what size the new special school would be?	The School Council were informed that the Council has identified a possible site for the location of the new special school and that experts were now looking at the site to create as big a special school as possible. The School Council were informed that the Council would be creative to maximise the space and would like the new special school to be big enough for around 180 pupils.
5.	The School Council asked when the new special school would be opened?	The School Council were informed that the new special school would be opened by September 2026.
6.	The School Council asked what age you could be to go the new special school?	The School Council were informed that the new special school would be for pupils between the ages of 3 to 19.
7.	The School Council asked how much the new special school would cost?	The School Council were informed that the new special school would cost around £54 million and that the Welsh Governments Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and the Council would jointly fund it.
8.	The School Council asked how many floors the new special school would have?	The School Council were informed that the Council would be creative to maximise the space and, if required, the new special school would be built over two floors and that lifts would be included.
9.	The School Council commented that the halls and doors should be wide enough to accommodate	The School Council were informed that this would be incorporated into the design process.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
	wheelchair users and walking frames/apparatus.	
10.	The School Council commented that there should be a 'touch pad' outside each door to make opening the doors easier.	The School Council were informed that this could be incorporated into the design process.
11.	The School Council commented that they would like a kitchen/café area to develop life skills and commented that in the new academic year, they would be establishing a 'Healthy Trolley' enterprise to assist pupils in learning new skills.	<p>The School Council were informed that a café had been established at another special school, Ysgol Ty Coch, which assists pupils in learning new skills.</p> <p>The School Council were informed that this would be incorporated into the design process.</p>

4. Closing Remarks

The School Council were thanked for their invaluable input and ideas and were informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The School Council were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed.

Minutes of Meetings with School Council of Ysgol Hen Felin

Date	19 th July 2023
Time	10:00 to 11:00
Mode	Face to Face at Ysgol Hen Felin

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Grace Zecca-Hanagan	GZH	21 st Century Schools Officer
Chloe Daunton	CD	Teacher of Ysgol Hen Felin
Representative pupils of school	N/A	School Council of Ysgol Hen Felin

1. Welcome and Introductions

LH welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

LH provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document. It was also confirmed that the pupils had all received a hard copy of the children's version of the Consultation Document.

3. School Council Questions

The School Council of Ysgol Hen Felin were invited to ask questions. The questions from the School Council and the responses provided are summarised in the table that follows.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
1.	When is the new school going to be built?	The School Council were informed that the new special school would be opened by September 2026.
2.	What is the new school going to be called?	A new Governing Body and School Council will be established for the new special school, and they will work together with staff, pupils and officers from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Number	Question/Comment	Response
		in order to develop a new school name.
3.	How many pupils will be at the new school?	The School Council were informed that the Council has identified a possible site for the location of the new special school and that experts were now looking at the possible site to create as big a special school as possible. The School Council were informed that the Council would be creative to maximise the space and would like the new special school to be big enough for around 180 pupils.
4.	Will the new school be a 3 to 19 school like ours?	Yes, the new special school will be a 3 to 19 special school like Ysgol Hen Felin.
5.	Why is the new school so near to ours?	A number of potential available sites within Rhondda Cynon Taf were looked at using a list of criteria. The site chosen as the best and biggest based on these criteria was Clydach Vale, Tonypany.
6.	What colour will the new school uniform be?	A new Governing Body and School Council will be established for the new special school, and they will work together with pupils, staff and officers from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council in order to develop a new school uniform.
7.	Will pupils from Ysgol Hen Felin move to the new school?	The School Council were informed of the catchment areas. The School Council were informed that children and young people who wish to remain in their existing special school following the

Number	Question/Comment	Response
		catchment changes can continue to do so. However, all new placements will be informed by the revised catchment areas once the changes are implemented (no later than September 2026) so that pupils attend their local special school.
8.	Will pupils from the new school visit us and can we visit them?	Yes. There will be links established between the new special school and Ysgol Hen Felin. The two schools could join up for events such as School Council sessions, sports days and fun days.
9.	What facilities will the new school have?	<p>The new special school will have similar facilities to those at Ysgol Hen Felin.</p> <p>The School Council commented that the new special school should include a media suite, so that the new special school could establish a school radio station.</p>
10.	Will the new school have its own School Council?	Yes, the new special school will have a School Council.
11.	How much will the new school cost to build?	The School Council were informed that the new special school would cost around £54 million and that the Welsh Governments Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and the Council would jointly fund it.
12.	Will the new school have an opening event?	Yes, the new special school will have an opening event and the School Council from Ysgol

Number	Question/Comment	Response
		Hen Felin will be invited to attend.

4. Closing Remarks

The School Council were thanked for their invaluable input and ideas and informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The School Council were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed.

Minutes of Meetings with School Council of Ysgol Ty Coch

Date	17 th July 2023
Time	13:30 to 14:20
Mode	Face to Face at Ysgol Ty Coch

Attendance		
Name	Initials	Title
Lisa Howell	LH	21 st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager
Grace Zecca-Hanagan	GZH	21 st Century Schools Officer
Kimberley Hooper	KH	School Council Lead at Ysgol Ty Coch
Representative pupils of school	N/A	School Council of Ysgol Ty Coch

1. Welcome and Introductions

LH welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. Introductions were made.

2. Consultation Overview

LH provided the meeting with an overview of the proposal being made and the consultation process to be followed, as set out in the Consultation Document. It was also confirmed that the pupils had all received a hard copy of the children's version of the Consultation Document.

3. School Council Questions

The School Council of Ysgol Ty Coch were invited to ask questions and makes comments. The questions and comments made are summarised in the table that follows along with their response, where necessary.

Number	Question/Comment	Response
1.	The School Council commented that the new special school should include the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of outside space. • A common room for sixth form pupils. • Quiet/breakout areas. • Sensory room. 	This was noted and will be considered in the design brief of the new school.
2.	The School Council commented that the	The School Council were shown some of examples of classrooms recently

Number	Question/Comment	Response
	design of the new special school should be bright.	delivered by the Council. The School Council noted that they preferred the classrooms that featured brighter fixtures, fittings and furniture.
4.	<p>The School Council commented that the new special school should have lots of areas for drop off at the start of the school day and pick up at the end of the school day.</p> <p>The majority of pupils who attend Ysgol Ty Coch utilise home to school transport. As such there are currently two sessions for drop off at the start of the school day and two sessions to pick up at the end of the school day.</p>	The School Council were informed that this would be incorporated into the design process.
5.	The School Council explained that a café had been established at Ysgol Ty Coch which assists pupils in learning new skills. They suggested that this type of area could be include in the new school.	The School Council were informed that this would be investigated further and would be discussed during the design process.

6. Closing Remarks

The School Council were thanked for their invaluable input and ideas and informed that they will be offered the opportunity over the coming weeks to reflect on the questions and responses provided and submit additional questions where required.

The School Council were encouraged to participate in engaging in the consultation process through completing the online survey or putting comments in writing to schoolplanning@rctcbc.gov.uk.

All attendees were thanked for participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed.

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22 September 2023

Re: Proposals to develop a new Special School in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Dear Cabinet Members,

I have been instructed by this Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee to convey the comments and observations of Members in relation to the **Proposals to develop a new Special School in Rhondda Cynon Taf** before its consideration at the Cabinet meeting on 23rd October 2023.

The Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee gave feedback and comments in respect of the New Special School at its meeting on the 14th September 2023 where the following comments and observations were made:

Concern was raised in respect of the proposal having a potential negative impact on the Welsh Language. Members commented that it was essential for any ALN provision to be reflective of the needs of Welsh Language speakers in RCT. Members also reflected that in order to meet the requirements of the WESP and work towards Cymraeg 2050, any Welsh Medium provision offered at a potential new facility would need to be carefully considered to ensure that Children and Young People who speak welsh at home or are currently learning to speak welsh, can continue to learn and develop their welsh language skills in any new setting. Members also heard that no response to the proposal had yet been received from Menter Iaith, Mudiad Meithrin and the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Members felt reassured that following engagement and consultation with parents, pupils, governors, School Councils and special schools staff that overall the response so far to the proposal had been positive

The Committee noted the out of county provision and the significant associated costs but were reassured to hear that children were only placed out of county by exception and any new provision will enhance capacity for those children and young people with complex needs.

Members were encouraged to hear of the Council's commitment to becoming carbon neutral and were pleased to hear that the integrated school transport team had worked with private transport companies to encourage more environmentally friendly means of transport such as electric vehicles and **recommended** that this be encouraged for any new facility

When considering the design of a new provision, Members **recommended** officers visit other out of county provisions to draw on best practice to ensure the primary consideration is its design and safety. When considering the design, members also **recommended** that self- contained gender neutral toilets are considered to ensure accessibility, safety and dignity of the Children and Young People using the facility. To support this, Members **recommended** that a full equality impact assessment is undertaken prior to the implementation and design stage being taken forward

Members of the Committee also highlighted the importance of recruiting a highly skilled and trained workforce for the new provision and acknowledged that whilst this would be a challenge for officers obtaining skilled staff, particularly with Welsh Language Skills and Speech and Language support it was essential that the right candidates are attracted to the roles.

Following conclusion of the Committee's discussions in respect of the proposals, Members thanked officers for the full and detailed proposal and for the opportunity to provide feedback into the consultation. Members were overall supportive of the proposal before them and look forward to seeing any future developments and welcomed any future opportunities to undertake scrutiny on the proposal.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christian Hanagan', written over a faint, circular official stamp.

Christian Hanagan
Service Director Democratic Services and Communication

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

CABINET

23 OCTOBER 2023

CIL ANNUAL MONITORING 2022/2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PORFOLIO HOLDER COUNCILLOR MARK NORRIS

Author: Jim Bailey, Head of Planning

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's approval in respect of the contents of the CIL Annual Monitoring Report and the proposed changes to the Regulation 123 List.
- 1.2 To advise Cabinet of the pre scrutiny by the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Community Infrastructure Levy. The recommendations will be provided verbally by the Director of Prosperity and Development.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:
 - (1) Approve the CIL Annual Monitoring Report (Appendix A).
 - (2) Approve the Regulation 123 List (Appendix B) for publication on the Council website for a period of 28 days and consultation as set out in paragraph 5.6.
 - (3) Approve the subsequent adoption of the Regulation 123 List if no adverse comments are received.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To enable the Council to continue to operate a Community Infrastructure Levy in accordance with the statutory regulations.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) require the Council to produce an **annual report detailing CIL income and expenditure** (Appendix A). Set out in paragraph 5.2 below is the details of the eighth of these annual reports since the Council introduced CIL in December 2014.
- 4.2 The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) also require the Council to publish an Infrastructure List (known as the Regulation 123 List). The List should set out the infrastructure, which the Council considers it is likely to apply CIL revenue to.
- 4.3 At the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23 July 2015, Members agreed the process for formulating, monitoring and revising the Regulation 123 list, which includes that the relevant Scrutiny Committee/Group review the operation of the list and consider the annual 123 list and annual CIL financial monitoring report and make recommendations to Cabinet where appropriate.

5.0 MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

CIL INCOME & EXPENDITURE

- 5.1 The Regulations require that CIL income must be split into three parts:
- 80% to be applied to infrastructure to support growth of the Council's area (known as the 'Strategic CIL' and is to be spent on items on the Regulation 123 List).
 - 15% to be passed to the Community/Town Council in whose boundary the development that paid CIL is located for the provision of local infrastructure improvements of other measures that support the development of the area.
 - 5% to be applied towards implementation and ongoing administration.
- 5.2 The total CIL income received in 2022/2023 was £890,493.47
- 80% as Strategic income = £319,644.05*
 - 15% Local income = £499,967,36
 - 5% Administration income = £70,882.06

*(*80% Strategic income is less than the 15% Local income due to the amount being off-set against the infrastructure balance until the cost of the new primary school at the Llanilid development has been met. The total cost of the new primary school is £10,223,499.00))*

Strategic income received in 2022/2023 was £319,644.05
Strategic income carried forward from 2021/2022 was £1,018,347.70
Strategic income spent in 2022/2023 was £395,000.00
Balance of Strategic CIL income £942,991.75

- 5.3 The **annual monitoring report** at Appendix A provides a breakdown of the CIL receipts received and the distribution of 15% of CIL receipts to Community/Town Councils.
- 5.4 Cabinet agreed on 20th September 2018 to spend £395,000.00 of Strategic CIL on Ffynnon Taf Primary School. The project included a new build extension (4 classrooms and a hall) and refurbishments to the current school buildings for school and community use. The funds were drawn down in 2022/2023.

THE REGULATION 123 LIST

- 5.5 It is proposed that there are minor amendments to the **Regulation 123 List** (considered at Cabinet on the 17 October 2022). The list proposes highway and education projects that support and mitigate the growth anticipated through the Council's Local Development Plan. The proposed List is set out in Appendix C.
- 5.6 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the **Regulation 123 List** (Appendix B) for publication on the Council web-site for 28 days and if there are no adverse comments received then the 123 List can be adopted. It is further recommended that the notification of the consultation be sent to all elected Members, Town and Community Councils and to the Members of the Council's Developers Forum.

6.0 PRE SCRUTINY

- 6.1 As outlined within the Committee's Terms of Reference, pre-scrutiny and Members of the CIL is a role placed on the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.2 In light of this role, pre scrutiny on the CIL will be undertaken by the Committee on the 18 October 2023 and a verbal update will be provided by the Director of Prosperity and Development.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 7.1 There are no direct implications as a result of this financial report, however, the equality and diversity implications of any infrastructure schemes that will be funded by CIL will be considered in the development of those projects.

8.0 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 As set out in paragraph 5.6 above.

9.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct implications as a result of this financial report, however, the Welsh Language Impact Assessment of any infrastructure scheme that will be funded by the CIL will be considered in the development of those projects.

10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

10.1 There are no additional budget requirements. The CIL receipts and spend for 2022/2023 is set out at Appendix A.

11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

11.1 The report and appendices have been prepared in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).

12.0 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

12.1 Infrastructure funded through CIL will support the Building a Strong Economy and Creating Neighbourhoods Where People are Proud to Live and Work priorities in the Corporate Plan.

13.0 STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

13.1 Successful implementation of the Regulation 123 list will be relevant to electoral wards.

14.0 CONCLUSION

14.1 The Regulation 123 List is considered appropriate to assist in funding schemes that support growth in the County Borough.

Other Information: -

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Leanne Lott (01443) 281114



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23 OCTOBER 2023

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNCILLOR MARK NORRIS**

Officer to contact: Jim Bailey, Head of Planning

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rhondda cynon taf

community infrastructure levy

ardoll seilwaith cymunedol

Monitoring Report 2022/2023

Regulation 62 – Monitoring Report 2022/2023

Background

Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charges took effect on 31 December 2014 and the Council is both a CIL Charging and a CIL Collecting Authority. Regulation 62 of the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended) requires CIL Charging Authorities to produce an annual report detailing CIL income and expenditure. This is Rhondda Cynon Taf's eighth annual report covering the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

Allocation of CIL

CIL income is required to be allocated as follows:

- Up to 5% of CIL can be applied towards implementation and ongoing administration
- 15% of CIL (excluding surcharges) is passed to the Community/Town Council in whose boundary the development that paid the CIL is located, for the provision of local infrastructure improvements or other measures to support the development of the area (referred to as local CIL).
- 80% of CIL is to be applied to strategic infrastructure to support the growth of the CIL Charging Authority's area (referred to as Strategic CIL).

Total CIL Income

Total CIL income in 2022/2023 was £890,493.47

Strategic 80% (to be spent on items on Regulation 123 List)

Strategic income received in 2022/2023 was £319,644.05

Strategic income carried forward from 2021/2022 was £1,018,347.70

Strategic income spent in 2022/2023 was £395,000.00

Balance of Strategic CIL income £942,991.75

Details of each CIL receipt and how it is apportioned is set out in Appendix A.

Local 15%

Local CIL income in 2022/2023 was £499,967,36

Rhondda Cynon Taf has 12 Community/Town Council areas, which are: Gilfach Goch, Hirwaun, Llanharan, Llanharry, Llantrisant, Llantwit Fardre, Pontyclun, Pontypridd, Rhigos, Taffs Well, Tonyrefail and Ynysybwl

Local CIL (15%) income received between 1st April 2022 and 30th September 2022 was £190,662.05. £184,401.59 was passed to the relevant Community/Town Council in October 2022 and the balance of £6,260.46 was in an area where there was no Community/Town Council.

The carry forward balance of £153,860.57 was also be paid to Llanharan Community Council in October 2022. This payment is in relation to Planning Application 19/1082/16.

£309,305.31 was received between 1st October 2022 and 31st March 2023. £12,357.97 was passed to the relevant Community/Town Council in April 2023 and the balance of £296,947.34 has been carried forward to 2023/2024.

Balance for areas where there is no Community/Town Council 2022/23 is £8,478.82.

The amount passed to each Community/Town Council is set out in Appendix B.

Administration 5%

Administrative Income in 2022/2023 was £70,882.06

Administrative income carried forward from 2021/2022 was £114,284.07

Balance of Administration Income £185,166.13

*(*80% Strategic income is less than the 15% Local income due to the amount being offset against the infrastructure balance until the cost of the new primary school at the Llanilid development has been met. The total cost of the new primary school is £10,223,499.00)*

CIL carried forward to 2023/2024

The amount of CIL carried forward to 2023/2024 is set out in the following table:

CIL CARRIED FORWARD	AMOUNT
Strategic CIL	£942,991.75
Local CIL	Areas where there is no Town/Community Council £8,478.82. Llanharan Community Council deferred payment of £296,947.34 received in 2022/2023 and this is to be paid in 2023/2024.
Administrative CIL	£185,166.13

Appendix A –CIL INCOME RECEIVED IN 2022/2023

Date received	Planning Application Reference	Site Address	CIL Charge Development Type	Community/ Town Council	Amount	Strategic	Admin	Local (Community/ Town Council)
19/04/2022	20/0963/16	Former Clariant Site, Llantrisant Road, Church Village, CF38 2SN (first instalment)	Zone 3	Llantwit Fardre	£205,131.52	£164,105.22	£10,256.57	£30,769.73
01/06/2022	18/1423/10	The Meadows, Coedely, Tonyrefail (third instalment)	Zone 2	Tonyrefail	£70,300.62	£56,240.50	£3,515.03	£10,545.09
09/09/2022	19/1081/16	Land At Former Open Cast Coal Site and Land To The North Of The A473, Llanilid (third instalment)	Zone 3	Llanharan	£143,086.77	£0	£0	£143,086.77
16/09/2022	21/1546/10	Former Co-Operative, Dunraven Street, Tonypandy, CF40 1AP (full payment)	Zone 1	No Community/Town Council	£41,736.40	£33,389.12	£2,086.82	£6,260.46

18/11/2022	19/0516/10	Penuel Chapel, High Street, Llantrisant, CF72 8BQ (final instalment)	Zone 3	Llantrisant	£12,085.88	£9,668.71	£604.29	£1,812.88
25/11/2022	18/1423/10	The Meadows, Coedely, Tonyrefail (fourth instalment)	Zone 2	Tonyrefail	£70,300.62	£56,240.50	£3,515.03	£10,545.09
01/02/2023	19/1082/16	Land At Former Open Cast Coal Site and Land To The North Of The A473, Llanilid (second instalment)	Zone 3	Llanharan	£204,764.89	£0	£50,904.32	£153,860.57
15/03/2023	19/1081/16	Land At Former Open Cast Coal Site and Land To The North Of The A473, Llanilid (fourth instalment)	Zone 3	Llanharan	£143,086.77	£0	£0	£143,086.77
TOTAL	-	-	-	-	£890,493.47	£319,644.05	£70,882.06	£499,967.36

Regulation 88, surcharges cannot be apportioned to community/town councils and must be split 5% administration and 95% strategic infrastructure.

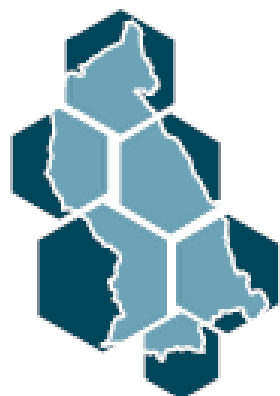
The 5% admin fee has also been used to off-set against the infrastructure balance until the cost of the new primary school at the Llanilid development has been met. The 5% Admin fee that would have been received to date is now being clawed back from the Llanilid payments.

Appendix B – CIL INCOME LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMUNITY/TOWN COUNCILS

Community/Town Council	15% received in 2022/23 to be passed to local council	Amount paid in October 2022	Amount paid in April 2023	Balance c/f
Gilfach Goch	£0	£0	£0	£0
Hirwaun	£0	£0	£0	£0
Llanharan	£440,034.11	£296,947.34 (amount paid includes the c/f balance of £153,860.57)	£0	£296,947.34
Llanharry	£0	£0	£0	£0
Llantrisant	£1,812.88	£0	£1,812.88	£0
Llantwit Fardre	£30,769.73	£30,769.73	£0	£0
Pontyclun	£0	£0	£0	£0
Pontypridd	£0	£0	£0	£0
Rhigos	£0	£0	£0	£0
Taffs Well	£0	£0	£0	£0
Tonyrefail	£21,090.18	£10,545.09	£10,545.09	£0
Ynysybwl	£0	£0	£0	£0
Non-Community Council/Town Council area	£6,260.46	£0	£0	£8,478.82*

*

£2,218.36 (carried forward from 2019/2020) to be spent in Aberaman South Ward
 £6,260.46 (carried forward from 2022/2023) to be spent in Tonypany



rhondda cynon taf
community infrastructure levy
ardoll seilwaith cymunedol

Regulation 123 List of Infrastructure
List Updated October 2023

In accordance with the requirement of Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) the following table comprises the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Infrastructure List. The list includes the infrastructure the Council considers it is likely to apply Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) revenue to:

Education Projects:

- New/additional education provision to serve the land at Mwyndy / Talbot Green;
- New/additional education provision to serve Trane Farm, Tonyrefail;
- New/additional education provision at the former open cast site north of A473, Llanilid

Transportation Projects:

- Provision of the A473/A4119 Talbot Green to Ynysmaerdy Relief Road;
- A4119/A4093 roundabout, Tonyrefail – signalised junction and active travel improvements
- Llanharan Link Road
- Cynon Gateway North
- South Coed Ely Link Dualling - upgrade the A4119 between Talbot Green and Coedely to dual carriageway standard
- A4119 Castell Mynach signalised junction
- Llanharan Community Route – Construction of new active travel routes
- Trefforest Industrial Estate – Construction of new active travel routes
- Trefforest Industrial Estate - New Railway Station
- Aberdare – Hirwaun extension of passenger rail services
- A473 between Tonteg roundabout and Upper Boat Roundabout

Please note:

The Regulation 123 list is not prioritised and projects can be added to the list or removed at the discretion of the Council, subject to appropriate consultation.

The inclusion of a project or type of infrastructure on the list does not signify a commitment from the Council to fund (either in whole or part) the listed project or type of infrastructure. The order of the list does not imply any preference or priority

Infrastructure not contained within the Regulation 123 List may be required by developer contributions or in-kind via a section 106 agreement. Such contributions will accord with Regulation 122 and 123 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Consultation

Background

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Authority. Since its CIL charges took effect on 31st December 2014, it has published a Regulation 123 list on its web-site.

The Regulation 123 list is a list containing infrastructure projects that may be fully or partly funded by CIL.

The following changes to the Council's Regulation 123 list are proposed as set out in the following table:

Infrastructure Requirement	Proposed Amendment	Reason For Amendment
Education Projects:		
New/additional education provision to serve the land at Mwyndy / Talbot Green;	To remain unaltered	N/A
New/additional education provision to serve Trane Farm, Tonyrefail	To remain unaltered	N/A
New/additional education provision to serve Taffs Well	To be removed	Infrastructure has been part funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy.
New/additional education provision at the former open cast site north of the A473, Llanilid	To remain unaltered	N/A
Transportation Projects:		
Provision of the A473/A4119 Talbot Green to Ynysmaerdy Relief Road	To remain unaltered	N/A
A4119/A4093 roundabout, Tonyrefail – signalised junction and active travel improvements	To remain unaltered	N/A
Llanharan By-Pass	Amend Description to: Llanharan Link Road	N/A
Cynon Gateway (A465)	Amend Description to: Cynon Gateway North	N/A
South Coed Ely Link Dualling - upgrade the	To remain unaltered	N/A

A4119 between Talbot Green and Coedely to dual carriageway standard		
A4119 Castell Mynach signalised junction	To remain unaltered	N/A
Llanharan Community Route – Construction of new active travel routes	To remain unaltered	N/A
Trefforest Industrial Estate – Construction of new active travel routes	To remain unaltered	N/A
Trefforest Industrial Estate – New railway station	To remain unaltered	N/A
Aberdare – Hirwaun extension of passenger rail services	To remain unaltered	N/A
A473 between Tonteg Roundabout and Upper Boat Roundabout	To remain unaltered	N/A



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

UPDATE REPORT ON THE EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY (2022-2025)

23 OCTOBER 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER CLLR NORRIS

AUTHOR: CLAIRE HUTCHEON, HEAD OF HOUSING STRATEGY AND INVESTMENT

Appendices - Appendix A: Empty Homes Strategy (2022-2025)

Appendix B: Empty Homes Action Plan (2022 – 2025)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the progress being made in bringing empty homes back into use in line with the RCT Empty Homes Strategy (2022-2025).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Members consider the information contained within this report and note the positive progress made to date in bringing empty homes back into use in line with the RCT Empty Homes Strategy (2022 – 2025).

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Empty Homes Strategy (2022 – 2025) was approved by Members in October 2022. The Strategy was developed to continue the commitment to tackle empty homes across RCT and increase the number of homes being brought back into use. This progress report highlights what has been achieved through the first year of delivering the strategy.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Empty private sector homes represent a wasted resource and are a financial expense both to the owners and the Council and in many cases a missed

opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing for residents. Not only are they a waste of a valuable housing resource, but they can cause blight to communities and distress to residents affected by their unsightly appearance and propensity to attract crime and anti-social behaviour.

- 4.2 Council Tax records, from 1st April 2017, revealed that there were 3,556 private sector homes that had been vacant for six months or more. This equated to 3.8% of Rhondda Cynon Taf's private housing (owner occupied and private rented) stock. The average for Wales in 2017/2018 was 2.4% with the lowest (Torfaen) having 0.78% of their stock empty.
- 4.3 Whilst RCT was above the Welsh average and did have the highest number of empty homes in Wales, this was primarily due to the level of 'churn' in the housing market, rather than persistent long term empty homes.
- 4.4 On the 4th October 2018 Cabinet approved an Empty Homes Strategy for the period 2018-2021, which aimed to make a difference to both the scale of empty homes that are brought back into use as well as having a more fundamental impact on the total number in order to reverse the trend in a more sustainable way.
- 4.5 The Strategy achieved a number of key objectives over the 3 year period delivering 1,267 interventions, which directly brought 692 properties back into use. Council tax records also showed that over this time the number of empty homes across the borough had reduced from 3,556 to 2,894, a reduction of 21% or 662 properties. In the context of the Pandemic, and the resultant disruption to the housing market, this was seen as a positive outcome.
- 4.6 However, whilst it was acknowledged that positive outcomes had been achieved, the problem persisted and continued to present problems in many communities. As such, a strong strategic approach was required which had clear objectives that were deliverable and would make a difference to both the scale of empty homes that needed to be brought back into use as well as have a more fundamental impact on the total number to reverse the trend in a sustainable way.
- 4.7 To achieve this, a new RCT Empty Homes Strategy (**Appendix A**) was developed and approved by Cabinet in October 2022, which set out 5 clear strategic objectives.
 1. **To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty homes being brought back into use.**
 2. **To maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use.**
 3. **To use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty homes are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use and monitor the outcomes related to these closely.**

4. To undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty homes.
5. To identify possible solutions that could prevent homes from becoming empty and also develop interventions for different market areas and types.

4.8 The Empty Homes Strategy provides a framework for future empty homes activity and enables the positive work undertaken to continue.

4.9 An annual empty homes strategy action plan (**Appendix B**) was also produced which ensures that the strategic aims of the Strategy are delivered and key actions are undertaken to the specified timescales.

5.0 **Impact of the Empty Homes Strategy (2022 – 2023) during the first year of delivery**

Objective 1: To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty homes being brought back into use.

Empty Property Operational Group (EPOG)

5.1 The remit of the EPOG is to take a strategic approach to wider empty homes issues and poor-quality housing by ensuring that the Empty Homes Strategy and Action plan are delivered and monitored. The work of the group ensures that a wide range of interventions are used, to support bringing empty homes back into use. This includes proactive home visits to long-term empty properties and offering various grant and loan products. The EPOG closely monitors outcomes, based on key performance indicators in line with Welsh Government requirements.

5.2 The Group meets quarterly and includes officers from Housing Strategy, Housing Grants, Public Health, Council Tax and Regeneration. A priority for the Group is to target “long term” vacant properties within the Borough, which are defined as empty properties that have been vacant for four consecutive years. The long term empty properties are identified by taking a snapshot at a point in time. A snapshot was taken in August 2022, and identified that 7% of empty properties (that had been empty within the previous 4 years), had been consecutively empty over that same period. This is a 2% improvement when compared to the data collected for the previous strategy which was at 9%. Further analysis will be carried out in year 2 of the implementation of the strategy regarding the long term empty properties to review how many of the long term empty properties have been brought back into use.

Working with Registered Social Landlord's (RSL) and other partners

- 5.3 In addition to bringing empty homes back in to use the council have been working with RSL partners to develop empty commercial buildings and buildings that will cease to be used for its current function back into use in town centres. These are complex schemes, which often require a number of interventions. There are several schemes in progress such as 122-126 Dunraven Street, Former Coop in Tonypany and the Treorchy Sorting Office. There have also been a number of new projects that have been brought into the social housing grant programme, these include; The Fruit Warehouse and Rhondda Bowl in Tonyrefail, former Cwmbach Primary School, Porth YMCA and the Button Factory.
- 5.4 in addition to this, the Council, in partnership with RSL's, have had an opportunity to utilise the Welsh Government's Transitional Capital Accommodation Programme funding to reduce the number of empty properties across RCT. In 2022/23 Trivallis submitted an application, which was supported by the Council, for 11 void properties to be brought back into use, they were successful with the application resulting in a £550k grant allocation. All 11 properties have now been brought back into use and in partnership with the Council have all been allocated to residents.
- 5.5 Further Transitional Capital Accommodation Programme funding has been made available by WG for 2023/24. The Council, in partnership with Hafod and Trivallis, have submitted applications for this funding to bring a further 7 empty properties back in to use and to acquire an additional 36 empty homes to the estimated grant amount of £5.5M. All 43 homes will then be brought back into use and in partnership with the Council will be allocated to residents.

RCT Landlord Forum

- 5.6 The Housing Strategy Team hosts the RCT Landlord Forum, which is held quarterly and attended by approximately **40 landlords**. The Forum enables the Council to engage directly with landlords and potential investors in the County Borough to share information and work together to reduce the number of empty properties in RCT.
- 5.7 The latest forum took place at Pontypridd Rugby Club on the 15th August 2023. The main agenda items involved a discussion on the Additional Licensing Scheme review for Houses in Multiple Occupation, implications of the Renting Homes Wales Act and advice and guidance on re-possession cases.
- 5.8 A Landlord newsletter is also published twice a year, which has been utilised to inform landlords of the Housing into Homes Loan, the Council's Homestep Plus scheme, information from the regeneration team and various energy efficiency grants that are available. Feedback from Landlords shows that they continue to find both the newsletter and meetings of value.

Working with Welsh Government

- 5.9 Prior to the launch of the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme in January 2023, RCT participated in significant consultation regarding how the scheme would work with Welsh Government. Building on the success of the Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme, discussions were facilitated to understand the criteria/functions of the scheme, funding available and achievable outcomes. RCT was recognised for its lead role for the Valleys Taskforce scheme and Local Authorities actively endorsed RCT to become the Lead Authority for the National Scheme. Following WG's request for any interested Local Authority to submit an Expression of Interest to act as a Lead Authority, RCT was appointed into the lead role. The Council subsequently worked with WG to agree a grant offer letter, staffing costs, Service Level Agreement and processes for the National Scheme.
- 5.10 Due to the success of the Houses into Homes Scheme and the Home Improvement Loans, the Council have also been involved in discussions with Welsh Government on additional funding opportunities to increase the amount of loans available. The Home Improvement Loan in particular has proved to be oversubscribed. Our partners Robert Owen Community Bank have processed 42 loans since April 2023, which clearly identifies the demand for this product. Discussions will continue with Welsh Government in the hope that more funding will become available for these schemes, due to this ongoing demand.
- 5.11 Officers are continuing to increase their knowledge and awareness of legal remedies for local authorities regarding large structures/building which are having a negative impact on neighbourhoods.

Objective 2: To maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use.

RCT Empty Homes Grant Scheme

- 5.12 The RCT Empty Homes Grant Scheme offers applicants a grant of up to £20,000 to renovate and bring an empty property back into use. The property must be vacant for at least 6 months to be eligible. 75 homes have been brought back in to use since the re-introduction of the scheme in 2021 (following the conclusion of Valleys Taskforce), totalling an investment of **£1.3M** locally. A further 28 homes are expected to be brought back in to use by the 31st March 2024 which will see a further investment of £550k. The RCT Empty Homes Grant Scheme is currently closed due to the launch of the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme, which offers the same outcome.

Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme

- 5.13 In 2019, following recognition of the success of the RCT Empty Homes Grant, the Valleys Taskforce agreed to commit **£10M** to fund bringing Empty Homes back into use. RCT Council were appointed as the lead authority due to the expertise held following on from the successful RCT Empty Homes Grant initiative and model of delivery. Local Authorities in the Valleys Taskforce Area

include, Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen and parts of Carmarthenshire, Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea.

- 5.14 At the end of the project on the 31st March 2023, 467 homes were brought back into use across 8 local authority (263 in RCT, 56%). A total investment of £8.6M was made (grant and client contribution) (£4.6M in RCT, 54%). It has been positive to see that 718 local contractors have been used to complete works on the 467 homes and it has been estimated that the contractors generated approximately 700,000 hours of employment because of the grant, therefore supporting the local economy.
- 5.15 Of the 467 homes brought back into use, the vast majority of homes had energy efficient measures installed. Therefore, the scheme supports the Council's efforts to tackle fuel poverty and to create a clean, green and sustainable places to live, fulfilling our obligations to decarbonise housing in Wales as we work towards achieving net zero by 2050.

National Empty Homes Grant Scheme

- 5.16 The Welsh Government have committed **£50M** over the next two years, to support bringing empty properties back in to use across Wales, which could see up to 2,000 long-term empty properties brought back in to use. £4.8M has been allocated to RCT (£2.4M each year).
- 5.17 A grant of up to £25,000 is available for homeowners or prospective homeowners to remove category 1 hazards from their properties to make them safe to live in and to improve their energy efficiency. Local authorities, Registered Social Landlords and Community Housing Groups are also able to apply for funding.
- 5.18 As at September 2023, 15 Local Authorities across Wales are participating in the scheme. Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea & Vale of Glamorgan.
- 5.19 RCT has received 697 applications across all participating Local Authorities (250 in RCT, 36%), of which, 377 are valid (107 in RCT, 28%).

Houses into Homes Loan

- 5.20 The Houses into Homes loan is a Welsh Government funded scheme, which provides a loan to help return privately owned empty properties back into use. Since the start of the scheme, RCT have delivered 155 Houses into Homes loans, totalling £4.4M of loans awarded; this has created 221 units of **accommodation** from privately owned empty properties. Local contractors were used to deliver works on all the 221 homes that have been created from the loans. Therefore, the investment made through the Houses into Homes

loans is contributing to the local economy providing a valuable work programme to local building/contractors at a very challenging time.

- 5.21 The scheme uses recycled monies to continue to provide loans and to date 128 loans have been repaid, worth £3.6M. In addition, the scheme supports the Home Improvement Loan, which is administered by our partner agency, Robert Owen Community Bank. This initiative, whilst not specifically targeted at empty properties, has provided 140 Home Improvement Loans, totalling £1.8M. This loan is for owner-occupiers and is provided interest free at affordable monthly payments, which enables residents to alleviate category 1 and 2 hazards from their homes and to escalate energy efficiency measures. Both products continue to be well subscribed.

Transforming Town Centre Loans

- 5.22 The WG Transforming Town Centre loan funding continues to be available for suitable projects. The Council administer interest-free loans to private sector property owners for the redevelopment of town centre buildings with end uses including housing. A small administration fee is usually applicable. Loan funding project applications are considered subject to planning and also an assessment process to consider the projected outputs from completed schemes. To date, in Rhondda Cynon Taf, 2 loans have been applied for and approved and delivery programmes are in place for these redevelopments.

Objective 3: To use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty homes are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use and monitor the outcomes related to these closely.

Long Term Empty Properties

- 5.23 The Empty Property Operational Group analysed the snapshot data from previous years and identified that 903 homes appeared on all four successive snapshots (i.e. in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022). In line with the Council's strategic approach, two dedicated Environmental Housing Officer's are working through this list completing home visits, starting with the properties that have been empty for the longest period. Work has been continuing well and is monitored via the EPOG. An analysis of the impact of the home visits on the number of long-term properties brought back into use will be conducted when the 2023-24 council tax data is available.
- 5.24 From 1st April 2017, Councils in Wales have been able to charge higher amounts (a premium) of up to 100% on top of the standard rate of council tax on second homes and long-term empty homes. The legislative changes were made by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the powers given to Councils are discretionary. Whether to charge a premium on second homes or long term empty home (or both) is, therefore a decision to be made by each Council. The Act also provides regulations which make exceptions to the premiums and these are set out in the Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015.

- 5.25 In response to this, from 1st April 2018, owners of long-term empty dwellings in RCT were required to pay a full council tax bill (i.e. no discount is allowed). Members took this decision as part of the Council's work in delivering its Empty Homes Strategy and this approach significantly contributed to long-term empty dwellings reducing by 25% since the discount was removed.
- 5.26 The new Council tax premiums below came into force on 1st April 2023; and services have already seen a further increase in calls, queries etc. regarding empty property loans/grants and assistance. It will not be evident what affect the new premiums will have on the number of vacant properties until next April at the earliest.

Period property empty	Council Tax Percentage
0-6 months	Nil
7-12 months	100%
1-2 years	100% current to increase to 150%
2 years +	100% current to increase to 200%

Marketing and promoting on how to bring empty homes back into use

Council/National website and social media platforms

- 5.27 The National Empty Homes Grant webpage has been re-branded and more informative content added which includes a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document and video of the grant process. Case Studies of applicants who have previously received an empty homes grant have also been uploaded to showcase the impact the grant can have for individuals.
- 5.28 A social media campaign for the National Empty Homes Grant has been running on RCT's platforms, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) since March 2023. The campaign has achieved a reach (reach is how many times the posts have been seen by different people) of 34.8k accounts on Facebook alone, with over 70k impressions (impressions are how many times a post has appeared on a screen) across both Facebook and X (Twitter). Across both platforms in English and Welsh the Council has received 827 click throughs to the webpage. This data shows that the information being shared regarding opportunities to bring empty homes back into use is reaching people and being viewed/accessed and shared.

Mail shots

- 5.29 A mail shot targeting 2,568 empty properties (empty for 12months+) will be issued in September 2023. Included in the mailshot will be a leaflet providing information on the National Empty Homes Grant and other interventions available to support bringing empty properties back in to use.

- 5.30 In addition to the mailshot, all long-term empty properties, identified as being vacant over four consecutive council tax years, are being targeted and will have received a home visit, and or letter, offering help and assistance to bring their property back into use.

Newsletters

- 5.31 RCT's success with the Valleys Taskforce empty homes grant, National empty homes grant scheme and Houses into Homes Loans have been promoted within the Housing Strategy and Investment Service annual newsletter. The latest edition of the newsletter was published in June 2023 with copies being distributed by email to internal Council employees and across the Council's community hubs for residents to access.
- 5.32 In addition, a Landlord Forum newsletter is produced twice a year and outlines all the available grants/loans and other assistance that is available to help bring properties back into use.

Objective 4: To undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty homes.

- 5.33 Further research has shown that whilst there are empty homes throughout the whole of Rhondda Cynon Taf, the issue is most acute within several parts of the Rhondda. The numbers are not so high in Cynon and only one area (Penrhiwceiber) displays comparable levels to parts of the Rhondda Valleys. Conversely, most of Taf has a particularly low level of empty properties, with most wards containing less than 2%. Further research on the underlying trends will be conducted during year 2 of the Action Plan.
- 5.34 Following on from the identified 903 long-term voids, an analysis at ward level further highlights the above, with 7 of the top 10 wards with the highest number of long-term vacant properties being within the Rhondda. Treherbert and Treorchy wards have the most with Beddau and Llanharan the least. Further analysis of data at a ward level will be conducted during year 2 of the action plan, and if necessary interventions will be targeted at wards with the highest levels of empty properties.
- 5.35 Prior to the launch of the National Empty Homes Grant scheme in January 2023, significant consultation took place between Welsh Government and Local Authorities in Wales. Lessons learnt from the Regional Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant scheme were discussed, considered, and implemented prior to the launch of the National scheme. Changes implemented included a change to the period a home needed to be empty (from 6 – 12 months). This was to target longer term empty properties and potentially avoid those properties that would have been returned in to use via 'natural churn'. The maximum grant available to applicants was increased from £20k to £25k for all essential works. Feedback from applicants, contractors and Local Authorities recognised the increase in costs of works over the past three years and the increased maximum grant award reflects this. To support Local Authorities to

work towards hitting the net zero agenda, some element of energy efficiency improvement measures to be included as part of works completed as a grant requirement (NB the grant cannot be considered for renewable measures only). Finally, as the scheme was to be expanded from regional to national, the current linguistic profile of the geographical areas concerned was taken into consideration. To ensure there were opportunities for persons to use the Welsh Language directly within the central administration team in RCT and ensure that Service users' needs are met, specific Welsh speaking staff (L5) were recruited.

Objective 5: To identify possible solutions that could prevent homes from becoming empty and also develop interventions for different market areas and types.

- 5.36 The Council had previous success with the implementation of the Healthy Homes Action Area work carried out in the Tylorstown ward. This saw 643 category 1 or 2 hazards removed from the properties and 151 boiler/heating systems installed with a further 56 loft insulations and minor energy efficiency measures complete. The Council are exploring if similar targeted schemes could be delivered in Penrhiwceiber and Clydach Vale as these are areas that have the highest amount of empty homes across RCT.
- 5.37 The EPOG have explored selective demolition for some properties however when the cases have been reviewed a demolition has not been an effective solution. For example, the demolition costs have far outweighed any discernible benefits.
- 5.38 Overall, the Council's approach to tackling empty homes through the delivery of the Empty Homes Strategy has been positive and will continue to be implemented over the next 2 years.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/ SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 An equality and diversity screening exercise was undertaken when the strategy was approved in October 2022 and a full impact assessment was not required at that time. In summary there are many positive impacts to groups that were covered in the equality impact assessment. The Strategy sets out the assistance available to bringing empty homes back into use, and ensures that everyone, regardless of protected characteristic group has access to affordable, safe and warm homes. The impact on age and disability is positive, explicitly because of the impact that developing new affordable homes will have on future housing supply and by offering diverse housing tenure and types. How the Council plans for future housing needs will have a huge impact on a diverse group of residents of all ages. Equally, developing 'homes for life' standard housing will mean that incorporating new designs into refurbished properties will enable residents to live longer in their own homes and easily adapt them as their mobility changes with time.

7.0 CONSULTATION/INVOLEMENT

- 7.1 A consultation exercise was not required for this report, however this may be required as actions within the strategy continue to be delivered.

8.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

A Welsh Language Impact Assessment was complete when the strategy was approved in October 2022. In summary, there are many positive impacts to residents of RCT through the approaches the Council takes in tackling empty homes. Information on these different processes are published on the Council's website and therefore information on available grants, loans, advice and assistance is available in both Welsh and English.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 There are currently no financial implications directly aligned to this report.
- WG funding has been awarded to the Council for the provision of property loans, which include the Houses into Homes loan (Landlord loan), the Home Improvement Loan (owner-occupier loan) and the Property Appreciation Loan (owner-occupier financial assistance loan) via Repayable Funding of £1,599,432 and Grant Funding of £1,576,024. This funding is recyclable and the repayable funding is not due for repayment until 2030.
 - WG funding has committed £50M to the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme with RCT being allocated £4.8m of which RCT has committed to provide the 10% match funding required £480k.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The delivery of the aims of the strategy will in some cases require the utilisation of existing Housing and Planning legislation where enforcement action in relation to an empty home is required.

11.0 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 11.1 Investment in housing provides an ongoing stimulus to the local economy, by encouraging spending and local supply chains. Making available a supply of affordable homes also helps to improve the prosperity of residents and helps support a huge range of households in society that may not otherwise be able to meet their needs in the market, thereby promoting independence and positive lives for all.

11.2 As such, the Empty Homes Strategy contributes to the delivery all three of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of economy, people and place. The Strategy also assists the Council to contribute to three of the seven wellbeing goals that 'The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:

1. A healthier Wales
2. A prosperous Wales
3. A Wales of cohesive communities

12.0 CONCLUSION

12.1 This report sets out what has been achieved during the first year of the implementation of the RCT Empty Homes Strategy.

12.2 During this period there have been 646 interventions delivered, which is above the provisional target of 400 per year. Council tax records show that during 2022-2023, the first year the Empty Homes Strategy (2022 – 2025) has been implemented, the number of empty homes across the borough has reduced from **2,892 to 2,634, a reduction of 258 properties.**

12.3 When reflecting on the empty homes data since the 1st April 2017, the Council Tax records revealed that there were 3,556 private sector homes that had been vacant for six months or more, **therefore over the last 5 years the number of empty homes reduced to 2,634, a reduction of 922 properties.**

12.3 The Council continues to take a proactive approach to bringing empty homes back into use within Rhondda Cynon Taf and has made available significant resources to tackle the issue. The Strategy provides a framework for all empty homes activity and ensures a co-ordinated and ambitious approach to decrease the total number of empty homes in the County Borough overall.

Other Information: -

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Claire Hutcheon, Head of Housing Strategy and Investment
(01443 281114)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23 OCTOBER 2023

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNCILLOR MARK NORRIS**

Officer to contact: Claire Hutcheon, Head of Housing Strategy and Investment
(01443 281114)

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF



Rhondda Cynon Taf Empty Homes Strategy

2022-2025

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Empty Homes and Housing Need
3. Enforcement Solutions and Legislative Framework
4. Challenges to bringing empty homes back into use
5. Financial Cost of Empty Homes
6. Current Approaches and Funding Options
7. Performance
8. Strategic Aims
9. Action Plan and Monitoring

Appendix A – Long Term Empty Homes by Ward

Appendix B – Case Studies

Appendix C - Performance Indicator Council Tax Exemption Classes

Appendix D – Empty Homes Strategy Action Plan 2022-2025

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Strategic Context

This Strategy provides a framework for all activity within Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) aimed at bringing empty homes back into use. It will supplement the previous strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in November 2018, which in turn replaced the Cwm Taf Empty Property Strategy that was produced jointly with Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council in 2014. The need to have a distinct strategy for RCT going forward was in recognition of the high numbers of empty homes in the Borough, especially in the North, and the Council's commitment to addressing the problem. It was also in appreciation of the continuing pressure to deliver affordable housing for residents of RCT. Whilst most new housing supply will be delivered through new build developments, bringing empty homes back into use can offer an economically viable option, which can also contribute to increasing the affordable housing supply. At the same time, it will have a positive impact on existing communities by improving environmental and social conditions.

In March 2020, the Council's corporate plan "Making a difference" was adopted. The plan sets out a vision for:

"Rhondda Cynon Taf to be, the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy and prosperous"

The Council is committed to delivering on these three main principles:

- Ensuring **People** are independent, healthy and successful
- Creating **Places** where people are proud to live, work and play
- Enabling **Prosperity** by creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial, fulfil their potential, and prosper

Bringing empty homes back into use contributes to all three principles and also helps assist the Council to contribute to three of the seven wellbeing goals that 'The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:

1. A healthier Wales

2. A prosperous Wales
3. A Wales of cohesive communities

Investment in housing provides an ongoing stimulus to the local economy, by supporting the construction industry and local supply chains. Making available a supply of affordable homes also helps to improve the prosperity of residents and helps support a huge range of households in society that may not otherwise be able to meet their needs in the market, thereby promoting independence and positive lives for all.

1.2 National Context

According to Welsh Government's most recent statistics, as at 31st March 2020 there were an estimated 1.4 million dwellings in Wales, of these just over 27,000 had been vacant for more than six months. ¹ Empty homes represent a wasted resource, financial expense and in many cases, a missed opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing for people in Wales. Not only are they a waste of a valuable housing resource, but they can cause blight to communities and distress to residents affected by their unsightly appearance and propensity to attract crime, vandals and anti-social behaviour. In addition to this, living next door to an empty home can devalue a home by as much as 18% and unsightly homes deter investment in an area and leads to a more general cycle of decline. ²

For many years, demand for housing in Wales has outstripped supply. This extra necessity for housing is driven by an increase in households, a growing population and changing demographics. The Welsh Government had an ambitious target of delivering an additional 20,000 new affordable homes by 2021 which was successfully exceeded. Whilst this target relates to new build homes, it is acknowledged that better utilisation of the existing housing stock can help ease some of the burden to delivering these new homes whilst also acting as a catalyst for area regeneration and community sustainability. Studies

¹ Welsh Gov't Housing Statistics

² Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors

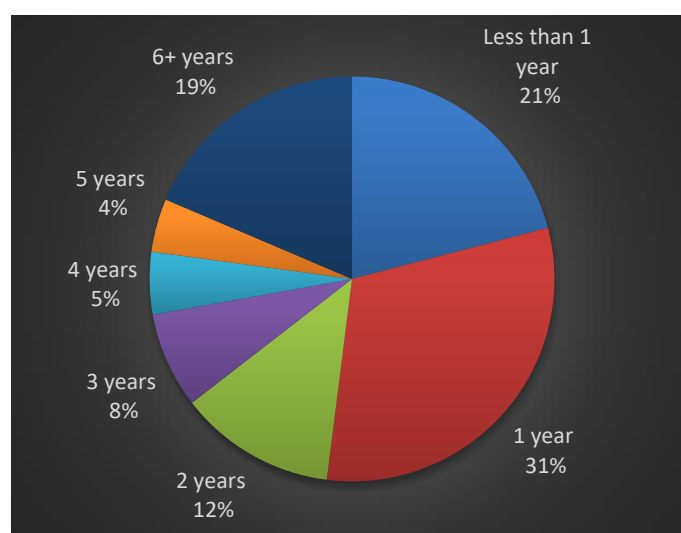
have also shown that the average cost of returning empty homes to a habitable state is between £6,000 and £12,000 per property, however it is expected that, due to the recent shortage and increase in material costs, this figure is much higher.³ This supports the statement that “bringing empty homes back into use not only provides much needed affordable housing, but can also be a more economically viable option to new build”.⁴

For this reason, the Welsh Government set an equally ambitious target of 5,000 empty homes to be brought back into use across Wales by 2021 and RCT was required to contribute to this target. Due to the constraints of Covid, which overlapped the previous Senedd term up to the end of 2021, there are no updates available on the empty homes target. During the next Senedd term 2021-25, no specific targets have been set but a commitment in excess of £2billion has been allocated for affordable housing.

1.3 Local Context

RCT is the second largest authority in Wales with a population of 237,700 and 103,300 dwellings.⁵ Of these dwellings, 92,197 are in the private sector (either owner occupied or privately rented). As at April 2021, 3.1% of RCT’s private housing stock was empty which equates to 2,894 empty homes.

Figure 1: Empty Property Void Time as at April 2021



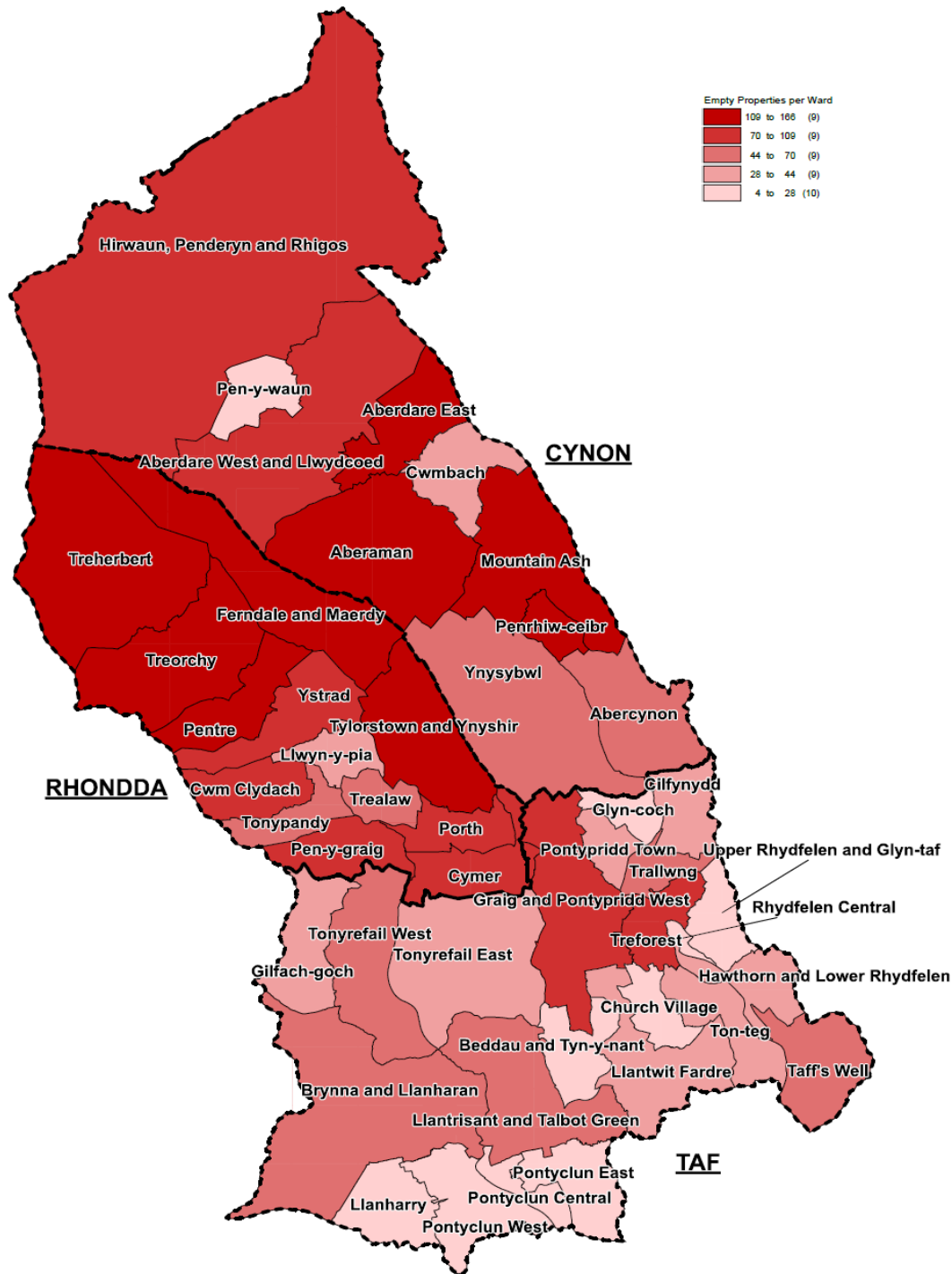
³ Chartered Institute of Housing – Information leaflet

⁴ Empty Homes Agency (2018)

⁵ Source: Welsh Government key statistics – National Census 2021 & Midyear Census 2016

As shown in Figure 1, 64% of homes that were empty as at 1st April 2021 had been vacant for less than three years, whilst 19% had been vacant for over 6 years. However, although this snapshot provided a useful reference point, trend data provides a much more reliable overview of the longer-term situation.

Figure 2: Percentages of Private Sector Empty Homes by Ward as at 1st April



Looking at the number of empty homes as a percentage of the total housing stock, enables us to pinpoint the areas that are worst affected. Whilst there are empty homes throughout the whole of RCT, analysis shows that in this snapshot, the issue is most acute within several parts of the Rhondda, with 44% of the total of empty homes located in the Rhondda. Whilst Cynon has a total of 30% empty homes, Aberdare has the second highest number of empty homes in RCT with a total of 190 properties recorded as empty. Conversely, most of Taf has a particularly low proportion of empty homes with 27% of properties empty, however Pontypridd has a total of 381 empty homes. Empty homes within this area tend to be empty for reasons other than low demand (i.e. inheritance, sentimental reasons, and probate) and are thus more difficult to return to beneficial use.

An analysis of four annual empty homes snapshots was undertaken using the data from 2018 to 2021 (**Appendix A**). In total, only 905 homes (7% of the total) appeared on all four successive snapshots (i.e. in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021) and 2,102 homes (17% of the total) appeared on two consecutive snapshots before ceasing to feature on future data collections. Most significantly, 9,048 homes (67% of the total) appeared on only one of the snapshots in four years. Whilst many of these homes were empty for longer than a single year, they were not empty for so long as to span two annual data collections and can therefore be considered 'transactional'. In other words, the bulk of homes recorded over the last four years have only been empty for a relatively short time, before returning into use through purchase or rental. Conversely, only a minority of homes (3%) were re-recorded as empty again after being brought back into use over this period.

This data reveals some interesting trends to help illuminate the related problems in the County Borough. Firstly, the 905 empty homes that were identified as having appeared on all four snapshots without returning into beneficial use are likely to be some of the most problematic empty homes in the County Borough, although they are a relatively minor element of the overall

issue. Secondly, whilst RCT does have amongst the highest numbers of empty homes in Wales at any given point, this is primarily due to levels of 'churn' in the housing market, rather than persistent long term empty homes.

2. Empty Homes & Housing Need

The Welsh Government defines housing need as:

“Households lacking their own housing or living in housing which is inadequate or unsuitable, who are unlikely to be able to meet their housing needs in the housing market without assistance”.

Bringing empty homes back into use can contribute to meeting housing need within RCT. However, it is important to recognise that there are different types of housing needs such as, the need to buy homes, the need for rental in the private sector and the need for affordable homes. There is no one solution that meets all these needs and therefore, the Council and its partners will have to work innovatively with empty property owners to meet these varied requirements. Partnership working continues to be an integral aspect to the effectiveness of empty homes action undertaken within the Borough.

2.1 Local Housing Market Assessment

The Council has identified an overall shortfall in affordable housing units, as well as a predicted future increase in housing need. The most recent Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) undertaken in 2022 has identified a need for 255 new affordable homes each year between 2022 and 2037.

This will also come at a time of increased house prices and rental charges. The LHMA also estimated that 6,208 new households will form during this period, 1,951 of which will not be able to afford market housing costs. It is therefore evident that new build developments alone will not sufficiently meet demand, further reinforcing the necessity for investment in the existing housing stock.⁶

2.2 Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is categorised as housing that is provided for sale or rent at below open market prices, and where there are secure mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market housing. Recent research has suggested that many people looking for affordable housing want

⁶ RCTCBC Local Housing Market Assessment 2021

to live in existing communities. This is further evidenced by the Council's Homestep low cost home ownership register and historical demand for assistance to purchase existing properties and not just new build. Providing low cost homeownership in existing communities can also help to re-balance housing markets in areas where there is a high level of rented accommodation.

2.3 Homelessness

Homeless prevention is when a local authority takes positive action to provide housing assistance to someone who the authority considers to be threatened with homelessness within 56 days. The Pandemic has resulted in an increase in the numbers of people presenting themselves as homeless or seeking advice and assistance. There has been a significant increase in the numbers of people based in emergency temporary accommodation who are unable to move on to suitable, permanent housing due to a shortage of properties.

Bringing empty homes back into use could contribute to meeting the needs of homelessness households, by increasing the housing supply and providing the local authority with nomination rights where incentives, such as grant or loan assistance has been provided.

3. Enforcement Solutions and Legislative Framework

As already mentioned, invariably, empty homes can be neglected and fall into disrepair. Where other informal approaches to owners have failed to bring about improvements, service of legal remedies will be considered.

The main options that are available to Councils include:

- **Building Act 1984, Sections 77-79**

This legislation allows the Council to require the owner of a building to carry out remedial works or demolish a building or structure if it is considered to be in a dangerous condition. If the owner fails to comply, the Council may carry out the works in default and recover the expenses reasonably incurred. This option is used in instances where the property is in a ruinous or dilapidated condition and is seriously detrimental to the amenities of the neighbourhood. The provision only addresses the external appearance of the building and therefore can be of limited benefit to the overall regeneration and reuse of the property.

- **Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 215**

Requires owners and occupiers to remedy their properties if they fail to maintain them and they are considered seriously detrimental to the amenities of the neighbourhood. The scope of this legislation is wide ranging and it is for the Council to interpret its use.

- **Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 Section 29**

Where a property is not effectively secured against unauthorised entry or is likely to become a danger to public health and is unoccupied or the occupier is absent from it, the Council can take action. It may secure the property or take steps to prevent it become a danger to public health.

- **Environmental Protection Act 1990, Sections 79-81**

This act allows the Council to require the abatement of statutory nuisance. This may be applied to a range of issues that affect empty homes, including the accumulation of rubbish or ingress of water, affecting neighbouring homes. The

Council can serve an abatement notice on the owners requiring works to abate the nuisance, and if necessary carry the work out in default.

- **Housing Act 2004**

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System is a risk-based assessment of the potential risks to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. Several enforcement options exist, including emergency measures, dependant on the severity of the assessment outcome.

Empty Dwelling Management Orders are also available and could be considered for long-term empty homes as a last resort against un-cooperative property owners. The rental income would repay the Council costs associated with enforcing the order and managing the property for a period of up to 7 years. At the end of the lease, the habitable property would be handed back to the owner. This procedure would only be practical in areas of housing need and would require a housing association partner to provide the management as the Council does not have any of its own housing stock.

Demolition orders can be made on houses that are not suitable for habitation. Where a number of poor houses are identified in one area and where it is considered that such action will assist in the wider regeneration of an area, the Council has powers to clear a number at once. These powers can be used for empty houses.

- **Housing Act 1985, Section 17**

If an owner refuses to bring a home back into use and the property is having a degenerative effect on the area, the Council has powers to compulsory purchase. This procedure could be considered where the Council identifies a future purposed use for the building.

- **Law of Property Act 1925, Section 103**

Exercising the power of sale of an empty property where money is owed to the Council: for example, because of the Council having to step in to undertake remedial works in default of an owner. The Council has a Policy for the use of

this power which highlights the need to ensure appropriate methods for disposal of homes so that local people are encouraged and able to buy them at market value, or otherwise that a housing association partner is able to purchase the homes for re-use as affordable housing.

4. Challenges to bringing empty homes back into use

There are a number of different and sometimes localised reasons why homes become empty, some of which are:

4.1 Lack of local demand for homes

Although the current housing market has resulted in a decline in the numbers of people being able to buy or rent a property, dwellings still remain empty in areas even where there are potential occupiers. Research shows that this is because there are too many similar homes for sale in the same locality and there is not sufficient variety in the localised housing market. In the North of the Borough, this manifests itself by the overabundance of traditional three bed terraced properties to the detriment of other options, especially for first time buyers and single people.

4.2 Housing market conditions

RCT remains an affordable option for investors in the property market, and traditionally is one of the cheapest places in the UK to buy a home. According to a recent UK housing market survey, 7 of the 10 cheapest places to buy a house in the UK are in the South Wales valleys.⁷ This has resulted in speculative investment purchases in areas where there is little demand or even an oversupply of similar, usually family, terraced properties. Local knowledge suggests that in areas of low demand many homes are sold via auction and to purchasers who do not know the area or understand the local market. Empty homes are often bought without being viewed because buyers are attracted by the low prices. These new owners are then unprepared for instances of unseen refurbishment work or low demand and may not have the resources or the inclination to invest in the property further; this results in homes remaining empty for longer. It can further lead to a situation where properties are “land banked” and left vacant waiting for an upturn in the housing market which may never materialise.

⁷ UK residential market survey June 2021

Within RCT, there are numerous sites, which have complicated ownership issues, which makes prosecution a non-viable option. Monies spent on certain buildings just results in a loss due to low residual land values. For example, buildings such as Tylorstown Workingman's Club would cost approximately £125k to demolish, leaving a plot of land worth around £1k to be sold through enforced sale. Mostly, these buildings are owned by "ghost" companies, and unfortunately they generate high numbers of complaints and are a cause for ongoing concern to the local communities they are situated in.

4.3 Owner inertia

For some owners, maximising income from their asset is not a high priority. Equally, an owner may lack the necessary knowledge or skills to refurbish or manage a property, but still be unwilling to sell. There may also be disputes regarding inheritance, which require the outcome of a legal remedy before rent, or sale, can be considered. Furthermore, a number of homes can remain empty due to personal or sentimental reasons.

4.4 Poor condition of empty homes

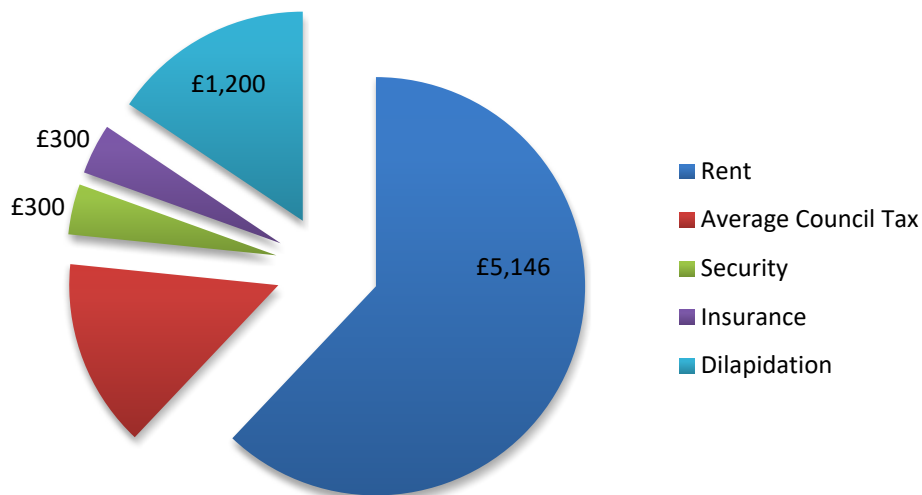
High quantities of homes are also empty due to their dilapidated condition. Research indicates that many owners are unable to carry out the necessary remedial works required to bring them up to an acceptable standard because of a lack of funds. These homes will remain empty until the essential works can be financed.

5. The Financial Cost of Empty Homes

5.1 Cost Implications for Owners of Empty Homes

Not only are long term empty homes a drain on council resources and a wasted resource in a time of meeting increased housing need, they are also a cost burden on the owners of the properties. Figure 4 shows that owning an empty dwelling costs the owner an average of £8,183.02 per annum based on 2022-23 costings. The rental loss is established by calculating the Local Housing Allowance of £98.96 for a 3-bed house and the Council Tax loss equates to the Council Tax rate for a band A property.

Figure 4: Average Annual Cost to Owners of Empty Homes in RCT



6. Current Approaches and Funding Options

6.1 Current Approaches

6.1.1 Empty Homes Officers

Over the last few years, the Council has increased its proactive approach to dealing with empty homes and now has two Empty Homes Officers working full time to tackle the issue. The Council's Empty Homes Officers maintain a comprehensive database of empty homes, based on Council Tax records and any property, which has been empty for more than six months as at 1st April, in conjunction with other known long-term empty homes. Part of the remit of the Empty Homes Officers is to identify ownership and legal responsibility of problematic empty homes, and to work with the owners or their estates to bring these back into use. Any direct actions taken by the Council or its partners on its behalf, which can lead to individual dwellings being returned to occupation, is recorded and the database is used to provide yearly performance indicator statistics and to monitor performance. Since the adoption of the last Empty Homes Strategy 2018 – 2021, 297 long-term empty homes have been brought back into use through direct action by the Empty Homes Officers.

The types of interventions that these officers undertake are as follows:

- proactively identifying and surveying empty homes
- serving notices on owners of empty homes where they are having a detrimental impact on the locality
- undertaking works in default (including demolition)
- securing empty homes
- enforced sales where the Council has secured a debt against an empty home
- providing advice and information

6.1.2 Raising Awareness

In order to raise awareness of the empty homes problem within RCT, a number of publicity and educational initiatives have been employed. Increased awareness of the issue can help identify properties of concern to residents and

encourage the owners to come forward and seek advice and guidance. To date, these initiatives have included the following:

- Publicising activities with social media and newspaper articles, local radio and Council and Local Health Authority newsletter articles
- Presenting to strategic partnership groups, Councillors, Community First Clusters, Landlord's Forum and the public
- Developing promotional literature such as leaflets and a comprehensive empty homeowner information pack
- The issue of questionnaires to owners of empty homes and residents affected by the issues

6.1.3 Targeted Community Approaches

It is documented that there are communities, particularly in the North of the Borough, where there are persistently high levels of empty homes. These communities also experience high levels of social deprivation coupled with poor quality housing across all tenures. This situation can often deter people from moving into these areas and discourages people from staying; thus leading to a high turnover of homes, especially in the private rented sector, and a subsequent increase in the numbers of empty homes.

The implementation of a Housing and Health Action Area was launched in Tylorstown during February 2015 and completed in 2019. The over-arching aim was to improve housing, health and prosperity through specific housing interventions. Within this context, work began to categorise and take action on empty homes in the Tylorstown area, according to their condition, and need for possible enforcement action. As a result, 62 empty homes were brought back into use following council contact, intervention or enforcement action. This was despite the very challenging local housing market. However, whilst the initiative brought back into use 62 empty homes, during this time a different 73 became vacant, further highlighting the 'churn' in the housing market.

The success of the Housing and Health Action Area scheme in Tylorstown reinforces the notion that measures focussed on selective communities, need to be delivered in the context of a wider strategic approach that will improve the overall “outlook” for the communities whilst tackling some of the more macro social and economic issues that affect. The Housing Strategy and Investment Team, in partnership with other Council Departments and external organisations is delivering an area based project in Penrhiwceiber focussing on tackling poverty.

6.1.4 Council Tax Premiums

Since April 2018, the Council has used its discretionary powers to remove the 50% council tax discount that was applied to long-term empty homes. This means that since the 1st April 2018, all properties that are both vacant and unfurnished for six months or more, and do not qualify for council tax exemption, are charged 100% council tax. The impact of this has been substantial, with an increase in the number of requests for advice and assistance from both landlords and home owners, seeking to bring their properties back into use.

6.1.5 Advice, Education and Information

It is acknowledged that there is scope for the Council to proactively assist the market by focussing on the most problematic empty homes as well as those that can be most effectively used for affordable housing in the higher demand areas of the Borough. Equally, a number of less problematic empty homes may be brought back into use through the provision of advice and “education”. This has led to the production of a comprehensive information pack for owners of empty homes in RCT. The pack contains advice on a multitude of options what are available to owners to enable them to better utilise their asset. The pack covers issues such as selling the empty house, purchase advice, letting or renting the house, advice on how to become a property owner and how to advertise your property, advice on refurbishment, private finance, and tax relief/reductions and outlines the legal enforcement procedures applicable to empty homes.

6.2 Funding Options

The Council has a number of funding options available to owners of empty homes to encourage them to be brought back into use. The options recognise that, apart from encouraging homeowners to utilise their assets, the commercial sector also represents a particular area where properties are underused, along with the residential upper floors of retail premises. The current funding options that are available are:

6.2.1 Empty Homes Grant

Following recognition of the success of the RCT Empty Homes Grant, which was launched in 2016, RCT was approached by Welsh Government to discuss a Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme Pilot. In the summer of 2019, the Welsh Government's Valleys Taskforce committed £10million to fund bringing empty homes back into use, with RCT Council appointed as the lead authority. Local Authorities in the Valleys Taskforce area include, Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Carmarthen, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot and Torfaen.

The Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant was available to perspective owner-occupiers who intend to occupy an empty home as their main residence, for a minimum 5-year period. To qualify, the empty home must have been registered vacant with the Council's Council Tax Department for a minimum of 6 months. Applicants' are required to make a mandatory contribution of 15% of the total cost of eligible works (capped at £3k). There was also a discretion to waive the 15% contribution in exceptional circumstances such as financial hardship, where the applicant could demonstrate that they are in receipt of an income related benefit. The grant was available for essential repair works to make properties safe and free from any category one or 2 hazards. During phase 1, the maximum grant award was £20k, but as part of phase 2, applicants could receive a maximum £25k grant. The additional £5k was specifically to support any suitable renewable energy measures that may be appropriate for the home, resulting in more homes improving their EPC ratings and helping to

reduce the overall carbon footprint in RCT as well as assisting owners/tenants with their fuel bills.

A total of 485 grants were approved, of which 263 (54%) are in RCT. A total of £7M is currently committed across the eight local authority areas, of which £3.9M (43%) is committed in RCT. As at September 2022, 360 homes have been brought back in to use, of which 206 (57%) are in RCT, the remaining homes plan to be brought back into use by the 31st March 2023.

In April 2021, following the end of the Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant, the Council reverted to its RCT Empty Homes Grant and has supported over 130 valid applications, investing over £2M in bringing empty homes back into use.

The RCT Empty Homes Grant provides a grant up to £20,000 to prospective homeowners who intend to occupy an empty home as their main residence, for a minimum 5-year period. To qualify, the empty home must have been registered vacant with the Local Authority's Council Tax Department for a minimum of 6 months. The Grant is available for essential repair works to make properties safe and free from any category 1 or 2 hazards.

6.2.2 Houses into Homes Loan

The Houses into Homes Loan is a Welsh Government funded scheme, which provides an interest free loan up to £25,000 per property or unit, and up to a total maximum of £150,000 per applicant. The scheme is aimed at returning privately owned empty homes into use and is managed by the Council. These loans are not available for potential owner-occupiers and are designed for applicants who want to rent or sell their property on completion of the refurbishment works. The loan must be repaid on sale or within 2 years from the date of loan approval, whichever is sooner, or within 3 years from the date of the loan approval if the property is for rent.

The Houses into Homes Loan has proved to be very popular with landlords and investors, the Council has processed over £4m of Houses into Homes loans

since the start of the scheme in 2012. This has provided 204 units of accommodation up to August 2022.

A Home Improvement Loan has enabled RCT residents to benefit from a loan to alleviate Category 1 and 2 hazards. Whilst this interest free loan is not targeted specifically at empty homes, it has enabled homeowners who have recently bought properties to carry out refurbishment works and improve the quality of housing within RCT.

In total, the two schemes have funded over £4.7M of improvements to RCT's housing stock, when the loan recipient's contributions are also taken into account, this figure is in excess of £7.5M. The majority of the £7.5M has been spent on the employment of local contractors and/or local building merchants and resources.

6.2.3 Homes Above Retail Premises (HARPS)

A recent survey by the Federation of Master Builders⁸ estimated that in the UK as a whole, as many as 300,000 to 400,000 new homes could be created by making use of empty spaces above shops. The Council has undertaken a number of approaches to bringing this empty space in town centres back into beneficial use.

The HARPS was enabled through the Welsh Governments' Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP) programme and focussed on the opportunities provided by the previously untapped housing market in Pontypridd Town Centre. Pontypridd has consistently been identified as one of the areas of high housing demand within the Borough and there is a distinct shortage of one and two bedroom units; yet the town centre offers very little scope to develop affordable housing to meet this demand. In total, 24 units of accommodation were delivered through the HARPS, and a total investment of £2.3M.

The current focus for the Regeneration Team is to provide an integrated approach to Town Centre Regeneration, one that incorporates all services,

⁸ Federation of Master Builders, Trade circular March 2021

employment opportunities, transport and housing solutions. This approach is funded by the Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) programme, which replaces the Vibrant and Viable Places Programme.

There is also provision in the Council's Housing Investment Policy (which identifies the Council's priorities for housing capital investment), to provide Flats over Shops grants to deliver residential accommodation in town centre locations.

6.2.4 Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is categorised as housing that is, provided for sale or rent at below open market prices and where there are secure mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market housing. Recent research has suggested that many people looking for affordable housing want to live in existing communities. This is further evidenced by the Council's "Homestep" low cost home ownership register and historical demand for assistance to purchase existing properties and not just new build. Providing low cost homeownership in existing communities can also help to 're-balance' housing markets in areas where there is a high level of rented accommodation.

The Homestep Plus scheme was enabled through the Welsh Government's VVP programme and was delivered in partnership between the Council and United Welsh Housing Association. The scheme enabled United Welsh to identify and buy empty homes in the CF37 postcode area and to refurbish them before offering them for sale at 70% of the asking price. Alternatively, residents could identify their own property, which United Welsh purchased on their behalf and sell on at the discounted price. The scheme successfully brought 24 empty homes back into use.

The Council's aim is that by 2030, RCT will be a Carbon Neutral Council and the County Borough will be as close as possible to Carbon Neutral as it can get by then. Increasing the supply of housing without the need to build from new will help achieve the Council's Plan to tackle Climate Change.

7. Performance

7.1 Performance

As at 1st April 2021 there are 2,894 private sector empty homes in RCT compared to 3,556 in April 2017. In 2017, the percentage of private housing stock unoccupied was 3.81% while in April 2021 this had been reduced to 3.13%.

Over the last four years, the Council has brought back into use 905 homes through direct action, loan or grant aid. Over 1,700 interventions on empty homes have taken place during this period, including home visits and calls to provide advice, serve notices or secure empty homes. Some empty homes examples can be found in **Appendix B**.

As per Performance Indicator definition PAM13, this figure consists of the Council Tax exemption classes of, A,C,F,G, L and Q, these are further explained in **Appendix C**, but excludes homes under renovation and homes classed as second homes (furnished). It also does not include houses taken out of Council Tax banding because they are deemed uninhabitable, or commercial empty homes.

There are two figures to the performance indicator; the number of empty homes and the number or empty homes returned to use. The Council's performance over the last four years is detailed in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Council performance in relation to empty homes

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Total
% of empty homes brought back into use:	7.38%	5.97%	8.36%	9.43%	-
Number of empty homes brought back into use:	213	179	240	273	905
Total number of empty homes:	2885	3000	2870	2894	-

Number of interventions:	452	467	387	413	1719
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For context, it should be noted that RCT only counts empty homes that have been brought back into use as a consequence of direct action by the Council e.g. enforcement or financial assistance in accordance with the national performance indicator definitions.

Figure 3 also demonstrates the improvement from 2020/2021 in the total number of empty homes that have been brought back into use per year by the council both in real terms and as a percentage. Notably, this has been achieved despite Covid restrictions and the negative effect this has had on the local and national housing markets.

8. Strategic Aims

There is clear evidence that good progress has been made in bringing empty homes back into use in RCT over the last few years. However, the scale of the problem still persists and continues to present problems in many communities. Despite lots of interventions and substantial numbers of empty homes being brought back into use, often the overall total number of empty homes in the Borough at any one time remains relatively static i.e. as one empty home is brought back into use, another falls empty.

As such, a strong strategic approach is required which has objectives that are clear, deliverable and will make a difference to the scale of empty homes that are brought back into use as well as having a more fundamental impact on the total number in order to reverse the trend in a sustainable way.

The strategic aims are:

1. To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty homes being brought back into use:

Drawing on best practice elsewhere, the Council will actively engage with housing associations, private sector partners, community groups and other stakeholders in the community, to identify new models and vehicles to increase the scale of empty homes that are brought back into use.

Responsibilities for the various interventions and approaches for empty homes are shared across two main departments within the Council. The 'Housing Strategy and Investment Team' located within the Prosperity & Development department is responsible for overall delivery of the strategy, developing an action plan and monitoring outcomes. It is also responsible for developing and delivering funding models and any other vehicles designed to bring empty homes back into use. Meanwhile, the Council's 'Housing Standards Team' located within the Public Health and Protection department is responsible for the provision of advice, assistance and enforcement activity as well as conducting pro-active visits.

Good communication and clarity of roles and responsibilities is vital to ensuring the successful delivery of the aims of this strategy. As such, an Empty Homes Operational Group co-ordinates delivery of the strategy, action plan and associated activity. The Group includes representatives from Housing Grants, Housing Strategy, Housing Standards, Regeneration, Planning, Council Tax and other partners as required.

2. To maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use:

The Council will continue to make available and ensure effective management of grants and loan schemes to facilitate owners (subject to funding) to bring their empty homes back into beneficial use. The Council will also prioritise identifying further funding opportunities that can be levered into the Borough for this purpose, one of which includes exploring a potential National Empty Homes Grant Scheme with Welsh Government.

3. To continue to use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty homes are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use and monitor the outcomes related to these closely:

The Council will continue to encourage or enforce the improvement or conversion of empty homes to increase the supply and choice of housing across RCT. Priority will be given to those properties which have the greatest detriment to the surrounding community and/or those properties which can most effectively be returned to use in terms of contributing usefully to housing supply.

4. To undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty homes and

identify possible solutions that could prevent homes from becoming empty:

The Council in its strategic housing role will undertake further research to understand why some areas are blighted by empty homes, taking into consideration both the 'micro' and 'macro' causes. It is possible that empty homes in some communities are a symptom of other issues, rather than the problem in itself and undertaking in depth research into the housing market and other social economic factors might help to identify more innovative solutions and approaches to the problem. The trend-based data will continue to be analysed to assist in the targeting of interventions.

5. To identify possible solutions that could prevent homes from becoming empty and also develop interventions for different market areas and types:

The Council will ensure that in its five identified Strategic Opportunity Areas the opportunities to bring private sector empty homes back into use is maximised. In addition, major infrastructure projects are an instrument for kick-starting regeneration with train stations, and their surrounding environments, increasingly seen as the steer for regeneration programmes. The development of the South East Wales Metro, as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, provides such an opportunity. The Metro has modernised the core valley lines resulting in far more frequent and faster trains into and out of Cardiff. This may well result in renewed and increased demand for housing in some areas where the housing market has been affected by depopulation in recent years, which would have a positive impact on the number of empty homes. Increases in tourism could also present an opportunity to encourage the re-use of empty homes.

This preventative approach will also include an evaluation of existing schemes to ensure that the impact of current funding streams is effective, development of new schemes and identification of approaches to both prevent homes from becoming empty and manage low demand effectively.

9. Action Plan and Monitoring

An Empty Homes Strategy Action Plan 2022-2025 (**Appendix D**) has been developed to accompany the Empty Homes Strategy adopted by the Council, with the purpose of driving forward its strategic aims, whilst also developing mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness (or otherwise) of the pro-active work being undertaken. The Action Plan mirrors the strategic aims outlined above and is monitored by the Empty Property Operational Group. The Empty Homes Operational Group meets quarterly and includes officers from Housing Strategy, Housing Grants, Public Health, Council Tax and Regeneration.

Appendix A – Location of 905 ‘Long Term’ Empty Homes

Ward	Number of empty homes appearing in 2018,20109 2020 and 2021 snapshot
Glyncoch	1
Pontyclun East	1
Treforest	1
Graig and Pontypridd West	2
Pontyclun Central	2
Tonteg	2
Beddau and Tyn-Y-Nant	3
Llanharry	4
Penywaun	4
Pontyclun West	4
Upper Rhydyfelin and Glyntaf	4
Hawthorn and Lower Rhydyfelin	5
Rhydyfelin Central	6
Llantwit Fardre	7
Cilfynydd	8
Ynysybwl	9
Cwmbach	10
Gilfach Goch	10
Llantrisant and Talbot Green	10
Brynna and Llanharan	11
Trallwn	11
Church Village	14
Tonyrefail West	14
Llwynypia	16
Tonyrefail East	16
Trealaw	17
Hirwaun, Penderyn and Rhigos	20
Tonypandy	21
Cymmer	23
Penygraig	23
Ystrad	25
Cwm Clydach	26
Abercynon	27
Mountain Ash	28
Porth	35
Aberdare East	36
Aberdare West and Llwydcoed	37
Aberaman	39
Pentre	41
Penrhiwceiber	43
Ferndale and Maerdy	57
Treherbert	62
Treorchy	71
Tylorstown and Ynyshir	99

Appendix B: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Houses into Homes Loan

A Houses to Homes loan was awarded in June 2019 for £75,000 for the conversion of storage space above retail premises into accommodation in the village of Ton Pentre. The top floor and building extension had been left vacant for nearly 30 years. After conversion, it now contains 3 X 2 bed self-contained flats. This scheme also attracted additional private sector contributions of £65,000 whilst local contractors were engaged to complete the renovation works.



Case Study 2: Homestep Plus

This property had previously remained empty for over 4 years before it was purchased by United Welsh and renovated within a 6 months period. On completion of the works, the property was sold under a shared equity arrangement with the Homestep Plus applicant purchasing the property for £95,000.



Case Study 3: Treforest Targeted Approach

This property was one of the longest standing empty homes in Treforest, having been empty since 2005. The Council's intervention helped by offering advice, guidance and encouragement to the owner regarding the condition of the property. The property was subsequently refurbished and has now been sold on the open market



Appendix C: Performance Indicator Council Tax Exemption Classes

Class	Definition
A	Properties which are unoccupied and unfurnished because they are in the process of being built, renovated or structurally repaired are exempt for up to 6 months from the date of completion of repairs/ alterations OR 12 months from the date last occupied whichever is the sooner.
C	Properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished are exempt for up to 6 months from the date of vacation. This is likely to be the most common category and will include properties that are for sale or awaiting re-occupation.
F	Properties that are unoccupied because the person who would normally have to pay the council tax has died, and neither probate nor letters of administration have been granted. This applies until probate/letters of administration have been granted and for 6 months afterwards (unless someone else becomes the owner or occupies the property). This exemption only applies if the deceased was the freeholder/leaseholder of the property.
G	Properties that are unoccupied where occupation is prohibited by law. This would include a property subject to a Closing Order because it is unfit for habitation or which is kept unoccupied because of impending compulsory purchase.
L	Properties that are unoccupied properties where the mortgagee is in possession under the mortgage.
Q	Properties left empty by a bankrupt where the liable person would be a trustee in bankruptcy are exempt. No time limit whilst the trustee in bankruptcy remains as the qualifying person.

Appendix D: Empty Homes strategy Action Plan 2022-2025

Strategic Objective 1	To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty homes being brought back into use				
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Continue to coordinate and lead an Empty Homes Operational Group (EHOG) to deliver the aims and objectives of the Empty Homes Strategy	Review Terms of Reference and membership	Group continued and attended by members	Quarterly 2022-2025	Housing Strategy	
	Coordinate EHOG meetings every quarter in order to implement and monitor the delivery	Key stakeholders embrace and deliver the strategic aims and objectives	Quarterly 2022-2025	Housing Strategy	
Liaise with speculative investors who wish to acquire properties within RCT to let to members of the public	Continue to organise the RCT Landlord Forum, setting agendas, booking venues for meetings and collating minutes.	The number of members attending the Landlord forums. Feedback from the landlords attending the meetings.	Quarterly 2022-2025	Housing Strategy	
	Attend RCT Landlord Forum to present Houses into Homes loans scheme	Increase in the number of Houses into Homes loan applications	Quarterly 2022-2025	Housing Strategy	
	Maintain database of empty home investors	Increase in the number of empty home referrals to investors	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	

Strategic Objective 2	To maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use				
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Identify and engage with empty home owners to investigate ways of returning empty homes back into use	To continue to provide Empty Homes Grants to assist owners to renovate long term empty properties by promoting the available schemes through posters/fliers, the council website an social media platforms.	Increase in the percentage of empty homes brought back into use	Ongoing	Housing Strategy and Grants	
Explore and implement a new Homestep Plus Scheme	Explore opportunities to deliver Homestep Plus in other areas of RCT	Areas identified to deliver Homestep Plus	April 2023	Housing Strategy	
	Implement a new Homestep plus scheme in RCT	Number of empty homes brought back into use through the scheme	September 2023	Housing Strategy	
Identify suitable empty homes and buildings in town centres and key settlements that could utilise funding	Identify suitable funding opportunities for mapped empty homes	Analysis undertaken of potential funding for each empty home Decrease in the number of large unoccupied and/or derelict buildings	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	

Strategic Objective 3		To continue to use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty homes are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use and monitor the outcomes related to these closely			
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
A commitment to use appropriate enforcement powers where suitable	Develop an enforcement approach to deal with owners of empty properties who do not voluntarily engage in the opportunities available to bring their properties back into use	Increase in the use of enforced sales, compulsory purchase and empty dwelling management orders and a subsequent reduction in the number of problem dwellings within RCT	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	
		Decrease in the number of complaints received regarding empty homes	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	
	Establish a more proactive and targeted approach to enforcement	Increase the number of empty homes brought back into use	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	
Provide up to date advice and assistance to bring empty homes back into use	Establish an Empty Homes webpage	Number of web page visits	December 2022	Housing Strategy	
	Update the Empty Home Advice Pack for empty home owners	Number of empty homes brought back into use	December 2022	Housing Strategy and Public Health and Protection	
	Promotion of Empty Homes Advice pack	Share Empty Homes Advice pack available on Council's webpage and social media platforms	December 2022	Housing Strategy	
	Develop online reporting of empty homes and develop a dedicated empty homes inbox	Number of empty homes reported online via Council's website	September 2023	Housing Strategy	

Strategic Objective 4	To undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty homes and identify possible solutions that could prevent homes from becoming empty				
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Share best practice with other local authorities/WG	Investigate benchmarking opportunities	Better understanding of empty home problems within RCT and neighbouring authorities	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	
	Potential to roll out of National Empty Homes Grant with Welsh Government	Number of empty homes brought back into use	October 2022	Housing Grants	
Maintain and monitor the Empty Property database	Record and report on the number of empty homes brought back into use through direct action by the Council	Increase in the number of interventions undertaken	Ongoing	Housing Strategy and Public Health and Protection	
		Increase in the number of empty homes brought back into use through interventions undertaken	Ongoing	Housing Strategy/Public Health and Protection	
Identify the reason why the number of empty homes remains relatively static in RCT	Undertake research to identify the reasons why the same number of empty homes become empty in certain areas	Solutions identified to target the trend of properties becoming vacant	July 2023	Housing Strategy	

Strategic Objective 5	To identify possible solutions that could prevent homes from becoming empty and also develop interventions for different market areas and types				
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Explore opportunities for Area Based Regeneration	Identify next area to deliver the Health and Housing Action Area scheme	Area identified and funding approved	March 2024	Housing Strategy	
Explore opportunity to increase empty homes Council Tax Premium	Compile report for political consideration, outlining benefits and options	Council Tax Premium increased and increase in the number of empty homes brought back into use	March 2023	Council Tax	

Empty Homes Action Plan (2022 – 2025):

Progress Legend Green – complete Amber – ongoing White – Not started

Strategic Objective 1	To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty properties being brought back into use					
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Brief comment on Progress	Progress to date
Empty Property Operational Group (EPOG) to continue to meet on a quarterly basis and deliver the aims and objectives of the Empty Homes Strategy and action plan	Arrange and Diarise quarterly meetings.	Monitoring of the action plan and key work aimed at reducing the number of empty properties. Key stakeholders embrace and deliver the strategic aims and objectives Produce relevant minutes and agendas	Quarterly	Housing Strategy and Investment Service	EPOG has been meeting on a quarterly basis Minutes and briefing notes are produced and distributed for comment	
	Ensure that key performance indicators are achieved in line with the aims of the empty homes strategy.	Reduction in the number of long term empty properties	Annually in April	Housing Strategy and Investment Service	Continued reduction in the overall number of empty properties in RCT	

Liaise with speculative investors who wish to acquire properties within RCT to let to members of the public	Co-ordinate and deliver strategic interventions and enforcement to help bring properties back into use	Increase in the number/uptake of grant/loan applications. Decrease in the number of long term empty properties.	Ongoing	Housing Strategy and Investment Service	During the first year there have been 646 interventions delivered, which is above the provisional target of 400 per year	
	Continue to administer the Houses into Homes Loan	Increase in the number of Houses into Homes loans approved. Increase the number of empty homes being brought back into use	Ongoing	Housing Strategy and Investment Service	Since Oct 22, there has been 12 Houses into Homes Loans completed and 14 approved.	
	Continue to administer the Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme	Increase the number of Valleys Taskforce empty homes grants Increase the number of empty homes being brought back into use	March 2023	Housing Strategy and Investment Service	467 homes were brought back in to use across 8 local authority areas (263 in RCT, 56%). A total investment of £8.6M was made (grant and client contribution) (£4.6M in RCT, 54%)	
	Launch and deliver the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme.	Increase the number of the National empty homes grants	February 2023	Housing Strategy and Investment Service	RCT is lead delivery authority for the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme.	

		Increase the number of empty homes being brought back into use			£50M approved over 2 years. £4.8M is allocated to RCT. 515 applications received – 200 in RCT.	
	Attend RCT Landlord Forum to present advice support and schemes that are available to bring empty homes back into use	Number of Landlords that attend and engage in the meetings Landlord forum newsletter published	Every 6 months	Housing Strategy and Investment Service	2 Landlord forums held over the past year with 40 landlords attending. Houses into Homes Scheme continues to be a very popular product, receiving over 500 landlord enquiries for the loan	
	Work with Regeneration team and liaise with private landlords	Increase in number of referrals from regeneration for joint approach to specific problem areas/properties.	Ongoing	Housing Strategy and Investment Service		

Strategic Objective 2	To maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty properties that are brought back into use					
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Brief comment on Progress	Progress
Identify and engage with empty property owners to investigate ways of returning empty homes back into use	To continue to provide Empty Homes Grants to assist owners to renovate long term empty properties.	<p>Increase in the percentage of empty properties brought back into use</p> <p>Increase in number of applications for our loan and grant offers.</p> <p>Reduction in the number of long term vacant properties</p>	Oct 22 and Ongoing	Housing Strategy and Grants	<p>Loans and grants continue to be successful products.</p> <p>12 Houses into Homes Loans completed and 14 approved totalling £4.4M</p> <p>467 homes were brought back in to use across 8 local authority areas (263 in RCT, 56%). A total investment of £8.6M was made (grant and client contribution) (£4.6M in RCT, 54%)</p> <p>515 applications (200 in RCT) for</p>	

				Robert Owen Community Bank	<p>the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme. £50M funding available over the 2 year period (£4.8M allocated to RCT)</p> <p>140 Home Improvement Loans completed totalling £1.8M</p>	
Deliver a new Homestep Plus Scheme	To continue to work with RSLs or develop an internal scheme to deliver a new Homestep Plus scheme in identified area – possible use of commuted sums	Target of 24 properties purchased and sold under Homestep Plus Scheme	Jan 2024-March 25	Housing Strategy and Investment Service	New proposals are being developed and a new method of delivery – funding options need to be identified.	

Strategic Objective 3	To continue to use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty properties are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use and monitor the outcomes related to these closely					
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Brief comment on Progress	Progress
A commitment to use appropriate enforcement powers where suitable	Develop an enforcement approach to deal with owners of empty properties who do not voluntarily engage in the opportunities available to bring their properties back into use	Increase in the use of enforced sales, compulsory purchase and empty dwelling management orders and a subsequent reduction in the number of problem dwellings within RCT	October 22 – October 25	EPOG and Public Health and Protection	Ongoing	
		Decrease in the number of complaints received regarding empty properties	October 22 – October 25	Public Health and Protection	Ongoing	
	Establish a more proactive and targeted approach to enforcement	Decrease in the number of empty properties	October 22 – October 25	Public Health and Protection	Ongoing	
Provide up to date advice and assistance to bring empty properties back into use	Review and update the Empty Homes webpage	Number of web page visits	December 2022	EPOG Housing Strategy and Investment Service	Web pages have been updated	
	Update the Empty Property Advice Pack for empty property owners	Number of empty properties brought back into use	December 2022	EPOG	New empty property advice pack produced. . Bi-Lingual empty property pack available	
	Promotion of Empty Property Advice pack	Empty Property Advice pack available on Council's webpage	December 2022	Housing Strategy and	Complete	

				Investment Service		
		Promotion of Empty Property Advice pack on Council's Facebook page	December 2022	Housing Strategy and Investment Service	Complete	
	Develop online reporting of an empty property	Number of empty properties reported on line via Council's website	Ongoing	Housing Strategy and Investment Service	On going	
Work with Council Tax to identify a targeted approach to bring empty properties back into use	<p>Include information on Empty Property Advice pack within the Council Tax mailshot</p> <p>Include information on loans/grants in c/tax mailshot</p>	Information included within mailshot	April 24	EPOG	Target for further mailshot April 24	

Strategic Objective 4	To undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty properties and identify possible solutions that could prevent properties from becoming empty					
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Brief comment on Progress	Progress
Share best practice with other local authorities/WG	Investigate benchmarking opportunities	Better understanding of empty property problem within RCT and neighbouring authorities	Ongoing	Housing Strategy and Investment Service	On going	
Maintain and monitor the Empty Property database	Record and report on the number of empty properties brought back into use through direct action by the Council	Increase in the number of interventions undertaken	Ongoing	Housing Strategy/Public Health and Protection	Ongoing	
		Increase in the number of empty properties brought back into use through interventions undertaken	Ongoing	Housing Strategy/Public Health and Protection	On going	
	Report empty property PI to Welsh Government	Benchmark performance at an All Wales level	End of each financial year	Housing Strategy	On going	
Identify the reason why the number of empty properties remains relatively static in RCT	Undertake research to identify the reasons why the same number of empty properties become empty in certain areas	Solutions identified to target the trend of properties becoming vacant	March 24 – March 25	Housing Strategy		

Strategic Objective 5	To identify possible solutions that could prevent properties from becoming empty and also develop interventions for different market areas and types					
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Brief comment on progress	progress
Explore opportunities for Area Based Regeneration	Identify next area to deliver the Health and Housing Action Area scheme (HHAA)	Area identified	Ongoing Dependent on funding	Housing Strategy	On going, funding opportunities are being explored, Penrhiwceiber has been identified as a potential HHAA	
Establish a more proactive and targeted approach to enforcement.	Develop working practices that deter owners from leaving empty properties vacant for lengthy periods	Increase in Council tax premiums.	April 2022 April 2023	EPOG	CTax increased for empty homes which has helped towards the reduction from 2,892 to 2,634	

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

A REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR STRATEGY 2023-2026

23 OCTOBER 2023

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT, IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER CLLR M
NORRIS**

**AUTHOR: CLAIRE HUTCHEON, HEAD OF HOUSING STRATEGY AND
INVESTMENT.**

Appendix A: Private Rented Sector Strategy 2023 - 2026

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of the proposed Private Rented Sector Strategy 2023 -2026 and seek approval for it to be implemented.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Members approve the proposed Private Rented Sector Strategy 2023-2026 which supports the delivery of a private rented sector that offers safe, affordable accommodation, that is well managed and of a good standard, creating accessible and sustainable tenancies.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council requires a Private Rented Sector Strategy (PRS) in recognition of the increase in demand for housing, across all tenures in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT). The PRS plays an important role in helping the Council meet its housing need and provides an alternative housing option to residents.

4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The PRS sector in Wales has grown over the last two decades and now accounts for 15% of the Welsh housing stock. In RCT, between the 2011 and the 2021 Census, the percentage of private rented properties grew from 13.7% to 17.6%, with an estimated 18,180 private rented properties in the Borough.
- 4.2 The Private Rented Sector (PRS) Strategy supplements the overarching RCT Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028 and outlines how the Council will work in partnership with landlords, residents and statutory bodies to offer safe, affordable accommodation, that is well managed and of a good standard, creating accessible and sustainable tenancies.
- 4.3 The PRS in RCT has faced a number of challenges over the past decade such as changes to welfare reform, increase in tenants with support needs, poor property standards and the introduction of legislation aimed at regulating the PRS and improving standards. These challenges have intensified further as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost of living crisis and an increase in interest rates.
- 4.4 At the same time, more and more households are becoming homeless. This is due to a combination of continued welfare reforms, landlords serving section 21 notices (no fault eviction notices), the freeze on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates and rents being increased by landlords for a number of reasons including the increase in interest rates.
- 4.5 Despite these challenges, the PRS has continued to be invaluable as a housing option for residents and to enable the Council to discharge its homelessness duty.

5. **PROPOSED PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR STRATEGY**

- 5.1 RCT's proposed overall vision for the PRS is ***“to ensure that the private rented sector in RCT offers safe, affordable accommodation, that is well managed and of a good standard, creating accessible and sustainable tenancies.”***
- 5.2 The Strategy has set out 4 strategic aims that have been developed in order to ensure that the vision is achieved.
1. **To identify opportunities, funding and vehicles to increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation. Such as:**

- Supporting partner organisations to push for a review of Local Housing Allowance and Broad Market Rental Areas rates in RCT.
- Working with partners including Welsh Government to introducing an 'intermediate product' with revised standards, different to those determined by Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS).
- Working with Welsh Government and other stakeholders to access funding and identify new models to increase the scale of affordable private rented accommodation.
- Promote the Social Lettings Agency with landlords through the RCT Landlord forum.

2. To support residents to access and maintain well managed privately rented accommodation. Such as:

- Working closely with Housing Providers and landlords to raise awareness and promote the tenancy related support that is available through the Housing Support Grant Team.
- Refer residents to appropriate support available in order for them to be able to improve their access to the PRS.
- Work with partners to review and develop the multi-agency response to housing support needs by building on relationships with health, probation, social services and landlords.
- Develop a policy for the provision of financial support, including the use of rent in advance and rent top ups.

3. To ensure the private rented sector offers good quality and managed housing. Such as:

- Working with landlords to improve management standards and conditions of properties and ensure effective management of properties.
- Evaluate the continued benefits of the Treforest Property Accreditation Scheme, to determine whether it has a continued role in improving managerial and service standards.
- Promote the grants and loans on offer to Landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their housing stock.

- Reviewing the current Additional Licensing Scheme and put forward recommendations following the review to be taken forward and implemented.

4. To develop strong partnerships and engagement to support the private rented sector. Such as:

- Ensuring that communication with landlords is regular, clear and transparent. The Council will continue to engage with landlords through the RCT's Landlord Forum and newsletter on a quarterly basis and provide a wide range of advice, knowledge and education to keep landlords well informed and up to date on relevant topics and legislation.
- Mapping all products that are available to landlords and develop an online 'One Stop Shop' where landlords will be able to navigate between services and clearly understand the different options and services available to them.

5.3 The strategic aims will ensure that the PRS in RCT provides a suitable housing option for all residents and contributes towards a functional housing market which will result in the creation of prosperous communities.

5.4 In addition to this, a 3 year action plan will be developed to deliver and drive forward the aims of the Strategy and ensure that the Council's ambitions related to the PRS are met. The action plan will be monitored quarterly by the Private Rented Sector Working Group and performance measured against each action.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/ SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 An equality and diversity screening exercise has been undertaken and a full impact assessment is not required at this time. In summary, the Equality Impact Assessment identifies positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts upon the protected characteristics. The Strategy outlines the Council's approach to improving housing conditions and management standards to ensure the PRS is an accessible housing option for residents of RCT, via a variety of funding offers, advice, support and guidance. The Council's services aim to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, sex, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, marriage of civil partnership, and/or gender reassignment, has access to affordable, safe and warm homes.

- 6.2 The impact on age and disability is positive, explicitly because of the impact that improving the conditions and management standards in the PRS will have on future housing supply. How the Council plans for future housing needs will have a huge impact on a diverse group of residents of all ages.
- 6.3 The vision for the Strategy is to ensure that the private rented sector in RCT offers safe, affordable accommodation that is well managed and of a good standard, creating accessible and sustainable tenancies; this will enable people to have access to good quality housing and to be able to stay within their local communities.
- 6.4 The vision is facilitated by offering incentives, grants and loans through the Social Lettings Scheme and Houses into Homes loans, advice and guidance and where necessary enforcement action. We aim to provide high quality support to service users and we further aim to utilise all available technology, ensuring effective delivery of our service and providing person centred support.
- 6.5 The Strategy will ensure that anyone, regardless of a protected characteristic group can access private rented accommodation as a suitable housing option.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLEMENT

- 7.1 A consultation exercise is not required at this stage but may be required as actions within the strategy are delivered. However, it is important to note that the Strategy has been developed collaboratively with key internal Council departments.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared for the purpose of this report. In summary, there are many positive impacts to residents of RCT through the approaches the Council takes in working with the PRS. Information relevant to the PRS is published on the Council's website and therefore information on available grants, loans, advice and assistance is available in both Welsh and English.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report. The strategy can be delivered and managed within existing staffing resources in the Housing Strategy team. The loan and grant products referred to in the strategic aims have already been secured from Welsh Government.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 Delivering the Strategy will in some cases require the utilisation of existing Housing and Planning legislation, particularly where enforcement action in relation to the PRS is required.

11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 11.1 The development of the Private Rented Sector Strategy can be used to support the delivery of all three of the Corporate Plan priorities; people, places and prosperity. Investment in housing provides an ongoing stimulus to the local economy, by encouraging spending and local supply chains. Making available a supply of affordable homes, that are of a good standard also helps to improve the prosperity of residents and helps support a huge range of households in society that may not otherwise be able to meet their needs in the market, thereby promoting independence and positive lives for all.
- 11.2 The Strategy will also continue to assist the Council to contribute to three of the seven wellbeing goals that 'The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:
1. A healthier Wales
 2. A prosperous Wales
 3. A Wales of cohesive communities

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 This report has provided an overview of the proposed Private Rented Sector Strategy 2023 -2026
- 12.2 Subject to its approval, the Strategy will support the delivery of a private rented sector that offers safe, affordable accommodation, that is well managed and of a good standard, creating accessible and sustainable tenancies. This will ensure that RCT provides a suitable housing option for all residents which contributes towards a functional housing market that will support the creation of prosperous communities.

Other Information: -

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Claire Hutcheon, Head of Housing Strategy and Investment (01443 281114)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23 OCTOBER 2023

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNCILLOR M NORRIS**

Officer to contact: Claire Hutcheon, Head of Housing Strategy and Investment (01443 281114)

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Rhondda Cynon Taf

Private Rented Sector Strategy

2023 - 2026



Contents

1. Executive Summary	2
2. Introduction.....	4
3. Private Rented Sector & Housing Need	9
4. Legislative Framework.....	13
5. Challenges within PRS	17
6. Current Approaches	23
7. Strategic Aims	32
8. Action Plan and monitoring	35

1

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

The importance to have a distinct Private Rented Sector (PRS) strategy is in recognition of the increase in demand for housing, across all tenures in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT). The PRS plays an important role in helping the Council meet its housing need and provides an alternative housing option to social rent or owner occupation.

The PRS in Wales has grown over the last two decades and now accounts for 15% of the Welsh housing stock. In RCT, between the 2011 and the 2021 Census, the percentage of private rented properties grew from 13.7% to 17.6%, with an estimated 18,180 private rented properties in the Borough.

The PRS in RCT has faced a number of challenges over the past decade such as changes to welfare reform, increase in tenants with support needs, poor property standards and the introduction of legislation aimed at regulating the PRS and improving standards. These challenges have intensified further as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost of living crisis and an increases in interest rates.

Despite these challenges, the PRS has continued to be invaluable as a housing option for residents in RCT and to enable the Council to discharge its homelessness duty.

The Council's current approaches in the PRS, serve to increase the availability of affordable private rented properties, support tenants to access and maintain private rented tenancies, and to work with landlords to ensure that standards in the private rented sector ensure properties are safe and attractive where residents want to live.

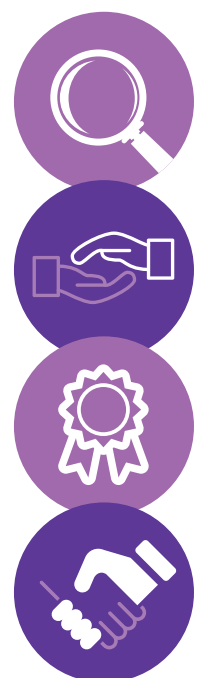
RCT's overall vision for the PRS is

“to ensure that the private rented sector in RCT offers safe, affordable accommodation, that is well managed and of a good standard, creating accessible and sustainable tenancies.”

The following strategic aims have been identified to achieve the vision:

- 1** | To identify opportunities, funding and vehicles to increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation.
- 2** | To support residents to access and maintain well managed privately rented accommodation.
- 3** | To ensure the private rented sector offers good quality and managed housing.
- 4** | To develop strong partnerships and engagement to support the private rented sector.

The strategic aims will ensure that the PRS in RCT provides a suitable housing option for all residents and contributes towards a functional housing market which will result in prosperous communities.



2

Introduction



In March 2020, the Council’s Corporate Plan ‘Making a Difference’ was adopted. The plan sets out a vision for:

“Rhondda Cynon Taf to be, the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy and prosperous”

The three main priorities of the Council’s Corporate Plan are:

Ensuring PEOPLE are

independent, healthy, and successful.

Creating PLACES where people are

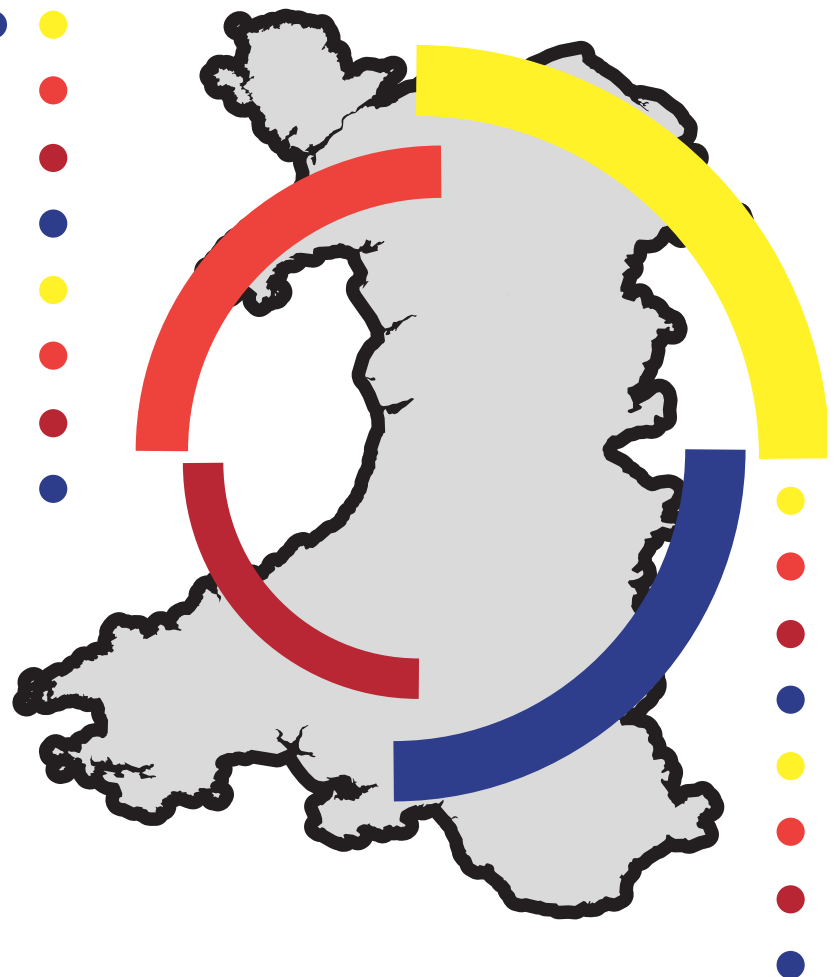
proud to live, work, and play.

Enabling PROSPERITY
creating the opportunity for people & businesses to

be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential & prosper.

The PRS Strategy contributes to all three principles of the Corporate Plan as well as contributing to four of the seven well-being goals that the ‘The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015’ puts in place as follows:

- 1 A prosperous Wales**
- 2 A healthier Wales**
- 3 A more equal Wales**
- 4 A Wales of cohesive communities**



The 'Ending Homelessness in Wales: A high level action plan 2021 -2026' sets the direction for the work of Welsh Government (WG) and its partners to end homelessness in Wales over the next five years. The Plan outlines the systems and processes that prevent homelessness, focusing on early prevention and making a transformational shift in approaches towards rapid rehousing. The Plan commits to making homelessness **rare** where it cannot be prevented; ensuring the experience of homelessness is **brief**; and supporting people to access suitable, long-term and stable homes so that homelessness is **unrepeated**. Increasing housing capacity, both in the social and private rented sector will be fundamental to ending homelessness.

RCT's Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy, which feeds into both the overarching RCT Housing strategy 2023 – 2028 and this PRS Strategy, sets out the Council's approach to support the most vulnerable residents – those at risk of experiencing homelessness and those who need support to maintain their tenancies and live as part of their communities. The Housing Support Grant is an early intervention grant programme to support activity which prevents people from becoming homeless, stabilises their housing situation or helps potentially homeless people to find and keep accommodation.

National Context

According to WG’s most recent statistics, as at 31st March 2020 there were an estimated 1.4 million dwellings in Wales, of which 204,995 were privately rented¹. The PRS in Wales, as in other parts of the UK, has grown significantly over the last two decades, now accounting for 15% of the Welsh housing stock.

As it has come to play a more important role in meeting housing need and demand, there are concerns around issues such as the affordability of PRS rents and regulating standards in the sector. Research carried out by Tyfu Tai Cymru (July 2022) (Part of CIH Cymru) revealed that the PRS in Wales is the worst performing tenure in terms of energy efficiency, with 20% of private renters living in fuel poverty, compared to 11% of owner occupiers and 9% of social housing tenants.²



Local Context



RCT is the second largest authority in Wales with a population of 241,900 and 108,420 dwellings³. Of these dwellings, 92,930 are in the private sector (either owner-occupier or privately rented). Between the 2011 and the 2021 Census, the percentage of privately rented properties within RCT rose from 13.7% to 17.6%. This represents the second highest rise in Wales. There is now an estimated 18,180 private rented properties in the Borough, which is an increase from 14,353 in April 2018.

There is a total of 549 (3.02%) Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in RCT. Historically HMOs in RCT have been the domain of students and this associated demand has seen the highest concentrations developed in areas adjacent to the University of South Wales, predominantly in the Treforest ward. There has been a reduction in the number of students living in Treforest, which could be the result of the merger with Newport and Merthyr, one of the faculties being based in Cardiff and students securing accommodation to Cardiff and commuting to Treforest. This has been instrumental in a significant change in the use of HMOs in the Treforest ward and HMO landlords have had to adapt to this change in the market to negate the inability to let their properties. As a result, landlords are turning to the non-student, single person demand and this trend is likely to continue.

Despite the increase in the number of properties in the PRS, recent local anecdotal knowledge from RCT’s Homelessness Service reports an increase in Section 21 eviction notices. The main reason provided by landlords for issuing a Section 21 notice is due to selling properties and leaving the PRS.

The owner-occupier market is out of reach for many households, which in turn is increasing the demand for both social and rented accommodation. In addition to this, social housing demand is outstripping supply and therefore the only tenure for many people to access is the private rented sector. This competitive market means that landlords are in a position to demand higher rents. The most recent breakdown of average private rental prices in RCT, indicates a growth of 9% between 2017 and 2019⁴.

¹ Welsh Government, StatsWales
² Welsh Housing Quarterly, July 2022

³ Office of National Statistics – Census 2021
⁴ Rent Officers Wales – Lettings Information Database

3

Private Rented Sector & Housing Need



Private Rented Sector & Housing Need

The Welsh Government Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) Guidance 2006 explains that housing need refers to *'households lacking their own housing or living in housing which is inadequate or unsuitable, who are unlikely to be able to meet their housing needs in the housing market without assistance'*.

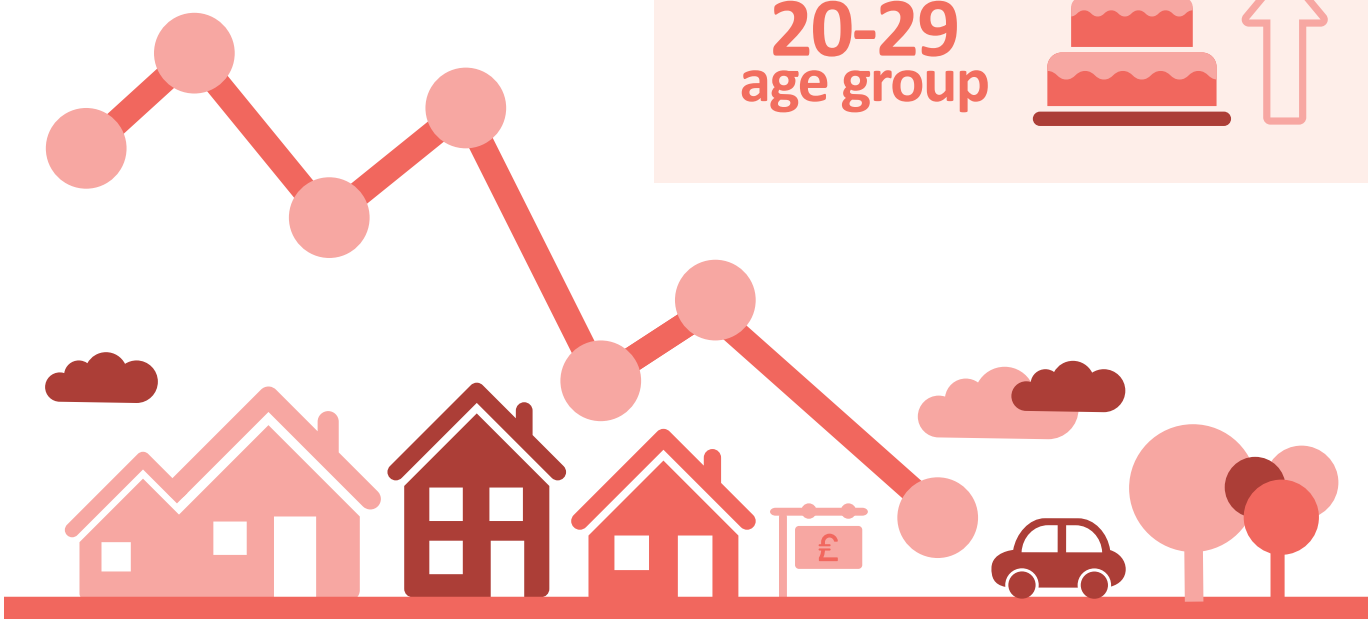
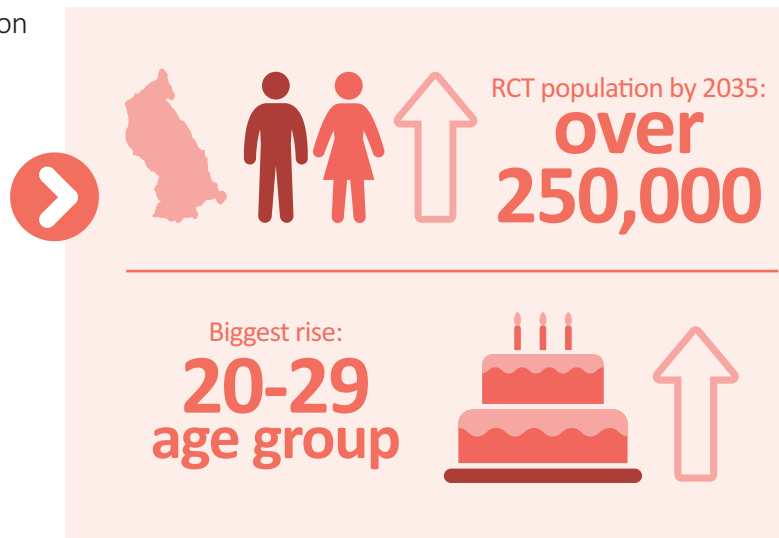
The private rented sector plays an important role in meeting some of the housing need within RCT.

Local Housing Market Assessment

The Council has identified an overall shortfall in affordable housing units, as well as a predicted future increase in housing need. The most recent Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA), undertaken in 2022, has identified a need of 255 new affordable homes each year between 2022 and 2037.

Changes to lettings policies such as the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) shared housing rate for under 35s and pressures on the housing stock make it less likely for single persons aged under 35 years to be allocated a one bedroom social rented or affordable rented property. Therefore, the PRS makes a vital contribution towards providing housing options for low-income households, particularly where private rents can be cheaper.

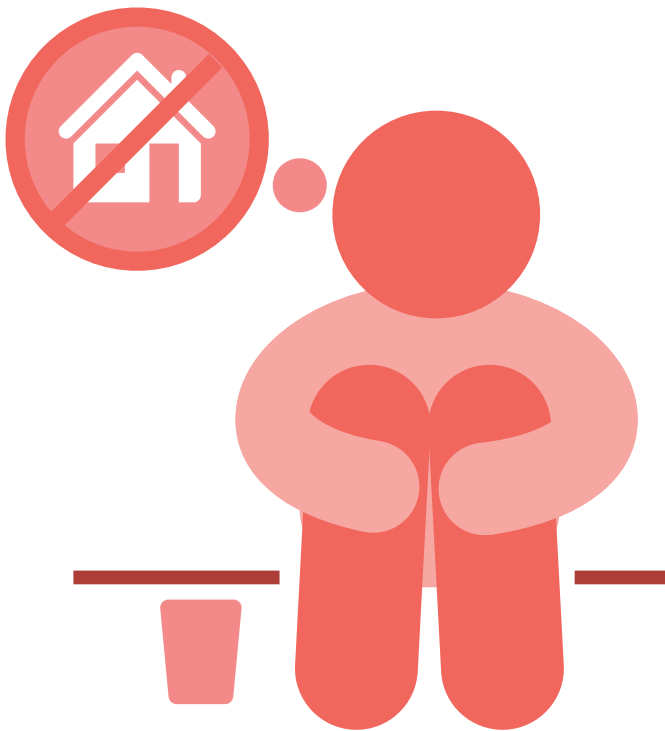
The LHMA projection indicates that the population of RCT will grow to over 250,000 by 2035 and that the biggest rise will be amongst people aged between 20-29. This age group will be predominately single and will be affected most by the lack of affordable housing and will be most likely to seek accommodation in HMOs.



Homelessness

Current pressures on the housing system in RCT has witnessed an increase in the number of homeless presentations. This is largely due to the removal of the priority need criteria linked to a 'no one left out' policy and the ban on evictions during the Pandemic, which when lifted resulted in a surge of homeless presentations as landlords followed through with eviction notices. The result of this is an increased reliance on emergency temporary accommodation, such as Bed and Breakfast accommodation. However, cuts to homeless prevention and hardship grants during the Pandemic has resulted in a barrier to secure (block book) temporary accommodation such as hotels. This presents a risk of not being able to secure enough emergency temporary accommodation during periods of increased homeless presentations, such as the winter months.

The private rented sector can offer an alternative model for temporary accommodation in the form of more suitable, intermediate accommodation as opposed to using establishments such as hotels and Bed and Breakfasts, particularly for families.



The loss of private rented accommodation is the highest reason for homelessness in RCT, which is mainly attributed to affordability and the impact of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA particularly in the Taff area⁵ where LHA rates are significantly lower than market rents). The LHA rates in RCT are determined by the Rent Officer Service for Wales which calculates the rates according to the 30th percentiles of all rents, for each size of property, within the two separate Broad Market Rental Areas (BMRA) applicable to RCT. The two BMRAs in RCT are Cynon/Merthyr and Rhondda/Taff. During 2022/23, a total of 440 households were threatened with homelessness due to loss of rented or tied accommodation⁶. There was also a 44% increase in the number of temporary accommodation placements between 2019/20 and 2022/23.⁷

There are growing concerns that people who are looking to rent in the private sector are struggling to access and sustain a tenancy where they are expected to meet rent shortfalls putting pressure on already tight household budgets exacerbated by the current cost of living crisis. Many properties in RCT are unaffordable for those individuals in receipt of housing benefits or on a low income.

In addition to affordability, RCT has amongst the highest reported incidences of substance misuse, mental illness and poor well-being in Wales, with mental health being the most common reason for there being priority housing needs in RCT. According to RCT's Housing Support Programme Strategy 'people with mental illness are far more likely to live in rented accommodation and mental ill-health is often given as a major reason for tenancy breakdown'⁸.

With the difficulties associated for people in RCT to become homeowners and the demand on social housing, the Council recognises the critical role played by the PRS in meeting this housing need and in turn helping to prevent homelessness.

⁵ Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022 - 2026

⁶ Arbitas Housing Solutions Software

⁷ Arbitas Housing Solutions Software

⁸ Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022 - 2026

Support to Refugees, Ukraine Nationals and Asylum Seekers

RCT Council has played an important role across all UK resettlement schemes and is committed to providing support to refugee families assessed by the United Nations as particularly vulnerable and therefore eligible for formal resettlement. The commitment to resettle the increasing numbers of refugees, Ukrainian nationals and asylum seekers in RCT presents challenges in terms of emerging housing need, support and financial demands.

Resettlement is organised through the following government funded schemes and overseen by the Home Office:

- UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) – under this scheme, vulnerable refugees are mainly nominated from the Middle East (notably Syria), North Africa and from refugee camps in other areas.
- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) – this scheme is overseen by the Director of Children’s Services in RCT in partnership with Bridgend and Merthyr Councils.
- Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) – this scheme offers the opportunity for resettlement to locally employed staff and their families who worked for the UK government in Afghanistan.
- UK Asylum Dispersal Scheme – under this scheme all local authorities in England and Wales are required to become asylum dispersal areas.



In Wales, there is a requirement to offer over 2,300 bed spaces and a regional dispersal plan for all 22 local authorities has been developed. One of the operating principles of the dispersal plan is to procure properties directly from private landlords.

Between 179 and 236 asylum seekers are to be located in RCT by December 2023, subject to the availability of appropriate accommodation. New private rented properties that are proposed to house individuals on the Asylum Dispersal scheme are identified by the Home Office contractor who works in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership, Police, Health, Education and Housing departments of the Council to consider their suitability.

In addition to the above, RCT contributes to the Ukraine response through the UK government’s Homes for Ukraine Response scheme, which was launched in March 2022. However, the challenge is finding suitable accommodation due to the limited availability of properties for rent.



4

Legislative Framework



Legislative Framework:

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 provides a system of regulation for landlords and letting agents, aimed at improving standards in the private rented sector, and has also reformed homelessness law with a stronger emphasis on prevention by allowing local authorities to use suitable accommodation in the PRS to discharge their homeless duty.



Part 1



Part 1 of the Act brought about a legal requirement that requires the registration of private rented properties in Wales with landlords who self-manage their properties required to be licensed. The underlying purpose of Part 1 of the Act is to raise the standards of rented accommodation and the professional practice of managing landlords and agents.

All private landlords are required to register themselves and the addresses of their rental properties in Wales. Landlords who undertake defined letting or property management activities of a rental property must become licensed. If a landlord instructs an agent to do such work on their behalf, it is the agent that must become licensed. The administration of the registration and licensing process is carried out by Rent Smart Wales.



Part 2



Part 2 of the Act covers the reform of homelessness law, including placing a stronger duty on local authorities to develop strategies to prevent homelessness and allowing them to use suitable accommodation in the PRS to discharge homelessness duties.

The Act places a duty on local authorities to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for anyone at risk of homelessness within 56 days. Homelessness Services need to consider their duty to assess housing need, the duty to prevent homelessness, the duty to help secure accommodation, the duty to provide interim accommodation, the duty to relieve homelessness and the duty to secure accommodation.

Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 came into force on 1st December 2022, introducing changes to the way all landlords, both private and social, rent their properties. The aim of the Act is to improve how properties are rented and managed, and will require all landlords to make necessary updates to their properties and paperwork.

Under the new legislation tenants are known as 'contract holders' and there are two types of landlord:



Tenancy and licence arrangements have been replaced with 'occupation contracts', of which there are two types:

- **Secure contracts** – these are issued by community landlords
- **Standard contracts** – these are the default contracts for the PRS (they can also be used by local authorities in certain circumstances such as supported accommodation)

The legislation has been brought in with the aim of creating security and improved accommodation for tenants and a more simplified process of operation for landlords.

Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019

The Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019 came into force on 1st September 2019, and made it an offence for a landlord or agent to require a person to make a payment which is prohibited, or to enter into a contract for services, or to require the grant of a loan in consideration of the grant, renewal or continuance of a standard occupation contract, or pursuant to a term of a standard occupation contract.

In accordance with the Act, a landlord or agent can only charge the following:

- Rent
- Security deposit
- Holding deposit
- Payments in default
- Payment in respect of council tax
- Payments in respect of utilities
- Payments in respect of television licence
- Payments in respect of communication services

In addition to the above, landlords can charge a fee for late rental payments (this is limited), and can ask for a tenancy deposit and rent in advance. The Act also places restrictions on the rent that can be charged whereby landlords or lettings agents cannot request different rent each month. The Act only applies to those whose contract started after 1st September 2019.

The Act aims to ensure that costs associated with renting in the private rented sector are reasonable, affordable and transparent.



Mandatory Licensing Scheme (Housing Act 2004)

The UK Mandatory Licensing Scheme (Housing Act 2004) came into force on 1st June 2006 and requires HMOs that are 3 storeys or more and occupied by 5 or more persons living in 2 or more households to be licensed.

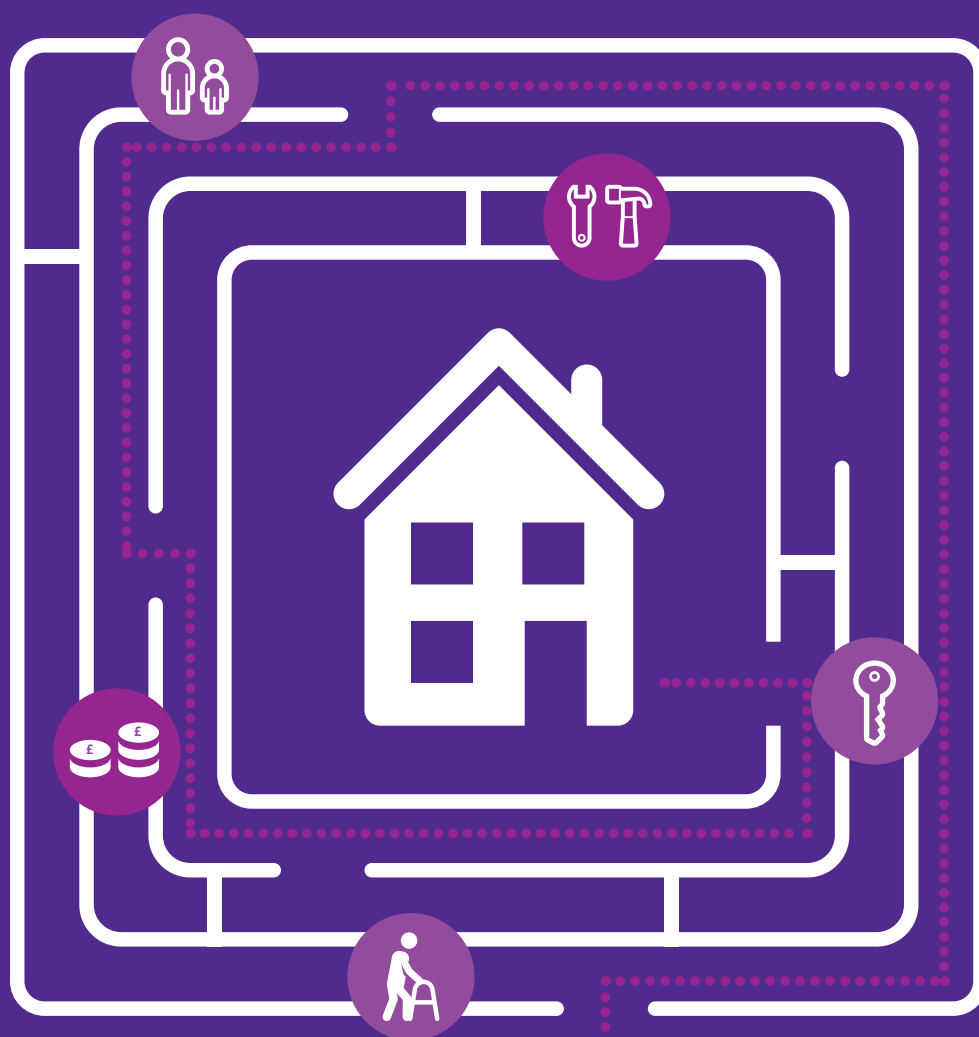
Licensing of HMOs is dealt with under Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004 and gives local housing authorities discretion to specify that landlords of some other, or all HMOs must apply for a licence if they want to let to tenants. This is called Additional Licensing. Each local authority can decide to implement an Additional Licensing Scheme to bring more HMOs within the scope of the licensing regime.

HMOs have been subject to proactive regulation in RCT for the last 17 years.



5

Challenges within the Private Rented Sector



Challenges within the Private Rented Sector

There are a number of different and sometimes localised challenges associated with the Private Rented Sector in RCT, some of which are:

Affordability of the PRS

The decline of the affordability of the PRS over the last couple of years is not only a local trend in RCT, but is also the case at a national level. The Office of National Statistics' (ONS) index for recording prices paid for private renting, rose by more than 11.7% between January 2015 and January 2023. The average rent in the PRS in Wales in February 2023 was £614 per month, compared to £430 in the social rented sector.

Welsh Government's Local Housing Market Assessment Guidance defines affordability in the private rented sector as:

'a household should be taken to as being able to afford market housing in cases where the rent payable would constitute no more than 25% of their gross household income'

The increase in rental costs in RCT can be attributed to increasing interest rates resulting in landlords struggling to service their mortgages and increases in operational costs such as certification, repairs and materials.

The LHA rates in RCT, which are set by the Rent Officer, can be problematic due to Rhondda and Taff being grouped together, even though the two areas are so distinct locally with rents being far higher in Taff than Rhondda. This has resulted in LHA rates being far lower than market rent in the Taff area, this can then cause difficulty engaging with the PRS and being able to discharge the Council's homelessness duty. Many private landlords cannot afford to charge rents as low as the LHA rates due to other financial commitments such as mortgage repayments.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the LHA rates for both BRMAs in RCT, for all property sizes:

Figure 1: Local Housing Allowance Rates up to April 2020

Source: www.lha-direct.voa.gov.uk		Shared Accommodation Rate	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4+ Bedroom
Cynon/ Merthyr	Weekly	£54.00	£77.10	£86.30	£97.81	£149.59
	PCM	£216.00	£308.40	£345.20	£391.24	£598.36
Rhondda/Taff	Weekly	£54.00	£75.00	£92.05	£98.96	£137.51
	PCM	£216.00	£300.00	£368.20	£395.84	£550.04

Figure 2 below shows a comparison of the average LHA rates in RCT, as at April 2022, against the median and lower quartile private rents, for all property sizes, across both BRMAs.

The current boundaries of the BRMA are contributing to increasing difficulties of inequality and a polarisation of low income benefit dependent households in deprived areas of the Rhondda Valleys. Low income households in receipt of LHA are faced with increasing shortfalls in the

difference between what they are able to claim and the actual rent of properties in the South of RCT. As shown in Figure 2 below, other than the LHA rate for a 3 bedroom property, lower quartile rents are higher than the maximum LHA rate in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Although the difference between the lower quartile rents and LHA is small, it is evident that tenants who are fully dependant on housing benefit cannot afford to rent a property in the PRS based on these figures.

Figure 2: Median and lower quartile rents against LHA rates

Source: Valuation Office Agency 2021 – 2022	Median Private Rent	Lower Quartile Private Rent	Local Housing Allowance (Merthyr/Cynon and Rhondda/Taff BRMAs)
1 Bedroom	£83.71	£76.27	£76.05
2 Bedroom	£104.24	£90.16	£89.18
3 Bedroom	£109.93	£99.50	£100.69
4+ Bedroom	£173.15	£135.72	£135.50



Welfare Reform

Welfare reform has had an impact on the private rented sector for a variety of reasons. In addition to the issues with LHA rates outlined in the previous section, the introduction of Universal Credit (UC), the spare room subsidy and the extension of the shared room rate to under 35 year olds have also impacted significantly on the PRS.

UC is a monthly payment for people of working age, who are on a low income, out of work or cannot work and is designed to top up income to a minimum level. UC replaces several benefits, including Housing Benefit, with one single payment.

According to data published by the Department for Work and Pensions, as of August 2021, 63,102 households in the PRS in Wales, in receipt of UC had a housing cost support element (LHA) included in their payment. Of this group, 42,891 (68%) households had a gap between the LHA award and their rents.

UC is designed with a monthly payment in arrears with the idea that this will mirror the world of work. There can often be a five week wait from the time of application for a claim to the first UC payment, in this time, arrears can rise sharply before plateauing after approximately 12 weeks. Although arrears generally stop increasing further, they are not paid down, causing a spike in claimant debt that they are then unable to pay off⁹. The rent arrears not only pose a significant, ongoing financial risk for local authorities at a time when the financial pressures faced by local government have never been greater, it also has a detrimental impact on the claimants themselves. Perhaps an even greater concern is the potential impact of claimants in the PRS, where the level of arrears could place vulnerable claimants at direct risk of being made homeless.

The housing element of UC is calculated based on the number of bedrooms in the property, if a tenant has a spare bedroom, the LHA rate, or the housing costs element of UC, might be reduced. This can have an impact on both tenants and landlords as tenants struggle to meet the shortfall to cover rents, which is in part due to the lack of suitable properties available to people, especially one bedroom properties for single adults.

⁹ The Smith Institute: Falling Behind, The Impact of Universal Credit on Rent Arrears

Property Standards

All rented homes must meet certain health and safety standards. The Council can inspect a property and use the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to assess if there are risks. The HHSRS looks at a variety of standards, including, damp and mould growth, excessive cold, overcrowding, faulty gas boilers, fire risks, dangerous electrics, the risk of falling on stairs, floors or paths leading to your home. The Council can then take action against landlords if risks are identified and can issue warnings and enforcement notices to landlords to ensure that repairs or improvements are carried within a set timescale.

In addition to the HHSRS, landlords will now have to follow the Fit For Human Habitation (FFHH) standards, which will be implemented as part of the Renting Homes Wales Act 2016. WG has set out the 29 matters and circumstances that must be considered when determining if a property is Fit for Human Habitation (FFHH).

The 29 items contained within The Renting Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) (Wales) Regulations 2022, are almost the same as those that are used in the HHSRS. WG has produced guidance for landlords to ensure it is understood that properties should be in good repair and fit for habitation. The Act states that rent will not be payable by the tenants where a property falls short of the required standards.

The majority of housing stock in RCT is pre-1920 traditional terraced housing, followed by pre-fabricated post war housing. These types of houses are often considered harder and more costly to bring up to the required standards.

According to a report published by Inside Housing in July 2022, the PRS in Wales is the worst performing tenure in terms of energy efficiency. In 2020, it was estimated that 20% of private rented tenants were living in fuel poverty in Wales, compared to 11% of owner-occupiers and 9% of social housing tenants.



Much of the housing stock in RCT is considered 'hard to heat' and is located in areas of deprivation with lower income levels, higher number of residents with existing health issues, posing a greater risk of fuel poverty to those living in cold homes. 'Hard to heat' homes are also some of the most difficult to treat due to the nature of the expensive energy measures and enabling works required to bring them up to an energy efficient level.

As at January 2023, 52% of homes registered as private rented in RCT are rated D, with another 25% rated E or below, totalling 77% of private rented homes rated D or below. Across RCT, the figure of all homes below a D rating is 70% highlighting the lower efficiency in the PRS. Since 1st April 2020, the domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) regulations prevents landlords (unless the property is exempt) from letting or continuing to let properties if they have an EPC rating of F or G. Only 22% of rated homes registered as private rented are C rated and government policy encourages homes to reach a minimum standard of C, to help mitigate fuel poverty. Increasing the number of properties to a C rating contributes to achieving the target of all homes being net zero by 2050.



Tenants with Support Needs

According to RCT's Housing Support Programme Strategy, RCT has been identified as having some of the highest reported incidences of mental health problems, substance misuse and poor well-being in Wales. Meeting the needs of these individuals, especially where there are co-occurring issues, is a significant challenge for the Council and its partners. The Housing Support Programme Strategy states that 'people with mental illness are far more likely to live in rented accommodation and their mental ill health is often given as the major reason for tenancy breakdown'.¹⁰

Since the Covid-19 Pandemic, there has been an increase in the number of people with complex needs. Difficulties accessing NHS services for treatment of mental health and substance misuse issues is having a negative effect on individuals managing their tenancies. The Housing Support Programme Strategy reports that mental ill health is the main reason for tenancy breakdown¹¹.

Private landlords with little experience and no formal training on how to work with vulnerable tenants with complex needs are having to manage greater levels of a breach of tenancy. These could be due to non-payment of rents, anti-social behaviour and often damage to property. The financial costs to the landlord can include legal action, loss of income and repairs, thus resulting in a reluctance from landlords to work with the Council to house tenants with support needs.

Financial barriers for tenants

There can be a range of barriers for prospective tenants when attempting to access accommodation in the PRS. These barriers can be even greater for those individuals on a low income or who are claiming LHA to assist with their rent.

In most situations where a property is proposed to be let to a tenant, the tenant is required to provide upfront costs and assurances to access the property. Most landlords/agents will now ask for one or more financial payments to secure the property. However, many individuals cannot meet these requirements and need further financial assistance to gain access to a tenancy in the PRS.

Private landlords often ask a tenant to pay one month rent in advance, and in some cases this has been as much as 6 months rent in advance, at the start of a new tenancy. Landlords require a deposit or bond, which offers some protection to the landlord in case of damage to the property or

unpaid rent. Figure 3 presents the typical upfront costs required to secure a property in the PRS:

Figure 3: **Average upfront costs in RCT**

Number of bedrooms	Average Monthly market rate	Bond	Rent Guarantee	Typical upfront costs
1 Bedroom	£522	£522	£522	£1,044
2 Bedrooms	£565.50	£565.50	£565.50	£1,131
3 Bedrooms	£609	£609	£609	£1,218
4 Bedrooms	£739.50	£739.50	£739.50	£1,479

(Source: Right Move)

Another requirement that is often stipulated in order to access the PRS is to provide a guarantor, someone who will be liable to pay the rent if the tenant does not. Many prospective tenants may not have a support network such as family or friends and would therefore be unable to provide a guarantor to secure accommodation.

¹⁰ Housing Support Programme Strategy

¹¹ Housing Support Programme Strategy

Demand and Availability of the Private Rented Sector

The PRS plays an important role in meeting housing need in RCT. With an excess of 5,000 applicants on the Council’s housing waiting list, a rise in homelessness presentations, and the requirement to find suitable housing as part of the Resettlement and Dispersal schemes, the availability and accessibility of the PRS is fundamental in helping the Council meet its housing need in RCT.

A growing concern in RCT, and also at a national level, is the number of landlords leaving the PRS. According to a recent survey carried out by the Council, 63% (42) landlords are considering leaving the private rented sector. This can include landlords with just one property, to large portfolio landlords. This scenario is not unique to RCT, with Bridgend, Blaenau Gwent, Ceredigion, Conwy, Newport and Vale of Glamorgan recently reporting similar scenarios.

Many private landlords consider the new legislation as too cumbersome and complex and feel that it favours the tenant over the landlord, with cost implications for the new ‘Fit For Human Habitation’ housing standards. Landlords are also concerned with the new notice periods, whereby they are unable to serve a possession notice for up to 12 months.

The survey highlights that landlords are considering leaving the sector for various reasons, such as high costs, damage to property, tenants not paying rent and the introduction of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, as highlighted in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: **Reasons for leaving the sector (RCT Landlord Survey)**

Reason for landlords considering leaving the PRS	Number
Tenant with arrears	9
Bad tenants	5
Damage to property	7
Rising rental costs	9
Renting Homes Wales Act 2016	9
Other *Retirement - 1, Lack of support for tenants - 1, Future expenses – 1	3

(Source: RCT Private Landlord Survey)

6

Current RCT Approaches To Support The Private Rented Sector



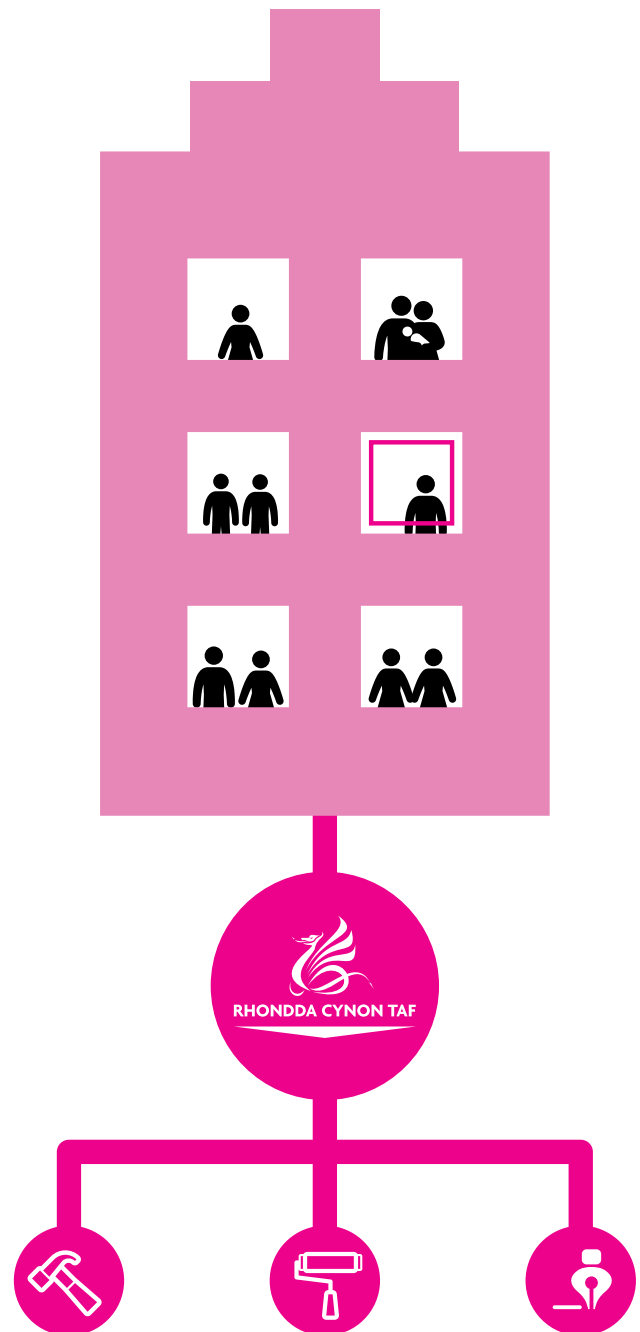
Current RCT Approaches To Support The Private Rented Sector: RCT's Social Letting Agency

In 2022, WG launched its national Leasing Scheme Wales, giving the opportunity for all local authorities to work with private landlords to offer those at risk of homelessness or who are homeless, longer-term security of accommodation (between 5 and 20 years) in the PRS with rent at LHA level. The scheme also offers ongoing housing related support whilst keeping properties at a high standard (maintained by the Council) with no additional cost to the landlord.

RCT's Social Lettings Agency (SLA) offers landlords a full property management service for the duration of the lease, including repairs and maintenance, and a guaranteed rental income even when the property is void.

At the end of the lease term, the property will be returned to the property owner in its original condition, in accordance with the terms of the lease. The aim of the scheme is to address challenges around housing induced poverty, where households are priced out of the PRS. The SLA also aims to increase the availability of affordable PRS properties to those in receipt of benefits, along with addressing mental and physical health issues, tackling inequalities associated with the risk of homelessness as a result of living in insecure, poor quality accommodation.

All properties accepted onto the scheme are required to meet mandatory quality standards as set out in the Leasing Scheme Wales – Scheme Guidance. In order to bring the property up to the minimum standards landlords are offered a grant of up to £5,000 where the property has been empty for under 6 months, or up to £9,999 where the property has been empty for 6 months or more.



RCT has been allocated Welsh Government funding to deliver the SLA with a target of 24 properties to be signed up by 2023/24, 65 properties by 2024/25, 97 properties by 2025/26 and 161 properties by 2026/27 (these targets are cumulative). To date, the target for 2023/24 has already been exceeded which evidences the demand for the scheme.



Landlord Engagement

RCT's Landlord Forum provides an opportunity for landlords to meet and share experiences, views and opinions of developing, letting and managing private rented accommodation. Landlords are able to benefit from information on good practice in all aspects of the PRS and ultimately raise the standard of their professional practice.

The Landlord Forum is held quarterly and provides the Council with a mechanism for raising awareness of Council services and strategic objectives and directly influencing the provision of rented accommodation options.

RCT's Landlord Newsletter is published bi-annually and is instrumental in reaching-out and engaging with private landlords who have properties in RCT. The newsletter provides a means of notifying landlords of new services, initiatives, legislation and opportunities to raise their knowledge and skills as a landlord in the PRS.

To ensure direct links with landlords are maintained, a database of landlords has been established which provides a fast and efficient mechanism for communicating with the extensive landlord list. It keeps communication lines open and is a fast and effective way of sharing important information that could benefit landlords and their tenants.

The all Wales PRS Officers Network forum is ceasing to be chaired by Welsh Government, however, all local authorities have agreed to continue with the meetings on a quarterly basis to share PRS knowledge and processes with colleagues from local authorities across Wales.

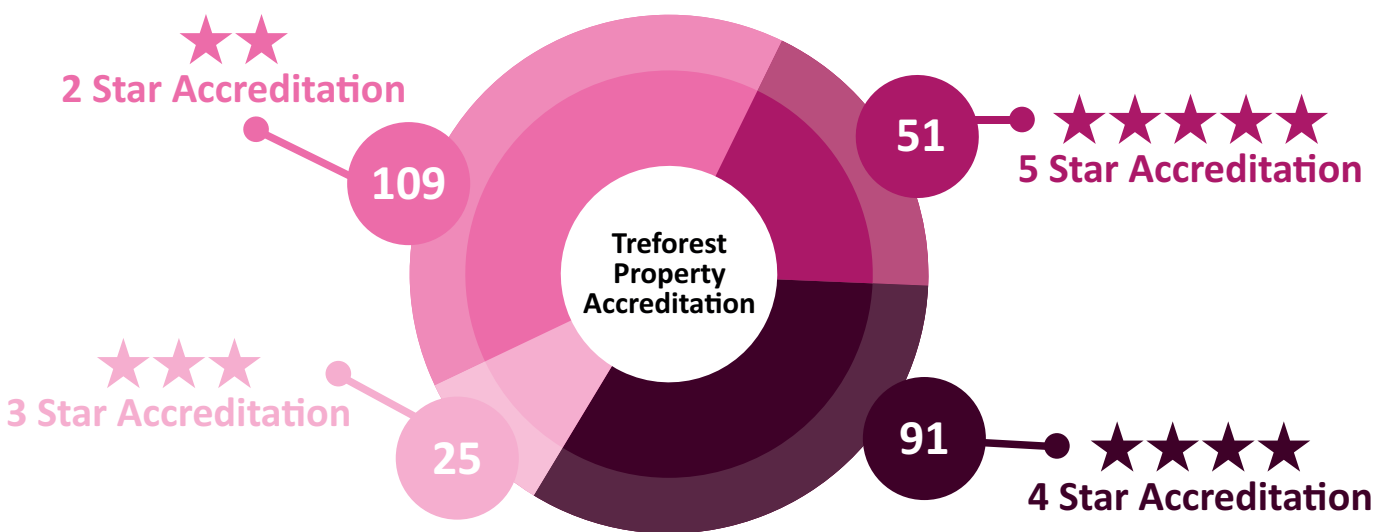
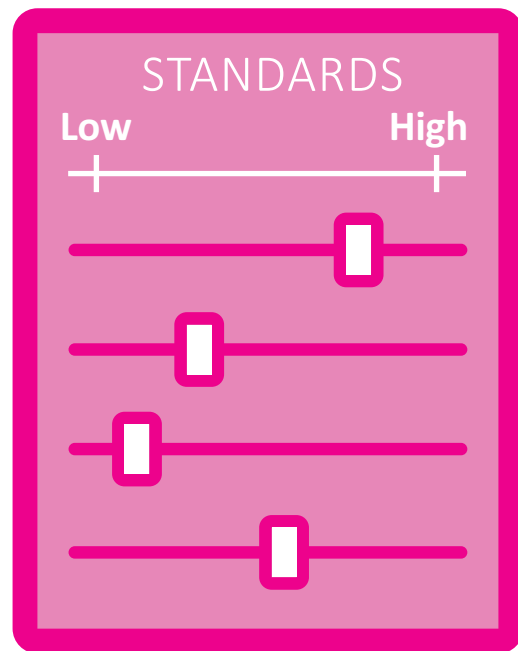
Treforest Property Accreditation Scheme

The Treforest Property Accreditation Scheme (TPAS) was introduced with the objective of raising the quality, amenity and management of the PRS in the Treforest area of RCT.

Properties are assessed and accredited based on the level of standards and amenities they provide. There are four levels of accreditation to reflect the quality of the property and its compliance with legislative requirements. Information on the properties and their accreditation is available for prospective tenants to view on RCT’s website.

The TPAS is a voluntary accreditation scheme and is open to all landlords and letting agents without charge. Landlords are supported in the self-assessment process and provided with relevant information such as the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (Housing Act 2004) and good practice in the PRS.

The TPAS is supported by RCT Council, the University of South Wales, representative bodies of the PRS and South Wales Police and Fire Services. The main benefit to landlords is the recognition of the quality of their property and the housing management they provide, whilst both attracting tenants and competing in a highly competitive rental market.



Tenancy Finder Service



RCT's Tenancy Finder Service is managed by the Council's Housing Solutions Service and assists landlords to source prospective tenants. Tenants are matched to a property according to their ability to meet the financial obligations in paying a set level of rent. At this point of the process, tenants are supported to set up UC claims for their housing costs and assisted to set up utilities.

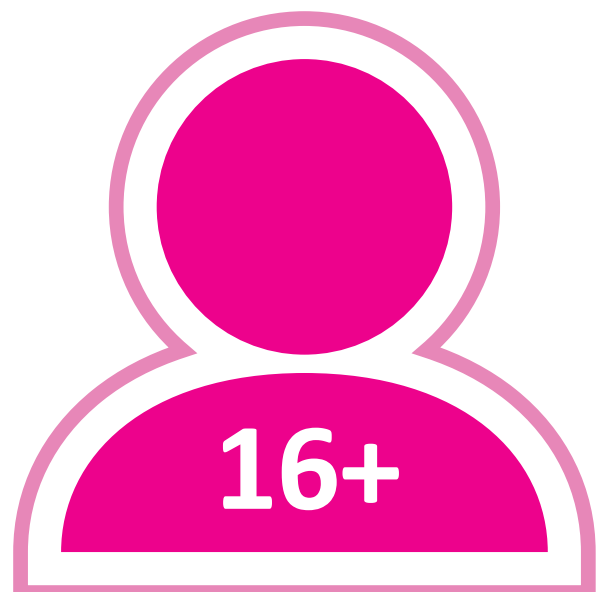
If further support is needed, a referral to Supporting People is made where the tenant would then receive tenancy related support (Floating Support) for the first 3 to 6 months of their tenancy, this support is fully reliant on the engagement of the tenant for it to proceed. Landlords are under no obligation to accept households nominated by the Council's Housing Solutions service and are still able to advertise and let the property privately.

Floating Support Service

Floating Support is a free housing-related support service in RCT for people aged 16 and over. The service helps prevent homelessness by building people's confidence and helping with the skills they need to live independently and successfully manage a home.

Floating Support is available for vulnerable households to access and sustain accommodation in the PRS. Specialist tenancy support enables vulnerable households to develop independent living skills and assist them in understanding the responsibilities associated with the terms of a tenancy agreement. Landlords are able to benefit from the added security provided in the knowledge that their tenant is able to comply with the terms of their tenancy.

During the financial year 2022/23, RCT's floating support service received 642 referrals for tenants living in the PRS, where 486 tenants were actually supported with housing related support.



Houses into Homes Loan

The Houses into Homes Loan is a Welsh Government funded scheme, which provides an interest free loan up to £25,000 per property or unit, and up to a total maximum of £150,000 per applicant. The scheme is aimed at returning privately owned empty homes into use and is managed by the Council. The loans are not available for potential owner-occupiers and are designed for applicants who want to rent or sell their property on completion of the refurbishment works. The loan must be repaid on sale or within 2 years from the date of loan approval, whichever is sooner, or within 3 years from the date of the loan approval if the property is for rent.

The Houses into Homes Loan has proved to be very popular with landlords and investors, the Council has approved and completed 149 loans, which equates to 220 new units of accommodation and investing over £4M since the start of the scheme in 2012.



Housing Standards Team

RCT's Housing Standards team works with landlords, tenants and partners to ensure the accommodation in the PRS provides a safe, attractive and healthy environment in which people want to live. The effective management of rented properties is also important, particularly in communities with high concentrations of rented properties.

The Council has adopted a Corporate Enforcement Policy that seeks to ensure it encourages people to comply with the law. Where this is undermined, the Council will use its legal powers to protect residents and communities. This Policy underpins the Council's approach to Housing Enforcement.

The Council endeavours to liaise with landlords to ensure they are aware of the standards required in letting properties. RCT also offers an advice service to new and existing landlords to support them as they undertake improvements, repairs and conversion of their properties. In addition, regular programmed inspections of houses in multiple

occupation are undertaken, as well as responding to service requests tenants concerned about their living conditions.

To achieve compliance with statutory requirements the Housing Standards Team, where possible, work informally with owners, landlords and managing agents. Where an informal approach is not effective or in high-risk situations, the team will consider the use of relevant legislation to remove or reduce risks posed to the health and safety of occupants or other members of the public.

Where significant hazards are found in a property and particularly where the occupiers are vulnerable and are at risk of injury, the Council uses a range of enforcement options to protect their health and safety. This will range from service of improvement notices to require repairs to a house, to the issue of prohibition orders to stop the use of whole or part of a property, to the use of emergency remediation notices to effect repair to prevent imminent risk. Where legal documents are not complied with, the Council will act to prosecute landlords where appropriate and may also undertake works in default and recover the costs.

HMO Additional Licensing Scheme

An Additional Licensing Scheme (ALS) has been in operation in RCT since 2006, this is in addition to the Mandatory Licensing Scheme.

Currently, the RCT Additional Licensing scheme covers the following HMOs:

- Entire houses or flats which are let to 3 or more tenants who form 2 or more households and who share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet
- Houses, which have been converted entirely into bedsits or other non-self-contained accommodation and which is let to 3 or more tenants who form two or more households and who share kitchen, bathroom or toilet facilities
- Converted houses, which contain one or more flats which are not wholly self-contained (i.e. the flat does not contain within it a kitchen, bathroom and toilet) and which is occupied by 3 or more tenants who form two or more households
- Buildings that are converted entirely into self-contained flats if the conversion did not meet the standards of the 1991 Building Regulations and more than one-third of the flats are let on short-term tenancies
- In order to be a HMO the property must be used as the tenants' only or main residence and it should be used solely or mainly to house tenants
- It is important to note that large HMOs i.e. those of 3 storeys or above with 5 or more tenants that comprise 2 or more households continue to be regulated through the Mandatory Licensing Scheme

The RCT ALS serves a dual purpose, both to protect the safety of tenants living in HMOs and to minimise the impact of shared housing on the character and amenity of the surrounding area. Changes in the market, as currently experienced in Treforest, present a prime example of how the RCT HMO licensing scheme can be utilised in tandem with other council initiatives to govern, monitor and ensure the quality and standard of both the property and its management. The ALS also

serves to mitigate the negative impacts associated with high densities of HMOs and effectively manages the changes in the dynamics of the housing market that, if left un-checked, could have an adverse impact on the desirability of an area, a rise in anti-social behaviour and a breakdown of social cohesion.

HMO inspection figures highlight that 1050 Category 1 and 2 hazards were removed from 360 licensed HMOs since the commencement of the 2018 ALS. This demonstrates that without continued regulation of smaller HMOs and converted buildings, there is a high risk that they would either be let in a low standard or would quickly deteriorate in standard and present hazards for occupants over time once the requirement for licensing ceased.

HMOs provide an invaluable source of affordable accommodation in a time of high demand and cater to a diverse range of tenants. Well-managed and maintained HMOs provide a valuable asset and form an essential part of RCT's housing stock. However, without the means to monitor, govern and enforce acceptable standards there is a risk that the sector will deteriorate, and in-turn present a blight on the communities in which they are located and a risk to the safety and well-being of the residents who depend on them most.

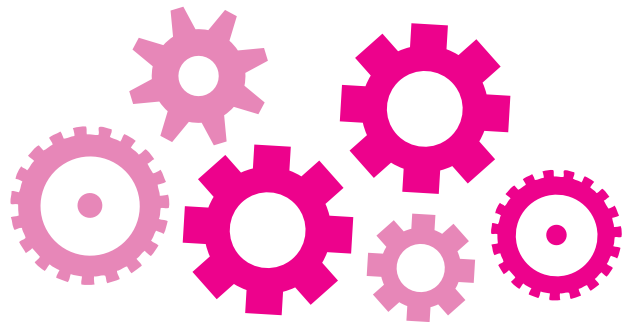


Supplementary Planning Guidance for HMOs

Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have the opportunity to formally control proposals for HMOs. In RCT, as mentioned previously in the Strategy, HMOs are heavily clustered in Treforest as a result of demand in previous years from students wanting to live close to the University. The recent trend of the decrease in the student population in Treforest has meant that there is no longer a need to have HMOs clustered in one area.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is non-statutory supporting information that supplements the policies and proposals of the Local Development Plan (LDP). The SPG has a twin purpose of identifying when it is deemed that the concentration of HMOs in an area has reached a level considered to adversely impact on a community, and secondly to provide guidance on standards of HMOs and how they should be developed. As a result of concerns relating to the high concentration of HMOs in Treforest, an SPG was introduced in 2018 to ensure that HMOs in

that area do not exceed a 20% threshold (within a 50 metre radius) and that they do not exceed a 10% threshold (within a 50 metre radius) for the rest of RCT.



Financial Support for Tenants

RCT's Housing Solutions Service works with tenants and landlords to ensure that the PRS is affordable, particularly for those on benefits who are or have been at risk of homelessness. Support is available to ensure vulnerable tenants can secure and maintain tenancies such as help with bond payments.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are a top-up to benefit to cover a shortfall between Housing Benefit / Universal Credit housing costs and rent and are considered if a person needs extra help with their housing costs. Any payment awarded is made in addition to any Housing Benefit / Universal Credit that has been awarded.

DHP is a limited budget, therefore an application is required in order to assess eligibility. DHPs are generally only available as short-term assistance, not a long-term solution.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are available to landlords, whose tenant(s) have a disability and require adaptations to the property to help them maintain their independence within their home. The landlord applying for the grant will be asked to sign a certificate stating that the tenant requiring the adaptations will occupy the property being adapted for at least five years. A certificate of ownership or tenancy is required when applying.



DFGs are awarded for essential adaptations to enable the freedom of movement around the property and can include:

- Installation of a stairlift
- Installation of a level access shower or specialist bath/toilet
- Improving or installation of appropriate heating system
- Widening doorways or installation of ramps
- Adaptation of heating and lighting controls
- An extension for extra care facilities
- External adaptations for safer access into the home

The maximum grant allowed is £36,000 and a contribution may be required for large adaptations such as an extension, through floor lifts or significant modification. The DFG budget of £4.3M for 2022/2023 was fully spent with 436 grants being approved and 348 completed that financial year.

Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Single People



The Council has worked in partnership with a private landlord to develop 18 units of good quality temporary accommodation in the form of a shared housing model for single people across RCT.

The scheme avoids placement and reduces reliance on Bed and Breakfast establishments. This provision has been extremely successful and there is ongoing work with the landlord to secure and develop an additional 10 – 20 units.



7

Strategic Aims



Strategic Aims

Whilst there is evidence to show that there has been some good work carried out to improve the PRS, it is clear that there is still more to do in order to increase the availability and accessibility of good quality, affordable private rented housing. In order to do this and address some of the challenges identified this Private Rented Sector Strategy has four strategic aims that will drive its delivery.

1 | To identify opportunities, funding and vehicles to increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation.

This includes:

- Supporting partner organisations to push for a review of LHA and BRMA rates in RCT due to the current rates being significantly lower than market rents in the South of the Borough, and therefore not affordable.
- Working with partners including Welsh Government to introduce an 'intermediate product' with revised standards, different to those determined by Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS). This would enable more use of the PRS for medium use and reduce time spent in emergency temporary accommodation.
- Work with WG and other stakeholders to access funding and identify new models and vehicles to increase the scale of affordable private rented accommodation such as the Leasing Scheme Wales (RCT's SLA).
- Promote the Social Lettings Agency with landlords through the RCT Landlord forum, RCT Landlord newsletter, and via the dedicated SLA page on the Council's website.
- Maintain strong links with current private landlords and look to work with new landlords, offering support and incentives to encourage them to work with the Council to increase the number of homes available to our residents.

2 | To support residents to access and maintain well managed privately rented accommodation.

This includes:

- Working closely with Housing Providers and landlords to raise awareness and promote the tenancy related support that is available through the Housing Support Grant Team such as Floating Support.
- Refer residents to appropriate support available in order for them to be able to improve their access to the PRS, such as the Council's Floating Support service and budget support commissioned by CAB.
- Work with partners to review and develop the multi-agency response to housing support needs by building on relationships with health, probation, social services and landlords and jointly review and develop working practices and processes.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of HSG funded services in light of increasing needs and risks, which will enable the Council to understand the level of support required by landlords.
- Develop a policy for the provision of financial support, including the use of rent in advance and rent top ups.



3 | To ensure the private rented sector offers good quality and managed housing.

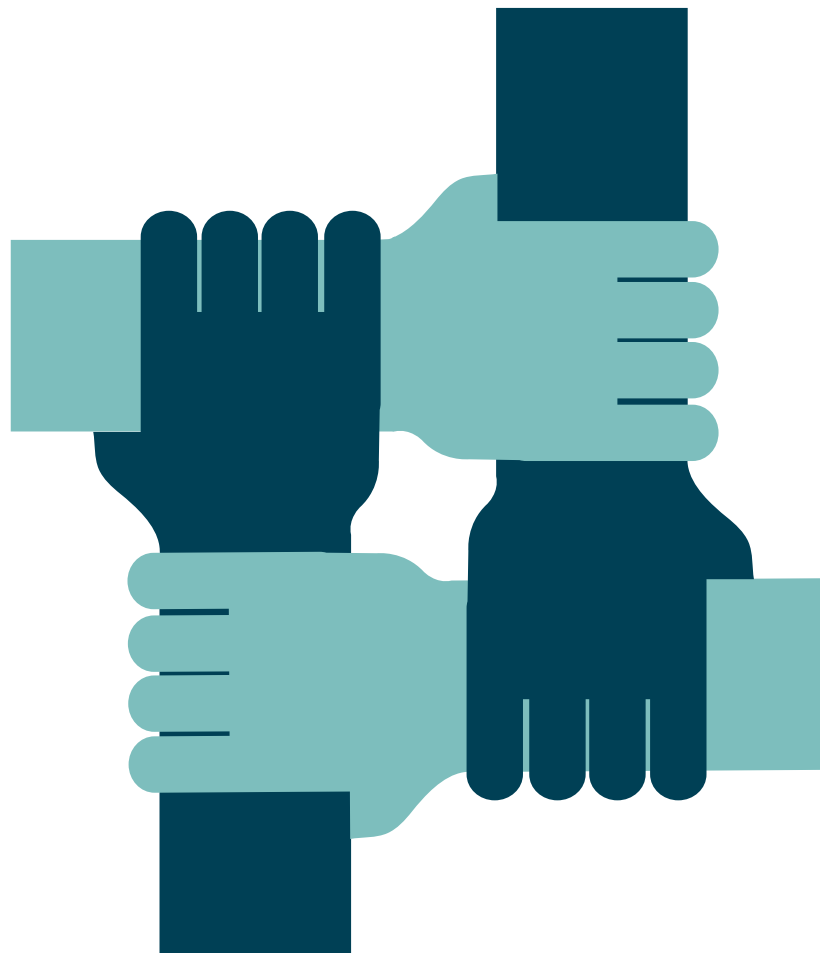
This includes:

- Working with landlords to improve management standards and conditions of properties and ensure effective management of properties by raising awareness of required standards, ensuring landlords are complying with the law and carrying out enforcement action where necessary.
- Evaluate the continued benefits of the Treforest Property Accreditation Scheme, to determine whether it has a continued role in improving managerial and service standards.
- Promote the grants and loans on offer to Landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their housing stock, such as WG’s Warm Homes Programme in order to help landlords reach an EPC Band C by 2030 in line with national policy.
- Offer advice to both Landlords and tenants regarding how to make homes more energy efficient and reduce energy bills through the Council’s Heat & Save by attending Landlord forums and community events.
- Reviewing the current Additional Licensing Scheme and put forward recommendations following the review to be taken forward and implemented.

4 | To develop strong partnerships and engagement to support the private rented sector.

This includes:

- Ensuring that communication with landlords is regular, clear and transparent. The Council will continue to engage with landlords through the RCT’s Landlord Forum and newsletter on a quarterly basis and provide a wide range of advice, knowledge and education to keep landlords well informed and up to date on relevant topics and legislation.
- Mapping all products that are available to landlords and develop an online ‘One Stop Shop’ where landlords will be able to navigate between services and clearly understand the different options and services available to them.



8

Action Plan and Monitoring



An annual action plan will be developed to deliver and drive forward the aims of the Strategy and ensure that the Council's ambitions related to the Private Rented Sector in the county borough are met. It will be monitored quarterly by the Private Rented Sector Working Group and performance will be measured against it.



Rhondda Cynon Taf

Private Rented Sector Strategy

2023 - 2026

52349-14 • August 2023

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg. Mae croeso i chi gyfathrebu â ni yn y Gymraeg.
This document is available in Welsh. You are welcome to communicate with us in Welsh.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

23rd OCTOBER 2023

ENGAGEMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET 2024/25

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS – CHRISTIAN HANAGAN IN DISCUSSION WITH THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR MAUREEN WEBBER

Author: Chris Davies, Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Cabinet of the proposed approach to resident engagement and consultation in respect of the 2024/25 budget setting process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Support the further continuation of the approach to the Council's budget consultation introduced in recent years, utilising the Council's Let's Talk Engagement website, as well as community face-to-face engagement. As part of the suggested approach, we will continue to provide alternative means of engagement for those having reduced or no access to the Internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods.
- 2.2 Support the Council's statutory requirements regarding consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax levels and that these will be met via the proposed approach.
- 2.3 Support the launch of a phase 1 budget consultation during the Autumn of 2023, in advance of the Welsh Government provisional budget settlement timescales, currently expected around mid-December.
- 2.4 Authorise the Service Director – Democratic Services & Communications to plan in detail the necessary timeline for

engagement, , in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member & Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director for Finance, Digital and Frontline Services.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide residents with the opportunity to provide feedback to the Cabinet on the 2024/25 budget setting process, via a range of engagement methods.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Every year the Council aims to undertake a comprehensive approach to its annual budget consultation, involving a large number of residents and key stakeholders.
- 4.2 The approach includes a range of face-to-face events in the community across the County Borough, as well as increased social media and digital engagement. Over 2,000 people were involved in last year's 2023/24 budget consultation process.
- 4.3 The widespread approach we use and the range of views we capture provides senior managers and Cabinet with the necessary information they need to inform budget setting for the year ahead. In addition, we have found that the information we collect is also valuable for service managers to use for their service planning and development.
- 4.4 The 2024/25 annual budget consultation will continue to use a range of methods to engage with the community. We will continue to build on the digital approach, using the successful [Let's Talk Engagement](#) platform. We will also ensure that the engagement is inclusive for those having reduced or no access to the Internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods. We will provide a number of face-to-face engagement opportunities in the community.
- 4.5 It is therefore proposed that the approach outlined in section 5 below is utilised for the 2024/25 budget consultation process.

5. PROPOSED ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

- 5.1 The 2024/25 budget consultation will take place in 2 phases. The first phase will take place in the Autumn of 2023 and will aim to collect views on the Councils' investment priorities, council tax levels and efficiency savings. The phase 1 process enables the Cabinet time to

consider the initial feedback received assisting in the development of a draft Budget Strategy for 2024/25.

- 5.2 Phase 2 will take place early in the New Year 2024 and will engage with residents on this draft strategy. The specific dates are dependent on the release dates of the Welsh Government Settlement.
- 5.3 The approach will make use of our digital tools through the Let's Talk online engagement platform, but will also include a number of face-to-face events and provide a number of alternative methods to ensure that it is inclusive of those who are not online or would rather provide their views in a different way.
- 5.4 The use of the Let's Talk platform, provides a user friendly and interactive form of engagement. The "Let's Talk Budget" project will provide key information, documents, graphics and videos to outline the background and context to the Council's budget, in addition to a number of engagement tools to allow feedback, which last year included online polls, a survey, and the ideas tool.
- 5.5 The Council's Social media platforms will be used to communicate the key messages to residents and service users and encourage engagement and feedback regarding the Council's budget and investment areas. This will include youth engagement, with Budget content created and shared on the YEPS Instagram and Facebook accounts through polls and stories.
- 5.6 An online survey will be developed on the Let's Talk site to collect responses on Council investments, Council Tax levels and the Council Tax Reduction scheme.
- 5.7 Emails will be distributed to all key stakeholders (including the Council's Citizens' Panel, Councillors, staff etc.).
- 5.8 A number of face-to-face engagement events will be planned, using the Council's recycling trailer, where we can outline the budget approach, answer questions and collect views. The events will allow the public to speak to Cabinet Members and senior officers about Council services and the budget in general.
- 5.9 The RCT Together Team facilitates 12 Neighbourhood Networks across the borough and these Networks provide a point of contact to respond to resident and community support. The Networks are local partnerships of council staff, organisations and local groups that are working together to deliver services and activities and to develop communities further. As part of the Council's Budget Consultation Process, we aim to provide presentations with a number of the

Networks, where we will take feedback from partners and provide an opportunity to engage with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers.

5.10 Engagement will also take place with the following;

- Older people via the Older Persons Advisory Group meeting
- Young people, working with our Youth Engagement Team
- A presentation and discussion with young people via our schools
- Report and presentation to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee and the School Budget Forum
- A presentation at the Community Liaison Committee
- Disability forum engagement
- Armed Forces and Veterans Groups engagement

5.11 As in all of the Council's consultations we will continue to consider those having reduced or no access to the Internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods;

- A telephone Consultation option will be available through the Council's Contact Centre – The contact centre number will be made available for people to discuss their views or as a minimum to request consultation materials.
- Individual call backs if required.
- Paper surveys and information available on request.
- Consultation freepost address for postal responses.
- Plan English Documents – These will be produced and placed online as well as being available in paper copy on request.

5.12 In addition to the above, all members have had opportunity over recent months at Cabinet and through Full Council to engage in the ongoing work on the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements.

Council Tax, Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Investment Priorities

5.13 The proposed approach will ensure the Council's duty to consult regarding Council Tax and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme are met as well as providing residents and service users with the opportunity to feedback on the Council's investment priorities.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 As noted in section 5, there will be a range of options for all stakeholders to get involved in the budget consultation. The consultation will also involve the Council's Disability Forum.

- 6.2 The online Let's Talk platform is accessible on mobile phones and tablet devices, and residents without internet access or smart phone/tablet devices can request a hard copy of the budget consultation questionnaire from the Contact Centre or at libraries.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 All consultation materials and the Let's Talk platform will be bilingual.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 The recommendations outlined in the report seek to ensure a range of engagement opportunities are provided to residents and service users as part of the budget consultation process.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 There are no financial implications directly aligned to this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The Council has a statutory duty to consult on Council Tax and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme which will be met under the approach to budget consultation outlined in this report.

11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 11.1 The budget setting process clearly impacts on the delivery of all Council services and contributes in turn to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 The comprehensive approach undertaken in previous years and the introduction of the Let's Talk digital platform has increased the range of engagement in the budget consultation process through a more interactive and varied approach.
- 12.2 The approach outlined in this report seeks to continue our positive conversations, by ensuring that all residents and service users have the opportunity to provide feedback and inform the budget setting process.
- 12.3 The results of the phase 1 consultation will be presented to senior officers and Cabinet Members early in the new year to inform the development of a proposed 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy. A phase 2 consultation will then take place on the draft strategy itself.

Other Information: -

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Chris Davies

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