



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**A hybrid meeting of the CABINET will be held on
Monday, 20th November, 2023 at 12.30 pm**

Contact: Hannah Jones - Council Business Unit

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 12pm on Friday 17th November 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 meeting held on the 23rd October 2023 as an accurate record.

(Pages 7 - 22)

3. THE COUNCIL'S REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25 - EARLY BUDGET REDUCTION MEASURES

To receive the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services, which provides Cabinet with an update on operational decisions and base budget reduction measures which have already been identified and the consequential financial implications which can now be factored into the Council's budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan.

(Pages 23 - 32)

4. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

To receive the report of the Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services, which seeks Cabinet's approval to initiate a consultation with interested parties and relevant stakeholders in respect of a proposed new Home to School Transport Policy as detailed in the report.

(Pages 33 - 100)

5. CONTINUATION OF FREE BREAKFAST CLUB PROVISION IN PRIMARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF A CHARGE FOR THE ADDITIONAL CHILDCARE ELEMENT

To receive the report of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services, which seeks permission to consult on the introduction of a charge for the additional childcare element which is available prior to the commencement of free breakfast club provision in primary and special schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf, noting Free School Meal Scheme (eFSM) pupils would be exempt from any charge.

(Pages 101 - 152)

6. LEARNING DISABILITY DAY SERVICES OFFER

To receive the report of the Director of Social Services, which informs the Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation on the proposed co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model for people with a learning disability. It also sets out recommendations regarding the next steps for the remodelling of the Council's Day Services in line with the day service strategy and operating model.

(Pages 153 - 232)

7. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024/25

To receive the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director, Finance, Digital & Frontline Services formally setting out the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2024/25.

(Pages 233 - 238)

**8. COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023
(QUARTER 2)**

To receive the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services, which provides Members with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first six months of this financial year (to the 30th September 2023).

(Pages 239 – 270)

9. CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

To receive the report of the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication, which provides Cabinet with the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

(Pages 271 – 302)

**10. HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS –
SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

To receive the report of the Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services, which sets out the supplementary capital programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects following the approval of additional 2023/24 investment by Council on 20th September 2023.

(Pages 303 – 312)

11. DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2022 / 2023

To receive the report of the Director of Social Services presenting Cabinet with the final draft of the Director of Social Services Annual Report for 2022/23 for approval prior to its publication.

(Pages 313 – 368)

12. PRE-SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

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

(Pages 369 – 372)

13. 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".

14. MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S LAND AND BUILDINGS PORTFOLIO: INTERIM UPDATE ON PROGRESS

To receive the exempt report of the Director of Corporate Estates, which seeks to provide an interim update on progress for the management of the Council's land and buildings portfolio until a future Corporate Asset Management Plan (2024-2030) is approved by Cabinet.

(Pages 373 - 402)

15. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any urgent business as the Chairman feels appropriate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Smith', is written over a faint, illegible stamp or watermark.

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, Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline 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 of 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

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CABINET**

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 23 October 2023 at 10.30 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 G Caple Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor R Lewis Councillor C Leyshon
Councillor M Norris Councillor B Harris

Non-Committee Members in attendance

Councillor K Morgan
Councillor C Lises

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
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 Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
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, Director of Social Services
Ms A Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Mr T Jones, Service Director – ICT & Digital Services
Ms S Nowell, Head of Transformation

Trade Union Representatives in Attendance

Mr P Crews - Unison
Mr G Morgans – GMB

Apologies for absence

Councillor M Webber

50 Welcome and Apology

The Leader welcomed attendees to the meeting and an apology for absence

was received from the Deputy Leader, County Borough Councillor M Webber.

51 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations were made pertaining to the agenda:

- The Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care declared a personal interest in respect of Item 3 (Future Commissioning of Domiciliary Home Care): "My younger sister has worked in long term home care for many years";
- The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity declared the a personal interest in respect of Item 12 (Update Report on Empty Homes Strategy): "I am a recipient of an Empty Property Grant";
- The Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services declared a personal and pecuniary interest in respect of Item 17 (Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited Annual General Meeting): "I am a Director of Amgen and will leave the meeting when the item is discussed and voted upon."; and
- The Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services declared a personal and pecuniary interest in respect of Item 17: "I am a Director of Amgen and will leave the meeting when the item is discussed and voted upon."

52 Minutes

The Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18th September 2023 as an accurate reflection.

53 Future Commissioning of Domiciliary Home Care

The Director of Social Services presented the report to Cabinet, which proposed recommendations with regards to the commissioning of domiciliary home care services.

The Leader thanked the Director for the report and advised that in advance of the proposals being presented, he had met with officers several times and also with Trade Unions to discuss the proposals contained within the report and to gain a further understanding of TUPE arrangements and the potential impact on staff and individuals.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care stated that the officer proposals before Members sought to respond to increasing demand for long-term home care and would address issues of capacity experienced by all providers. The Cabinet Member stated that the revised approach aimed to achieve a sustainable model that in no way reduces the availability of the service, but would, instead, enable long-term commissioning arrangements to be improved, enhancing the experience of service users and home care workers.

The Cabinet Member commented that through the new approach, the Council would continue to support people to be as independent as possible by continuing to provide an in-house reablement and intermediate care service.

The Cabinet Member noted that the Council currently delivered just a small proportion of the long-term home care provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the

changes would see the remaining ten-percent transfer to external providers. It was added that reablement and intermediate care services through the Council's 'Support@Home' Service would continue to be provided by the Council.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure advised of questions received from residents in respect of the impact the proposals could have on those individuals who need more complex care. The Cabinet Member spoke of the concern that the independent sector would not support such individuals and questioned whether the independent sector, which currently provide most of the support, include supporting the most complex of care needs to ensure independence for those individuals is maintained in their own homes.

The Director of Social Services advised the Cabinet Member that most of the long-term home care services were already delivered by existing independent sector providers. The Director acknowledged the concerns of residents but emphasised that the independent sector providers can and do successfully support many individuals with complex needs.

The Cabinet Member also sought assurance that the independent sector have access to the same level of training as Council staff. The Director confirmed that independent providers can and do access the same training and development through the Regional Workforce Development Partnership, which was hosted by the Council.

In respect of the query highlighted with training and development, the Leader further questioned whether the independent providers access the training available and the Director confirmed that regional workforce meetings take place on a quarterly basis, whereby performance is monitored in respect of both in-house training attendance and equally, the independent sector.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity questioned whether it would be possible for independent providers to be mandated to both recognise Trade Unions and encourage staff membership, if the proposal were to be approved. The Cabinet Member questioned whether the current independent providers recognise Trade Unions and whether it could be built into the wider tender process going forward, if supported. The Director of Human Resources advised that in terms of the requirement, it could be included within the tender documentation but not necessarily, legally enforced. The Director added that, to the best of his knowledge, the independent sector already work alongside Trade Unions so did not anticipate any issues with the Cabinet Member's suggestions.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services noted that the financial implications from the proposal would be built into the Medium-Term Financial Plan and requested further information.

The Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services noted that the report set out the hourly rate differential between the independent sector and the in-house service; and emphasised that this was based on current rates enforced. It was explained that, whilst multiplying the differential by the number of hours currently provided by the internal service was straight forward and amounted to around £1.5M, it needed to be considered in the broader context of:

- The tender exercise, market forces and how the independent sector responds;
- The new geographically zoned arrangements being offered to the market; and

- The fact that tenderers would be instructed to accept the requirements of TUPE and continued Local Government Pension Scheme membership for transferring staff.

The Service Director continued and explained that the above-mentioned 'unknowns' make it difficult to project with certainty the financial implications, albeit the proposal as packaged does provide the market with a more efficient operating model to tender for. The Service Director concluded by explaining to Cabinet Members that a more cost-effective service was expected, this being set against the £35M budget gap faced by the Council for next financial year.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health & Communities acknowledged the concern amongst the workforce in respect of the proposals. The Cabinet Member noted that, if approved, eligible staff would transfer through TUPE and questioned whether the existing terms of conditions would be protected and whether access to the Local Government Pension Scheme would be maintained. The Director of Human Resources confirmed that TUPE would protect staff's existing terms and conditions of employment. In respect of the Local Government Pension Scheme, the Director advised that whilst TUPE regulations do not state access to the Local Government Pension Scheme, the Council would follow the current Welsh Government's guidance on TUPE, which stipulates that Local Authorities include access to the Local Government Pension Scheme. Therefore, if approved, the Council would include the requirement within any tender documentation which would mean that staff would continue to have access to the scheme.

The Leader questioned whether the pension would be protected in the same way as the Council's pension scheme and sought assurance that there would be no risk of this being changed in the future. The Director advised that individuals would have 'admitted body' status into the RCT pension fund and would have the option to transfer their current RCT service into the new pension fund. The Director advised that as far as he was aware, once admitted body status is achieved, there would be no risk of this being changed in the future but that he would clarify this with the Council's pension section.*

The Leader questioned whether this could be stipulated within the contract monitoring to ensure individual's pensions aren't adversely affected. The Director of Social Services confirmed that it could be ensured, through the Council's in-house contract monitoring service, that any providers are compliant with tender specification and contract specification.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language noted that concerns had been expressed that the proposals would affect the Council's ability to safely respond and manage any future social care crisis.

The Director of Social Services advised that he had confidence that the market would be able to meet any future service pressures. The Director explained that during times of increased pressure, the Council already work with the independent sector to meet demand based on assessed need and risk. It was noted that whilst it was proposed that the Council transfers the remaining 10% of its in-house long-term home care services to commissioned independent sector providers, the Council would not be depleting the overall capacity of long-term home care provision. The Director felt that making the proposed changes would result in increased capacity that would help to better deal with increase demand pressures in the future.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity spoke of the current financial climate and the situation which required Members to make difficult decisions, which includes ensuring the delivery of services is as effective and efficient as possible. The Cabinet Member stated that the level of care provided in communities should be the key consideration and that the report before Members proposes that the Council continues to deliver all reablement and intermediate care in-house.

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 C. Lises

With the agreement of the Leader, the following Trade Union representatives were granted permission to address the Cabinet:

- Mr P Crews (Unison)
- Mr G Morgans (GMB)

N.B- Following the contributions of the speakers listed above, the Leader was handed a petition in respect of the matter.

In response to the comments made by Non-Committee Members and Trade Union representatives, the Director of Social Services advised that, to his knowledge, the Council had not stopped providing in-house packages of care and that he would investigate the matter. In terms of communication and information sharing, the Director stated that, given the size of the workforce, it was extremely difficult to ensure staff receive the information first-hand and at one time but, in this case, staff had been contacted through the mobile app and email; and confirmed that service users had been contacted later that day. Despite this, the Director acknowledged that some service users were aware before some staff members.

*Following clarification of the Leader's question in respect of whether the pension would be protected in the same way as the Council's pension scheme, the Director of Human Resources advised that as part of the admitted body status, a Pension Fund Admission Agreement would be put in place. It was explained that the agreement is a legal binding triparty document between the Provider, the Council and the Pension Fund. As such, between this and the TUPE wording, which would be included within the Tender documentation, the Provider would not be permitted to withdraw for the Fund so staff would remain in the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care acknowledged the difficult decision before Members. However, the Cabinet Member noted that, if approved, the local authority would continue to deliver all reablement and intermediate care in-house; would make the sector more resilient; and by providing the service in more co-ordinated way, should improve staff recruitment and retention. The Cabinet Member was satisfied by the advice received by officers at the meeting and felt that the plans would have no impact upon the level of care in the community.

The Chief Executive took the opportunity to summarise comments to assist the Cabinet in its deliberation. The Chief Executive reiterated that the Director of

Social Services was advising Cabinet that, in recommissioning its long-term support, the Council would move to a more efficient model that secures the provision for the most vulnerable residents going forward. The Chief Executive clarified that the proposal was primarily a recommissioning exercise for long-term care and support across the County Borough and stated that it was incumbent on the Director of Social Services to review the operating model at such times, to ensure that it is fit for purpose. The Chief Executive continued and explained that the proposal would move to a new operating model for care and support, which includes the small, but nonetheless valuable, in-house provision. The Chief Executive clarified that, if approved, the move would shift to an outcome-based model and would introduce a geographical zoning proposal to maximise efficiency and in doing so, increase much needed capacity in the sector. The Chief Executive assured the Cabinet that if approved, the staff affected would have full protection through TUPE and would continue to access the Local Government Pension Scheme. The Chief Executive emphasised that the proposals before Cabinet Members would not reduce or cut domiciliary care services but would protect the service through a more resilient service model, during the challenging financial climate.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure recognised that the proposed changes would cause anxiety amongst staff but hoped that the reassurance provided by officers at the meeting would alleviate the concerns to a degree. The Cabinet Member was satisfied, based upon the information contained within the report and the responses of officers, that the proposal would have no impact on the care provided.

The Leader noted that a small number of staff would not be eligible for TUPE and suggested that an additional recommendation be added to ensure that no compulsory redundancies are taken forward through the implementation of these proposals. The Director of Human Resources confirmed this and explained that any individuals identified as ineligible would be provided with options such as redeployment and voluntary early redundancy.

Prior to any decision being made by the Cabinet, the Leader emphasised the importance of referencing the three points made by Members at the meeting in respect of the protection of membership for staff within the Local Government Pension Scheme, the recognition of Trade Unions to be factored in and that no compulsory redundancies are to be taken forward. As such, the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication put forward the following **additional** recommendations for Member consideration:

- 2.5 *The protection of membership for staff within the Local Government Pension Scheme to be factored into the procurement process to be taken forward;*
- 2.6 *The recognition of Trade Unions to be factored into the procurement process to be taken forward; and*
- 2.7 *That no compulsory redundancies are taken forward through the implementation of these proposals.*

Members were content with the assurances and additional recommendations proposed by the Leader.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information provided in this report, the Equality Impact Assessment (including Socio-Economic Duty) and Welsh Language Impact Assessment;
2. To approve 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 the report;
3. To approve 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 the report;
4. To approve 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; and
5. 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.

In addition to the above-mentioned recommendations (2.1 to 2.5) as contained within the report, the Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

6. The protection of membership for staff within the Local Government Pension Scheme to be factored into the procurement process to be taken forward;
7. The recognition of Trade Unions to be factored into the procurement process to be taken forward; and
8. That no compulsory redundancies are taken forward through the implementation of these proposals

54 Future Commissioning of the Council's Supported Living Service for People with a Learning Disability

The Director of Social Services presented Cabinet with the report, which made recommendations with regards to the commissioning of Supported Living Services for people with a learning disability.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care commented that the Council has substantial experience and a good track record of commissioning Supported Living Services from external providers. It was noted that with the current 10-year contract due to end this year, the retendering process was already underway, to start the new contract from April 2024.

The Cabinet Member continued and noted that the proposed changes would transfer the small percentage of Supported Living Services currently provided in-house to the external market, which already provides around 90% of the service. The Cabinet Member acknowledged officers' advice, which was that the changes would ensure best value and future sustainability of the service, without reducing its availability to help people who rely upon it. The Cabinet Member emphasised the importance of this in the context of the significant budget gap, the rising cost pressures, and the rising demand within the service.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure questioned how the Council would engage with the individuals affected, including service users, their families, and staff members.

The Director of Social Services advised that, if agreed, the Council would provide regular engagement and communication with all affected individuals to ensure that they are kept fully informed of the process and timescales for service transfer. This would include sharing information, including easy read format, and holding meetings supported by social work staff and advocates, such as Cwm Taf People First and DEWIS Centre for Independent Living and in the case of staff, Trade Unions. It was added that, following the procurement process and contract award, the Council would engage with all affected individuals to address any anxiety they may have about the change of provider. There would also be opportunities to meet with the new providers to discuss any concerns.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health & Communities acknowledged the concern amongst the workforce in respect of the proposals and questioned whether the same reassurance could be provided as per the last item of the agenda (Minute No. 53), in respect of what TUPE means, and the protection it affords. The Cabinet Member also asked if the same assurance could also be provided in respect of job protection as a result of the changes, if agreed.

Alongside the Cabinet Member's suggestion, the Leader asked if the same assurance could be provided as the last item of business (Minute No. 53) in respect of no compulsory redundancies.

The Director of Human Resources confirmed that the same protection would be applied in terms of TUPE and staff's membership within the Local Government Pension Scheme. The Director advised the from an initial review, it was anticipated that all staff would be eligible for TUPE but should that not be the case, no compulsory redundancies would be undertaken as part of the process and that staff would be provided with options such as redeployment and voluntary early redundancy.

The Leader sought clarification that the three providers that would be tendering were not private sector companies and were not for profit, to which the Director confirmed.

Similarly, to the last item of business, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services noted that the financial implications from the proposal would be built into the Medium-Term Financial Plan and requested further information.

The Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services advised that the report highlighted the current hourly rate differential between the independent sector and the in-house service, and when applied to the number of hours currently provided by the internal service, this equates to an estimated saving of around £650k per year.

The Service Director advised that the estimated saving would come with a number of caveats and that it needed to be considered in the broader context of the points made in the previous item in terms of:

- The retender exercise, market forces and how the independent sector responds;
- The fact that tenderers would be instructed by the Council to accept the requirements of TUPE and continued Local Government Pension Scheme membership for transferring staff; and
- With specific regard to support living, each scheme is driven by differing

complexities of need, with this informing the number of hours required.

The Service Director continued and explained that the above-mentioned 'unknowns' make it difficult to project with certainty the financial implications, but it was expected that the proposal, alongside the re-tender process underway with the independent sector for existing contracts, would provide opportunity for a more cost-effective service, this being set against the £35M budget gap faced by the Council for next financial year.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language questioned whether the services users and their families would see change in the small number of settings the Council currently provides.

The Director of Social Services assured the Cabinet that the proposal, if agreed, would involve no change to an affected individual's home or to the level of care and support they receive. It was explained that TUPE would also mean that eligible staff employed in the remaining 9 in-house supported living homes would transfer to the new commissioned providers. As such, this would help to maintain stability for the individual and continuity of staff support around the provision of activities and their care and support during any transition.

The Director noted that people with a learning disability had been involved in the development of the new contract documentation and the evaluation methodology, which would help to ensure that the right person-centred service is being commissioned, which is more consistent and equitable across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Leader sought clarification that the individuals at the properties have their own tenancies to which the Director confirmed. The Director advised that as part of the proposal, the tenancy arrangements would not change for the individuals, only the care provider as part of a procurement exercise.

With the agreement of the Leader, Non-Committee Member, County Borough Councillor K. Morgan was granted permission to address the Cabinet.

Similarly, to the last item of business, prior to any decision being made by the Cabinet, the Leader emphasised the importance of referencing the three points made by Members at the meeting in respect of the protection of membership for staff within the Local Government Pension Scheme, the recognition of Trade Unions to be factored in and that no compulsory redundancies are to be taken forward. As such, the Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication put forward the following **additional** recommendations for Member consideration:

- 2.4 *The protection of membership for staff within the Local Government Pension Scheme to be factored into the procurement process to be taken forward;*
- 2.5 *The recognition of Trade Unions to be factored into the procurement process to be taken forward; and*
- 2.6 *That no compulsory redundancies are taken forward through the implementation of these proposals.*

Members were satisfied with the information contained within the report, the responses of officers and the additional recommendations proposed by the Leader.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information provided in this report, the Equality Impact Assessment (including Socio-Economic Duty) and Welsh Language Impact Assessment;
2. To approve 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; and
3. That 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.

In addition to the above-mentioned recommendations (2.1 to 2.3) as contained within the report, the Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

4. The protection of membership for staff within the Local Government Pension Scheme to be factored into the procurement process to be taken forward;
5. The recognition of Trade Unions to be factored into the procurement process to be taken forward; and
6. That no compulsory redundancies are taken forward through the implementation of these proposals.

55 Pre-Scrutiny Committee Feedback

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication provided Cabinet with the feedback and comments of the items that were pre-scrutinised by the Council's thematic Scrutiny Committee's following the last Committee cycle.

During the cycle, the following reports were pre-scrutinised and the key comments and observations were noted in Section 5 of the report:

- Proposals to develop a new School in Rhondda Cynon Taf;
- Representations, Compliments and Complaints Procedures Annual Report – 2022/23; and
- Community Infrastructure Levy Annual Monitoring Report.

The Service Director noted that, in respect of the Community Infrastructure Levy Annual Monitoring Report which had been pre-scrutinised by the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 18th October 2023, comments had been circulated to Cabinet Members.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language took the opportunity to thank the Scrutiny Committees for their respective work.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the comments and observations of the Scrutiny Committees following pre-scrutiny of the items listed within section 5 of the report.

56 Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2022-2023

The Director of Social Services presented Cabinet with the 2022/23 Annual Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Report.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care recognised the importance of the report, which seeks to ensure individual of all ages are protected; and provides prevention of harm and abuse. The Cabinet Member noted that the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board has a statutory duty to provide an annual report which outlines its priorities.

The Cabinet Member noted the greater need and focus to improve approaches to public sector concerns and stated that all partnership agencies have their part to play.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note and endorse the content of the 2022/23 Annual Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Report.

57 Social Services Representations, Compliments and Complaints Procedures Annual Report 2022/23

The Director of Social Services provided 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.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care thanked the Director for the report and stated that both complaints and compliments are valuable feedback, which drives service improvement and planning. The Cabinet Member added that it was reassuring for staff to receive compliments for all their hard work and dedication.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of this report and the Social Services Annual Representations and Complaints report for 2022/23; and
2. To note the work undertaken by the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team.

58 Customer Feedback Scheme - Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report - 2022/23

The Service Director of Digital and ICT provided 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.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services emphasised the importance of customer feedback and was pleased to note that 95% of complaints had been dealt with at stage 1. The Cabinet Member recognised that the team were always looking for new ways to capture information and noted that the 'You Said, We Did' service was going from strength to strength.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report, the Customer Feedback Scheme (CFS) Annual Report for 2022/23 and the work undertaken by the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team.

59 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report and Letter 2022-2023

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services advised Cabinet of the publication of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' ('PSOW') Annual Report and Annual Letter to this Council for 2022-2023.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language thanked the Director for the report and stated that the report allows Cabinet Members to accurately review and monitor how the Council is managing the feedback it receives. The Cabinet Member was pleased to note that, given the size of the Local Authority, a small number of complaints had been made and a small number had been referred to the Ombudsman.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider and note the 2022-2023 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Report and Annual Letter to this Council.

60 Proposals to Develop a new Special School in RCT

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services advised Cabinet 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, these are:

- Park Lane Special School;
- Ysgol Hen Felin; and
- Ysgol Ty Coch.

Members' attention was drawn to Appendix A of the report, which detailed the outcome of the consultation.

The Director informed Members that the documents noted 38% were against the proposals, but that it should read 37%. The Director advised that, overall, the consultation responses were positive with 56.5% in favour of the proposals and emphasised that some of the parents/carers appeared to have misunderstood the proposals, which was illustrated in Section 5 of the consultation document. It was therefore emphasised that as a result of the proposals, there would be no school closures and that the children in existing placements would remain in their current schools.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language thanked officers for undertaking the consultation and thanked individuals for their responses. The Cabinet Member was content that officers had been able to answer and address any points raised through the consultation including those of Estyn.

The Cabinet Member was content that the proposal to develop a new special school was the right step forward and would build capacity in an area of increased demand for the future. The Cabinet Member emphasised that pupils already attending special schools within RCT would not be required to move schools and that, if approved, new catchments would be put in place for future arrangements.

The Leader was in favour of the proposals and commented that the special school would be a huge investment, which was desperately needed.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report;
2. To note the information contained within the Consultation 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; and
3. 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.

61 CIL Annual Monitoring 2022/2023

The Director of Prosperity and Development sought Cabinet's approval in respect of the contents of the CIL Annual Monitoring Report and the proposed changes to the Regulation 123 List and advised Cabinet of the pre scrutiny by the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity was content with the recommendations contained within the report. The Cabinet Member noted the considerations of Scrutiny Committee and looked forward to receiving feedback from the Community Councils.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the CIL Annual Monitoring Report;
2. To 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 of the report; and
3. To approve the subsequent adoption of the Regulation 123 List if no adverse comments are received.

N.B- Following the conclusion of this item, the Cabinet pause for a short break.

62 Update Report on Empty Homes Strategy

The Director of Prosperity and Development provided the 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).

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity spoke of the success of

the programme in getting homes back on the market or into meaningful use. The Cabinet Member was pleased to note that, to date, just under 700 properties had been brought back into use and was happy to move the recommendations contained within the report.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information contained within the 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).

63 Private Rented Sector Strategy 2023-2026

The Director of Prosperity and Development provided the Cabinet with an overview of the proposed Private Rented Sector Strategy 2023 -2026 and seek approval for it to be implemented.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity spoke positive of the work undertaken in respect of the private rented sector with RCT landlords; and noted that RCT had been proactive with providing advice with legislation requirements and guidance. The Cabinet Member added his thanks to officers and advised that he had received compliments on their behalf.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities echoed the comments and was in support of the recommendations contained within the report.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To 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.

64 Engagement on the Council's Budget 2024-2025

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication informed the Cabinet of the proposed approach to resident engagement and consultation in respect of the 2024/25 budget setting process.

The Leader advised that next year's budget would likely be the most challenging for RCT since his time as Leader of the Council; and it was emphasised that public engagement would be vital. The Leader stated that unless UK Government announce additional funding in their Autumn budget, the consequences to Wales and its Local Authorities would be very difficult. The Leader advised that, following a survey, across England, there would potentially be at least 26 Local Authorities issuing 114 notices in the next year; and that although RCT were a long way away from issuing a notice, the careful management of the budget and resources would be key.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services added that it would likely be a year which requires an honest conversation with residents in respect of the huge challenge faced by the Council.

The Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To 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. To 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;
3. To 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; and
4. To 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.

65 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".

66 Write Off of Irrecoverable Debts

Following the consideration of the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director for Finance, Digital and Frontline Services containing exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), the Cabinet was **RESOLVED:**

1. To write-off the accounts to the appropriate Bad Debt Provision contained within the Council's accounts (if further information on any debt becomes available, payment will be pursued).

67 Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited - Annual General Meeting

Following the consideration of the report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services containing exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), the Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. That the current intention to continue the operation of Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited and Amgen Rhondda Limited

- (the 'Companies') as Local Authority controlled companies into the future is confirmed;
2. That subject to the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director – Finance, Digital and Frontline Services being satisfied that there are no irregularities in the accounts of the Companies that the accounts be received on behalf of the Council;
 3. That Azets Audit Services are appointed as auditors to the Companies for the year-ending 31st March 2024;
 4. That the Directorships of the Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services and Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services for both Companies continue;
 5. To note the continuation of the non-executive director position on the Board of the Companies through to the 2024 Annual General Meetings;
 6. That the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and/or his nominee be authorised to exercise the Council's vote at the Annual General Meetings of the Companies in accordance with recommendations 2(ii) to 2(iv) above; and
 7. That the Council be represented at the Companies' Annual General Meetings by a Cabinet Member.

This meeting closed at 12.48 pm

**Councillor A Morgan
Chair.**

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



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20th NOVEMBER 2023

THE COUNCIL'S REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25 –

EARLY BUDGET REDUCTION MEASURES

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR - FINANCE, DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CLLR A MORGAN

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 At its meeting on the 18th September 2023 the Cabinet received an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27.
- 1.2 Further updates were to be provided to Cabinet during the Autumn period 2023 as part of the budget setting process and this report provides Cabinet with an update on operational decisions and base budget reduction measures which have already been identified and the consequential financial implications which can now be factored into the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the operational changes and base budget reduction measures / updates which have been identified by the Senior Leadership Team and which can now be factored into next year's budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan; and
- 2.2 Note the 2024/25 budget and Council Tax setting timetable as attached at Appendix 2.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On the 18th September 2023, Cabinet received an update on the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27.
- 3.2 The report was also subsequently reported to full Council (20th September 2023) alongside a presentation on the Council’s reserves.
- 3.3 Cabinet noted the current position modelled and agreed to receive further updates in the autumn as part of the annual budget setting process.
- 3.4 The Senior Leadership Team have continued to prioritise work in preparation for next year’s budget setting process and have already identified and agreed a number of measures which can now be incorporated into next year’s budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 3.5 These actions have been determined as operational decisions which the Senior Leadership Team are authorised to implement. They are reported here for Cabinet to note.

4.0 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24 TO 2026/27

- 4.1 The Medium-Term Financial Plan sets out a range of scenarios alongside differing levels of Welsh Government (‘WG’) settlement levels. The base case, in line with WG’s indicative settlement level for next year (2024/25), results in a budget gap position as shown below.

Remaining Budget Gap at Welsh Government Settlement Levels				3 Year Budget Gap
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	
+3.1% increase for 2024/25, +2.0% increase for 2025/26 and +2.0% increase for 2026/27	35,005	26,897	23,498	85,400

- 4.2 The timing of the Local Government Settlement for 2024/25 will follow the UK Government Autumn Statement which is due to be announced on the 22nd November 2023. The Council is expecting to receive the Provisional Settlement from WG on the 20th December 2023.
- 4.3 The budget gap for 2024/25 is of course still assuming a level of settlement from WG based on their indicative level as provided

alongside this year's settlement. Any implications from the UK Government's budget plans and consequently WG's Local Government Settlement will be factored into the initial draft budget strategy when that is brought forward for Cabinet to consider during January 2024.

- 4.4 Work is also ongoing to affirm the Council's base budget requirements for next year, in light of updated financial information and modelling and alongside the most up to date financial position for this financial year as available in the quarter 2 Council Performance Report.

5.0 REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25 – EARLY BUDGET REDUCTION MEASURES

- 5.1 Within the context of a significant budget gap being forecast for 2024/25, the Senior Leadership Team has undertaken focused and priority work over the summer and early autumn months to identify measures which can be incorporated into the draft budget strategy. This work remains ongoing, however there are a number of operational budget reduction measures which have already been identified for implementation and which will have a consequential beneficial impact upon the budget gap position referenced above.
- 5.2 This report provides details of these for Cabinet's information and will provide some early assurance that this work is already beginning to have a positive impact. This is a position statement of work undertaken to date and work is ongoing in order to identify further options which can contribute toward closing the budget gap.
- 5.3 A summary of the early budget reduction measures is included in the table below, with further (service area) detail attached at Appendix 1.

Budget Reduction Category	£'000
General Efficiency Measures - cost reduction / additional income	2,153
General Efficiency Measures - non pay budget freeze and efficiency	2,000
General Efficiency Measures - Recharge of costs / use of external funding	930
General Efficiency Measures - service restructuring and vacancy management	1,637
Operational Service Reconfiguration	1,525
Grand Total	8,245

- 5.4 Of particular note would be the Operational Service Reconfiguration proposals. Whilst these have been properly determined as

operational decisions taken by the Senior Leadership Team, they are included here for completeness.

Operational Service Reconfiguration	£'000
Christmas Closure of Hawthorn and Ferndale Swimming Pools	2
Closure of daytime face-to-face box office function at RCT Theatres (equates to 16 hours per theatre per week)	30
Illuminated signs and bollards - convert to unlit	27
Leisure - Demand led targeted Review of Opening Hours (max 8 hour reduction per satellite centre, per week)	250
Libraries and One4All - Reconfiguration of services and standardisation / review of opening hours (min 40 hrs per week for the three Area Libraries and harmonisation of lunchtime opening across all Branch Libraries that will increase the total opening hours across Branch libraries)	236
Parks and Street Cleansing - Service Review, realignment of resources and delivery model	750
Reduce opening hours of Community Recycling Centre sites	100
Progress Community Asset Transfer of Llantwit Fardre Sports Centre	80
Street lighting - revision to maintenance arrangements	50
Total Operational Service Reconfiguration	1,525

5.5 It is also now possible to factor in a number of other base budget updates and adjustments which follow on from the successful delivery of the 2023/24 budget strategy. These include part year to full year adjustments in respect of changes to Waste Collections, Day Nursery provision and the Community Meals Service. We can also now include the anticipated additional income forecast to be received as a consequence of the updated Council Tax base relating to the premium chargeable on second homes (from 1st April 2024). In aggregate these updates reduce the budget gap by a further **£0.841M**.

5.6 The timetable for the budget setting process is also now set out at Appendix 2.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be completed as appropriate alongside any operational decision to ensure that the Council complies with the public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010, namely the Public Sector Equality Duty and Socio-Economic Duty.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report sets out a number of early measures which can be incorporated into the draft budget strategy for 2024/25. There are no specific Welsh Language implications.

8.0 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The proposed approach to budget consultation for the 2024/25 budget was set out and agreed by Cabinet on 23rd October 2023. It comprises 2 phases as follows:

Phase 1 - provide residents and stakeholders with the opportunity to feedback their views on some of the key strategic building blocks used to construct the Council's budget.

Phase 2 - once Cabinet agree the draft budget strategy, and in light of the provisional local government settlement, then this draft strategy will be consulted upon as part of Phase 2.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The early budget reduction measures and base budget updates as set out in this report (amounting to £9.086M) can now be factored into the draft budget strategy when it is brought forward for Cabinet's consideration during January 2024.
- 9.2 The implications of the Provisional Local Government Settlement for 2024/25 will also then be known.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS or LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The Council has a legal duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set a balanced budget and also a legal duty under the Local Government Act 2000 for it to be reported to and approved by Full Council. The construction of the draft 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy in line with the "Budget and Policy Framework", as set out in the Council's Constitution, will support compliance with the above legal requirements.



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

11.1 The draft budget strategy will be a key enabler for the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and in doing so will support wider partnership objectives and the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

12.0 CONCLUSION

12.1 This report sets out a number of early budget reduction measures and budget updates amounting to £9.086M which can now be factored into the budget requirement and draft budget strategy for 2024/25.

12.2 It also sets out the timetable for the agreement of the 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy, Council Tax Setting and the 3-year Capital Programme.

APPENDIX 1

EARLY BUDGET REDUCTION MEASURES	£'000
Education & Inclusion Services	385
General Efficiency Measures - cost reduction / additional income	290
General Efficiency Measures - Recharge of costs / use of external funding	96
Finance, Digital and Frontline	2,364
General Efficiency Measures - cost reduction / additional income	863
General Efficiency Measures - Recharge of costs / use of external funding	197
General Efficiency Measures - service restructuring and vacancy management	377
Operational Service Reconfiguration	927
Chief Exec's	1,370
General Efficiency Measures - cost reduction / additional income	9
General Efficiency Measures - Recharge of costs / use of external funding	480
General Efficiency Measures - service restructuring and vacancy management	881
Social Services	394
General Efficiency Measures - cost reduction / additional income	309
General Efficiency Measures - Recharge of costs / use of external funding	55
General Efficiency Measures - service restructuring and vacancy management	30
Public Health, Protection and Community Services	1,732
General Efficiency Measures - cost reduction / additional income	682
General Efficiency Measures - Recharge of costs / use of external funding	103
General Efficiency Measures - service restructuring and vacancy management	349
Operational Service Reconfiguration	598
Grand Total	6,245
General Efficiency Measures - non pay budget freeze and efficiency	2,000
GRAND TOTAL	8,245

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2024/25 BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING TIMETABLE

18th September 2023

Cabinet – Consider the Council's updated Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27

20th September 2023

Council – Consider the Council's updated Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27

23rd October 2023

Cabinet – Consider the approach to Budget Consultation for 2024/25

14th November to 19th December 2023

Consultation (Phase 1) – Budget Consultation Phase 1 (including Council Tax Reduction Scheme)

20th December 2023

Provisional Local Government Settlement - Receipt of provisional settlement figures further to WG Budget

17th January 2024

Council Meeting

- Consider the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25
- Provisional Local Government Settlement 2024/25

22nd January 2024

Cabinet Meeting – Consideration of draft Senior Leadership Team budget strategy options and for Cabinet to formulate their draft budget strategy, taking into account feedback from Phase 1 of the Budget Consultation process

23rd January 2024 to 5th February 2024

Consultation (Phase 2) – Consultation on the Cabinet's draft budget strategy

19th February 2024

Cabinet Meeting – To consider the feedback from the Phase 2 Consultation and to agree the Cabinet's final revenue budget strategy for recommending to Council (plus the Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27)

March 2024

Final Local Government Settlement – Receipt of final settlement figures

6th March 2024

Council Meeting – Cabinet to submit its 2024/25 Budget Strategy and Council Tax levels to Council

Council Decision :

- Approve the 2024/25 Revenue Budget
- Approve the 2024/25 Council Tax (including necessary formal Council Tax Resolution)
- Approve the 2024/25 to 2026/27 Capital Programme

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH NOVEMBER 2023

REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS, STREETCARE AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR ANDREW MORGAN OBE AND THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE (COUNCILLOR ANN CRIMMINGS)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's approval to initiate a consultation with interested parties and relevant stakeholders in respect of a proposed new Home to School Transport Policy as detailed in the report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet: -

- 2.1 Considers the information in the report in respect of the Council's current Home to School Transport Policy and a proposal to introduce a revised policy, together with the associated impact assessments appended to the report;
- 2.2 Initiates a consultation with interested parties and relevant stakeholders in respect of a proposed new Home to School Transport Policy, namely providing mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary school, secondary school and college transport in line with relevant statutory distance criteria, which would be implemented from the start of the 2025/2026 academic year;
- 2.3 Notes that under the proposed Home to School Transport Policy the discretionary elements of:
 - 2.3.1 allowing a learner to select their nearest suitable school in accordance with choice of English or Welsh Medium language or preferred religious denomination would continue; and
 - 2.3.2 providing pre-compulsory school age transport and post-16 transport would continue;

- 2.4 Notes that under the proposed Home to School Transport Policy the discretionary elements of Additional Learning Needs transport would not change; and
- 2.5 Subject to paragraph 2.2 above, agrees to receive a further report detailing the results and feedback from the consultation process, updated Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessments and any necessary further information in order for Cabinet to determine whether and, if so, how it wishes to progress with the proposed new Home to School Transport Policy.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council is facing significant financial challenges into the medium term and is considering a range of options to contribute to addressing the shortfall in funding.
- 3.2 To set out a proposal for consultation in respect of a new Home to School Transport Policy, that primarily maintains the current beneficent discretionary transport and providing mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary school, secondary school and college transport in line with relevant statutory distance criteria, which would be implemented from the start of the 2025/2026 academic year.
- 3.3 Should the proposed new Home to School Transport Policy be implemented the Council would continue to provide discretionary Home to School Transport provision beyond statutory requirements in a number of areas as outlined in the report.
- 3.4 To ensure that the process for progressing any proposal is undertaken efficiently and effectively and in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At its meeting on 18th September 2023 the Cabinet received an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27. This reported an estimated budget gap of £35.005M for 2024/25 financial year, rising to £85.4M (cumulatively) across the next 3 years. This follows the Council having balanced its largest ever budget gap for the current year, 2023/24.
- 4.2 Given the size of the budget gap and with a focus across the medium term, this report sets out an option to reduce the cost base with regard to the provision of Home to School transport.
- 4.3 The Council operates a very generous Home to School Transport policy which means it delivers the largest operation of its kind in Wales. The

Council currently provides Home to School transport for approximately 9,000 mainstream pupils, 960 Additional Learning Needs ('ALN') learners, and 2,300 College students each day, with approximately 9,000+ of these learners transported on a discretionary basis. This transport is provided through the provision of contracted coaches, minibuses, taxis, and public transport season tickets.

- 4.4 Many Councils have already modified their eligibility criteria. The Council now provides discretionary transport for more learners than almost every other Council's entire Home to School transport operations.
- 4.5 Since the Covid-19 pandemic and conflict in Ukraine bus operators have experienced significant increases in operational costs e.g. fuel, parts, wages etc. These costs have naturally impacted the viability of school bus routes and the affordability to operate them at pre-pandemic rates. As a result, the Council has uplifted its current contract rates significantly to match industry demand and continues to receive tender bids for new/replacement routes far above those received prior to March 2020.
- 4.6 In 2015 the Council reviewed its Home to School Transport Policy consulting widely on a proposal to amend it but ultimately determining in early 2016 not to proceed with its implementation. Whilst much has changed since that point in terms of the transport market generally, and availability of supply, the provisions of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 and associated Operational Guidance remain unchanged and this Council continues to provide well in excess of the statutory minimum requirements.
- 4.7 Indeed, the Council's Home to School Transport costs have increased from £8M in 2015 to over £15M for the 2023/24 financial year.
- 4.8 Factoring in the increasing costs this report provides details of a service change proposal for Cabinet's consideration.

5. **LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The Council has a number of statutory duties which are relevant to this policy which Members are reminded of, and have in their minds, prior to initiating any consultation and before taking any final decision(s) in respect of the implementation of any new Home to School Transport Policy. These are set out in detail below.

THE COUNCIL'S DUTIES UNDER THE LEARNER TRAVEL (WALES) MEASURE 2008

- 5.2 The Welsh Government's Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 (the 'Measure') sets out the current statutory duties of Local Authorities with regard to the provision of home to school transport. Statutory guidance is also provided by the Welsh Government in the Learner Travel

Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance – June 2014 (the ‘Guidance’). The Measure and the Guidance can be accessed by clicking on the following links: [Measure](#) / [Guidance](#).

- 5.3 Under the Measure the Council **must**:-
- Assess the travel needs of learners in its area
 - Provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age attending primary school who live 2 miles or further from their nearest suitable school
 - Provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age attending secondary school who live 3 miles or further from their nearest suitable school
 - Assess and meet the needs of “looked after” children in its area
 - Promote access to Welsh medium education
 - Promote sustainable modes of travel
- 5.4 The Council must therefore continue to meet these responsibilities in any future policy it adopts.
- 5.5 The Measure requires the Council to provide learners with free transport to their nearest suitable school if they ordinarily reside beyond a ‘safe’ walking distance to that school. The term “suitable school” applies to the catchment area English, Welsh or dual-language mainstream school or special school/class as appropriate. Where learners are not entitled to free transport the Council has the power to provide transport on a discretionary basis.
- 5.6 The definition of nearest “suitable school” is where the “education or training provided is suitable having regard for the age, ability and aptitudes of the learner and any learning difficulties he or she may have”.
- 5.7 The walking distance is measured by the shortest available route. The Guidance states that, “a route is considered to be ‘available’ if it is safe (as far as reasonably practicable) for a learner without a disability or learning difficulty to walk the route alone or with an accompanying adult if the learner’s age and levels of understanding requires this.” If a route is not ‘available’ then a learner is entitled to free transport to their nearest suitable school even though the distance from home to school is less than the distance limit that applies to his/her age.
- 5.8 Assessing the travel needs of learners does not mean providing free transport. Learners will only qualify for free transport provision if they meet the entitlement criteria. Whilst the Council is required to assess the travel needs of all learners under the age of 19 there is currently no legal duty to provide free or assisted transport arrangements for non-compulsory school age children (up to the term in which a child turns 5 or post 16 learners).
- 5.9 Parents and learners may express a preference for a particular school/ a particular type of language provision or Faith school, but the Measure

does not confer on those parents and learners any rights to free transport to their preferred school and or location, unless that school is determined by the Council to be the learner's nearest suitable school and the learner meets the distance criteria. Members should note particularly however the position in relation to Welsh medium education as outlined in paragraphs 5.17 – 5.20 below.

- 5.10 The Council is also required to have regard to:-
- The needs of disabled learners and learners with learning difficulties
 - Any particular needs of learners who are 'looked after' or formerly looked after by the Council
 - The age of a learner
 - The nature of the route that the learner is expected to take between home and the places where they receive education or training.
- 5.11 In assessing the travel needs of learners the Council must take into account the fact that the travel arrangements they make in light of the assessment must not cause unreasonable levels of stress, take an unreasonable amount of time or be unsafe.
- 5.12 When exercising functions under the Measure the Council is **not** required to take account of extra-curricular activities, breakfast or after-school clubs when assessing learner travel needs.
- 5.13 If a learner cannot be admitted to their nearest suitable school which results in the learner having to attend the next available nearest suitable school, the Council has the same duty to provide free transport as long as they meet the agreed distance criteria.
- 5.14 Free transport for learners who attend special schools, pupil referral units and learning support classes is provided in accordance with the Council's agreed policy on walking distance and safe routes (as set out above) and must be supported by appropriate evidence and be confirmed by the Council's Access and Inclusion ALN Panel. Learners with disabilities (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) may be entitled to assistance with transport from home to an appropriate school/college even though the Council's agreed criteria on safe walking distance (as set out above) are not met.
- 5.15 There is no statutory duty for the Council to provide free transport to post 16 learners who continue their studies in mainstream further education or training. There is no statutory duty to provide free transport to a learner with a disability or learning difficulty in post-16 further education or training. Although in assessing learner travel needs the Council "must have regard in particular" to the needs of learners who are disabled or with learning difficulties.

Power To Provide Discretionary Provision

- 5.16 The Measure provides the Council with the power to provide discretionary transport arrangements for non-compulsory school age children.
- 5.17 When deciding which schools are most suitable for learners in its area, the Council and Welsh Ministers have a duty under the Measure to ‘promote access to education and training through the medium of Welsh’.
- 5.18 The Council has the power to provide discretionary transport arrangements for learners who are not attending their nearest suitable school because of language preference.
- 5.19 The Council has to make it clear in its Home to School Transport Policy (which is contained in the annual Starting School Booklet) its arrangements for providing free or assisted travel to schools teaching through the medium of Welsh or English.
- 5.20 Preference for either language should be treated equally. The Council must also take into account its [Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027](#) and [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022 – 2032 \(WESP\)](#). The WESP sets out the ten-year plan for the planning and improvement of provision of Welsh Medium and Welsh Language education.
- 5.21 A learner is entitled to free transport to a denominational/Faith school if that school is considered by the Council to be the learners nearest suitable school. However, the Measure also provides the Council with the power to provide discretionary transport arrangements for learners who are not attending their nearest suitable school because of denominational preference.
- 5.22 The Council is also required to make clear in its Home to School Transport Policy its arrangements for providing free or assisted travel to denominational schools.
- 5.23 If the Council does make use of its discretionary powers, it must ensure that the policy applies to all learners in similar circumstances living in that Council’s area. The Council should ensure that any policy is fair, reasonable and complies with relevant equality legislation to ensure it does not discriminate unlawfully between learners when using their discretionary powers.

Charging for Transport

- 5.24 The Council may not charge for transport arrangements that it is *required* to make for learners of compulsory school age (i.e. the statutory requirement to provide free home to school transport), except in relation

to looked after children where the Council makes travel arrangements for a child who is looked after by another authority (where a charge may be made to another authority).

- 5.25 However when the Council uses its Section 6 powers under the Measure to provide discretionary travel arrangements for learners not entitled to free transport provision, a charge can currently be made for these arrangements.
- 5.26 In 2015 the Council consulted on a proposal to continue to provide transport at current discretionary distances but introduce a means tested charge for all pupils living beyond the statutory distances and who choose to travel on Council funded school transport to their catchment or nearest suitable school or college. The Council ultimately decided not to amend its Home to School Transport Policy at that time.
- 5.27 The Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) of 2000 and 2005 apply to all new public service vehicles (buses or coaches) that:
- Have been introduced since 31 December 2000
 - Have a capacity exceeding 22 passengers; and
 - Are used to provide a local or scheduled service.
- 5.28 PSVAR applies in England, Scotland and Wales and are the responsibility of the UK Government Department for Transport. Requirements under the regulations have been introduced in phases. The final requirement from the PSVAR was implemented on 1 January 2020. This requirement means that any coach used on a scheduled service from that date must provide wheelchair access. The PSVAR apply only to public service vehicles. A vehicle that is not a public service vehicle (that is, one that is not operated on a commercial basis for hire and reward) is outside the scope of the PSVAR.
- 5.29 The PSVAR apply to transport for learners provided by Local Authorities on a discretionary basis where the Local Authorities collect a fee from the learner (i.e make a charge or sell surplus seats). The regulations do not include transport that Local Authorities provides. In some areas, as a consequence of PSVAR, some fare paying schools buses have been withdrawn.
- 5.30 Medium-term exemptions to the PSVAR have been introduced by the UK Government in respect of in-scope home-to-school services. Those exemptions came into force on 1 July 2023 but expire on 31 July 2026. The grant of such exemptions will require the operator concerned to progressively increase the compliance rate among its vehicles that are available for in-scope home to school transport services. All must be what the UK Government describes as “either fully or partially compliant with PSVAR” by 1 August 2025.

- 5.31 There is currently a significant shortfall in the number of buses that meet the PSVAR requirements within the marketplace. Due to the additional time required to operate scheduled school bus routes, and the geographical restrictions along these routes e.g. a bus with wheelchair lift requires a road to be flat without incline, it is also not practical to operate such vehicles on school contract routes.
- 5.32 As a result of the above the option of charging for transport under the statutory distance has not been proposed as a viable option.

Education Act 1996

- 5.33 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 creates the offence on the part of a parent of failing to secure the regular attendance at school of a registered pupil. Section 20 of the Measure amends Section 444 to provide that a parent will have a defence to a prosecution if a local authority has failed to discharge, where required, their statutory duties under the Measure to make travel arrangements to facilitate the attendance of their child at school.

Active Travel

- 5.34 The Council needs to have due regard to the Welsh Government's Active Travel Action Plan for Wales and the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. The action plan aims to address congestion and encourage people to walk and cycle more often. The Welsh Government estimates that one in five cars on the road at 8:50am on a weekday is doing the school run. Congestion in towns is therefore a serious issue. The Action Plan sets out the actions that the Welsh Government and its partners will take to encourage more people to walk and cycle for more journeys. It is hoped that this will not only improve the health of our young people, but also improve the health and well-being of those who live and work in the area.

6. CURRENT POLICY

- 6.1 The Council currently provides Home to School transport for approximately 9,000 mainstream pupils and 2,300 College students¹ each day through the provision of more than 193 routes. This transport is provided through the provision of contracted coaches, minibuses, and public transport season tickets.
- 6.2 The following table demonstrates how the Council schedules its contracted mainstream/college bus transport provision to ensure the most efficient use of available resources.

¹ As at September 2023

Number of learners carried by contracted bus	9,528
Number of school/college bus routes	193
Number of buses in operation	168
Average number of learners per route	49
Overall % of vehicle capacity utilised	81%
Number of learners carried by public transport	1,750

- 6.3 The Home to School transport budget for 2023/24 is £15m.
- 6.4 The Council's Learner Travel Policy is contained in its annual Starting School Booklet.
- 6.5 The Council is currently exercising its discretionary powers (referred to in paragraphs 5.16 - 5.23 above) under the provisions of the Measure to make a more generous provision to learners. The comparison to the statutory requirements is shown below: -

Age during Academic Year	User	Statutory Requirement to Provide Transport Free	RCT Provision (as at November 2023)
3 – End of term in which child turns 5	Non-compulsory school age	No statutory provision (although duty to assess needs)	Free transport for pupils attending full time in line with the Council's admission arrangements if reside 1.5 miles or further safe walking distance to their catchment or nearest suitable school
Term following 5 th Birthday – 11	Learner receiving compulsory primary education (English or Welsh Medium & SEN)	Reside 2 miles or further safe walking distance to their nearest suitable school	Free transport if reside 1.5 miles or further safe walking distance to their catchment or nearest suitable school
12 – 16	Learner receiving compulsory secondary education (English or Welsh Medium & SEN)	Reside 3 miles or further safe walking distance to their nearest suitable school	Free transport if reside 2 miles or further safe walking distance to their catchment or nearest suitable school
16+	Post-16 learners	No statutory provision (although duty to assess needs)	Free transport if reside 2 miles or further safe walking distance to their nearest suitable school or college at which the approved course of study they wish to follow is offered (full time attendance) – for 2 years after the end of compulsory education (or 3

Age during Academic Year	User	Statutory Requirement to Provide Transport	RCT Provision (as at November 2023)
			years for those who have reached 19 but started a course when under 19 and continue to attend that course).
3 – 19	Learners selecting a school in accordance with their preferred religious denomination	No statutory provision – Measure does not require provision where learner selects a school that is not the nearest ‘suitable school’ (as the definition does not include voluntary aided (Faith) mainstream schools).	Allows learner to select their nearest ‘suitable school’ in accordance with their preferred religious denomination Therefore distance provisions above apply
3 – 19	Learners selecting a Welsh Medium School	Statutory provision is an issue of interpretation – Measure does not require provision where learner selects a school that is not the nearest ‘suitable school’.	Allows learner to select their nearest ‘suitable school’ in accordance with choice of English or Welsh Medium language. Therefore distance provisions above apply.

6.6 Based on a review of all Welsh local authorities, the provision at Rhondda Cynon Taf compares favorably, and is in many cases, more generous than in other parts of Wales. The table in Appendix 1 to the report summarises an analysis of Home to School Transport provision using available information contained in each authority's starting school booklets for 2023/24 (note policies may have been subsequently updated and relevant information has been provided in this regard where possible). It is noted that 18 councils in Wales currently provide Home to School Transport in line with the statutory distance requirements.

7. REVIEW OF SERVICE PROVISION - OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 Three options have been considered as part of this review².

A. **Status Quo** i.e. Retain the current level of provision resulting in £nil savings.

² Savings figures based on pupil numbers and service usage as at September 2023

B. Provide mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport in line with statutory distance criteria.

Transport for all primary school pupils living between current discretionary distance of 1.5 miles and statutory distance of 2 miles would no longer be provided. Free transport for pupils living further than 2 miles away would continue, including where pupils attend Welsh or Faith schools because of parental/carer/learner preference.

Transport for all secondary school pupils living between current discretionary distance of 2 miles and statutory distance of 3 miles would no longer be provided. Free transport for pupils living further than 3 miles away would continue, including where pupils attend Welsh or Faith schools because of parental/carer/learner preference.

This option has the potential to deliver savings of approximately £2.5m in a full year.

C. Removal of all discretionary provision.

In this option transport would no longer be provided for:

- i. Primary school pupils of compulsory school age attending an English medium school living between current discretionary distance of 1.5 miles and statutory distance of 2 miles;
- ii. Secondary school pupils of compulsory school age attending an English medium school living between current discretionary distance of 2 miles and statutory distance of 3 miles;
- iii. Pupils below compulsory school age;
- iv. Post 16 pupils;
- v. All Primary and Secondary school pupils attending a Welsh Medium or Faith school, except where it is the nearest suitable school and is more than the statutory safe walking distance away.

This option has the potential to deliver savings of approximately £6.9m in a full year.

7.2 An analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each option, including the impact on pupil numbers as at September 2023, is shown at Appendix 2 to this report.

7.3 The proposed preferred option is B – Provide mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport in

line with statutory distance criteria. It is proposed that this policy would be implemented from the start of the 2025/2026 academic year.

- 7.4 Option B would deliver a financial saving whilst maintaining all other elements of discretionary provision. It would also assist in addressing increasing concerns about market stability in respect of Home to School transport provision. It is anticipated that it would also encourage more pupils onto public transport which would help sustain public transport services, albeit it is acknowledged that for younger pupils there may be safeguarding concerns. Furthermore, with the electrification of valley lines and improved frequency of services via the South Wales Metro, pupils will have access to improved rail services and integrated public transport network. Clearly however it will mean approximately 2,750 pupils no longer receiving access to free Home to School transport. From an educational perspective, this raises potential issues in respect of pupil attendance and learner engagement in education should the Council's policy be amended in this way. This is a potential risk given the strong correlation between learner attendance and outcomes, and the continued impact of the pandemic on attendance rates at a local, regional, and national level.
- 7.5 Option B would mean the Council continuing to meet the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, with 18 of the 22 Council's in Wales already adopting the statutory distance requirements.
- 7.6 If implemented this option would deliver savings of £2.5m per year, which would be fully realised in the 2026/27 financial year. The part-year savings for 2025/26 would be £1.4m.

8. PROPOSED NEW HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

- 8.1 Whilst the Council has chosen to make use of its powers to provide discretionary transport arrangements, it also has the power to remove this provision at a later date.
- 8.2 In doing so the Council should follow the correct procedures in line with its relevant policy protocols.
- 8.3 If the Council does decide to change or remove the discretionary transport provision it provides, it must publish the information before 1 October of the year preceding the academic year in which the changes will come into force.
- 8.4 Therefore, subject to the proposed consultation and thereafter Cabinet determining how it wishes to progress with the proposed new Home to School Transport Policy, it is proposed that the new policy would be implemented from the start of the 2025 - 2026 academic year and published prior to 1st October 2024.

8.5 Should Cabinet determine to progress with the proposed new Home to School Transport Policy, it would be proposed that the Council's current discretionary distance eligibility criteria for Home to School transport, as set out in the table at paragraph 6.5 above, be amended in line with the Welsh Government statutory distance eligibility criteria. The overall provision would be as set out in the table below:

Age during Academic Year	User	Statutory Requirement to Provide Transport	to Free Provision from September 2025
3 – End of term in which child turns 5	Non-compulsory school age, learner selecting education through English or Welsh medium.	No statutory provision (although duty to assess needs)	Continue to provide transport for pupils that reside 2 miles safe walking distance to their catchment or nearest suitable school, at the beginning and end of the normal school day and not at lunchtimes
Term following 5 th Birthday – 11	Learner receiving compulsory primary education, learner selecting education through English or Welsh medium.	Reside 2 miles or further safe walking distance to their nearest suitable school	Reside 2 miles or further safe walking distance to their nearest suitable school
12 – 16	Learner receiving compulsory secondary education, learner selecting education through English or Welsh medium.	Reside 3 miles or further safe walking distance to their nearest suitable school	Reside 3 miles or further safe walking distance to their nearest suitable school
16+	Post-16 learners, learner selecting education through English or Welsh medium.	No statutory provision (although duty to assess needs)	Continue to provide transport for pupils that reside 3 miles or further safe walking distance to their nearest suitable school or college.
3 - 19	Learners selecting a school in accordance with their preferred religious denomination	No statutory provision – Measure does not require provision where learner selects a school that is not the nearest 'suitable school' (as the definition does not include voluntary aided (Faith) mainstream schools).	Continue to provide transport for pupils that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reside 2 miles or further safe walking distance to their nearest suitable school for 3-11 year olds (primary) attending full time in line with the Council's admission arrangements. • Reside 3 miles or further safe walking distance to their nearest suitable

Age during Academic Year	User	Statutory Requirement to Provide Transport to Free	Proposed changes to RCT Mainstream Transport Provision from September 2025
			school for 11-19 year olds (secondary).

8.6 The Council would continue to provide all other areas of its discretionary transport provision in excess of the current minimum Welsh Government statutory requirement, as demonstrated in the table below:

Service Provision	WG Statutory Policy	RCTCBC Proposed Policy
Primary School Distance > 2 miles	✓	✓
Secondary School Distance > 3 miles	✓	✓
Pre-compulsory School Age < 5 years	✗	✓
Transport to nearest suitable Faith School (Primary and Secondary)	✗	✓
Transport to nearest suitable Welsh Medium School (Primary and Secondary)	✗	✓
Post 16 Education Transport (6 th form or College)	✗	✓

8.7 Learners will continue to be able to select their nearest 'suitable school' in accordance with choice of English or Welsh Medium language or preferred religious denomination.

8.8 The same age and distance criteria apply to children looked after as to children who are not looked after. If the Council determines that a child looked after should attend a school other than the nearest suitable school, then transport will be provided upon request by the child's social worker in accordance with the Council's agreed policy on walking distance and safe routes.

- 8.9 Pupils living beyond statutory distances attending their nearest or catchment school by choice of language would continue to have the benefit of free transport.
- 8.10 Whilst pupils with additional learning needs/disabilities receiving education at their catchment or nearest special school, pupil referral unit or learning support are assessed by distance criteria, in practice these pupils would not be affected by this proposed policy change as their transport is based upon their individual need.
- 8.11 The Council is aware that Welsh Government are in the process of reviewing the Guidance, however it is unclear what, if any, changes will be made. The Council will review any revisions to the Guidance, as and when issued, and consider accordingly.

9. THE COUNCIL'S DUTY IN RESPECT OF CHILDREN IN NEED

- 9.1 It is the duty of the Council under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 ('the 1989 Act') to (a) safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and (b) so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.
- 9.2 For the purposes of the 1989 Act "children in need" are defined as follows:
- "A child shall be taken to be in need if-
- (a) He/She is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him/her of services by a local Council;
 - (b) His/Her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him/her of such services, or
 - (c) He/She is disabled."
- 9.3 The care needs of individual families with children in need will inevitably be affected by their particular circumstances at any given point in time and by the particular local services available to them at that point. The Council works with these individual families to identify the specific needs of any child determined to be in need at that point in time.
- 9.4 If Cabinet decides to initiate a consultation on the proposal, officers would identify any particular requirements of children in need, so that they can be taken into account prior to any final decision being taken.

10. CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT

- 10.1 Section 9 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on local authorities to have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parent, however this is 'in so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and with the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure'.
- 10.2 Due to the financial pressures the Council is currently facing it is considered that changes to its current Home to School Transport Policy, to align transport provision more closely with Welsh Government statutory transport requirements are necessary for the Council to: -
- maintain affordability within future financial constraints;
 - continue to be able to meet its statutory requirements; and
 - maintain discretionary transport for its most vulnerable users (e.g., ALN pupils).
- 10.3 A proposed new Home to School Transport Policy has been developed and the proposed changes to existing policy are outlined in paragraph 8 of this report.
- 10.4 The proposed new policy has taken into account current budget pressures. The Council is not alone in facing these challenges, nor in having to consider such reviews of discretionary areas of current provision.
- 10.5 Subject to the agreement of the recommendation in paragraph 2.2 above, there is a duty on the Council to consult with pupils, parents/carers, transport providers, key stakeholders and interested parties who are likely to be affected by the proposal. The consultation must take place whilst the proposals are at their formative stage. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee would also be a consultee in respect of the proposal.
- 10.6 The Council must provide the consultees with sufficient information to enable them properly to understand the proposal being consulted upon and to express a view in relation to it. The information must be accurate, clear and concise.
- 10.7 Consultees must be given adequate time to consider the proposal and to respond. It is proposed that consultation would run for a period of 6 weeks. Subject to Cabinet approval, it would commence on 27th November 2023 (subject to the Council's call-in provisions) and end on the 8th of January 2024.
- 10.8 The results of any consultation (together with appropriate impact assessments and any necessary further information) would be reported back to Cabinet in order for it to determine whether, and if so, how it wishes to progress with implementation of the proposed new policy.

11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY)

11.1 Cabinet Members will be fully aware and mindful of the general equality duty introduced by the Equality Act 2010 and the specific public sector equality duties applicable to the Council as a local authority in Wales.

11.2 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Single Equality Duty) requires public authorities to demonstrate in decision making that they have paid 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Council must have due regard to the impact of any of the proposals on those with a protected characteristic. The Council has a specific duty to publish information to demonstrate how they have paid due regard to the aims above as part of their decision making. Undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment ('EqIA') would be evidence that the Council has considered its legal obligations in making the decision on the recommendations in this report.

11.3 An EqIA has been prepared and is attached in Appendix 3 to the report. Subject to paragraph 2.2 above, the EqIA would be published on the Council's website, together with a consultation document that outlines the proposal in further detail and in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010. The EqIA would then be updated post any consultation utilising the feedback received and any additional data to assist Cabinet in reaching any final decisions on the proposal.

11.4 The initial EqIA exercise has found that there is one negative and eight neutral equality and diversity implications associated with this report. These risks could be mitigated by a range of actions as detailed in the impact assessment.

11.5 Under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 the Council must: -

- (a) prepare and publish a strategy for contributing to the eradication of child poverty which the Council has done through the adoption of the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-being Plan 2023-2028](#); and

- (b) take all reasonable steps to perform the actions and functions set out in the strategy for the eradication of child poverty. The actions and functions, and the steps the Council has taken and will take to perform them, are again set out in the Well-being Plan.
- 11.6 It is a priority of the Council, and its partner organisations of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board, to engage with families who have any additional needs as early as possible to support them to make the most of family life and reach their full potential. If Cabinet decides to initiate a consultation on the proposal, further consideration of the effect of the proposal for issues of child poverty and social deprivation will be considered (whether as part of the Council's EqIA, or otherwise).
- 11.7 The Council has also used as a basis for developing its priority of ensuring that the future generations of Rhondda Cynon Taf live in a safe, healthy and prosperous County Borough the shared set of rights for children and young people set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child. A link to a summary of these rights is provided below: -

[Summary of United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child](#)

12. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Members will be aware that the Welsh language has official status in Wales which means that the Welsh language should not be treated less favourably than the English language in Wales.
- 12.2 The Council must also promote access to education and training through the medium of the Welsh language when exercising the functions under the Measure.
- 12.3 The Council must also take into account its [Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027](#) and [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022 – 2032](#) (WESP). The WESP sets out the ten-year plan for the planning and improvement of provision of Welsh Medium and Welsh Language education.
- 12.4 Under the Measure, when deciding which schools are most suitable for learners in its area, the Council has a duty to promote access to education and training through the medium of Welsh.
- 12.5 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 4 to the report. This will be published on the Council's website together with a consultation document that outlines the proposal in further detail and in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.
- 12.6 The initial WLIA exercise has identified that there is a possibility of impacts on the Welsh language in respect of this proposal. There is a

potential that the additional walking distance from home to school may discourage parents from putting their children into Welsh medium schools, in favour of nearer English medium catchment schools, with a greater risk at the primary school level. It should be noted however that under the proposal the Council would, as part of its discretionary provision, still allow a learner to select their nearest 'suitable school' in accordance with choice of language. On this basis there might be potential for growth in Welsh Medium demand where pupils live over 2 miles (in the case of primary school pupils) or 3 miles (in the case of secondary school pupils) from their nearest suitable Welsh Medium school who would be entitled to free transport.

- 12.7 Should Cabinet agree to initiate a consultation in respect of the proposal the WLIA would be updated using the feedback received together with any additional data/information to further assess the impact on the Welsh language and assist Cabinet in reaching any final decisions on the proposal.

13. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The cost to the Council of delivering its current Home to School Transport Policy amounts to £15M per year. Of this, the cost of delivering the discretionary provision, that is, at levels above that required by the Measure amounts to £6.9M.
- 13.2 The proposed option to be consulted on maintains all other elements of discretionary provision other than the statutory distance requirements. It would deliver savings amounting to £2.5M in a full year, meaning the Council would continue to provide discretionary provision amounting to £4.4M per year.
- 13.3 Subject to consultation, and the consequent decision of Cabinet, the proposal would be implemented from September 2025, with £1.4M being realised in financial year 2025/26, with the full year saving of £2.5M then being realised from financial year 2026/27.
- 13.4 This is within the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, currently forecasting a budget gap of £85.4M to financial year 2026/27.

14. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS & LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 14.1 The legal implications and relevant legislation in respect of the proposal are set out in the main body of the report.

15. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN, NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

15.1 The delivery of Home to School transport services support and promote the Council's Corporate Plan priorities for People – are independent, healthy, and successful; Places – where people are proud to live, work and play; and Prosperity – creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper.

15.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. To make sure we are all working towards the same purpose, the Act puts in place seven well-being goals on the Council:

- A prosperous Wales;
- A resilient Wales;
- A healthier Wales;
- A more equal Wales;
- A Wales of cohesive communities;
- A Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh Language;
- A globally responsible Wales.

15.3 The Act imposes a duty on all public bodies in Wales to carry out "sustainable development", defined as being "the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the wellbeing goals."

15.4 The Act sets out five ways of working needed for the Council to achieve the seven well-being goals, these being:

- The importance of balancing short term needs with the needs to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs;
- Considering how the Council's objectives impact upon each of the well-being goals listed above;
- The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the Council services;
- Acting in collaboration with other persons and organisations that could help the Council meet its well-being objectives; and
- Acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse.

15.5 The potential health and environmental implications associated with implementing the recommendations set out in this report support the Well-being Plan of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board, the declaration by the Welsh Government of a Climate Emergency and the Council's own Corporate and Air Quality Action Plans. One of the

objectives of the Corporate Plan is to “encourage our residents to be more active and healthy”.

- 15.6 The Air Quality Action Plan is aimed at tackling pollution at locations within the County Borough which currently exceed national guidelines. School transport bus fleets are contracted from operators, mainly local SMEs based in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Fleet profiles are generally older than public transport fleets and they are typically in their final stage of usage – i.e., their primary purpose has ceased and they have been converted for schools use.
- 15.7 Their daily mileage is low, they all have diesel engines, and therefore they represent a huge challenge for carbon reduction. The Council has worked with the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority (CCRTA) to commission a study on decarbonising school transport. It shows that there is no business case to replace these vehicles with new ultra-low emission coaches and it will be some time before the market generates second hand vehicles. Retrofitting options may evolve in the short-medium term.
- 15.8 Reducing the number of school buses in operation each day would assist with the implementation of the Council’s Corporate and Air Quality Action Plans. However, by extension, the use of private vehicles by parents / grandparents to transport pupils to school due to the reduction in number of school buses, may lead to additional cars on the network, which in turn, may off-set some of the associated air quality gains.
- 15.9 One of the objectives in the Well-being Plan is to “help people live long and healthy lives and overcome any challenges”. A recent Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board report on childhood obesity has found that the combined Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil area has the highest rate in Wales at 14.6%. It is possible that the policy change proposal would have an impact on obesity in a positive way, as it would lead to more pupils walking to school.

16. CONCLUSION

- 16.1 Section 9 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on local authorities to have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parent, however this is ‘in so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and with the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure’.
- 16.2 Due to the financial pressures the Council is currently facing it is considered that changes to current Home to School Transport Policy to align transport provision more closely with Welsh Government statutory transport requirements are necessary for the Council to: -
- maintain affordability within future financial constraints;

- continue to be able to meet its statutory requirements; and
 - maintain discretionary transport for its most vulnerable users (i.e. ALN pupils).
- 16.3 A proposed new Home to School Transport Policy has been developed. The proposed changes to existing policy are outlined in this report.
- 16.4 The proposed new policy has taken into account current budget pressures. The Council is not alone in facing these challenges, nor in having to consider such reviews of discretionary areas of current provision.
- 16.5 Cabinet is requested to consider the information presented in this report, together with the associated impact assessments, and determine whether or not to initiate a consultation on the preferred option as detailed herein.
- 16.6 If Cabinet does initiate a consultation on any proposal to amend its current Home to School Transport Policy, a further report would be presented to Cabinet setting out the results of the consultation exercise, updated impact assessments and any other relevant information relating to the proposal in order for Cabinet to determine whether or not, and if so how, it wishes to proceed with implementation of any new Home to School Transport Policy.

Other Information:-
Relevant Scrutiny Committee-

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Cross-cutting themes)

APPENDIX 1
HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT PROVISION - ALL WALES PICTURE

Analysis of Home to School Provision in Other Welsh Local Authorities						
Authority	Nursery/ Reception (Age 3 - 5)	Primary Provision (Age 5 – 11)	Secondary Provision (Age 11– 16)	Post-16 (Age 16+)	Faith School Provision (Age 3 – 19)	Welsh Medium Provision (Age 3 – 19)
RCT – Current Provision	>1.5 miles to catchment area school or the nearest school.	>1.5 miles to catchment area school or the nearest school.	>2 miles to catchment area school or the nearest school.	>2 Miles to catchment school / college or nearest place providing course.	Same as Primary & Secondary	Same as Primary & Secondary
Blaenau Gwent	>1.5 miles to catchment area school or the nearest school. No provision for Nursery	>1.5 miles for Infants to catchment area school or the nearest school. >2 miles for Primary to catchment area school or the nearest school.	>2 miles to catchment area school or the nearest school.	No direct provision but £150 grant provided. College subsidises local bus route for pupils at £2 per day (plus £150)	Same as Primary & Secondary. Post 16 allowed to travel at no cost if continuing education at same school	Same as Primary & Secondary. Post 16 allowed to travel at no cost if continuing education at same school

Bridgend	>2 miles to local catchment area school. (Nursery provision remains 1.5 miles)	>2 miles to local catchment area school.	>3 miles to local catchment area school.	>3 Miles to catchment school / college or nearest place providing course.	Same distances as Primary & Secondary.	Same distances as Primary & Secondary (in County schools only).
Caerphilly	No Provision	>1.5 miles to catchment area school or the nearest school.	>2 miles to catchment area school or the nearest school.	>2 Miles to catchment school / college or nearest place providing course.	Same distances as Primary & Secondary.	Same distances as Primary & Secondary.
Cardiff	No Provision	>2 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	No Provision.	Same distances as Primary & Secondary.	Same distances as Primary & Secondary.
Carmarthenshire	No Provision	>2 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 Miles to catchment school / college or nearest place providing course.	Same as Primary & Secondary	Same as Primary & Secondary

Ceredigion	No Provision	>2 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 Miles to catchment school / college or nearest place providing course.	Same as Primary & Secondary	Same as Primary & Secondary
Conwy	No Provision	>2 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 Miles to catchment school / college or nearest place providing course.	Same as Primary & Secondary	Same as Primary & Secondary
Denbighshire	No Provision	>2 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 Miles to catchment school / college or nearest place providing course.	Same as Primary & Secondary	Same as Primary & Secondary
Flintshire	>2 miles No provision for Nursery	>2 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 miles Only to nearest named place of education	Same as Primary & Secondary. Must prove faith to qualify	Same as Primary & Secondary

Gwynedd	>2 miles No provision for Nursery.	>2 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 miles Only to nearest named place of education.	Same as Primary & Secondary.	Same as Primary & Secondary.
Merthyr Tydfil	>2 miles to nearest or designated catchment area school.	>2 miles to nearest or designated catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest or designated catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest or designated catchment area school.	Same distances as Primary & Secondary.	Same distances as Primary & Secondary.
Monmouthshire	>1.5 miles to nearest suitable or designated school. No provision for Nursery	>1.5 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	>2 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	No Provision	Same as Primary & Secondary.	Same as Primary & Secondary.
Neath Port Talbot	No Provision	>2 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	>3 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	Provided for students >3 miles at a charge of £100 pa.	Same distances as Primary & Secondary.	Same distances as Primary & Secondary.
Newport	No provision	>2 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	>3 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	No transport provided but £150 grant provided.	Same as Primary & Secondary.	Same as Primary & Secondary.

Pembrokeshire	No Provision	>2 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest appropriate catchment area school.	>3 Miles to catchment school / college or nearest place providing course.	Same as Primary & Secondary	Same as Primary & Secondary
Powys	>2 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	>2 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	>3 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	>3 miles to nearest suitable or designated school / college.	Same as Primary & Secondary.	Same as Primary & Secondary.
Swansea	No provision	>2 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	>3 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	>3 miles to nearest suitable or designated school / college.	Same as Primary & Secondary.	Same as Primary & Secondary.
Torfaen	>2 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	>2 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	>3 miles to nearest suitable or designated school.	>3 miles to nearest suitable or designated school. Provision will either be in the form of a Travel Grant (currently £48.00 per term) or a bus pass.	Same as Primary & Secondary if child adheres to faith of school in question.	Same as Primary & Secondary.

Vale of Glamorgan	No Provision.	>2 miles to nearest or designated catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest or designated catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest or designated catchment area school.	Same as Primary & Secondary.	Same as Primary & Secondary.
Wrexham	No provision	>2 miles to nearest or designated catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest or designated catchment area school.	No Provision.	Same as Primary & Secondary.	Same as Primary & Secondary.
Ynys Mon	No provision	>2 miles to nearest or designated catchment area school.	>3 miles to nearest or designated catchment area school.	No Provision.	Same as Primary & Secondary.	Same as Primary & Secondary.
Current provision information taken from the 'Starting School Booklet' for each Authority for the 2023/24 academic year or their current Home to School Transport policies.						

APPENDIX 2

ANALYSIS OF ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF OPTIONS

Option		Advantages	Disadvantages	Recommended Option?
A	Status Quo i.e. retain existing service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Would retain provision for approximately 11,300 pupils. ○ Meets the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) measure 2008 in relation to promotion of access to Welsh medium education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The total level of discretionary transport costs the Authority £6.9M per year. 	<p>Not proposed as the costs of discretionary provision as currently provided are considered to be unaffordable.</p> <p>Current provision is in excess of statutory requirements.</p>

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages	Recommended Option?
<p>B Provide mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport above statutory distance only.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Could encourage pupils/parents to walk to school – Health and environmental benefits. ○ Meets the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) measure 2008 in relation to promotion of access to Welsh medium education. ○ Policy applies to all students above the statutory distances. ○ Potential to deliver a saving of approximately £2.5m in a full year. ○ Policy would continue to offer transport on a discretionary basis to 6,000+ learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased congestion on roads if pupils transported by car. ○ Potential impact on local bus companies. ○ Potential challenges on “available” routes. ○ Will affect 336 primary school pupils and 2,362 secondary school and college pupils. ○ Potential negative impact on school attendance, learner engagement in education and outcomes. ○ Potential impact on low income families who would not have the financial means to transport their children to school. ○ Potential impact on the number of learners accessing Faith and Welsh medium education. 	<p>Yes, Proposed Preferred Option</p> <p>This option would continue to offer transport in excess of the statutory minimum and provides an equitable service for learners in English, Welsh, and Faith School education.</p> <p>It meets the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) measure 2008 including in relation to the promotion of access to Welsh medium education.</p> <p>18 of the 22 Council’s in Wales already adopting the statutory distance walking policy.</p> <p>If implemented this option would deliver savings of £2.5m per year, which would be fully realised in the 2026/27 financial year. The part-year savings for 2025/26 would be £1.4m.</p>

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages	Recommended Option?
<p>C Removal of all discretionary provision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equality of provision to all pupils, in line with statutory requirements. ○ Could encourage pupils/parents to walk to school – Health and environmental benefits. ○ Delivers an estimated £6.9m saving per year ○ As this option removes discretionary provision there would be no subsidy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased congestion on roads if pupils transported by car. ○ Impact on capacity of schools. ○ Potential impact on local bus companies. ○ Risk of not meeting requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) measure 2008 in relation to promotion of access to Welsh medium education. ○ Potential impact on school attendance, learner engagement in education and outcomes. ○ Potential impact on low income families who would not have the financial means to transport their children to school. ○ Potential impact on the numbers of learners accessing Faith and Welsh medium education. ○ Potential challenges on “available” routes. ○ Will affect 9,000+ pupils. ○ May impact on viability of some schools. 	<p>Not proposed as this option would result in the complete removal of transport provision for 9,000+ pupils. Some journeys will not be on direct commercial routes, reducing the number of alternative travel options for pupils. This could have a negative impact on school attendance.</p> <p>There is a risk of not meeting the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) measure 2008 in relation to promotion of access to Welsh medium education.</p>

Notes:

The number of pupils included in the table above are as at September 2023.

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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: Geraint Roberts

Service Director: Stephen Williams

Service Area: Transportation

Date: 13/11/2023

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

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

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

Review of the Council's Home to School Transport Policy

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

The proposal seeks Cabinet’s approval to initiate a consultation with interested parties and relevant stakeholders in respect of a proposed new Home to School Transport Policy, namely providing mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary school, secondary school and college transport in line with relevant statutory distance criteria, which would be implemented from the start of the 2025/2026 academic year. However, it should be noted that it is not proposed to consult on amending the discretionary elements of Additional Learning Needs, (ALN), transport - distance criteria for ALN Transport will not change.

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

The Welsh Government’s Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 sets out the current statutory duties of Local Authorities with regard to the provision of home to school transport. Statutory guidance is also provided by the Welsh Government in the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance – June 2014. The Measure and the Guidance can be accessed by clicking on the following links:

Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 (legislation.gov.uk)

Learner travel: statutory provision and operational guidance | GOV.WALES

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users
- Employees
- 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>The proposals will affect children and young people of school age, and their families/carers, in the county borough.</p> <p>The proposal will affect 336 primary school pupils and 2,362 secondary school and college pupils (based on September 2023 passenger data).</p> <p>Overall, this proposal will impact approximately 24% of pupils that currently receive school transport.</p>	Current passenger information.
Disability (<i>people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions</i>)	Neutral	<p>Children and young people who have a disability or additional learning need attending mainstream education would be assessed individually for transport on a discretionary basis. Children attending one of the special schools within the county borough are not considered as part of these proposals, so there is no change to their current provision.</p> <p>The Council's school transport policy states that free transport to and from</p>	<p>Current passenger information and Council policy.</p> <p>Whilst pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) are assessed by distance criteria, in practice SEN pupils would not be affected by this proposed policy change as their transport is based upon their individual need. The discretionary elements of SEN</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?
		school may be provided on medical grounds e.g. chronic illness or temporary incapacity for short but continuous periods. This is not subject to change under the proposals.	transport (pre-school, post 16, etc.) would continue
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 suggest that children and young people who are transgender or gender neutral will be disproportionately impacted by the proposals.	The proposal is to provide mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport above statutory distance only, regardless of gender.
Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	Neutral	No impact	The proposals will affect children and young people of school age in the county borough.
Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i>	Neutral	No impact.	The proposals will affect children and young people of school age in the county borough. The Council will continue to offer transport on medical grounds where deemed

<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?
			appropriate by medical practitioners.
Race <i>(ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)</i>	Neutral	There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a disproportionate impact upon learners based on race or ethnicity.	The proposal is to provide mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport above statutory distance only, regardless of race or ethnicity.
Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>	Neutral	<p>Learners attending the faith schools (primary and secondary) will maintain home to school transport under the proposed statutory walking distances providing the faith school is determined to be their nearest available school.</p> <p>The proposed changes will be applied equally to English medium education provision and Faith education provision</p> <p>Pupils generally travel further to Faith/Welsh Medium schools, although the proposed changes would impact upon English medium education provision in exactly the same way.</p>	The proposal is to provide mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport above statutory distance only, regardless of religion or belief.

<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?
Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i>	Neutral	There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a disproportionate impact upon learners based on sex.	The proposal is to provide mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport above statutory distance only, regardless of sex.
Sexual Orientation <i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i>	Neutral	There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a disproportionate impact upon learners based on sexual orientation.	The proposal is to provide mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport above statutory distance only, regardless of sex.

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?

Armed Forces Community <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i>	Neutral	There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a disproportionate impact upon learners based on whether a member a member of the Armed Forces Community or not.	The proposal is to provide mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport above statutory distance only, regardless of whether a member of the Armed Forces Community or not.
Carers <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i>	Neutral	There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a disproportionate impact upon learners based on whether a carer or not.	The proposal is to provide mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary and secondary school and college transport above statutory distance only, regardless of whether a Carer or not.

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:

N/A

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

Yes

No

Name: Geraint Roberts

Position: Integrated Transport Manager

Date: 2/11/2023

Please forward a copy of this completed screening form to the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

PLEASE NOTE – there is a separate impact assessment for Welsh Language. This must also be completed for proposals. Section 3 Socio-economic Duty needs only to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. Definition of a ‘strategic nature’ is available on page 6 of the [Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance](#).

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?
<u>Low Income/Income Poverty</u> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>	Neutral	There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a disproportionate impact upon learners based on low income.	The proposals will affect children and young people of school age in the county borough.
<u>Low and / or No Wealth</u> <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	There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a disproportionate impact upon learners based on low and/or no wealth.	The proposals will affect children and young people of school age in the county borough.
<u>Material Deprivation</u> <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	There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a disproportionate impact upon learners based material deprivation.	The proposals will affect children and young people of school age in the county borough

<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	There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a disproportionate impact upon learners based on area deprivation.	The proposals will affect children and young people of school age in the county borough
<u>Socio-economic background</u> <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i>	Neutral	There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a disproportionate impact upon learners based on socio-economic background.	The proposals will affect children and young people of school age in the county borough
<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	There is no evidence to suggest that there will be a disproportionate impact upon learners based on socio-economic disadvantage.	The proposals will affect children and young people of school age in the county borough

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.**

Protected Characteristics - Age

The proposals will affect children and young people of school age in the county borough.

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

Transport for all primary school pupils living between current discretionary distance of 1.5 miles and statutory distance of 2 miles would no longer be provided. Free transport for pupils living further than 2 miles away would continue, including where pupils attend Welsh or Faith schools because of parental/carer/learner preference.

Transport for all secondary school pupils living between current discretionary distance of 2 miles and statutory distance of 3 miles would no longer be provided. Free transport for pupils living further than 3 miles away would continue, including where pupils attend Welsh or Faith schools because of parental/carer/learner preference.

All pupils within these two age ranges will be assessed equally.

- 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.

Data used is school bus passenger information from September 2023.

- 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.

Consultees must be given adequate time to consider the proposal and to respond. It is proposed that consultation would run for a period of 6 weeks. Subject to Cabinet approval, it would commence on 27th November 2023 (subject to call in) and end on the 8th of January 2024.

The results of any consultation will be reported back to Cabinet in order for it to determine whether, and if so, how it wishes to progress with implementation of the proposed new policy.

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 AND REVIEW

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

The proposal will be monitored firstly as part of a public consultation and secondly, if subsequently implemented, by reviewing attendance levels at school.

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

The proposal will be reviewed at the end of the public consultation.

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

The Integrated Transport Unit and Education and Inclusion Services.

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

Findings from the public consultation will be used to determine whether the option of providing mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary school, secondary school and college transport in line with relevant statutory distance criteria is to be implemented.

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

As part of the Impact Assessment process all proposals that fall within the definition of ‘Key Decisions’ must be submitted to the Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your proposal is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Decision please forward your impact assessment to Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for a Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. The EqlA guidance document provides more information on what a Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that you can demonstrate how you have considered equality and socio-economic outcomes. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below

Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation

SECTION 6 – 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.

There is one negative equality and diversity implication associated with this report.

This one negative impact relates to the protected characteristic of Age.

This negative impact will be mitigated by a range of actions as detailed in the impact assessment above.

SECTION 7 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer: G ROBERTS

Name: GERAINT ROBERTS

Position: INTEGRATED TRANSPORT MANAGER

Date: 13/11/2023

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: S WILLIAMS

Name: STEPHEN WILLIAMS

Position: DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS, STREETCARE, AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Date: 13/11/2023

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:	Proposed new Home to School Transport policy.
Department	Integrated transport Unit
Director	Stephen Williams
Officer Completing the WLIA	Geraint Roberts
Email	Geraint.e.roberts@rctcbc.gov.uk
Brief Description	The proposal seeks to introduce a proposed new Home to School Transport Policy, namely providing mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary school, secondary school and college transport above statutory distance only and implemented from the start of the 2025/2026 academic year. Should the proposed new Home to School Transport Policy be implemented the Council would continue to provide discretionary Home to School Transport provision beyond statutory requirements in a number of areas.
Date	November 2023
Please outline who this proposal affects? (Service Users, Employees, Wider Community)	Service Users

<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 consult with interested parties and relevant stakeholders in respect of a proposed new Home to School Transport Policy, namely providing mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary school, secondary school and college transport in line with relevant statutory distance criteria, which would be implemented from the start of the 2025/2026 academic year. This could potentially impact on the Council’s ambitious Welsh in Education Strategic Plan targets to grow the number of learners accessing Welsh medium education.</p>												
<p>Who will benefit / Could the policy affect Welsh language groups? If so, list them here.</p>	<p>The proposal would affect transport entitlement for learners attending Welsh medium primary and secondary schools that live under the statutory distances from school, although the proposed changes may adversely impact more on learners in Welsh medium settings who are generally more reliant on school transport to access education. This is a potential risk to our target to significantly grow the numbers of learners accessing Welsh medium education in Rhondda Cynon Taf, as specified in our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. It should be noted however that under the proposed Home to School Transport Policy the discretionary element of allowing a learner to select their nearest suitable school in accordance with choice of English or Welsh Medium language would continue.</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 Local Authorities in Wales to see an increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers – the others were Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and the Vale of Glamorgan. 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>The table that follows outlines the Welsh language skills of residents living in RCT and Wales and is obtained from the 2011 Census.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">Welsh Language Skills of Residents (2011 Census)</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Welsh Language Skill</th> <th>RCT</th> <th colspan="2">Wales</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Can speak, read and write Welsh</td> <td>9.7%</td> <td colspan="2">14.6%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Welsh Language Skills of Residents (2011 Census)				Welsh Language Skill	RCT	Wales		Can speak, read and write Welsh	9.7%	14.6%	
Welsh Language Skills of Residents (2011 Census)													
Welsh Language Skill	RCT	Wales											
Can speak, read and write Welsh	9.7%	14.6%											

Can speak and read but cannot write Welsh	0.9%	1.5%
Can speak but cannot read or write Welsh	1.6%	2.7%
Can understand spoken Welsh only	4.2%	5.3%
Other combination of Skills	3.3%	2.5%
No skills	80.4%	73.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

The data demonstrates that the Welsh language skills level of residents living in RCT is lower than the all Wales Welsh language skills level.

The table that follows outlines the Welsh language skills of residents living in RCT and Wales and is obtained from the 2021 Census.

Welsh Language Skills of Residents (2021 Census)			
Welsh Language Skill	RCT	Wales	
Can speak, read and write Welsh	9.8%	13.8%	
Can speak and read but cannot write Welsh	0.7%	1.1%	
Can speak but cannot read or write Welsh	1.4%	2.2%	
Can understand spoken Welsh only	3.9%	5.0%	

Other combination of Skills	5.5%	5.2%
No skills	78.7%	72.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

The data demonstrates that the Welsh language skills level of residents living in RCT is lower than the all Wales Welsh language skills level.

The data demonstrates the Welsh language skills level of residents living in RCT and the all Wales Welsh language skills level are lower in 2021 than 2011.

The Welsh Language Use Survey for the years 2013 to 2015, contains detailed information about Welsh speaker's fluency and their use of the Welsh language in a range of settings. When looking where respondents living in Wales learned to speak Welsh, the majority, 45.0%, learned to speak Welsh at home, followed by 26.0% who learned to speak Welsh at nursery and primary school between the ages of 2 to 10 and 14.0% who learned to speak Welsh at secondary school at the age of 11 plus. The remaining 2.0% learned to speak Welsh in other settings, including at Welsh medium learning classes for adults.

The data demonstrates that the Welsh language skills level of residents living in RCT is lower than the all-Wales Welsh language skills level. In recent years, support has been given to promote and increase pupils use of the Welsh language in primary and secondary schools and in social contexts. This has been done through the Welsh Language Charter (Siarter Iaith), developed by Gwynedd Council, and various other projects, in partnership with the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSCJES) and the Urdd. This could contribute towards the Welsh Government's ambitious goal of creating a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050 and the WESP.

Other relevant data or research

All Local Authorities in Wales must produce a WESP. The WESP is a long-term language planning tool which sets the direction for the strategic planning, delivery and growth in Welsh medium and Welsh language education. Through the WESP, and effective strategic planning and investment, the Council aims to contribute significantly to achieving the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050 as set out in Cymraeg 2050. The WESP can be viewed and downloaded from the Council website via:

[Welsh in Education Strategic Plan \(WESP\) 2022 – 2032 | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk)

There are seven outcomes within the WESP, two of which are:

- More opportunities for pupils to use Welsh in different contexts in school.
- An increase in the provision of Welsh medium education for pupils with ALN in accordance with the duties imposed by the ALNET Act 2018.

In recent years, support has been given to promote and increase pupils use of the Welsh language in primary and secondary schools and in social contexts. This has been done through the Welsh Language Charter (Siarter Iaith), developed by Gwynedd Council, and various other projects, in partnership with the CSCJES and the Urdd. This could contribute towards the Welsh Government's ambitious goal of creating a million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050 and the WESP.

Whilst the Council would meet statutory requirements from a free home to school transport perspective, this proposal may potentially impact on the numbers of families wishing to send their children to Welsh medium education as they might opt to send their child to a closer English medium school.

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.

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?
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<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>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>All consultation correspondence would continue to be published in Welsh with the Welsh appearing first.</p> <p>Future recruitment would focus on recruiting Welsh speakers to increase face-to-face Welsh language service provision.</p> <p>As there are currently only 4% of staff within the Service area with Welsh language skills of level 3 or above, (the level at which speakers likely have sufficient skills to use the language more extensively at work), recruiting more Welsh speakers would have a positive impact on the service's Welsh provision, and the Council's attempts to promote the language.</p> <p>Moreover, in light of recent guidance from the Welsh Language Commissioner, the Council has a statutory duty not only to mitigate negative impacts, but to maximise any possible positive impacts too.</p>	<p>Current / ongoing public consultations shows Welsh language appearing first.</p> <p>The percentage of Welsh speakers in RCT according to the 2021 Census was 12.4%, and the Council's Welsh Language Skills Strategy aims to ensure the percentage of staff with Welsh language skills is at a similar level.</p>	<p>Ensure that, upon each new order of consultation material, all correspondence is reviewed, and bilingualism retained.</p> <p>Encourage contact in Welsh by incorporating an appropriate additional line into correspondence, e.g., "we welcome correspondence in Welsh, which will not lead to a delay in responding".</p> <p>Ensure steps are taken for basic relevant Welsh lessons for those who need it with the aim of further upskilling and training as appropriate.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to ensure there are a number of Welsh-speaking members of staff on the team through advertising some new posts as "Welsh-essential" roles <i>where practical to do so</i>.</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>There is a potential that the additional walking distance from home to school may discourage parents from putting their children into Welsh medium schools, in favour of nearer English medium catchment schools, with a slightly greater risk at the primary school level, (albeit the risk is still low).</p> <p>However, it should be noted that under the proposal the Council would, as part of its discretionary provision, still allow a learner to select their nearest 'suitable school' in accordance with choice of language. On this basis there might be potential for growth in Welsh Medium demand where pupils live over 2 miles (in the case of primary school pupils) or</p>	<p>As part of its discretionary provision, the Council would, as now, allow a learner to select their nearest 'suitable school' in accordance with choice of language should the proposal be implemented.</p> <p>Out of a total of 1,217 pupils attending Welsh primary schools, (as of September 2023), 260 pupils would be affected by this proposal, (this represents 21% of all such pupils).</p> <p>Out of a total of 1,900 pupils attending Welsh secondary schools, (as of September 2023), 237 pupils would be affected by this proposal, (this represents 12% of all such pupils).</p>	<p>The Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus programme is having a positive impact on the promotion of the Welsh language in schools engaged with the programme through providing increased opportunities for pupils to use the Welsh language in different contexts.</p> <p>The Council would continue to adhere to The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 which requires the Council to produce a five year strategy outlining actions which will facilitate and promote the Welsh language.</p>

		<p>3 miles (in the case of secondary school pupils) from their nearest suitable Welsh Medium school who would be entitled to free transport).</p>	<p>Whilst the proposed changes will be applied equally to English medium education provision and Welsh medium education provision, as pupils generally travel further to Welsh Medium schools, a greater number of primary age pupils are impacted. However, this is reversed for secondary age pupils, where those attending English medium schools are impacted by a greater number.</p>	<p>The Council's Five Year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy (2022 – 2027) along with its supplementary action plan has been taken into consideration in order to encourage and facilitate long term growth for the Welsh language and Welsh medium education. The strategy outlines the Council's commitment to working towards the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 vision of increasing the number of Welsh speakers.</p> <p>The Council would continue to ensure a clear alignment with the Five Year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. This commitment to promoting the Welsh language, increasing the number of Welsh pupils and improving the Welsh language skills of staff and pupils across schools in Rhondda</p>
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				Cynon Taf is reaffirmed in the Education & Inclusion Directorate's Education Strategic Plan for 2022 – 2025.
<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 Welsh language has official status and legislation in place which provides rights for Welsh speakers to receive Welsh language services. The challenge is to expand the opportunities for people to be able to use the Welsh language in their daily life through creating the right conditions for new pupils of all ages to develop and use their skills from early years, through every stage of compulsory education and post-16 provision.</p> <p>As mentioned above, there is a potential that the additional walking distance from home to school may discourage parents from putting their children into Welsh medium schools.</p> <p>Yet, the proposal is clear that the Council would, as part of its discretionary provision, still allow a learner to select their nearest 'suitable school' in accordance with choice of language. On this</p>	As part of its discretionary provision, the Council would, as now, allow a learner to select their nearest 'suitable school' in accordance with choice of language should the proposal be implemented – please see data above.	<p>The Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus programme is having a positive impact on the promotion of the Welsh language in schools engaged with the programme through providing increased opportunities for pupils to use the Welsh language in different contexts.</p> <p>The Council would continue to adhere to The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 which requires the Council to produce a five year strategy outlining actions which will facilitate and promote the Welsh language.</p> <p>The Council's Five Year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy (2022 – 2027) along with its supplementary action plan has been taken into</p>

basis there might be potential for growth in Welsh Medium demand.

If these benefits are indeed realised, this would potentially positively impact on our WESP targets and our strategic priorities to increase the number of Welsh language speakers and to growth the number of learners accessing Welsh medium education and opportunities.

consideration in order to encourage and facilitate long term growth for the Welsh language and Welsh medium education. The strategy outlines the Council's commitment to working towards the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 vision of increasing the number of Welsh speakers.

The Council would continue to ensure a clear alignment with the Five Year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. This commitment to promoting the Welsh language, increasing the number of Welsh pupils and improving the Welsh language skills of staff and pupils across schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is reaffirmed in the Education & Inclusion Directorate's Education Strategic Plan for 2022 – 2025.

				The Council is aware that Welsh Government are in the process of reviewing its Learner Travel Guidance, however it is unclear what, if any, changes will be made. The Council will review any revisions to the Guidance, as and when issued, and consider accordingly.
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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?
<u>Compliance with the Council’s Statutory Welsh Language Standards</u> e.g. increasing or reducing the Council’s ability to deliver services through the Medium of	Neutral	All processes associated with this proposal would be in accordance with the Council’s Statutory Welsh Language Standards.	Contractual arrangements would ensure that all consultations are undertaken bilingually and all public correspondence in relation to these proposals would be sent out bilingually with Welsh positioned first.	The relevant and required statutory consultation will be undertaken bilingually and all public correspondence in relation to the proposal

<p>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>will be produced bilingually.</p> <p>Ensure all officers involved with these proposals has an awareness of the Council's Statutory Welsh Language Standards and ensure compliance with these standards.</p> <p>All public consultation announcements will be made bilingually.</p>
<p>Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably than the English language</p>	<p>Neutral.</p>	<p>The proposed changes will be applied equally to English medium education provision and Welsh medium education provision.</p>	<p>The proposal is based on walking distance to all schools, regardless of language choice.</p>	<p>Greater promotion of Welsh medium schools across the County Borough.</p>

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?
The Council would continue to adhere to The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and work towards achieving the goals of Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 vision by promoting the Welsh language.	Ongoing	Transportation and Education & Inclusion Services.
Encourage contact in Welsh by incorporating an appropriate additional line into correspondence, e.g., "we welcome correspondence in Welsh, which would not lead to a delay in responding".	Ongoing	Transportation and Education & Inclusion Services.
The Council is aware that Welsh Government are in the process of reviewing its Learner Travel Guidance, however it is unclear what, if any, changes will be made. The Council would review any revisions to the Guidance, as and when issued, and consider accordingly.	If, as, and when the Welsh Government make any changes to its Learner Travel Guidance.	The Welsh Government (Review) and then the Transportation and Education & Inclusion Services (Implementation)

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

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 impact assessment 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.

For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not you are required to forward this assessment to Welsh Language services in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.

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

Welsh Language Services Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Welsh Language Services feedback
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation

Stage 5 – Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing

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

The Council's Transportation and Education & Inclusion Services will monitor the impacts of this proposal, holding periodic review meetings.

Stage 6 – Summary of Impacts for the Proposal

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment. This summary should be included in the Welsh Language Considerations section of the SLT/Cabinet report template. The impact assessment should be published alongside the report.



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

The proposal seeks to introduce a proposed new Home to School Transport Policy, namely providing mainstream English, Welsh and Faith primary school, secondary school and college transport above statutory distance only and implemented from the start of the 2025/2026 academic year. Under the proposed Home to School Transport Policy the discretionary element of allowing a learner to select their nearest suitable school in accordance with choice of English or Welsh Medium language would continue.

Whilst the proposed changes will be applied equally to English medium education provision and Welsh medium education provision, as pupils generally travel further to Welsh Medium schools, a greater number of primary age pupils are impacted. However, this is reversed for secondary age pupils, where those attending English medium schools are impacted by a greater number.

This impact assessment has been completed prior to any consultation being undertaken on the proposal. Should a consultation be initiated by Cabinet on the proposal relevant feedback would be used to inform and update this impact assessment ahead of any final decision(s) being made in relation to the proposal.

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Stage 7 – Sign Off			
Name of Officer completing the WLIA	Geraint Roberts	Service Director Name:	Stephen Williams
Position	Integrated Transport Manager	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	13/11/2023	Date	13/11/2023

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH NOVEMBER 2023

CONTINUATION OF FREE BREAKFAST CLUB PROVISION IN PRIMARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF A CHARGE FOR THE ADDITIONAL CHILDCARE ELEMENT

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE (COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek permission to consult on the introduction of a charge for the additional childcare element, which is available prior to the commencement of free breakfast club provision in primary and special schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf, noting eligible Free School Meal (eFSM) pupils would be exempt from any charge.
- 1.2 To note the proposal would generate additional income, which would be ring fenced and reinvested back into school budgets.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the contents of this report together with associated impact assessments;
- 2.2 Agrees to initiate a consultation with service users, key stakeholders and prospective service users on the proposal to charge a fee for the additional childcare element which is available prior to the commencement of free breakfast club provision;
- 2.3 Agrees that eFSM pupils should be exempt from the proposed charge and that views be sought through the consultation process on whether consideration should be given to any further categories of concession (such as a capped charge for parents/carers with more than one child making use of the provision); and
- 2.4 Subject to 2.2 above, agrees to receive a further report summarising the results and feedback from the consultation process, together with updated impact

assessments, to determine whether Cabinet wishes to proceed with the proposal or not, and if so, how.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council is facing significant financial challenges into the medium term and is considering a range of options to contribute to addressing the shortfall in funding.
- 3.2 To set out a charging proposal for consultation for the additional provision currently in place, which includes a period of free enhanced childcare for pupils currently attending free breakfast clubs.
- 3.3 To ensure that the process for progressing any proposal is undertaken efficiently and effectively and in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Breakfast clubs play an important part in the life of schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf and ensure not only good nutrition and a positive start to the school day, but an opportunity for social interaction and early arrival in school. The provision supports all our pupils with a healthy breakfast in a safe and protected environment for the period immediately before the start of the school day. It can also promote positive attendance and engagement in education.
- 4.2 Providing free breakfast clubs in primary schools has been an integral part of the wider work the Welsh Government (WG) has been doing to improve access to healthy food and nutrition in schools maintained by local authorities in Wales for the past twenty years. In September 2004, WG introduced its Free Breakfast Initiative in primary schools, which aimed to help improve the health and concentration of children and to assist in the raising of standards of learning and attainment.
- 4.3 Section 88 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, places a duty on a local authority to provide free breakfasts on each school day for learners in the primary schools it maintains. This duty came into force on 1st April 2013 and enables free breakfast provision to be established, or continued, in primary schools. Breakfast provided by local authorities must be:
 - provided free of charge,
 - available on school premises,
 - available before the start of the school day, except in the case of a community special school where breakfasts may be made available before or at the start of each school day.
- 4.4 Local authorities have the flexibility to decide on the form of the breakfast content, subject to compliance with the Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) 2013 (Healthy Eating Regulations), which regulate food and drink provided in maintained schools.

- 4.5 There is no legal requirement on a governing body of a maintained primary school to operate a free breakfast service. However, in RCT the local authority operates breakfast clubs on behalf of all schools as the schools have elected to opt out of this delegated function. If a governing body decides to operate a paid-for breakfast service, and provides the breakfast itself, it may charge pupils for the breakfast provided. However, the charge must not exceed the cost of providing the breakfast.
- 4.6 Where a governing body decides to operate a free breakfast service and has asked the local authority to provide free breakfasts to learners at the school, the local authority will be obliged to provide free breakfasts unless the local authority considers that it would be unreasonable to do so.
- 4.7 The 2013 Act does not state what would constitute as being 'unreasonable'. This allows for flexibility for different sets of circumstances so that, for example, what is unreasonable in one set of circumstances may not be unreasonable in another. When considering what is unreasonable in a particular situation, local authorities should consider a range of factors, including:-
- demand for the provision of free breakfast in the maintained school;
 - availability/suitability of a venue to undertake the provision of free breakfast;
 - availability/suitability of facilities within the maintained school to provide the provision; and
 - availability/suitability of staff to supervise the breakfast provision.
- 4.8 There are three situations where the local authority's duty to provide free breakfast will not apply: -
- From April 2013, where no request is made by the governing body to the local authority to establish and provide free breakfast provision.
 - Where the school has asked the local authority, in writing, to stop providing existing free breakfast provision.
 - Where the local authority has decided that it would be unreasonable to provide, or continue to provide, breakfasts and has notified the governing body in writing that, as a result, it is not going to provide breakfasts; or, where breakfasts are currently provided, that it is going to stop providing breakfasts.
- 4.9 A pupil's entitlement to receive a free breakfast is dependent on the local authority's duty arising from the 2013 Act, and a request for a free breakfast being made by or on behalf of the pupil. Therefore, where a duty exists and a request had been made to the local authority by or on behalf of a pupil, the pupil will be entitled to receive free breakfasts. The legislation does not give local authorities or governing bodies the power to impose criteria to determine, and potentially restrict, a pupil's entitlement to a free breakfast.
- 4.10 Breakfast should normally be delivered as a short period before the start of the school day, i.e. 30 minutes, to achieve the primary purpose of providing

sufficient time to enable those children who attend, to choose their breakfast, eat it without rushing and to start normal school activities.

5. FREE BREAKFAST CLUBS IN RCT

- 5.1 Headteachers are responsible for the internal organisation, day-to-day management and control of the school and this applies to the breakfast session.
- 5.2 In RCTCBC, all 92 primary schools and 3 special schools provide a free breakfast club and all pupils, from nursery to year six, are eligible to attend. The Council's Education Catering Services supply the staffing and the food to primary and special schools to facilitate access to free breakfast clubs.
- 5.3 To comply with the requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, a risk assessment for the operation of breakfast clubs is conducted by the governing body and recorded in writing to identify the risks to health and safety.
- 5.4 Schools need to consider a range of matters whilst running a breakfast club, including; the level of demand for the provision, catering provision, if there suitable facilities available on the school premises, what level of staffing supervision is required (staff to pupil ratio), are reasonable adjustments required for pupils with additional learning needs, appropriate training for staff (first aid, food hygiene, food safety, manual handling, etc.), and timing of the session.
- 5.5 Timings of the breakfast clubs vary from school to school, but typically run between 8.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m., with supervised play and social interaction before being taken to class. The cut off time for pupils being admitted to breakfast club is 8.30 a.m. in most schools.
- 5.6 Breakfast club staff work one hour, typically 8.00-9.00 a.m., Monday to Friday. They are responsible for setting up and putting away the tables and benches, preparing and serving breakfast, supervising pupils, and cleaning up the facilities. There are 595 staff employed to run breakfast clubs, all staff are employed by Catering Services, but some are also teaching assistants employed at the schools.
- 5.7 All pupils who attend are offered toast or a choice of cereals, freshly prepared seasonal fruit and either water, milk, or juice break. The food and drink costs of supplying a typical breakfast portion is £0.37, however, the biggest cost is the staffing costs to prepare and serve food and supervise the pupils.
- 5.8 The breakfast club menu can also accommodate pupils who have a medically prescribed dietary requirement, but pupils cannot start attending breakfast club until the appropriate medical evidence is submitted and a bespoke menu derived for them.
- 5.9 The outturn cost of providing the breakfasts clubs during the last five financial years is detailed in Table1 below.

Table 1: Breakfast Club Outturn 2018/19 – 2022/23	
Financial Year	Outturn (£)
2018/19	1,473,453
2019/20	1,547,732
2020/21	1,272,640
2021/22	1,384,817
2022/23	1,690,686

- 5.10 The average daily number of free breakfasts served since the start of the autumn term is detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Average Daily Free Breakfasts Served	
Week Ending	No. of Free Breakfasts
08.09.23	4439
15.09.23	4967
22.09.23	4951
29.09.23	5096

- 5.11 A summary of the projected outturn for 2023/24 for breakfast clubs is set out below in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Breakfast Club Projected Outturn 2023/24	
Expenditure Type	Projected Outturn (£)
Employee	1,478,553
Supplies and Services	378,802
Total Costs	1,857,355

The cost of providing the breakfast club provision has increased by nearly £400k over the past 5 years and with the Bank of England forecasting continued high inflation rates for the next few years, this will have a significant impact on spiralling food, staffing, transport and energy costs.

6. PROPOSAL FOR CHARGES

- 6.1 It is proposed to introduce charges for the additional childcare element provided during breakfast club, from the start of the spring term 2024. This would require the timing of the session before the start of school day to be restructured. A typical breakfast club would operate, as detailed in Table 4 below, however, each breakfast club would have its own local agreement in terms of start and finish times.

Table 4: Proposed Timing of Breakfast Club (Based on a setting that runs between 8.00-9.00 a.m.)	
Est. Time	
8.00 a.m.	Doors open and start for the additional paid childcare session.
8.15 a.m.	Doors closed, no further admission to the additional paid childcare session.
8.25 a.m.	Doors open in readiness for the start of free breakfast session.
8.30 a.m.	End of paid additional childcare session and start of free breakfast session.
8.40 a.m.	Door closed, no further admission to free breakfast session.
9.00 a.m.	End of free breakfast session.

It is proposed that pupils attending the paid additional childcare session would arrive between 8.00 – 8:15 a.m. and would attend the whole session until 9.00 a.m. Pupils attending the free breakfast session would between 8.25 – 8.40 a.m. and would attend the session until 9.00 a.m. Staggered arrival times would ensure that effective registration and supervision takes place on arrival. Some flexibility in arrangements for learners accessing home to school transport would be afforded.

- 6.2 It is proposed that no charge is made in respect of pupils who have applied for and are entitled to Free School Meal provision (note this relates to the underlying eligibility for Free School Meals and not those pupils receiving the Universal Primary Free School Meal provision). As per the January 2023 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data, on Census day, 27.95% of pupils who received a free breakfast were free school meal pupils.
- 6.3 Some parents/carers may not consequently require the paid additional childcare session, so the numbers attending between 8.00 – 8.25 a.m. would possibly reduce.
- 6.4 Charges for the additional childcare element of breakfast club would be based on a termly charge and would be payable at the start of each term. Charges would not be pro-rata'd and no refunds would be payable.
- 6.5 In line with current payment arrangements for school meals, parents/carers would only be able to pay on-line for the additional childcare charges. This approach would help to minimise administration costs.
- 6.6 It is proposed that a daily charge be implemented at £1 per day. Based on 190 days per year this would be rounded down to £60 per term, amounting to an annual charge for parents/carers of £180. This is shown below in Table 5 below, with average daily demand numbers updated and modelled to reflect no charge for eFSM pupils and assumed potential take up levels.

Average Daily Demand	Termly Charge	Projected Termly Income	Projected Annual Income	Annual Cost to Parent/Carer	Equivalent Daily Rate
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
2,750*	60	165,000	495,000	180	0.95

*Adjusted figure to reflect eFSM numbers and possible reduction in demand for the additional childcare element.

- 6.7 The impact of amending the termly charge to varying levels is shown in Table 6 below.

Average Daily Demand	Termly Charge	Projected Termly Income	Projected Annual Income	Annual Cost to Parent/Carer	Equivalent Daily Rate
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
2,750	50	137,500	412,500	150	0.79
2,750	60	165,000	495,000	180	0.95
2,750	70	192,500	577,500	210	1.11
2,750	80	220,000	660,000	240	1.26

- 6.8 For comparison purposes, the cost of private sector childcare varies depending on the setting and what is being offered. The typical cost of a registered childminder is £6.00 per hour.
- 6.9 Four Councils in Wales currently implement a charging policy for the additional childcare element of breakfast clubs at a nominal cost of £1 per day and other Councils are considering this option due to budget pressures.
- 6.10 Consideration could be given to providing concessions from the proposed charge, for example, a cap applied to parents/carers with more than one child making use of the provision. These options would be explored through the proposed consultation process, outlined below, to enable Cabinet to make an informed decision in light of views fed back.

7. OPERATIONAL RISKS

- 7.1 There are several risks, associated with restructuring the timing of the breakfast session, which may impact negatively on the operational delivery, as detailed in Appendix A, together with mitigating measures.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 8.1 The Council must satisfy its public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties Councils must in making decisions, have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations based on protected characteristics.
- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached in Appendix B. The Assessment will be published on the Council's website, together with a consultation document that outlines the proposal in further detail and in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.
- 8.3 Should the decision to proceed with a consultation process be agreed, the Equity Impact Assessment would be updated to take account of consultation feedback and reported to Cabinet for consideration as part of its decision-making process.

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached in Appendix C. This will be published on the Council's website together with a consultation document that outlines the proposal in further detail and in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.
- 9.2 Should the decision to proceed with a consultation process be agreed, the Welsh Language Impact Assessment would be updated to take account of consultation feedback and reported to Cabinet for consideration as part of its decision making process.

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Subject to the agreement of the recommendation in Section 2.2 above, there is a duty on the Council to consult with service users, parents, carers, providers, and stakeholders, who are likely to be affected by the proposal. The consultation must take place whilst the proposals are at their formative stage.
- 10.2 The Council must provide the consultees with sufficient information to enable them properly to understand the proposal being consulted upon and to express a view in relation to it. The information must be accurate clear and concise.
- 10.3 The consultees must be given adequate time to consider the proposal and to respond. It is proposed that consultation would run for a period of 6 weeks with current users of the service, their family/carers, and other stakeholders. Subject to Cabinet approval, it would commence on 27th November 2023 (subject to the Council's call in provisions) and end on the 8th January 2024. Consultation methods would be a short online questionnaire through the Council's website.

Letters will also be distributed to parents/carers via school messaging systems to encourage them to participate in the survey.

- 10.4 In addition, appropriate consultation will also be undertaken with all staff (and their Trade Union representatives) potentially impacted by the proposal, in accordance with the Council's Managing Change Policy, if this report is approved.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Introducing a charge of £1 per day (rounded to £60 per term) for the additional childcare element which is available prior to the start of the free breakfast club provision could generate estimated annual income in a full year of £495k. eFSM pupils would be exempt from the charge.
- 11.2 Alternative levels of charges are shown at paragraph 6.7 above.
- 11.3 The consideration of options for concessions will be informed by feedback received through the consultation process, which would impact on the level of income referenced above.
- 11.4 The annual charge to parents/carers is proposed at £180.
- 11.5 The income generated from this proposal would be ring-fenced and reinvested back into school budgets enabling the Council to support their cost pressures next year over and above funding for pay increases.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 12.1 Section 88 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 places a duty on a local authority to provide free breakfast on each school day for learners at a primary school it maintains. Local authorities must also comply with regulation 4 of, and Schedule 1 to, the Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013 when deciding on the form of the breakfast content.

13. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN, NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

- 13.1 There are links to Making a Difference, the Council's Corporate Plan for the years between 2020 and 2024, specifically:
- **People:**
 - 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 all children and young people.
- 13.2 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.
- 13.3 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 take into account the long term impact of decisions, on communities and to take steps to address and prevent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
- 13.4 The charging proposals could contribute towards achieving some of the seven well-being goals by:
- **A Prosperous Wales** - Should the proposal proceed, the continuation of the childcare element of breakfast clubs will allow working parents/carers to be economically active.
 - **A Healthier Wales** – the proposal will be a fully accessible service, providing good nutrition and a social context for young people to socialise with their friendship groups and an opportunity to play before the start of the school day.
 - **A Wales of More Cohesive Communities** – Fully accessible breakfast clubs, integrated into our local community schools with a dedicated area to play and eat breakfast before the start of the school day.
 - **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language** – the provision of breakfast clubs will allow a daily opportunity for staff and pupils to develop their Welsh language skills.
 - **A Globally Responsive Wales** – The proposals could build upon the good working breakfast club practices and initiatives already in place to further develop extra-curricular activities to encourage healthy lifestyles for the school community.

13.5 The proposal could contribute towards achieving some of the five ways of working by:

- **Long Term** – The proposal allows parents/carers to continue to be economically active, contributing to the long-term aim of a viable economy for Wales.
- **Prevention** – The Council believes that the proposal continues to support pupils with a free healthy breakfast, improving the health and concentration of children, assisting in raising standards of learning and attainment and to get the best possible start to the school day.
- **Integrations** – The proposal will provide a fully accessible and integrated service providing dedicated support for children with additional learning needs to participate in everyday school life.
- **Collaboration** – The Council will continue to work effectively with the governing body and parents/carers to meet the needs to the wider community.
- **Involvement** – The proposed changes will seek the views of stakeholders including pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community.

13.6 As stated in 8.1 to 8.3, an Equality Impact Assessment which further details the contribution of the proposal to the [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) has been prepared.

14. **CONCLUSION**

14.1 The report provides proposals for the introduction of termly charges for the additional childcare element which is available prior to the start of the free breakfast club provision in RCT. The recommendation to initiate a consultation would be required to furnish Cabinet with the outcome, for Members to best consider if charges should be introduced and, if so, at what level.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee-

Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer:

Lisa Kidner, Business Manager Catering Services

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET
20TH NOVEMBER 2023

Item:

CONTINUATION OF FREE BREAKFAST CLUB PROVISION IN PRIMARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF A CHARGE FOR THE ADDITIONAL CHILDCARE ELEMENT

Background Papers

None

Officer to contact: Lisa Kidner, Business Manager Catering Services

APPENDIX A: OPERATIONAL RISKS

Risks	Impact	Mitigation
Cut off time for admitting pupils.	Timescales for admitting pupils into breakfast club will be tighter, which could result in queues or pupils missing the admission window.	Procedure for admitting pupils to breakfast club to be streamlined to improve efficiency, swift registration and reduced congestion
Timescales for feeding pupils.	Additional pressure on staff to ensure pupils are served and fed within revised timescales without impinging on the start of registration for the school day. Younger pupils or those with Additional Learning Needs may have inadequate time to eat their breakfast.	Appropriate time slots to be considered to support pupils and priority given to those who require some adjustments in the provision.
Attendance registers.	Under the new proposals schools will need to keep two registers; one for attendance in paid additional childcare session and another for attendance at free breakfast session.	A new electronic registration system will need to be designed to record pupil attendance.
Home to school transport.	Some pupils travel to school on home to school transport so the restructured timing of the breakfast club may prohibit the additional childcare element for some pupils.	Adaptations to the timing of the additional childcare element will have to be adjusted within the allocated timeslot.
Staff: pupil ratio.	Additional breakfast club staff may be required to assist with registration for two admission times and this may impact on the capacity to supervise and serve breakfast.	Risk assessment of staff: pupil ratio will need to be undertaken and additional staff appointed if deemed necessary.
Access to school/parking.	In the main, parents/carers are currently dropping off children to breakfast club between 8.00-8.30 a.m. If they do not require childcare and drop off their child(ren) between 8.25-8.40 a.m. this could result in traffic congestion in the school	Encourage parents/carers to park responsibly and walk pupils, where possible, to breakfast club.
Unsupervised drop-off of pupils.	Parents/carers could drop off children to paid additional childcare session without	Parents/carers to register (sign in) each child at the

Risks	Impact	Mitigation
	paying the termly charge upfront or children may be dropped off late to the additional childcare/free breakfast session, which would leave them unregistered and unsupervised.	school daily for safeguarding purposes.
Additional administration costs.	Additional workload for existing school-based and Local Authority staff in terms of managing the termly payments.	Payments to be administered online, termly in advance.
Workforce issues.	If the proposed timing of breakfast club changes some staff may no longer want to work for breakfast club due to other work commitments.	Individual risk assessments to be undertaken to ensure appropriate staffing levels and staff commitments to be accommodated, where possible.
Safeguarding.	Additional supervision may be required for the additional childcare element to ensure compliance with safeguarding legislation.	Appointment of new staff, where and when required, following comprehensive risk assessments of pupil numbers and suitable site accommodation.

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: Lisa Kidner

Service Director: Andrea Richards

Service Area: Catering Services, Education & Inclusion Services

Date: 11.11.23

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Continuation of free breakfast club provision in primary and special schools, with the introduction of a charge for the additional childcare element.

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

The Council is facing significant financial challenges into the medium term and is considering a range of options to contribute to addressing the shortfall in funding.

The purpose of the report is to seek permission to consult on the introduction of a charge for the additional childcare element, which is available prior to the commencement of free breakfast club provision in primary and special schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf, noting eligible Free School Meal (eFSM) pupils would be exempt from any charge.

To note the proposal would generate additional income which would be ring fenced and reinvested back into school budgets.

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

Section 88 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, places a duty on a local authority to provide free breakfasts on each school day for learners at a primary school it maintains. Local authorities have the flexibility to decide the form of the breakfast content subject to compliance with the Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) 2013 (Healthy Eating Regulations), which regulate food and drink provided in maintained schools.

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users
- Employees
- 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>The proposal could have a potential negative impact on primary age children, who attend breakfast club and their parents/carers.</p> <p>The Council is continuing to provide a free breakfast club but if additional childcare is required before the free breakfast club starts, there will be a proposed charge. However, this charge may impact on the parents/carers of younger people for part of the session, as the pupils are 11 years of age or under.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact the Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and guidance can also be found on the RCT CBC website.</p>	<p>All Primary age children are eligible to attend free breakfasts clubs, therefore, the age profile of children attending is 3-11 years.</p> <p>Approximately one third (33.25%) of households in RCT have at least one dependent child of primary school age. Total households: 78,324 (Census, 2021).</p> <p>6.63% of households in RCT (15,611) are comprised of no adults or one adult with at least one child of primary school age (Census, 2021).</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>Disability <i>(people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions)</i></p>	<p>Negative</p>	<p>The proposal may have a negative impact on the parents/carers, with a disability / long-term health condition, of primary age children due to possible financial hardship. However, if learners are eligible to free school meals they will be able to access the additional childcare for free prior to the start of the breakfast club provision which free to all learners.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact the Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and guidance can also be found on the RCT CBC website.</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	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.
Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.
Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.
Race <i>(ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.
Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and philosophical beliefs)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this 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?
<i>including people with no beliefs)</i>			
Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.
Sexual Orientation <i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.

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?
Armed Forces Community <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i>	Neutral	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.	It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.

<p>Carers <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i></p>	<p>Negative</p>	<p>The proposal could possibly impact on carers, if the parents/carers of primary age children who are not efsm cannot afford this service, which could put additional pressures on them.</p> <p>However, learners that are eligible to efsm will be able to access the additional childcare element free of charge prior to the start of the free breakfast club provision.</p> <p>To mitigate this impact the Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and guidance can also be found on the RCTCBC website.</p> <p>Carers will also be entitled to their own assessment, which will help to mitigate against indirect hardship caused by any future decisions.</p>	<p>Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.</p>
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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:

N/A

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

Name: Andrea Richards

Position: Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation

Date: 11.11.23

Please forward a copy of this completed screening form to the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

PLEASE NOTE – there is a separate impact assessment for Welsh Language. This must also be completed for proposals.

Section 3 Socio-economic Duty needs only to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. Definition of a ‘strategic nature’ is available on page 6 of the Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance.

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?
Low Income/Income Poverty <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>	Neutral	<p>The impact of this proposal is likely to have a neutral impact on parents/carers of primary age children experiencing income poverty, as learners eligible to efsm will be able to access the additional childcare element free of charge prior to the commencement of the free breakfast club. This proposed change in essence will offer the same provision to efsm learners as they are currently accessing.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact the Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and guidance can also be found on the RCT CBC website.</p>	<p>In RCT, of 78,324 households with at least one child of primary school age, 45.49% are considered deprived in at least one dimension (Census, 2021).</p> <p>57.81% (9025) of households with no or one adult and at least one child of primary school age in RCT are considered deprived in at least one dimension (Census, 2021).</p> <p>Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.</p>
Low and / or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with</i>	Negative	The impact of this proposal may have a negative impact on parents/carers of primary age children that are not efsm but have low or no wealth due	Assessment of impact on service users 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?
<i>any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i>		to the proposed enhanced childcare charge. To mitigate the impact the Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and guidance can also be found on the RCT CBC website.	
<u>Material Deprivation</u> <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>	Negative	The impact of this proposal may have a negative impact on parents/carers of primary age children who are not efsm as they may be unable to afford the proposed charge for childcare. To mitigate the impact the Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and guidance can also be found on the RCT CBC website.	Assessment of impact on service users 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>	Negative	The impact of this proposal may have a negative impact on parents/carers of primary age children that are not efsm and may be unable to afford the proposed charge for childcare. To mitigate the impact the Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and guidance can also be found on the RCT CBC website.	Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.
<u>Socio-economic background</u> <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i>	Negative	The impact of this proposal may have a negative impact on parents/carers of primary age children that are not efsm and may be unable to afford the proposed charge for childcare. To mitigate the impact the Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and	Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.

		guidance can also be found on the RCT CBC website.	
<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>	Negative	<p>The impact of this proposal may have a negative impact on parents/carers of primary age children who are not efsm that may be unable to afford the proposed charge for childcare. To mitigate the impact the Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and guidance can also be found on the RCT CBC website.</p>	<p>Although the in-work poverty rate for single parents in Wales (27%) is lower than the rest of the UK for the same period (30%), like the UK, single parents have the highest in-work poverty rate than all household types. Also, like the UK, single parents are more likely to be single mothers (Poverty in Wales, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, November 2020).</p> <p>Assessment of impact on service users during and following consultation stage.</p>

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.**

The proposal has a negative impact on eight disadvantaged groups highlighted in section 3, which includes age, disability, carers, Low and / or No Wealth, Material Deprivation, Area Deprivation, Socio-economic Background and Socio-Economic Disadvantage. A detailed action plan to reduce/mitigate these impacts will be collated during and following the consultation process. However, it is important to note that no charge will be made for the additional childcare provided for efsm learners prior to the start of the free breakfast clubs

To minimise the impact of an introduction of a charge on these groups, the Council will continue to provide the free breakfast session, free additional childcare for efsm learners and set the charge for the childcare element at a rate, which is substantially lower than comparable childcare rates charged by an external provider. The Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and guidance can also be found on the RCT CBC website.

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

Not applicable.

- 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.

Census 2021, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Schools PLASC data, iTrent

- 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.

To be actioned following Cabinet's consideration of the proposal to consult, if approved.

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 AND REVIEW

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

Following Cabinet's consideration to consult on the proposals, the impact assessment will be updated if approved and Cabinet will receive a further report on the outcome of the consultation in due course.

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

To be determined following Cabinet's final decision .

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

Director of Education & Inclusion Services

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

To be determined following Cabinet's final decision.

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

As part of the Impact Assessment process all proposals that fall within the definition of ‘Key Decisions’ must be submitted to the Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your proposal is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Decision please forward your impact assessment to Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for a Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. The EqlA guidance document provides more information on what a Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that you can demonstrate how you have considered equality and socio-economic outcomes. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below

Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation

SECTION 6 – 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.

There are 8 negative and 9 neutral equality and diversity implications associated with this report. These risks will be mitigated by a range of actions as detailed in the impact assessment.

The impact assessment has been completed prior to any consultation being undertaken on the proposal. Should a consultation be initiated by Cabinet on the proposal, relevant feedback would be used to inform and update the impact assessment ahead of any financial decision being made in relation to this proposal.

SECTION 7 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer: Lisa Kidner, Business Manager Catering Services

Name: Andrea Richards

Position: Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation

Date: 11.11.23

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: yes

Name: Gaynor Davies

Position: Director of Education & Inclusion Services

Date: 11.11.23

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

Action Plan to reduce or mitigate any actual or potential negative impact and to further the aims of the Equality Duty

Protected Characteristic Impacted	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale
Age	To mitigate the impact of charges to service users, the Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and support can also be found on the Council's website. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and, if agreed, the preferred level of termly charge for the additional childcare element of the breakfast clubs.	Business Manager, Catering Services	January 2024
Disability	To mitigate the impact of charges to service users, the Council will continue to highlight the Cost of Living support and advice from the UK Government, which can be found on the GOV.UK website, i.e. Wales Fuel Support Scheme, income and disability benefits. Advice and support can also be found on the Council's website. This information will be included in the letter sent to service users advising them of the outcome of the consultation and, if agreed, the preferred level of termly charge for the additional childcare element of the breakfast clubs.	Business Manager, Catering Services	January 2024
Impact on Carers	Support is available through the Council's carers support service. Carers are also entitled to their own assessment.	Responsible Commissioning Manager	On-going

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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:	Continuation of free breakfast club provision in primary and special schools, with the introduction of a charge for the additional childcare element.
Department	Education & Inclusion Services
Service Director	Andrea Richards
Officer Completing the WLIA	Lisa Kidner
Email	Lisa.J.Kidner@rctcbc.gov.uk
Brief Description	<p>The Council is facing significant financial challenges into the medium term and is considering a range of options to contribute to addressing the shortfall in funding.</p> <p>The proposal is to initiate a consultation for the consideration of the introduction of termly charges for the childcare element of free breakfasts clubs in RCT from the start of the new financial year in April 2024. Consideration is to be given to four charging options per term, ranging from £50-£80. A full community consultation with service users and key stakeholders will be undertaken to furnish Cabinet with the outcome, for Members to best consider if charges should be introduced and if consideration should be given to any categories of exemption/concession (i.e. to pupils eligible for free school meals) or a cap applied to parents/carers with multiple children making use of the provision.</p> <p>In the main, the Welsh language is not going to be treated less favourably than the English language as the proposals apply to all sectors. However, learners transported to schools may potentially be disadvantaged due the tight timescales associated with the childcare element. In order to mitigate these risks, it is proposed that some flexibility in relation to accessing the additional childcare element is provided for those learners</p>

	arriving by school transport. A charge will however apply for these non-efsm learners for childcare irrespective of the arrival time prior to the commencement of free breakfast club provision.
Date	10 th November 2023
Please outline who this proposal affects? (Service Users, Employees, Wider Community)	The proposal will affect pupils, parents/carers, employees and the wider community.

<p>What are the aims of the policy, and how do these relate to the Welsh Language?</p>	<p>The aim of the policy is to consider the introduction of termly charges for the additional childcare element of free breakfast clubs in RCT. The Consultation will be undertaken in both Welsh and English, and the proposed changes apply to both English and Welsh medium settings.</p>
<p>Who will benefit / Could the policy affect Welsh language groups? If so, list them here.</p>	<p>The proposals will ensure continuity of service and as a consequence Welsh language groups such as pupils, parents/carers, employees, and the wider community will continue to be able to deal with the Council in the Welsh language, and access provision in Welsh medium settings, if they choose to do so.</p> <p>The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is focused on developing a wide range of actions to promote access and growth in the Welsh language and provision, and access to childcare in Welsh medium settings will be potentially beneficial, whilst recognising that there will be some cost implications. However, the costed element of the additional childcare could be a barrier to some families, and children may lose out on opportunities to interact with others in Welsh as a consequence of this. A drop off in numbers accessing the additional childcare element, and potentially free breakfast clubs, may also potentially adversely impact on staffing. However, the need for Welsh medium staff in the County Borough remains high, with many available employment opportunities within the Welsh medium education sector.</p> <p>Nevertheless, access to free breakfast clubs will remain in place in all Welsh medium primary school settings.</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, where the percentage of the population in the county borough, who can speak Welsh, increasing 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 Local Authorities in Wales to see an increase in the percentage of Welsh speakers. Others Local Authorities included Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tydfil. All of these are neighbouring county boroughs, which could demonstrate that our region is seeing some positive trends in terms of increases in the numbers of 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 this may potentially have on the services we provide.</p>

The Annual Population Survey collects information about respondents' Welsh speaking ability and includes a question on how often people speak Welsh. It is updated quarterly, so is a more up-to-date source than the Census. The most recent Annual Population Survey, for the quarter ending June 2023, reported that 20.2% of respondents living in the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf said they could speak Welsh, compared to the All-Wales figure of 29.7% of respondents. This can be further broken down into the data contained in the table below:-

Welsh Language Skills of Residents – (%)		
	County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf	Wales
Can Read Welsh	18.89%	26%
Can Write Welsh	17.2%	23.9%
Can Understand Spoken Welsh	23.0%	33.5%

The data demonstrates that in each Welsh language skill area, the 'all Wales' percentages are notably higher than the County Borough percentages. However, the current data shows a significant increase in the number of residents that can read, write, and understand spoken Welsh since the last Census in 2011.

When asked about their frequency of speaking Welsh, the table below provides a breakdown of responses of respondents living in the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf compared to the all Wales responses.

Frequency of Speaking Welsh by Residents – (%)		
	County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf	Wales
Speak Welsh Daily	7.4%	15.0%
Speak Welsh Weekly	5.1%	5.8%
Use it Less Often	5.2%	7.4%

The data demonstrates that the percentage of respondents that speak Welsh daily is far lower for the County Borough than the all Wales percentage.

Other relevant data or research

N/A

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 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	If Cabinet approve the proposal to introduce charges for the additional childcare element of breakfast clubs, and learners access this provision, then this will potentially have a neutral impact on pupils, parents/carers, staff and the wider community's ability to use the Welsh language.	Pupils who attend breakfast clubs, parents/carers, employees and the wider community are currently able to deal with the Council through the medium of Welsh, if they choose, and our website and correspondence is fully compliant with the relevant Welsh Language Standards.	Stakeholders will be able to use the Welsh language when they are given the opportunity to express their views on the proposal during the consultation process. The full consultation process will comply with the requirements of The Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015

		<p>The above Groups will continue to have opportunities to use the Welsh Language and have dialogue with the Council through this medium if they choose as there will be continuity of service. Catering Services will also continue to promote the use and development of the Welsh Language in its operation.</p> <p>However, as some families that are not efsm many may be able to afford to pay for the additional childcare aspect there is a possible risk that there might be a reduction in the numbers of learners accessing this and the breakfast club provision. If this is the case, then there will potentially be reduced opportunities for some learners to use the Welsh language prior to the start of the school day.</p>	<p>Phone greetings are also bilingual and service users are encouraged to communicate with the provision in Welsh.</p> <p>Staff are actively encouraged to greet pupils and parents/carers in Welsh and use the Welsh Language in work.</p> <p>All new starters must complete Level 1 Welsh, if they are not already a Welsh speaker, and there are opportunities to learn Welsh in the Council. Staff who have completed Level 1 are actively encouraged to move onto Level 2 and to progress through the levels.</p>	<p>Breakfast club staff will be encouraged to access Welsh lessons as part of our strategic actions as detailed in Outcome 7 of the new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.</p> <p>A proactive marketing campaign will be undertaken to encourage engagement in both childcare and breakfast club provision.</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>The proposal would have a neutral impact on the numbers and/or percentages of Welsh speakers with pupils, parents/carers, employees, and the wider community.</p> <p>Breakfast clubs will continue to actively promote and use the Welsh Language in line with statutory standards.</p> <p>Staff are actively encouraged to learn Welsh and speak Welsh in work by accessing the Councils free Welsh Courses.</p>	<p>Staff are encouraged to learn and speak Welsh and are provided with staff updates from the Translation unit on training opportunities.</p> <p>All new starters must complete a Level 1 Welsh course if they are not already a Welsh speaker , and there are opportunities to learn Welsh in the Council. Staff who have completed Level 1 are actively encouraged to move on to Level 2 and to progress through the levels.</p> <p>Breakfast clubs have a number of staff, who are Welsh speakers to varying degrees of fluency, who can assist with pupil, parent/carers, staff enquiries.</p>	<p>Catering Services are working with the Translation Unit to develop a tailored Level 1 Welsh course for breakfast club staff. They will be able to learn Welsh words and phrases that would be specific to their role.</p>

			The Service is currently unaware of the number of pupils, parents/carers who are Welsh speakers.	
<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 would have a neutral impact on the opportunities to promote the Welsh language with pupils, parents/carers, employees and the wider community.</p> <p>Breakfast clubs are already promoted through the medium of Welsh on the Council's website and the continuation of the service, will allow opportunities to further encourage and promote the Welsh language.</p> <p>All communication is bi-lingual. Enquiries in Welsh are responded to in Welsh and language choice will be recorded for future reference. All consultation is undertaken bi-lingually.</p>	<p>Pupils and parents/carers have daily contact with breakfast club staff in person where the Welsh language can be promoted as all staff have to undertake Level 1 training. Staff are provided with opportunities to learn Welsh by accessing the Councils free Welsh Courses.</p>	<p>Pupils and parents/carers will continue to receive a service from the Council so the Welsh language will continue to be promoted and all correspondence will be bi-lingual.</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 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>Positive</p>	<p>The proposal will have a positive impact on compliance with the Council's Statutory Welsh Language Standards as the proposal is not reducing the Council's ability to deliver service through the medium of Welsh. The review will provide an opportunity to strengthen the standards.</p> <p>All digital and offline communications are bi-lingual. All consultation with pupils and parents/carers is undertaken bi-lingually.</p> <p>We have a good working relationship with the Translation Unit, ensuring that all our documentation, letters, online</p>	<p>The consultation process will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, as will all correspondence with pupils and parents/carers.</p> <p>Staff will be enrolled on a proposed bespoke Level 1 Welsh course with the aim of further development.</p>	

		material is compliant with the Welsh standards.		
	Neutral	<p>We will 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>All consultation documents and correspondence will be produced in both Welsh and English and in accordance with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.</p> <p>All digital and offline communications are bi-lingual and any enquires/complaints in Welsh will be replied to in Welsh.</p> <p>Staff are encouraged to learn Welsh and speak Welsh in work. All new starters must complete Level 1 Welsh, if they are not already a Welsh speaker.</p>	All website content, correspondence with pupils and parents/carers, signage, greetings etc are bi-lingual.	
Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably than the English language				

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?
We will require staff to complete the tailored Level 1 Welsh course and continue to actively encourage staff to complete the Council's free Welsh Courses.	On-going	Training Team, Catering Services
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?	
N/A	N/A	
N/A	N/A	

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
<p>Welsh Language Services welcome the points made in regard to this proposal. On the surface, the proposal is considered to have a neutral/positive effect on the Welsh Language as there will be a continuation of the service and, therefore, compliance will more than likely stay the same.</p> <p>As we consider the change in how the service is administered in more detail, however, there are some negative effects that need to be considered and mitigated where possible.</p> <p>First of all, the extra charges may cause the parents of non efsm children to be more reluctant to send their children to breakfast club. Indirectly, therefore, opportunities for pupils</p>	03.11.23	Comments received have been considered and included where appropriate.

<p>to use the Welsh Language could potentially be reduced if they do not attend the clubs. Furthermore, if there is a reduction in attendance numbers, the number of staff required could also be impacted. Here, we need to ensure that Welsh Language skills are not lost from the Service.</p> <p>Another aspect that requires consideration in terms of mitigation is the issue of transport to Welsh Medium (WM) schools compared English Medium (EM) settings. Given that there are specific times included within the proposal and that WM settings require transport in terms of distance and time, this could potentially act as a barrier for some parents. We must ensure that the Welsh Language is not affected disproportionately if this were to be the case and, mitigations should be implemented in event of this occurring.</p> <p>Other comments made are relatively minor but together could really strengthen proposal further if applied.</p>		
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation

Stage 5 – Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing

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

Following the Consultation, Cabinet will receive a further report on the outcome of the consultation.

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 -

Welsh language groups such as pupils, parents/carers, employees and the wider community will continue to be able to deal with the Council in the Welsh language, if they choose to do so, as there will be continuity of service. There are some neutral/positive Welsh Language implications associated with the proposal.

Stage 7 – Sign Off

Name of Officer completing the WLIA	Lisa Kidner	Director Name:	Gaynor Davies
Position	Service Manager, Catering 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>LJ Kidner</i>	Director Signature	<i>Gaynor Davies</i>
Date	10.11.23	Date	10.11.23

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH NOVEMBER 2023

LEARNING DISABILITY DAY SERVICES OFFER

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH CLLR G CAPLE, CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report informs the Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation on the proposed co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model for people with a learning disability. It also sets out recommendations regarding the next steps for the remodelling of the Council's day services in line with the Day Service Strategy and operating model.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Considers the feedback to the consultation on the proposed co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model for people with a learning disability and 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 the implementation of the proposed co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model for people with a learning disability as consulted upon, including the proposed commissioning intentions and market developments as part of the planned learning disability transformation programme.
- 2.3 Subject to 2.2 above, approves the remodelling of the Council's day service provision to a new East and West structure, including smaller community-based groups to ensure that services are delivered in a way that achieves the best possible individual outcomes for people, based on need and demand, whilst making the best use of Council resources.
- 2.4 Subject to 2.2 above, approves the permanent decommissioning of Treforest Learning Curve which has been closed since February 2020, due to significant damage sustained by Storm Dennis.

- 2.5 Subject to 2.2 above, approves a co-produced review of the Council's work-based projects to explore alternative care and support options for individuals who access them with commissioned third sector and supported living providers, and supported employment agencies and employers to better meet their personal outcomes while being more cost effective. .

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need to improve adult social care services is a key priority for Rhondda Cynon Taf and without transforming the way that services are provided, it would not be possible to meet people's changing expectations and needs within the resources available.
- 3.2 In order to achieve the transformation required and ensure the Council's day services offer meets the aspirations of current and future people with a learning disability and their families, a co-produced draft Day Services Strategy and operating model has been developed to address user led "My Day My Way" engagement priorities.
- 3.3 Recent consultation undertaken supports implementation of the co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model, thereby ensuring that the Council's future day services offer for people with a learning disability achieves the best possible individual outcomes for people, whilst making the best use of Council resources.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 [In July 2021](#), the Cabinet considered a report on the Council's learning disability day services offer. The report provided key information, including feedback from engagement activity already undertaken by Cwm Taf People First, which evidenced the need to transform the Council's day service provision for people with a learning disability. As a result, Cabinet agreed:
- the on-going engagement with people with a learning disability, their families and carers, staff and partners and the proposal to co-produce a new Day Opportunities Strategy to transform the Council's current day service offer and future service provision;
 - to receive a further report that presents the co-produced draft Day Services Strategy for people with a learning disability for approval prior to formal public consultation.
- 4.2 [In May 2023](#), the Cabinet considered a report on the extensive user led "My Day, My Way" engagement activity undertaken in the development of a new co-produced draft Day Services Strategy and operating model proposal for people with a learning disability.

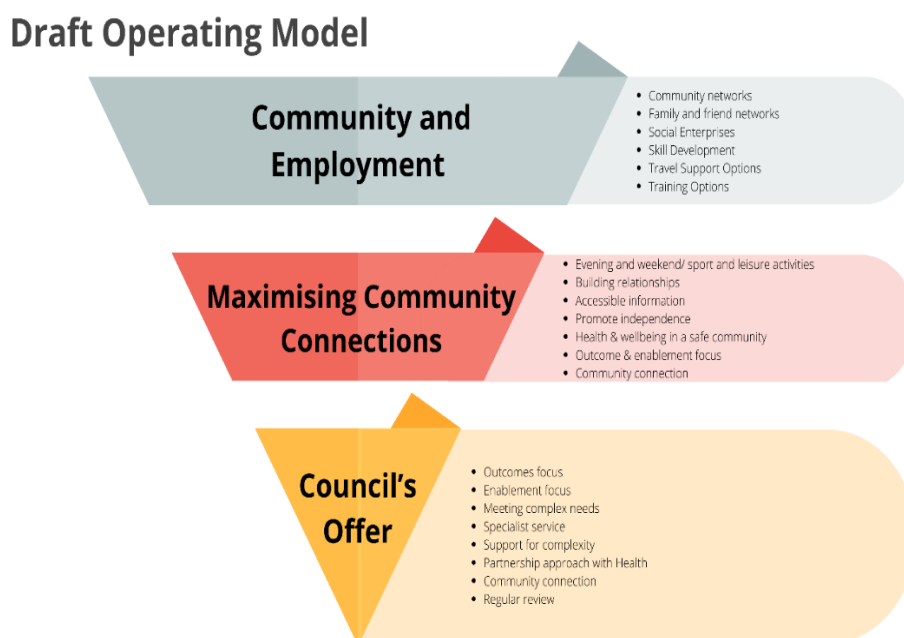
4.3 A copy of the “My Day My Way” engagement activity and feedback can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T75_c3RNi1A. The priorities people have told us that they want to be addressed include:

- people feel safe and healthy.
- building community connections.
- maximising digital engagement and building and improving connections.
- providing more accessible options during the daytime, evening, and weekends.
- people receive the best support to suit their needs, including more paid employment and volunteering opportunities.
- improving access to public transport which meets people's needs.
- people have a good place to live.

4.4 Member’s will recall that in order to respond to what people told us through the “My Day My Way” engagement, it was proposed that we refocus the delivery of the Council’s day services based on this feedback as well as national and local priorities and good practice evidence. The proposal presented to the Cabinet in May 2023 was to move away from approaches of solely providing ‘day care in centres’ to instead focus on key strategic priorities for people with a learning disability and support the way in which the Council provides and commissions day services for the future. A new co-produced draft Day Services Strategy, shown in the infographic below, was developed from what people told us during the “My Day My Way” engagement, setting out the priorities needed to shape the Council’s day services offer.



4.5 Members will also recall that the regaining and developing of new skills, as well as the promotion of independence and wellbeing are essential elements within the draft co-produced Day Services Strategy. It was recognised that people benefiting from day services will have different levels of need and that this might change over time as people's needs increase due to age or illness or as people gain independence. Therefore, the Cabinet in May 2023 was also presented with an operating model, as shown in the infographic below, focused on three levels of support in acknowledgement that some people require a relatively short period of support to realise their aspirations whereas others may need longer term specialist intensive support.



Level 1: Community and Employment Offer

4.6 At this level people will be encouraged to recognise their existing strengths and support networks and / or community support options to maintain their health and wellbeing. This offer would promote independence, sustainability and prevent a reliance on longer-term or more intensive support provision. It would include the routine use of community resources such as leisure services, libraries, and open access groups to provide activities and social contacts for people within a community setting.

4.7 This offer would also focus on the use of community resources to provide activities such as training, volunteering, and employment for people within their local community.

Level 2: Maximising Community Connections

- 4.8 At this level there would be a focus on enabling individuals to regain their independence, with support for them to connect to their communities over a period of time. This could involve a programme of support which enables people to lead on developing their own services and deliver more themselves, including within a day centre environment which aims to enable people to achieve greater independence.
- 4.9 This level would be suitable for people with higher support needs and may involve development of microenterprises, pooling direct payments and supporting the community hubs. A differing commissioning approach is needed to achieve fundamental changes and based upon delivering an outcome focused approach, and maximising what the community can offer.

Level 3: Council's Offer

- 4.10 At this level there would be a focus on developing specialist support for people with complex needs, including those with physical and multiple learning disabilities. This would involve care and support with a focus on an individual's health and wellbeing with the involvement of multi-disciplinary teams (e.g. health, care management). Individuals would be supported to be able to access community-based groups like everyone else but may also involve an element of centre-based support. This offer would be suitable for people with more complex needs, in which dedicated staff would provide person-centred support, whilst offering choices and activities to enhance people's outcomes.
- 4.11 The in-house Complex Autism Service is a good example of how such tailored specialist support offers a preventative approach whilst individuals move through pathways into less intensive support.
- 4.12 Under this level, it is proposed:
- that the Council's day service provision is remodelled to a new East and West structure, including smaller community-based groups to ensure that services are delivered in a way that achieves the best possible individual outcomes for people, based on need and demand, whilst making the best use of Council resources.
 - that Treforest Learning Curve Day Centre would be permanently decommissioned with the continuation of the existing current provision received by people who previously accessed the Centre prior to its temporary closure in February 2020.

5. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK ON THE CO-PRODUCED DRAFT DAY SERVICES STRATEGY AND OPERATING MODEL PROPOSAL

- 5.1 At its meeting in May 2023, the Cabinet gave approval to consult on the proposed Day Services Strategy and operating model to help shape our learning disabilities service offer and to ensure that services are arranged and delivered in a way that achieves the best possible individual outcomes for people, whilst making the best use of Council resources.
- 5.2 Consultation started on 31st May 2023 and ended on 30th June 2023. The methodology described below was utilised to promote and collect the consultation feedback.
- 5.3 The consultation used an online and paper survey using Snap XMP to gain feedback on the proposals. A consultation booklet, including easy read was provided to all members of the Council's Learning Curve Day Centres and their families and staff as part the survey. To ensure wide outreach and involvement of the wider community the consultation was promoted on the Council's online consultation webpage and an email sent to key stakeholders to promote the consultation and encourage participation in the survey.
- 5.4 Detailed information regarding the survey consultation and feedback received are set out in the consultation report at Appendix 1. In total 168 survey responses were received.
- 5.5 The table below indicates who the respondents were - most (44%) being people with a learning disability.

Respondents	Analysis
Are you a:	
Person with a Learning Disability	71 (44%)
Staff	63 (39%)
Carer of a person with a Learning Disability	24 (15%)
Advocate for a person with a Learning Disability	1 (1%)
Other	4 (3%)
Base	168 (100%)

- 5.6 Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the differing level of support and proposed operating model. Below provides a summary of responses.

Level 1: Community and Employment Offer

5.7 Overall, most respondents agreed with the inclusion of Level 1: Community and Employment Offer in the proposed model, with 74% agreeing as shown in the table below.

Counts Analysis % Respondents	Total	Do you agree with Level of Support 1?		
		Yes (agree)	No (disagree)	Not Sure
Base	166	123 74%	34 21%	9 5%

5.8 Respondents feedback are included in Appendix 1, with some examples below:

*“This is definitely needed more in the community for people with low support needs who will feel valued and lead a fulfilling life and be treated equally and not tarnished with a disability” **member of staff.***

*“I think this is a good way of getting individuals out in the community and getting us involved in activities, meeting new friends” **person with a learning disability.***

5.9 Whilst the majority of respondents agreed with the inclusion of Level 1: Community and Employment Offer in the proposed model, there were some themes identified, including:

- limited employment opportunities
- lack of opportunities and infrastructure within the community
- transport links, and
- revamping of previous projects but also the recognition for the need for our offer to change.

Level 2: Maximising Community Connections

5.10 Overall, most respondents agreed with the inclusion of Level 2: Maximising Community Connections in the proposed model, with 67% agreeing as shown in the table below.

Counts Analysis % Respondents	Total	Do you agree with Level of Support 2?		
		Yes (agree)	No (disagree)	Not Sure
Base	165	111 67%	40 24%	14 9%

5.11 Respondents feedback are included in Appendix 1, with some examples below:

*I think this approach to maximise community connections is very exciting and will build stronger community options for the future” – **staff member.***

*“I would like to meet new people to make new friends and do activities with them like cooking” - **person with a Learning Disability.***

5.12 Whilst the majority of respondents agreed with the inclusion of Level 2: Maximising Community Connections in the proposed model, there were some themes identified, including:

- opportunities around direct payments and the resources to fund activities.
- staffing and support for people accessing the community resources
- development of opportunities and infrastructure within the community, and
- maximising community connections.

Level 3: Council’s Offer

5.13 Overall, most respondents agreed with the inclusion of Level 3: Council’s Offer in the proposed model, with 76% agreeing as shown in the table below.

Counts Analysis Respondents	%	Total	Do you agree with Level of Support 2?		
			Yes (agree)	No (disagree)	Not Sure
Base		164	125 76%	30 18%	9 6%

5.14 Respondents feedback are included in Appendix 1, with some examples below:

*“Two bespoke centres to provide the support for individuals is a sensible approach. Pooling the resources. Linking in with health, care managers and others to improve health and reduce demand on other services.” – **staff member.***

*“I would like to go out and work in the community” – **person with a Learning Disability.***

*“Day centres are an older model; I believe more volunteering projects would be beneficial for those with lower support needs” – **staff.***

5.15 Whilst the majority of respondents agreed with the inclusion of Level 3: Council’s Offer in the proposed model, there were some themes identified, including:

- travel time for individuals

- need to invest in our estate to build modern and bespoke facilities for the future and need to focus on assistive technology.

5.16 In addition, People First held 12 sessions for individuals with a learning disability, to offer support with the consultation. 3 staff drop-in sessions were held in Rhondda, Cynon and Taf Learning Curve Day Centres.

People First Sessions

5.17 Overall, a total of 53 surveys were completed during the 12 sessions held for people with a learning disability. Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the proposed operating model and their feedback is summarised below:

Level 1: Community and Employment Offer

5.18 Overall, most respondents agreed with the inclusion of Level 1: Community and Employment Offer in the proposed model, with 89% agreeing as shown in the table below.

Do you agree with this?	
Yes	47 (89%)
No	0 (0%)
Not Sure	6 (11%)

5.19 Respondents feedback are included in Appendix 1, with some examples below:

- “More value for money.”*
- “Builds self-esteem.”*
- “Gives purpose.”*
- “Offers me choice.”*
- “I like the structures”.*
- “People would like to have the opportunity to volunteer and have paid work”.*

5.20 Whilst the majority of respondents agreed with the inclusion of Level 1: Community and Employment Offer in the proposed model, there were some themes identified, including:

- being able to manage in a work environment, and
- impact on benefits.

Level 2: Maximising Community Connections

- 5.21 Overall, most respondents agreed with the inclusion of Level 2: Maximising Community Connections in the proposed model, with 92% agreeing as shown in the table below.

Do you agree with this?	
Yes	49 (92%)
No	4 (8%)
Not Sure	0 (0%)

- 5.22 Respondents feedback are included in Appendix 1, with some examples below:

“I like the idea of developing own services”.

“Needs to be a flexible model.

“Community Hubs are a great idea. There are lots of things closing down making it more difficult for people”.

“It is good for people to get out and about”.

- 5.23 Whilst the majority of respondents agreed with the inclusion of Level 2: Maximising Community Connections in the proposed model, the need to support people in developing community connections with the right support was an identified theme and some comments are included below:

“Don’t like the idea – I like one-to-one support”.

“Should not be used to cut back on council services”.

“People would need support to do this”.

“Being scared and anxiety stops some people”.

“Not everyone can communicate with us”.

“Some environments are too noisy”.

Level 3: Council’s Offer

- 5.24 Overall, most respondents agreed with the inclusion of Level 3: Council’s Offer in the proposed model, with 98% agreeing as shown in the table below.

Do you agree with this?	
Yes	52 (98%)
No	1 (2%)
Not Sure	0 (0%)

- 5.25 Respondents feedback are included in Appendix 1, and whilst there were some concerns noted in relation to staffing levels, the inclusion of Level 3: Council's Offer was well received:

"Better to have more specialised centres".

"Some people are bored in day centre, so a mix of different things is better."

"It's a good plan- if it comes together."

Staff Drop-ins

- 5.26 A total of 33 staff took part in the sessions and were asked whether they agreed with the proposed operating model and their feedback is summarised below.

- 5.27 There was general support around the different levels of the proposed operating model with positive comments on the "My Day My Way" co-production and engagement approach. However, staff raised similar themes to those identified above, including:

- lack of community opportunities for people they support,
- limited infrastructure to support employment and volunteering,
- need for investment in our buildings, and
- impact and possible changes to on their role moving forward.

- 5.28 In conclusion, the proposed new co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model has been positively received and clearly evidences that people who use our services are ready for change and wanting to co-design, lead and develop on services. There were no themes identified during the consultation that could not be mitigated.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Taking into account the outcome of the consultation, which was informed by what people told us through the "My Day My Way" engagement and supported by information contained in this and previous reports, it is recommended that the Cabinet agree the implementation of the proposed co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model for people with a learning disability, as set out in paragraph 4.4 and 4.12 above.

- 6.2 At its meeting in May 2023, the Cabinet will recall that the following commissioning intentions and market developments had been identified to form the basis of a recommended action plan for implementation and remodelling of the current day services offer in line with the agreed operating model:

6.2.1 To ensure people feel safe and healthy we will:

- Reduce inequalities by providing improved and equitable services across Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Provide access to high quality, safe and effective support.
- Promote the importance of maintaining friendships and relationships to reduce loneliness.

6.2.2 To continue building connected communities we will:

- Maximise opportunities within the Community Hubs.
- Develop partnership working with all areas of the Council.
- Develop micro and social enterprises.
- Provide more paid employment and volunteering opportunities.

6.2.3 To maximise digital engagement and build and improve connections we will:

- Produce accessible, easy-read information.
- Develop an accessible website.
- Promote and encourage use of the Insight App.
- Improve our offer for technology skills using assistive technology and technology support sessions.

6.2.4 To improve access to public transport which meets people's needs we will:

- Expand the travel training opportunity.
- Maximise opportunities with representative groups to share experiences to travel together.
- Influence public transport providers to recognise people's needs. Including accessibility of timetables.

6.2.5 To provide more accessible options for opportunities during the day, evenings, and weekends we will:

- Maximise what the community can offer for example, Community Hubs and other resources.
- Support our stakeholders to develop more opportunities and options that ensure collaboration and coproduction.
- Establish and promote what is available.

6.2.6 To ensure people receive the best support to suit their needs we will:

- Provide specialist care and support for people with complex needs, including those with autism and physical and multiple learning disabilities.
- Explore with our existing partners and providers to develop a tailored service within the community and establish wider community connections.
- Provide tailored support for employment and volunteering.

6.2.7 To ensure people have a good place to live we will:

- Embed co-production in the service design and delivery of “My Home My Way,” the next stage of the Learning disability Transformation programme in respect of our re-tender for supported living.
- We will build upon what people are already telling us in order to support people to have a good place to live.

6.3 If the proposed co-produced Day Strategy and operating model is approved by the Cabinet, an individual’s assessed eligible need may be met more appropriately by alternative provision through remodelling our existing service offer. Whilst it is appreciated that the implementation of the co-produced Day Strategy and operating model may cause anxiety for individuals who currently access the service and their families, Adult Services will ensure that:

- all existing day service individuals and their families will be fully supported with individual plans to meet their assessed needs;
- people with complex needs who currently use the Council’s day service, will continue to be supported under the proposed new service model based on their assessed need and risk;
- for others with lower needs, in particular those who currently access our work projects, we would work with them on an individual basis to identify alternative care and support choices in the community that would make for a stimulating and enjoyable experience.

6.4 The overall impact of the implementation of the proposed new model would be mitigated through the planned approach to gradually phase out non-complex care from within the Council’s day service provision, based on assessed need and risk. For those that might need our services in the future, only those with complex needs would be able to access day care services in the future. Those with non-complex needs would be signposted and supported to access other forms of support as part of the social work care and support planning process.

6.5 Having due regard to the consultation, there is a need for Adult Services to start to redesign its day services model for people with a learning disability to ensure our offer achieves the best possible individual outcomes for people in the more cost effective and efficient ways. Therefore, subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed that:

6.5.1 The Council's day service provision is remodelled and moves to a new East and West structure, alongside smaller community-based groups based on need and demand. If agreed:

- it will involve no change to an individual's level of care and support they receive. Care staff will also be relocated with them to promote a seamless transition and to provide continuity of care;
- officers will contact all current people registered at the Council's day service and their families to discuss the proposal with those directly affected and provide additional support and, if necessary, a reassessment to ensure their needs will be appropriately met;
- staff structures will need to be reviewed and any potential employment implications for staff will need to be consulted upon prior to any change in service;

6.5.2 A co-produced review of the Council's work-based projects, shown in the table below, is undertaken in line with the proposed operating model to explore alternative care and support options for individuals who access them to better meet their personal outcomes while being more cost effective, through for example:

- direct payments;
- commissioned third sector and supported living providers;
- supported employment agencies and employers.

However, it is expected that some individuals may need to access support in the Council's core day centres, based on a reassessment of their need and risk.

Work-based Project Name	Individuals accessing service	Total days attendance per annum	Cost per attendance	Total cost of Service
Aberaman Printing and Embroidery	7	588	£143	£83,952
Café 50	5	588	£163	£95,763
Learning Curve Catering	6	363	£336	£121,798
Cwm Cycling	12	525	£88	£46,200
Horticulture	10	988	£110	£108,625
Maesnewydd Garden Centre	24	1038	£215	£223,063
Rhondda Cycling	8	338	£178	£60,075
Total	72	4425		£739,475

If agreed:

- all individuals will be offered opportunities to access alternative work-based support opportunities or be supported to access different support to achieve what matters to them, in line with their assessed needs;
- the proposal may cause anxiety for individuals who currently access the projects and their families. Officers will contact them to discuss the proposal with those directly affected and will offer the additional support of a social care worker or advocate, as necessary;
- staff structures will need to be reviewed and any potential employment implications for staff will need to be consulted upon prior to any change in service.

7. CONSULTATIONS / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 Engagement activity has already been undertaken in the development of the draft co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model proposal for people with a learning disability.
- 7.2 At its meeting in May 2023, the Cabinet gave approval to undertake targeted consultation on the proposals reported to enable them to make informed decisions on the future of the Council's day services for people with a learning disability in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 7.3 Consultation started on 31st May 2023 and ended on 30th June 2023 and consultation feedback is available at Appendix 1 and a summary included in Section 5 above. There will be further appropriate consultation and engagement with people with a learning disability, and their families, staff and other key stakeholders, subject to Cabinet approval, of the recommendations in Section 2 above.

8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) informed by the consultation feedback regarding the proposed co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model for people with a learning disability has been completed and has informed the final recommendations set out in this report. A copy of the EIA is attached at Appendix 2.
- 8.2 The key potential impacts of the proposals on people with protected characteristics particularly people with disabilities and carers are set out in the EIA. Whilst there are changes to the Council's day services provision and offer for people with a learning disability currently supported by Adult Services, the focus will continue to be on meeting

assessed care and support needs through existing and, if relevant, new provision so any potential impact will be minimalised.

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

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared (attached at Appendix 3) and confirms there are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications associated with implementing the recommendations set out in Section 2 above.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The proposed new Strategy and operating model, if agreed, would provide a more cost-effective and sustainable day service offer, the implications of which will be considered as part of the proposed implementation action plan.

- 10.2 In addition, a review of work-based projects, if agreed, could generate an estimated revenue saving of around £220,000 in a full year, whilst continuing to fully meet the assessed needs of individuals. These savings would be ring-fenced and reinvested back into Adult Services budgets enabling the Council to maintain these essential care and support services.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 11.1 The Council's day service provision 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, but it is not a specific statutory provision.

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

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

- 12.1 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.

12.2 The proposals in this report, subject to approval, would allow the Council to meet the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. They meet the needs of people with a learning disability and their families and carers, including those with more complex needs are more sustainable and increases focus on the services offered, which promote choice, wellbeing, and independence, resulting in the wellbeing goals of a Wales of cohesive communities, a healthier Wales and more equal Wales are supported. Due regard has also been made to the five ways of working, included in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

13. ELECTORAL WARDS AFFECTED

13.1 Subject to approval, the recommended proposals will most likely impact on people with a learning disability, their families and carers, and staff from across the County Borough.

14. CONCLUSIONS

14.1 This report provides key information evidencing the need to transform the Council's day service offer for people with a learning disability in order to:

- respond to the engagement feedback from people who use services and their families as to what they would like day services to look like and deliver now and in the future;
- meet the current and future increasing need and complexity of the people we support and develop sustainable opportunities for them;
- meet the expectations from people we support and their families and carers for more outcome-based opportunities focused on individual progression and achievement that promotes independence not dependence;
- recognise people's abilities, not disabilities, and that everyone with a learning disability can make a positive contribution to the community in which they live;
- improve the delivery of the day service offer, including the current employment and skills projects in the most efficient and cost-effective way.

- 14.2 In order to achieve the transformation required and ensure the Council's day service offer meets the aspirations of current and future people with a learning disability, it is proposed that the new co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model developed from what people told us during extensive "My Day, My Way" engagement, is implemented, as recommended in Section 2 of this report. In doing so, it will help shape the future service offer to ensure that services are arranged and delivered in a way that achieves the best possible individual outcomes for people and make the best use of Council resources.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH NOVEMBER 2023

LEARNING DISABILITY DAY SERVICES OFFER

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH
CLLR G CAPLE, CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE**

Background Papers

Cabinet: 20th July 2021

Cabinet: 15th May 2023

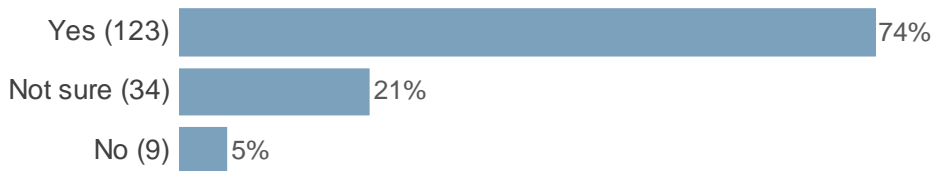
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Learning Disability Day Services Consultation

This report was generated on 07/07/23. Overall 168 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'. A total of 168 cases fall into this category.

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

Do you agree with this approach?



Is there anything you would like to say about this?

- I would like to return to day centre
- Would like day centre to reopen.
- I believe accessible training opportunities and support to find suitable volunteering is important, more suitable, learning disability specific volunteering opportunities are needed.
- facilities need to improve in communities for adults with changing bed and hoist facilities are these are often forgotten
- While I agree with this approach I do not feel that the infrastructure is set up to support this. There is a major lack of opportunities, projects and community resources to make this work. So unless the council intend to rectify this it will leave individuals with nothing to do. They will eventually fall through the cracks and become more and more isolated. Both Elite and Motivate have both tried this. Employers do not have the jobs at present and parents do not want benefits effected. this will also only work for individuals who's families will let them go out into the community unsupported. We have a lady who is competent to volunteer but her father will not let her access the community unsupported so that will leave her doing nothing as support will not be offered.
- I would like to get a paid employment job in a cafe. I would also like to learn first aid.
- Sometimes simply just being in their local area (community) is enough it allows opportunities to explore and just be with eachother and not all about doing. It has greater value!
- N/A
- this sounds good in pricinple, but how many individuals will actually get work oppurtunities and by who
- Would parents/carers be kept informed
- As long as there are facilities available
- i am often told from people who have attempted to provide volunteering services that there is no inferstructure for it, they end up searching for placements & they get nowhere with it, I fear that this looks good on paper however in reality it could leave vunerable people isolated and left without a service
- More support for the individuals the better
- This is definitely needed more in the community for people with low support needs who will feel valued and lead a fulfilling life and be treated equally and not tarnished with a disability.
- the bases been set up already, as i know due to past experience everything seems to stop
- Are there enough community resources that individuals want to do. enough choice?

Is there anything you would like to say about this?

This is great in principle. as long as there is enough resources within the community that is accessible.

On paper it looks very appealing , But i hope there is supprt and the resources are there to maintain this

Individuals will be supported to recognise their strengths, by who?

Personally I don't feel there will be enough community resources to provide meaningful activities for our individuals. We are already finding it difficult to find employment placements.

Hopefully the council will enable individuals to work within the community as have previously ensuring suitable businesses and areas are provided.

Currently, I feel there's a gap with regards to a team supporting individuals in this area. Everything is always put on the social worker, so I feel going forward, this shouldn't be added to their workload.

My daughter is not doing this she can't travel on her own

As I run a work project for adults who have a learning disability, this was the category that I thought our individuals would fit into. But having the categories explained to us by upper management, clarified that people who need little support are suited to this classification of Community and Employment. So this has been very confusing for staff working within the projects, as this information should have been made clearer sooner. I am sure that these services will be suitable for the people intended as it is geared towards adults who are able to operate within the community with very little support. I work within a day service setting, and this level of individuals do not tend to use day services.

I think this is a good way of getting individuals out in the community and getting us involved in activities, meeting new friends.

I'm not sure

I'm not sure

No

I wouldn't be able to be in this group as I need support with travel.I am not able to go new places on my own and I don't deal well with change or new people. And it could effect my benefits.

I don't want change I like what I do know it makes me happy and if that changed I would be very angry

I am a support worker for adults with learning disabilities and I feel strongly that this new approach is not in their best interests as many of the individuals can't cope with change and more importantly don't want change. The individuals I support feel they already have a job as we are in a work base and that they learn new skills every day and have reached new potentials since joining us. They would never cope with the day that is structured as employment with no care attached and therefore would not suit this group but are more than capable of a work environment with support as they have now. We have also had parents expressing concerns over how paid employment would effect their benefits and if these plans went ahead and individuals couldn't cope or didn't like the new structure then what would happen to them then. I have spoken to individuals I support and the feedback is clear that they don't want anything to change and they already their say their way so why change anything !!

While in theory I think this approach is very good , as far as the individuals that we support are concerned , thinking also of the individuals who access our services very very few of them would fit into this catergary.

No I have read through this information many times and I don't think it gives us anywhere near enough information to make a decision on whether it's a good thing or not. It's just a flash over no in depth information about exactly what is planned and how it will effect us really. My daughter has been attending this service for many years and is perfectly happy as things are and has amazing staff who treat her wonderful. They know her she knows them and her days are happy ones and she's made to feel part of the team and is valued and appreciated. Would this be the case if these changes went ahead.

I do agree but the opportunities are going to have to be available to access. I agree with the idea but the infrastructure needs to be in place to support the vision

Is there anything you would like to say about this?

I think it is wonderful that opportunities are being sought in the community, However, I wonder what the criteria is for low support needs? Does this need to be made more explicit and does this discriminate against those with higher support needs?

As someone who has worked for over twenty years with adults with learning difficulties, my primary concern is about their need for a break too. I have worked with some individuals that have not had a holiday throughout the time that I have worked with them, unless it has been imposed on them by the closure of service e.g. for Christmas week and Whitsun week. Should this model go ahead, I'd like to think that they, too, would have annual leave and other in-work benefits and not be expected to work continuously throughout the year without time off.

Having been directly involved in the past with day centre projects being merged with outside partnerships, Drive in my case. I do feel this would not be of benefit to the individuals I support or for the staff who are currently working here. When we were working with Drive the projects were not managed correctly and this affected staffs wellbeing. The project became very run down and dated, poor quality of items were on sale, the building was looking very run down with rotten windows etc, it really wasn't a nice environment to be working in. It has taken many years to rebuild the project back up and to build up our customers and community presence. Also would the individuals that currently attend still be able to access the project? Would staff keep their jobs or would they be re-deployed like the last time? Would staff be offered re-deployment if they do not what to join the new partnership? Out of 16 individuals who currently attend NOT ONE has mentioned that they would like to have paid employment. They enjoy what they do now and think of it has a job.

I feel that there is a need for the update of day service prevision however I think that on paper it sound excellent but in my 30 year of service I feel that there a lot of work still to be done as to access to community settings with regard's to accessibility and very limited community resources in some areas of RCT. To access the community it can be expensive and I think individuals will struggle with financing activity's they may want to participate in . There is also limitation on public transport due infrequency and cancelation or some routes eg Penderyn. As regards to social enterprising of some day service project there are negatives and positives. The individual I worked with on these projects have been offered opportunity's to seek payed employment and I would say ,most or a big percentage of individuals wanted to stay in the projects as a volunteer this is due to problems with their benefit if they were seeking employment . also my concerns are that the project become business lead rather than person centered. The positive would be that as a project leader we would be able work in a less restrained as regards to business eg able to have a social media presence a may have more access to funding for projects.

I would retain my independance by enabling me by increasing my days visiting the Learning Curve. this will improve my well being. I believe and my family believe two days is not enough.

more activities in my community . raising many areas

Phillip said he likes to be independent and do as much as he can for himself

Is there anything you would like to say about this?

In my experience where I have worked as a member of support staff for 18 years. When i first started the bases on which I worked were referred to as " The Employment and Training" bases. So planning to improve opportunities for adults with a learning disabilities is a technically a "revamp" of an old idea. My concerns are that there has been a lack of information to back these plans. I feel both staff and individuals have a right to be well informed. Only then we can make a good informed decisions. For agreeing to these changes without sufficient information. How do we know whether it could make a positive impact or not? Before the council acts on these proposals to go ahead with social enterprise ideas and thus gaining funding (by going into partnerships with outside companies). i.e. Vision Products. I feel there are many of questions still to be asked as well as answered. I acknowledge the fact that change can be good. Change can be embraced. But uncertainty, lack of information can cause a stressful situation among staff as well as staff morale. . Are staff going to be moved around to work in other bases? Are there other members of staff coming to our work bases coming to look at changing our tried and tested ways of working? We feel our jobs could be jepodized Are they looking to have us train their staff then replace us? There are many questions still not answered. Also I feel the individuals who are looking to come off their benefits and move onto full time employment is not without risk. Risk of losing their security. On a serious note,if they are unsuccessful in their employment pursuits to train and put a new claim in for benefits can be extremely testing for anyone can severely impact on daily life if things do not go to plan. .

I would like to know what proposals the council has to offer. Need to elaborate.

I think it is important for people with a learning disability who can use community services to do so. The issue over recent years has been the reduction in such services so would want to see some commitment to support this in action.

NA

IT'S A GOOD TIME TO DO WORK

NO

No

people get more opportunities

This is all very well but some families are afraid of letting their son /daughter have employment due to the lost of benefits and they hold them back .

don't think it for me

WOULD LIKE TO WORK AND TAKE PART IN LOCAL COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

VERY GOOD

I ALREADY WORK IN A CARE HOME AND WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE OR MAYBE DO ADDITIONAL DAYS

I WORK FOR PEOPLE FIRST AND ENJOY IT AND WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE

I would like more activities in the community suitable for me. I would like to work in an office more activities to keep busy, re-open day centre

I would have liked to have had a person to take Ian out in evening but my social worker said if he didn't want it there was no point

I'm unsure regarding the refocus of the learning disability projects. From my experience individuals currently attending are generally not looking to secure paid employment. Parents/carers also oppose supported paid employment, as they worry about benefits being affected. Also, some individuals currently attending the training projects would not have the ability to engage in paid employment, if the refocus is on a more enterprise model. Therefore, where would individuals attend as an alternative as they would not have the level of independence to access community options, or may not want to. How would we repurpose projects to facilitate this suggestion, and would new community settings/Vision Products be more cost effective?

I want to be able to go somewhere with my friends every day.

I don't want to work thank you

Is there anything you would like to say about this?

I am good with my hands I like carpentry and making things Like rugs

I like learning I can learn sewing and knitting

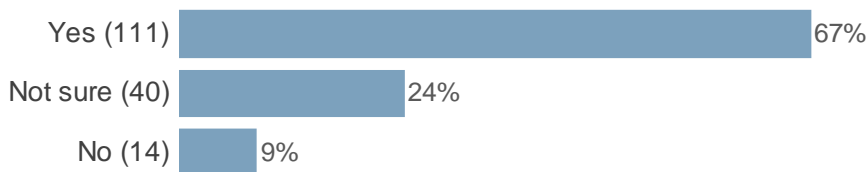
I like learning and doing stuff

No thank you

I am happy with the projects that I am doing now . but I would always like more options.

I worked in remploy in dinas for 35 years I want to enjoy myself and relax with my friends and go to day service

Do you agree with this approach?



Is there anything you would like to say about this?

I would like to attend more activities

some parents have been offered this service but refuse to pay and wanted full time day service as it cost nothing when they could be accessing the community daily

While in theory this is a good idea I do question, where are these "Community Hubs" that they will support? And what do they offer to these individuals? This will only be relevant for individuals with minimum support needs. Once again in theory this is great. But where is the infrastructure for it all? And will it be all set up before this is all rolled out? If not, once again it will leave individuals without a service and isolated.

I like attending day centre, but would like learn more things.

I have concerns for individuals with more profound learning disability

N/A

this again - has any oppurtunities already been found

Keep parents/carers informed

if this is supported properly & the people who access this service get the community presence they need, with oppertunitys available for them it could be a great success

Good independence for the individuals

There is loads of good work already going on in the community and utilising direct payments to help organisations cover costs is the way forward.

yes i do, but to get parent/carers to accept this and use the direct payment as they should doesn't always work. they tend to ask for both direct payments and day service

Individuals and staff have constantly expressed their wish to increase community presence , low staffing levels makes this near impossible. Families are already struggling to find staff to work with individuals so where will the staff come from to ensure individuals get to do any activities or outings from their direct payments. Care workers jobs are becoming less desirable as people are not willing to work the demanding role for such little pay or appreciation.

We are struggling to recruit and retain staff currently in the social care sector, to fulfil this offer for the individuals you would still need supporting staff to achieve this

Again would like to see a lot of support in this area

Again who will make decisions of who is suitable for what part of the plan.

Is there anything you would like to say about this?

Again Personally I don't feel there will be enough community resources to provide meaningful activities for our individuals. Some of the families we support do not want to pool their direct payments.

The council would have to ensure suitable places for individuals attend visit. Making sure access to facilities that maybe need throughout the day. Concerns would be families receiving direct payments but money not being put to support the individual the money is for.

The concept of this proposal sounds alright, but I am unable to comment fully as I do not work within this area, and may not foresee any issues that may evolve.

No it's good

I have a job in Aberaman in embroidery which I love and don't want to change that.

I need a lot of support so this group wouldn't suit me and I'm happy as I am don't want change

Many of the individuals I support would suit half the criteria to be put in this group but not all of it. Again they strongly express how happy and content they are in they daily service and do not want these changes. Parents feel that this proposals are not explain nearly clearly enough for them to have an informed decision on whether they want them or whether they would be a good thing. They know their family members enjoy and are happy now and what emotions will any changes spark.

Again I would say that this sounds like an excellent way to go forward but as before the individuals that we support on the whole would not meet the criteria to access these community hubs etc. as they would need continued support, as they currently do access these services and enjoy, it giving them a sense of purpose and well being and doing their self esteem a world of good. It would be a real shame if they had to stop accessing these services because the support was not there , they would miss out and end up not having the quality of life that they are at presently enjoying.

As I said in above box I haven't enough information to make an informed decision. My daughter seems to partly fit into this group but not fully so how would this be decided and by who. If my daughter doesn't meet all the criteria for this group then where would she fit in

I agree with the idea and believe this is a great way to meet the peoples needs. As long as support, places for info on how to proceed and other examples to see how they work in practice

I feel that this is very person-centred and would maximise opportunities for social communication in a range of meaningful environments, so long as this is decided in consultation with the individual. It would be beneficial for them to have clear functional goals for enhancing communication skills as well as participation in activities of daily living.

I don't think I know enough to comment on this. Although I think it a very good idea to maximise community connections, however, what sort of microenterprises are envisioned? What would they look like? Are they inclusive? How will this enable individuals to connect to their communities? How do you deal with unrealistic expectations and perceived abilities?

Who would manage/monitor this? Not all communities have community hubs. Also not all community facilities have appropriate disable toilets/changing rooms. Would travel training be provided, if so by who?

I don't know enough about these offers and what they mean to make a judgment. Not sure what 'microenterprises' involves or what benefits pooling direct payments can bring or what community hubs provide.

I have concerns around this however the fact is that I would love to see individuals have a more person centered service ,and can see it working well for some people, as long as there the right level of support by staff and families . In my experience and speaking to other staff , especially during the winter months that it is very hard to find to find activities ,and on occasions parents and families are on a tight budget and unable to pay to accesses activities ,which can be expensive. I have often seen staff just walking around supermarkets desperate to find shelter in bad weather . Pooling direct payment again has to be manage well and ensuring individuals are compatible and in agreement to how they share their time with no just a cost cutting practice. I have worked in the community myself delivering classes and during the day time there seems to be more provision for elderly groups and limited groups for younger people .

Is there anything you would like to say about this?

more community hubs in RCT with more information

I feel the idea of pooling direct payments is good. When I spoke with an individual about this she understood and quite liked the idea she could possibly save some money and at the same time meet up with friends

I would like more detailed information.

I think for individuals to be more creative with their support packages enables them to have more control. Assurance and governance around this could be an issue?

I need support

NA

NO

NO

Accessing the community is a good thing , but will parents have the time and want to take they son/daughter along to a activity on a daily or regular basis as well as paying for each activity, when they can access activities free at the Day Centre.

DONT UNDERSTAND POOLING FINANCES

ABOUT TIME

NOT SURE NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND

NOT COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND

I would like to meet new people to make new friends and do activities with them like cooking

Nick enjoys going to the hub Tylorstown rugby, going with the staff to various activities

I'm concerned about the lack of community options, I feel there should be more. However, I also feel with more communication on activities/options individuals would like to try that further options can be developed. I think this approach to maximise community connections is very exciting, and will build stronger community options for the future

No thank you

No thank you

No thank you

No thanks

No thanks

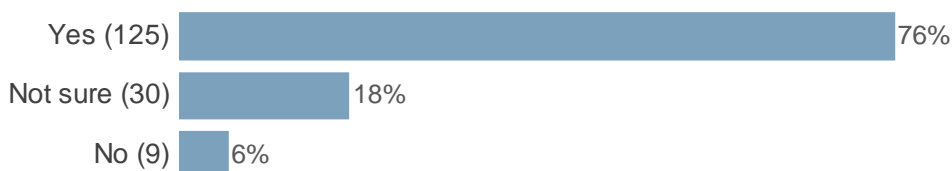
No thank you

Sounds like something I would enjoy

Not now

No thankyou

Do you agree with this approach?



Is there anything you would like to say about this?

I would like day centres to re open

I used to enjoy going to day centres

Would like to return to day centre

Day centres are an older model, I believe more volunteering projects would be beneficial for those with lower support needs

community centers need to get better facilities and locations as most local services are closing

I completely agree with this. Individuals with complex support needs will benefit from this. However funding must be made available to allow the centers and community based groups to provide all the necessary technology and equipment to fully support the complex individuals who will access them.

ii THINK THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH MORE PROFOUND DISABILITIES WOULD SE AT A DISADVANTAGE

The needs to be trust in order to achieve this which will only happen if support is consistent.

N/A

I agree wqith this and can see it happening

keep autism specific bases such as abercynon, rhondda and gelli .

Keep parents/carers informed

Groups are great for the individuals, it gets each person get to know eachother on a daily basis

There will always be a need for this service so that everyone has the chance to engage and socialise.

but due to the ongoing pay grade disruptions then this may suffer to a degree

this approach ahs already been implemented through the years and then the majority of community units closed and individuals returned to big centres. why do it again if it was felt they weren't appropriate then /

RCT is a huge area, what happens to individuals that possibly don't fall in to the east/west Geographic's. Will they still be able to get specialist support? Are they able to recruit more staff to fulfil this ?

would like to see this happening but in some cases resources are not met such has assistive technology,

Half day service and half community based service sounds like a good idea but where is the support coming from? People with autism learn differently, no good putting someone on the autistic spectrum with someone with challenging behaviour for example.

I feel we need bespoke centres in the three catchment areas. If the individuals have to travel on transport for a considerable length of time this could lead to behaviors or health issues.

Supporting individuals with higher needs and being vulnerable just having 2 hubs so far apart and nothing in Taf would mean more time/distance travelling to and from centres , the staff being expected to do this? Having a smaller main centre for individuals with complex needs as a permanent base would make more sense. As many individuals would need greater support and possibly equipment to support them. Also taking into consideration medication, personal care etc

Is there anything you would like to say about this?

I support individuals at day service, within a true work setting. They are involved in the complete process of production and the running of the workplace. They are engaged in activities according to their ability and are supported to improve and learn new skills. This work is unpaid, however the service offers an important period of their time as their engagement within this setting all beneficial to their social and mental well-being. Although the individuals I support semi-fit within this category, but there are no work opportunity available to them. I feel that their skills, talent and knowledge that they have developed will be lost and their potential to learn more in this field will be stifled. In fact I would class this proposal as a backward step, by removing the opportunity to engage in voluntary work and training, a concept which most of us take for granted. The emotional and mental impact that the working environment has on each individual is immense. All are so proud that they have a job, albeit unpaid, which gives them satisfaction and self-worth. To quote one of my individuals, who said "Me and my dad are the only people who work in our family," which she said with pride. This is a poorly constructed category and doesn't take into account peoples aspirations, values and social standing that our individuals perceive and hold in high esteem.

It's good

I don't want things to change for me I'm very happy with what I do now and feel comfortable with staff who support me. I would be very upset if that changed

I want things to stay as they are I'm happy with things and I learn new skills everyday and my staff are great

Like in previous group the individuals I support would partly fit into this group but partly would be too independent and skilled for it and if they were put into this group because they didn't totally fit into previous one then they would be wasting their potential and lose all the skills and confidence that we have worked extremely hard to instill in them. I feel that individuals have far too many different abilities skills knowledge and potential to possibly fit them all into just three groups and therefore would be unjustified to try and do so. The whole point to this is more Centre based choices for individuals and for them to have their day their way but as far as I can see this is the exact opposite as many fall into the missing gaps between these 3 groups and would be placed out of their control into a group which doesn't really fit them but it's the closest they fit into. The individuals I support strongly feel they have their day their way already and have a valid role in their role and don't want things to change.

This is the approach that most concerns the individuals that I support, individuals that are capable but need that extra support, and also those of a more complex nature. Two bespoke centres sounds fantastic but I am concerned how this will be funded. Person centred communication is wonderful in theory but again needs a budget to accommodate it, that is staff and resources.

My daughter only seems to partly fit into this group too so what would be the deciding factor between the two groups. If she was placed into this group for example I think her abilities would be wasted. She is very capable and motivated but would be held back in this group but is not quite independent enough for the other groups. I really don't understand why the service needs to change when it works as it is. If it's as in the title MY DAY MY WAY then leave things alone as that's exactly what the service gives my daughter now. These plans seem to go directly against that title as it would be my day in whatever group the powers that be think you fit in and if you don't like it then you have little or no choice anyway

I really like the idea of a combination approach to an individual's daily timetable. Speech and Language Therapy (Health) are keen to support Day centres in developing their Inclusive Communication Strategies so that individuals have the best opportunities. As useful as assistive technology can be, we also need to consider low-tech support tools (e.g. paper-based systems) for those who are unable to access technology due to cognitive difficulties. It is not only an individual's ability to express themselves that we should consider, but also to have capable environments that can support their understanding e.g. through routines, visual planners. I have been very impressed by the team, at Llwynypia Day centre, who are very innovative and creative in their ideas for individuals and very focussed on enhancing skill development.

Day centres should always have their place for those that need it because, unfortunately, some people will never need less intensive support, through no fault of their own.

Is there anything you would like to say about this?

I agree with this but also there is a need for updating building to ensure the best care is given for these individuals at the moment we are in building that are too small have limited wheelchair accesses and is need of repair, and not really suitable for the need of individuals. We are seeing more individuals with more complex needs coming into the service and we should be providing appropriate environment for individuals. As a team leader would like also to see more involvement again with review meeting for individuals as this has fallen by the way side very much in the last few years.

This would be beneficial re specialist support. At this time I would not come fall into this bracket.

It sounds all well and good in my opinion. (I am not sure as again there is a very vague somewhat limited information on this available at the moment) It would be reassuring to this group of individuals if these changes are implemented.

I think more Centres are needed and service users reintroduce to day Centres

Would this mean closing some Day Centres?

Two bespoke centres to provide the support for individuals is a sensible approach. Pooling the resources. Linking in with health, care managers and others to improve health and reduce demand on other services.

This also applies to me

NA

COOKERY NEXT WEEK

NO

NO

Better staffing levels need to be considered as well as being better paid and recognized for the work they do and the creativity that they bring to the job.

I WOULD LIKE TO GO OUT AND WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

MORE INFORMATION TO BE PASSED ON TO STAFF TO MAKE THEM AWARE OF THE FUTURE PLANS

at the moment I don't need these facilities

Anything that helps the clients is making life better, and more like a better life than they would have had

We need investment in buildings for the future, to provide specialist services for adults with a learning disability, this includes buildings similar to the scope of new 21st Century schools, with modern and bespoke facilities. Assistive technology options are also paramount, and expected, as young people are losing skills when leaving a fully equipped environment at school or college, when transferring to adult services. We therefore need investment to ensure buildings can meet the needs of individuals with complex health needs, pmlD.

I want to do what I want every day

I used to go to day center with my friends I want to go out every day I want to go to charity shops

I used to go to day centre with my friends I want to go out every day

I used to go to day centre with my friends I want to have coffee mornings with people

I like day centre

No thank you

I like day centre and the activities I do there I like Cambrian lakeside too

I want to do what I want every day I want to go to day centre and cinema

No thank you

Is there anything you would like to say about our plans?

I would love to return to day centre and go on day trips

It is great to hear that the offer for individuals is being reviewed across RCT

I really hope this comes into place, I believe we should be looking at what the individuals want following the "my day, my way" and I believe this is to be able to access the community more. Working in Autism services I do think there is such need for this service, it has such a positive impact on individuals lives- using the TEACCH approach.

not sure if the infrastructure is there to support a lot of what has been suggested

it would work well if there was enough staff for community bases but currently shutting as not enough staff to cover some days

I do worry as I have said that this proposal will go through and be rolled out before everything is set in place to fully support the individuals, and their families that it will effect. And I worry that some individuals, and families will fall through the cracks of the system. Also, the care managers that are there for the individuals need to be fully on board with it all and look wider and work harder to support the changes.

N/A

Unsure due to disruption of staff teams, times and days of working would they likely to change to ensure individuals get the most of community visits. As of now there are not many community hubs offering free groups that are suitable for some individuals.

not sure about these plans/or parents carers take on them either.

Anything that will help individuals feel wanted and helpful is a good think. Giving them a purpose and make them feel like part of the community is always a good thing.

As long as it benefits the Individuals and is not a look good exercise i am all for it.

i am looking forward to seeing if a change in attitude towards volunteer work and community presence gives the service a new exciting way of working with our beautiful people

the plan sounds great, i would have to see it up and running, before i commit to an answer

not sure

Just more we can do for each individual, the better for their independence and well being.

I have worked a long time in the service and have seen things change for the better and then return to how they were as they failed, in an ideal world this would be a fab way forward, but in the real world it wouldnt work, also the way things are at present and how they are trying to spilt the service by grade 5 staff and grade 6 staff is not fair.

i think we should be supporting our individuals who can work/volunteer in community centres to find these individuals. moving on our current individuals to placements so we can have more individuals coming through the system and others can get more support wih what they need to.

As i already stated on previous questions people are not willing to start working as care workers for such little pay and appreciation, so where will the staff come from to provide more 1-1 support ? Your plans appear to be what day services were years ago, employment groups for more able individuals , skills side for more complex needs. we then had mobility and work placement teams to travel train individuals to Centre or the work placements the team had found. why were these stopped when it now appears you feel this is the way forward. You want 2 main centres and small community units , you had this years ago and subsequently shut them all. why do you want to reintroduce this and where will the money come from to pay for these separate buildings ? Covid showed how essential the current service is and the multiple calls from families crying pleading to extra days , if families cant find staff with direct payments how will they cope at home ? how will families continue to work ?

I feel we already do a lot of this but it does sound like a good plan.

Would the day center staff be involved in duties outside of day center , where there would be places for the individuals to access if in other areas,

Yes. Who is going to make decisions on who goes where? Parents going to have a say in all this.? Council going to listen to constructive criticism or ignore it?

Is there anything you would like to say about our plans?

They sound wonderful. Hopefully they will be well staffed. For someone like my daughter who feels a bit stagnant at day centre, but can't cope with a normal job, it sounds great.

Whilst these plans and visions are positive, it needs to be recognised that new teams need to be set up to enable this work to happen.

Cf446aa

My concern is that parents/carers/advocates, will complete this survey oblivious to having enough information regarding the terms of the employment offered, and may think that it represents the system we have now. People will therefore use their own interpretation, leading to false, ill-informed, answers on the survey, promoting/putting their names to something that the people in the service don't want! Considering this is a major change to services within RCT day services, the communication about what is proposed and the lack of timing to respond to the proposals is very poor.

I found this plan hard to understand, I had to have support from staff. I would of liked this to be more of an easy read. I didn't find this helpful.

No

No thank you

No

No

No

No

No thank you

It's good

?

Why change the service when I'm very happy the way things are now and would be very upset if things change

I don't want or like change and don't know why things have to change when they are fantastic they way they are now

I don't feel that individuals can or should be placed into such a small choice of groups as most don't fit into just one or other but a mixture of two maybe three as they have varied abilities and strengths in different aspects of daily activities. The name individual was brought about as not to discriminate or isolate or categorize these people yet few years on we again want to place them into one of just three groups seperating them by ability whether that's physical or otherwise. The service as it stands in area I work has many bases offering different sorts of services where individuals choose where they would like to attend and are supported to merge into that base develop their skills learn new ones and are able to reach their own potential in all areas which ever base they are in. I feel we offer a very wide range of services now and it works well and individuals are on the whole very content happy and confident in the places they are and therefore their well being is thriving too.

Don't change a service that works perfectly well as it stands

I think the re structuring of day services is a move forward in regards for support of individual's with an LD. Working on skills they would like to develop and opportunities to be part of something meaningful and rewarding. Infrastructure is what needs to be developed to make this structure work. Also bringing families and individual's along on the journey is also going to be a challenge, communication is key

Is there anything you would like to say about our plans?

I think it is very positive that a holistic approach is being taken to planning support available to individuals with an LD. It is very important that, regardless of living arrangements, equal opportunities are being provided to our individuals. In order to support these plans I do feel that Day services and Community services staff are well supported through training, to maximise all opportunities available. I do feel that there are currently some disparities that may hinder some of these plans. I am personally aware of staff who have left Day services due to poor levels of pay for the responsibilities that they have. Without adequate staffing in Day and Community services, individuals are disadvantaged as they do not receive the vital support that they need to engage in activities, both physically and communicatively.

What happens to the individuals and staff who are already in the projects if the proposals go ahead? If our individuals are not deemed capable of gaining independent employment, and many of them are, where do they go? Many of them are convinced that they are doing a job of work and are content in that, they have a real community presence and generally enjoy their time 'at work' having built up a rapport with staff and their peer group.

It would be nice if staff had more information regarding partnerships, e.g what would their involvement be at the projects, would they be taking over the day to day running etc.

I am very interested in finding out more and extending this collaborative and co-produced approach to the way Education services may work with and alongside Learning Disability Services in RCT.

I agree that everyone to be treated as individuals with own choices and presences. was given guidance and support to fill in by sister (Tracy Jones)

STAFF FILLED OUT ON BEHALF OF INDIVIDUAL

IT ALL SOUND GOOD

I would like to know if there will be a face to face general meeting before any plans are implemented.

Is there a plan to consider supported living providing 24hour support and dipping into services for specific things.. eg library for an event, day centre for a specific support need? Need to develop independence and community whilst providing for those most in need.

km Barnes Alison Szigetvari

Luke

Robert loves going to class, but doesn't want to go back full time to Day Centre as he have retired
STAFF ADVOCATE FOR THE PERSON

Ffion Marth

The focus going forward needs to maximise the time/sessions available to as many clients as possible and to ensure there is something for everyone catering for all levels of need.

IT'S GOOD TO HELP EVERYONE

NO

NO

people wants help in the community and support

There are some families who depend and have confidence in the day service provision. They depend on sending they son /daughter to Day Centre so that they are able to work and have respite time .

not for me

I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO GET WORK WITH ELITE , NOTHING SO FAR SO HOPING MORE OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE AVAILABLE TO ME AND MY NEEDS

NO

VERY GOOD PLANS , LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEW CHANGES

I WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE BEING AS INDEPENDENT AS POSSIBLE WITH SUPPORT AS AND WHEN I NEEDED

I think it is a good idea

Is there anything you would like to say about our plans?

more 1-1 support more staff

R.C.T always endeavour to make different means to enhance the lives of the disabled, of which my son Nicholas is one

I want to be able to go out with staff every day I need more staff

I miss the day centre I used to knit jumpers there Now I knit jumpers in my house

Day centre is a good idea

I miss the day centre Meeting my friends and staff

I like my new house

Very Good

I am very happy with what is available at the moment But always want more activities to choose from

I would like to visit my friends They used to go to day service and gateway

No thankyou

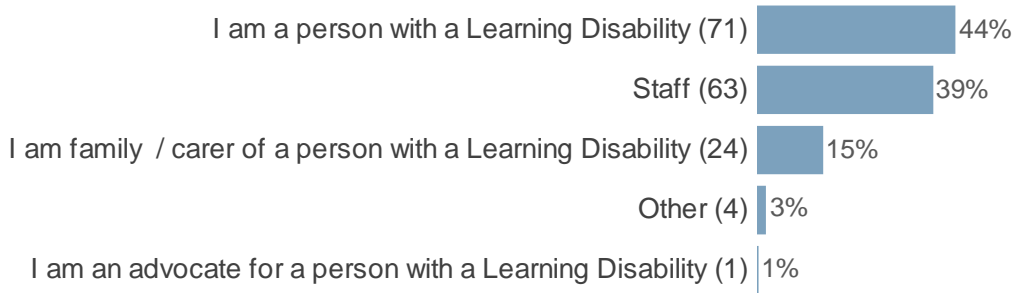
What is your postcode?

CF45 4PQ	CF38 1NF	CF45 4UQ	CF44 8HU	CF40 2NW	CF42 6DY	CF39 8BZ
CF43 4EH	CF72 9JF	CF44 6TY	CF43 4DW	CF40 2PY	CF40 6DY	CF39 8QB
CF41 7BT	CF72 9RS	CF44 9YX	CF40 1DU	CF42 6DY	CF44 8HN	CF40 2DN
CF40 1NS	CF72 8AQ	CF44 8EG	CF41 7SB	CF40 1DW	CF44 9YX	CF45 3SY
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CF39 9SH	CF44 6DA	CF40 6DY	CF72 9AR	CF44 8HU	CF39 8LW	CF40 1DU
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CF42 5LP	CF44 9NW	CF43 3AA	CF40 1DU	CF40 6DY	CF38 1NF	CF40 1DU
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CF38 1NF	NP11 4GG	CF40 2PE	CF40 2NW	CF42 6DY	CF72 9RX	CF40 1DU
CF38 2HY	CF40 2HZ	CF40 2PE	CF38 1PG	CF42 6DY	CF38 1NF	CF40 1DU
CF38 1NF	CF44 8HU	CF40 1DW	CF40 2NW	CF40 6DY	CF38 1NF	CF40 1DU
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CF38 1NF	CF15 5GG					

What is your age?

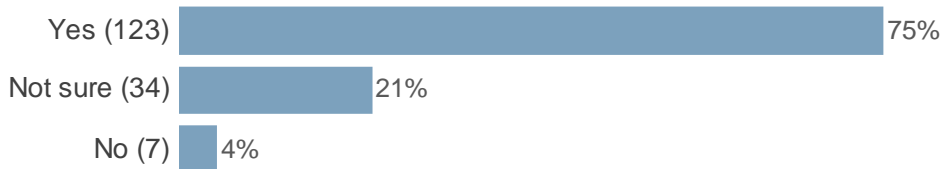
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61	64	59	48	50	36	53	28	59	33	32	56	61	45	70	49	58	37	74	34
33	64	59	73	46	65	54	44	68	77	58	54	21	51	30	55	25	43	84	73
25	59	51	69	55	51	43	29	54	75	32	35	57	52	47	41	62	53	64	37
48	45	61	38	64	55	43	60	23	48	58	51	51	59	32	59	50	55	59	55

Why did you fill out this form?



Work for a L.D charity.
with staff
It was asked by day centre
SLT

Do you think our plans will treat people fairly and make sure they have the same chances in life?



Is there anything more you want to tell us about equality?

Agree that everyone has the right to equality

In theory, yes. But I do not feel that there is enough put in place to allow this to roll out yet. I would hate for it to result in this failing individuals and their families.

I want people to recognise I have a different religion and people to respect me.

Not a lot is communicated to me about my daughters day to day experience

n/a

No matter what type of disability anyone has, feeling and being part of a community can only be a good way forward

Each person be treated with care and respect

it is the family that need to change the way they think, and not use day service as a sitting service. They need to speak with their own son/daughter to find out exactly what they want, not what the parent wants.

Absolutely I agree with all the above

Hope so

Will the individuals be listened to or will it be what the families want. What about equality for the staff that support the individuals, will their views be listened to so that they can enable the individuals to make informed choices.

Removing the opportunity for our individuals to experience and successfully take part in working opportunities.

I think everyone should have the same chances to do things.

Is there anything more you want to tell us about equality?

I think everyone should have the same chances to do things.

I think everyone should have the same chances to do things.

I think everyone should have the same chances to do things.

I think everyone should have the same chances to do things.

No

?

I think these changes will cause stress and upset for people like me who are happy with what they do already. I think it will stop people who need little support reaching their full potential by being placed in a group they don't fit into just because they don't completely fit into another group. Individuals have such varied abilities and needs how can they be divided into just 3 groups

As mentioned previously, staffing levels will always have an impact on equality. If there are no staff available in Day centres and community services to support these plans there will never be equal opportunities for individuals to participate. However, taking a holistic approach to support opportunities is very promising.

Not everyone has the same chances in life, that very much depends on your socio-economic background, education, etc. Do I think that you want to make sure people have been treated as fairly as possible? Yes

some individuals may struggle depending on disability

already treated fairly in community, but would like more opportunities

VERY GOOD

I like living with care, I like the activities they do, and trips out

Phillip said he likes his staff they are good as we take him to bingo, he said he loved care and his family do

SOME SERVICE USERS GET ANXIOUS WHEN IN CROWDS, BUT I THINK IT'S FAIR

NA

NO

NO

people be nice to everyone

Everyone as they own characteristics and this should be respected at all times.

I think I will be treated equally in these new groups

I want to be treated the same as everyone else

I want to go to the shops and buy jewellery. I want to go back to day centre

I want the same as everyone else. I am young and fit and I used to go to day centre with my friends

I want to go to work in a shop and help people to buy things I want to do things like everyone else

I want to go out on a bus and train and go anywhere I want to with staff

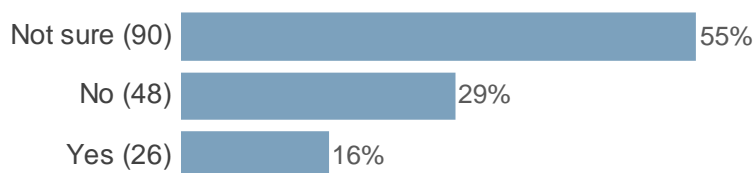
I want the same choices as everyone else. Thank you

It's very important that everyone gets a fair chance. And they do the things they want to do.

I want to go to cinema and to day centre every week and be able to do what I want to do, I am not young but I am still fit and want to go out every day

I want everyone to be the same and treated the same. I would like to go back to day centre where I looked forward to going every week and seeing my friends.

Do you think our plans could make it harder for people to use Welsh if they want to?



How do you think we could change our plans to make it easier for people to use the Welsh language?

Not sure really apart from everything to be written in english as well as welsh

Try making it accessible to all

I feel like the option and choice should be there if needed and wanted.

This is a difficult one as there isn't a lot of call for welsh language in the Rhondda valleys in particular. I think you can offer it and that is all.

not sure

More access to Welsh language courses and bilingualism

I don't know

I don't know

I'm not sure

I don't know

I don't know

I don't know

I don't know

I'm not sure

Yes

Can you teach simple Welsh to help people learn like others.

?

I think Welsh should always be an option, but not a necessity. There is a very small percentage of the population in RCT with an LD who access the Welsh Language.

By having bi-lingual people in situ in all places of employment.

Basic welsh course for better understanding

more Welsh learning classes more Welsh items in shops Welsh market

WHAT IF THEY CAN SPEAK WELSH Staff - M.Southule

IM NOT SURE

N/A

John says to have welsh lessons or go to college

NO, I THINK THIS WILLNEED TO BE SLOELY AND MOTIORED AS WE GO ALONG

Whilst there is a focus on welsh language need to be inclusive of all communication strategies used in our service group.

have more Welsh people

NA

TRANSLATION COURSES

How do you think we could change our plans to make it easier for people to use the Welsh language?

Bilingual staff

UNSURE

MORE COURSES TO LEARN

MORE COURSES TO LEARN WELSH

PEOPL CAN SPEAK WELSH FROM THEY OWN ACORDE

DO NOT NOWE

some people cant understand welsh

unsure

MORE CLASSES IN WELSH

I DONT SPEAK WELSH

SEND TWO FORMS ONE IN WELSH AND ONE IN ENGLISH

Not all are able to speak Welsh, so the use of this to many are very hard.

include welsh sessions

put more english translations so english speakers can try and use the language more

welsh signs

Incorporate the Welsh Language Standards

I speak a little bit of welsh, but mostly English

welsh classes

I don't know

Im not sure

I don't speak welsh

I do not speak welsh so don't know

No I don't think so

I do not speak welsh

No

Is there anything more you want to tell us about how our plans could affect the Welsh language?

NA

n/a

Just a very hard language to learn

None

No

Yes

?

Welsh language is dying and not enough spoken

N/A

John says it will be reslly good if he could speak two languages

CANT THINK OF ANYTHING

NA

Is there anything more you want to tell us about how our plans could affect the Welsh language?

NA

UNSURE

NOT SURE

NO

NO

and you can have a voice

Short courses /on line courses that can be accessible and free to all

No

I do not speak welsh my aunty lila speaks welsh

I do not speak welsh

No I don't think so

No

I'm not sure as I don't speak welsh myself

I don't know

I don't speak Welsh

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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: Alexandra Beckham

Service Director: Neil Elliott

Service Area: Community and Children’s Services

Date: November 2023

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

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

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

Learning Disability Day Services Strategy and Operating Model

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

This Equality Impact Assessment is for approval to progress to the next steps of the remodelling of Learning Disability Daytime Services in line in with the proposed operating model. The operating model and strategy have been co-produced following extensive engagement with a range of stakeholders including people with Learning Disabilities, carers and family members, staff, services, commissioned services, and Health.

As of 2021, there were 13,676 individuals 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.

As of November 2023, 204 individuals within Rhondda Cynon Taf currently access the Council's Daytime Services. This further emphasises the significance of developing our Learning Disability Day Services Model to keep alignment with anticipated increased demand for access to the community and meet the needs of people with a learning disability.

The outcome of the engagement findings suggested that people supported the need for change and the subsequent model - 75% of respondents to the consultation survey, agreed that the plans will treat people fairly and make sure they have the same chances in life.

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

The proposals in this report would allow the Council to meet the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. By providing a model of care that meets the needs of people with a learning disability and their families/carers, including those with more complex needs that is sustainable and increases focus on service offered, which promote choice, wellbeing and independence, the wellbeing goals of a Wales of cohesive communities, a healthier Wales and more equal Wales are supported.

Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014

Any future provision of services would need to be considered in accordance with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. Local Authorities have a general duty under the Act to promote wellbeing. This duty applies when considering decisions in respect of an individual but also when considering broader strategic issues that do not relate to an individual. In doing so, the overall purpose is to produce a sustainable and diverse range of care and support services to deliver better, innovative, and cost-effective services and support and promote the wellbeing of every person, and their carer, with the need of care and support. The recommendations made in Section 2 above aim to deliver the highest standards of care and support and is consistent with the above duty.

In addition, the Act and the accompanying Part 2 of the Code of Practice general duties in the provision of preventive services and promotion of service user led services and development of the third sector provision the operating model and strategy will allow the Council to Ensure that Going forward Rhondda Cynon Taf will be at the forefront of this ongoing development.

In addition, the Act and the accompanying Part 4 of the Code of Practice sets out that where an Authority has carried out an assessment which has revealed that the person has needs for care and support then the local authority must decide if those needs meet the eligibility criteria, and if they do, it must meet those needs either by commissioning services from independent organisation or by providing the service directly. The Council's Day Service forms part of this provision. The recommendations put forward will allow the Council to ensure that going forward Rhondda Cynon Taf can meet all eligible needs.

Due regard has also been made to the five ways of working, included in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the wellbeing goals have been considered:

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) (page 6):

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-08/well-being-of-future-generations-wales-act-2015-the-essentials.pdf>

“A healthier Wales: A society in which people's physical and mental wellbeing is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.” (p. 6)

“A more equal Wales: A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances)”. (p. 6)

- **Long Term** – social services is demand led and there is a requirement to meet the needs of people in the longer term and, because of rising demographics and increasing complexity, the transformation of services continues to be a priority as we seek to achieve long term sustainable change to our care and support offer. The Council's commitment to developing daytime opportunities represents a focus on the long-term wellbeing of individuals using the service and the sustainability of social care by supporting carers and reducing demand on alternative care and support at home.
- **Prevention** – the report highlights proposals to reduce reliance on traditional services and move to a model focussing on the need to develop more progressive community-based services aimed at reducing loneliness and enhancing wellbeing through more volunteering and paid employment opportunities.
- **Integration** – the implementation of the proposal requires the Council to work with partners, particularly within Health to ensure the service offer and future service delivery of care and support for people with a learning disability meets their assessed needs.

- **Collaboration** – the proposed operating model and strategy outlined in this report have and will be developed with current and new partner organisations, including third sector organisations and wider communities.
- **Involvement** – the key stakeholders are people with a learning disability and their families and carers who use social care. There has already been engagement with people in the development of service proposals and models outlined in this report. If these proposals are agreed by Cabinet, then further involvement will be undertaken to ensure that all stakeholders have an opportunity to shape care and support provision to ensure benefits and wellbeing opportunities are maximised.

In addition to the above, there are several other national priorities, which will help influence the transformation of day services for people with a learning disability, including:

- The **Statement of Policy and Practice for Adults with Learning Disability published by Welsh Government in 2007** describes the vision, key principles, and outcomes that the Welsh Assembly Government believes are desirable - this is Welsh Government's latest guidance, and it is still relevant today.
- The **Welsh Government Learning Disability - Improving Lives Programme** communicates an ambition to create a society across Wales that has a desire for change and 'Prosperity for All' improving the opportunities and life outcomes for all people with a learning disability aligning to key equality and human rights principles.
- The **Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act 2018** and its associated statutory **ALN Code** will bring transformational change to the way local authorities in Wales make statutory provision to meet the needs of learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN) over a new extended age range of 0 to 25 years. The change in legislation will have clear implications for adult and education services to work collaboratively to ensure that, where appropriate, young people have access to further education and training opportunities in addition to any other social care needs they may have.

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users x
- Employees x
- 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

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>)	<u>Positive</u>	The proposal will provide broader opportunities for those with Learning Disabilities from aged 16 years plus, and throughout adulthood to develop new skills, take up wider opportunities and, benefit from individualised care and support proportionate to their needs and outcomes sought.	Cwm Taf Statement of Strategic Intent. Welsh Governments' publication, Learning Disability Improving Lives Programme (2018), 204 individuals with a learning disability who attend our current day services will be affected by the proposal. Ages profile of individual's attending Day Services are between 18-80+

<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?
		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'.	The age range in responses to the consultation engagement survey was 67 years, with the youngest response being 21 years old and oldest 88 years old. Considering this and the outcome of our engagement findings, as 75% of respondents agreed that the plans will treat people fairly and make sure they have the same chances in life, on the whole, people of all ages support the need for change and the subsequent model.
Disability <i>(people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions)</i>	<u>Positive</u>	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. The proposal indicates that in future individuals will access a variety daytime and evening	Cwm Taf Statement of Strategic Intent Previous engagement and consultations. As of November 2023, there are 863 adults registered with a learning disability in Rhondda Cynon Taf By using easy read and technology, we were able to engage with a range of individuals to ensure more voices were heard – 44% of consultation survey responses were from people with a Learning Disability.

<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>opportunities based on the level of their needs.</p> <p>People with a learning disability may feel a lack of control or involvement in key decisions. Individuals with disabilities and their families may experience uncertainty and anxiety with changes to current services they receive as they are unclear of the implications.</p> <p>Provide service users and families with information and support to ensure any changes are managed.</p> <p>To ensure that there will be continual dialogue with individuals /families throughout the consultation period. Where a service user could not</p>	Learning disability needs analysis and transformational plan.

<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>make an informed choice or has no family, an independent advocate would be made available.</p> <p>Easy Read communications will be devised to ensure individuals are fully engaged in the coproductions of services.</p>	
<p>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></p>	<p><u>Immediate-Neutral</u></p> <p><u>Future- Positive</u></p>	<p>It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.</p>	<p>There is a lack of data about people with Learning Disabilities who have different gender identities to the sex they were assigned at birth.</p> <p>Across Rhondda Cynon Taf, according to the ONS (2021b), 0.36% of people aged 16 years and over have a gender identity different from their sex registered at birth.</p> <p>There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic.</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?
			Learning disability services will be expected to offer opportunities and be responsive to the needs of transgender people.
Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	<u>Positive</u>	It is considered that the proposal will have a positive impact on people who share this characteristic as the proposal will provide support for people to form more friendships and relationships.	Cwm Taf Statement of Strategic Intent There are currently two married couples who have learning disabilities in Rhondda Cynon Taf. One of the engagement themes was 'Friendships and Relationships' whereby people told us how they would like to meet people and develop friendships, including getting married. The proposal to implement the operating model, will encourage people to develop social networks and friendships. Working with all stakeholders to develop and co-produce meaningful activity, will support with the development of friendships.
Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i>	<u>Neutral</u>	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. There is currently no individual pregnant that attends our day service provision.

<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 <i>(ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)</i>	<u>Positive</u>	<p>It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.</p> <p>Learning disability services will be expected to provide opportunities and be responsive to the needs of anyone of Race.</p> <p>With the Strategy promoting improved training and development for people with Learning Disabilities, independence can be expected to increase for people of all races.</p>	<p>The outcome of our engagement findings, with people supporting the need for change, along with the subsequent model, will ensure that all people with a learning disability will be positively impacted by the strategy and proposed operating model. This includes the 4.9% of RCT residents which identify as part of any minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma or Travellers – the total of which have a Learning Disability is unknown (ONS, 2021a).</p> <p>Ethnicity data gathered from WCCIS shows the ethnicity groups of people with a learning disability as of November 2023:</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Any other Asian background</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any other ethnic background</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any other mixed background</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any other White background</td> <td>161</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any White Background, including Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish</td> <td>627</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Asian or Asian British-Indian</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Any other Asian background	2	Any other ethnic background	2	Any other mixed background	1	Any other White background	161	Any White Background, including Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish	627	Asian or Asian British-Indian	1
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Asian or Asian British-Indian	1														

<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?												
			<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Chinese or Chinese British</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Information not obtained</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Information Refused</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mixed White & BI African</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not stated</td> <td>57</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White and Asian</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </table>	Chinese or Chinese British	2	Information not obtained	6	Information Refused	2	Mixed White & BI African	1	Not stated	57	White and Asian	1
Chinese or Chinese British	2														
Information not obtained	6														
Information Refused	2														
Mixed White & BI African	1														
Not stated	57														
White and Asian	1														
<p>Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i></p>	<p><u>Neutral</u></p>	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that this group will be disproportionately affected by the proposal.</p> <p>Individuals of any religion or belief will continue to be able to access support.</p>	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic.</p> <p>Following the outcome of our engagement findings, with people agreeing with the need for change, people will be supported to develop their own user led services which include people with different religions, beliefs etc.</p> <p>Services will help to identify the religion or beliefs individuals may have.</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?
Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i>	<u>Positive</u>	Introducing new support options to promote greater independence and skill development of people with Learning Disabilities through the Strategy will help remove barriers for all sexes.	The outcome of our engagement findings, with people supporting the need for change, and the subsequent model which will be developed, will support all sexes to develop social networks, working and volunteering opportunities. According to WCCIS November 2023, there are 340 females, 522 males and 1 transgender with a learning disability in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
Sexual Orientation <i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i>	<u>Immediate – Neutral</u> <u>Future-Positive</u>	Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that this group will be disproportionately affected by the introduction of the Strategy. Individuals of any sexual orientation will be able to access the support set out in it.	Individuals of any sexual orientation will be able to access the support set out in the operating model. The model will support individuals would be supported to access community events such as Pride and other LGBTQ events

Reference List

ONS (2021a) *Ethnic group - census maps, ONS, Home - Office for National Statistics*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/ethnic-group/ethnic-group-tb-20b/white-english-welsh-scottish-northern-irish-or-british?lta=W06000016&lad=W06000016> (Accessed: 01 September 2023).

ONS (2021b) *Gender identity - census maps, ons, Home - Office for National Statistics*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/gender-identity/gender-identity-4a/gender-identity-different-from-sex-registered-at-birth?lta=W06000016&lad=W06000016> (Accessed: 01 September 2023).

WCCIS

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?
Armed Forces Community <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i>	<u>Neutral</u>	Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that this group will be disproportionately affected by the introduction of the new Strategy.	
Carers <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i>	<u>Positive</u>	Unpaid carers are more likely to have intersecting identities that could mean they experience compounded barriers. Therefore, the Strategy will have a positive impact on people who have protected characteristics as improving opportunities for people with Learning	The engagement findings included carers views which often supported those expressed by individuals with Learning Disabilities, the proposed operating model will support carers in ensuring that those they care for receive the right support at the right time but also by undertaking carers

		Disabilities will result in greater skill development, confidence and opportunities for many which in turn reduce reliance on carers.	assessment in line with the social services and well being the model will support in meeting their needs,
--	--	---	---

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:

No negative impacts have been identified.

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

Name: Alexandra Beckham

Position: Head of Service – Learning Disabilities, Mental Health and Substance Misuse

Date: 08/11/2023

Please forward a copy of this completed screening form to the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

PLEASE NOTE – there is a separate impact assessment for Welsh Language. This must also be completed for proposals.

Section 3 Socio-economic Duty needs only to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. Definition of a 'strategic nature' is available on page 6 of the [Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance](#).

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 • Children looked after • 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
---	--

<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?
Low Income/<u>Income Poverty</u> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>	<u>Positive</u>	Individuals with Learning Disabilities receive a range of significant benefits, and will be able to also secure part time employment enhancing their income.	The development of the operating model will support those who are able to secure volunteer or employment opportunities. People with Learning disabilities who are employed report that they are financially secure. Greater support to teach skills such as numeracy, literacy can promote budgeting and

<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?
			handling money for people with a learning disability.
<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>	<u>Positive</u>	<p>Whilst individuals with Learning Disabilities often have regular benefits and can access money when they ask, the majority do not control their own Finances.</p> <p>Greater support to teach skills such as numeracy, literacy can promote budgeting and handling money for some.</p>	<p>The learning disability daytime opportunities model will provide social networks, working and volunteering opportunities for all.</p> <p>Greater support to teach skills such as numeracy, literacy can promote budgeting and handling money for people with a learning disability.</p>
<p><u>Material Deprivation</u> <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i></p>	<u>Positive</u>	The proposed operating model and strategy will raise skills, expectations, and possibilities for people.	<p>Greater support to teach skills such as numeracy, literacy can promote budgeting and handling money for people with a learning disability.</p> <p>By promoting people's independence through the operating model will support people in having a safe place to live as identified within the engagement feedback</p>

<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?
Area Deprivation <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport))</i>	<u>Positive</u>	The Strategy promotes wider access to community resources by those with Learning Disabilities therefore increasing the disposal income spent locally.	The outcome of our engagement findings with people supported the need for change and the subsequent model developed, social networks, working and volunteering opportunities which will be available for all and will increase people's disposable income.
Socio-economic background <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i>	<u>Positive</u>	Promoting greater opportunities for people will result in higher expectations and attainment and greater socio-economic mobility.	By offering meaningful activities and supporting peoples to develop their own services as identified within the feedback will ensure people have access to education, employment, and subsequent income
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>	<u>Positive</u>	The Strategy seeks to offer people with Learning Disabilities an ordinary life, similar to that others in their community can expect or even take for granted. It seeks to redress disadvantage.	

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.

No negative or adverse impacts on a protected group have been identified. Therefore, a separate action plan has not been completed.

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

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

Cwm Taf Statement of Strategic Intent - [LearningDisabilityAnalysisofStakeholderEngagementReport2017.pdf \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/learning-disability-analysis-of-stakeholder-engagement-report-2017.pdf)



Copy of Learning
Disability Programme

My Day My Way Engagement Findings -



MDMW voice &
choice.pdf

My Day My Way Workshop Findings-



Easy Read Learning
Disability Day Service:

My Day My Way Consultation Outcomes -

- 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.

My Day My Way Engagement

The My Day My way engagement process as identified in the attachment in 1c was across all stakeholders and we received 858 responses which supported in the development of the co-produced operating model.

Views were sought in a variety of ways to encourage participation such as:

- Videos of people with Learning Disabilities introducing the themes
- Easy Read versions of web-based questionnaire.
- Easy Read paper copies.
- Use of Assistive technology Eye Gaze sessions for those with non-verbal communication at both day centres and schools
- Stakeholder sessions with individuals they support.
- Virtual sessions

My Day My Way Findings

The My Day My Way findings were collated by a group comprising a wide range of stakeholders including those with a learning disability, these findings were shared in person including at the Peoples First Annual Conference. Around 300 people were involved in the feedback sessions.

My Day My Way Workshops

We held in person Workshops for all stakeholders, around 150 people participated.

My Day My Way Consultation Outcomes

The Learning Disability Day Services consultation was conducted in-house. It aimed to gain feedback on the proposals.

To ensure wide outreach and involvement of the wider community the consultation was promoted on the [Councils online consultation webpage](#) to encourage engagement.

In addition to this, a consultation booklet was provided to all members of the Learning Curve Centre and their families and staff, which included the survey, and an easy read document.

An email was also sent to key stakeholders to promote the consultation and encourage participation on the Snap XMP survey.

To avoid any disproportionate impact, People First held sessions for individuals who required support with understanding and completing the survey so that their voices were heard.

A total of Overall, 221 survey responses were received to the consultation.

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:

Reviews will be held annually in keeping with the following:

Purchasing and contracts monitoring and reviews of Service Level Agreements

Individual care and support plan / care and treatment plan reviews

Provider service reviews

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

As the strategy and operating model is implemented, individuals with lived experience and their carers will contribute to evaluation and service design and developments.

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

Transformation Programme Strategic Lead, Programme Lead, Business Officer and Co-production Officer

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

Best practice will shape future design, engagement and approaches to attaining outcomes sought

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 Officer Review Panel considerations
	November 2022	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 13th November 2023 and the feedback will be presented to Cabinet prior to its meeting

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:-

A broader range of positive opportunities for individuals with Learning Disabilities from age 16 years plus will be offered, by through our operating model on a three-level approach will support and enhance people's outcomes and promote meaningful opportunities for people and supporting them to deliver on their own services.

These include an enhanced level of support for these with the most complex needs including improved communication via assistive technology such as eye gaze programmes and other technology opportunities to enhance support provision.

For those with potential to move to a community approach, support will be tailored to aid the transition and new ways of pooling direct payments and commissioning bespoke groups and activities of interest to smaller number of people will facilitate access and choices.

Resources will be used more effectively as the market is shaped to optimise skills sets and specialities to avoid duplicate and offer timely suitable support and intervention.

SECTION 8 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer:

Name: Alexandra Beckham

Position: Head of Service

Date: 13/11/2023

I recommend that the proposal:

- Is implemented with no amendments x
- 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: 14/11/2023

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

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:	Learning Disability Day services Offer
Department	Adult Social Services
Service Director	Neil Elliott
Officer Completing the WLIA	Alexandra Beckham
Email	Alexandrabeckham@rctcbc.gov.uk
Brief Description	<p>New proposal to implement the Day Services Strategy and operating model proposal</p> <p><u>Level 1: Community and Employment Offer</u></p> <p>This offer would promote independence, sustainability and prevent a reliance on longer-term or more intensive support provision. This offer would include the routine use of community resources such as leisure services, libraries, and open access groups to provide activities and social contacts for people within a community setting.</p> <p>This offer would also focus on the use of community resources to provide activities such as training, volunteering, and employment for people within their local community. Subject to consultation and Cabinet approval, it is proposed to review and recommission, if appropriate, the Council's current learning disability work-based projects to refocus these as social enterprises and / or ongoing work opportunities through Vision Products or other community settings instead of at present through the Council's Day Service provision. This offer would be suitable for people with low support needs.</p>

	<p><u>Level 2: Maximising Community Connects</u></p> <p>This will focus on enabling individuals to regain their independence, with support for them to connect to their communities over a period of time. This could involve a programme of support which enables people to lead on developing their own services and deliver more themselves, including within a day centre environment which aims to enable people to achieve greater independence.</p> <p>This phase would be suitable for people with higher support needs and may involve development of microenterprises, pooling direct payments and supporting the community hubs. A differing commissioning approach is needed to achieve fundamental changes and focus upon delivering an outcome focused approach and maximising what the community can offer.</p> <p><u>Level 3: Council's Offer</u></p> <p>The council's offer will focus upon developing specialist support for people with complex needs, including those with physical and multiple learning disabilities. This would involve care and support with a focus on an individual's health and wellbeing with the involvement of multi-disciplinary teams (e.g., health, care management). Individuals would be supported to be able to access community-based groups like everyone else but may also involve an element of centre-based support. This offer would be suitable for people with more complex communication needs, in which dedicated staff would provide person-centred communication support, whilst offering choices and activities to enhance people's outcomes. The Complex Autism Service is a good example of how such tailored specialist support offers a preventative approach whilst individuals move through pathways into less intensive support.</p>
Date	November 2023
Please outline who this proposal affects? (Service Users, Employees, Wider Community)	Current and future service users Parents and Carer Employees Stakeholders and wider community resource

<p>What are the aims of the policy, and how do these relate to the Welsh Language?</p>	<p>The aim is to consult with people with a learning disability, parents and carers, staff and all stakeholders in respect of the proposed operating model and key priorities. The consultation will be undertaken in both Welsh and English and in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. All Correspondence will be produced in easy read format as per our commitment within the Learning disability Transformation programme throughout all engagement all materials used have been produced both in Welsh and English.</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. As above all documentation will be produced in easy read format in both Welsh and English and we support all with individuals with a learning disability in their chosen way to communicate be that through eye gaze technology, Makaton etc.</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. Furthermore, according to Pupil Level Annual School Census (2021/22) data, of the 69,100 pupils in Wales with Additional Learning Needs or Special Educational Needs, 15,670 (23%) of pupils are enrolled in Welsh Medium schools. It is possible to conclude from these figures, 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 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</p>

	<p>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 • Welsh speakers should not be required to ask for a service in Welsh.
<p>Other relevant data or research</p>	<p>In our current day time service offer we have 3 staff who speak Welsh, and one individual who speaks Welsh. We also commission directly with third party providers who would be responsible for meeting the requirements of the Welsh standards</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>	Positive	The proposal will have a positive impact on service users, staff and the wider community, to use the Welsh language. By engaging with the proposed strategy and operating model, we can support individuals to lead upon developing their own services and promote the use of the Welsh language. This is especially relevant learners of	Welsh language Level 1 skills/ training forms a mandatory part of the Council and Social Care Wales Induction Framework and is also incorporated into the Social Care Wales registration process. At present, Day service staff are not required to register, with Social Care Wales. However, we follow	Following the consultation on the proposed operating model, people with a learning disability advised that in order to support people with the Welsh language, we should support people in terms of accessing Welsh courses tailored to their needs within our services and the third sector. This will ensure that

		<p>Welsh and Welsh speakers who wish to lead on developing their own services. We will ensure that bilingual services are proactively offered in line with the More Than Just Words strategy. Additionally, we will encourage staff to communicate and engage with service users in Welsh, wherever possible.</p> <p>We actively encourage our existing and new staff, as well as our stakeholders, to begin Welsh language lessons. We also support staff by providing them with opportunities to continue developing their Welsh Language skills. This, in turn, will enable us to provide further services through the medium of Welsh. Whilst we have staff who are already able to speak Welsh, we will encourage and offer support to staff so that they can go beyond level one to ensure increased confidence of the use of the Welsh language. Through this, both staff and service users will be able to use and promote and sustain use of the language.</p>	<p>the above induction framework as standard within all of our services.</p>	<p>people's needs are understood and met, and individuals with a learning disability, their parents and carers and staff will be supported to meet their identified outcomes and will be supported to do so in the right way and at the right time. As outlined in 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 and social care.</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>	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>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. Whilst completing Welsh Language level 1 training is mandatory as part of the Council's induction programme, we will also offer further promote and support those who wish to progress to a higher level of proficiency. In turn, this will increase and support our Welsh Language service provision.</p>	<p>Staff training to enhance learners' bilingual skills</p> <p>Work with the relevant departments/ services to provide an online course for beginners that's tailored to those working within the proposed operating model. We will also support staff and individuals to work with the Council's internal Welsh Language tutor in order to improve and develop their Welsh skills. Tailored apps and online courses on the 'Learn Welsh' website are also available, encouraged and promoted for staff to use.</p>
	Neutral	<p>The Cabinet report outlines a proposal to consult on the proposed strategy and operating model. It focuses upon the offer being in three distinct areas: community and employment, maximising community connections and the councils offer. As outlined, 12.4 % residents of RCT are able to speak Welsh. By focusing upon the community development, we will be able to support individuals to lead on developing their own</p>	<p>Welsh speaking residents and staff will also be able to access all consultation documentation in the</p>	

		<p>services in a co-productive way and promote the Welsh language as part of this.</p> <p>Staff are actively encouraged and supported to learn Welsh and speak Welsh in work. For instance, we promote and offer staff the opportunity to connect with our internal tutor or signpost them to available external Welsh language lessons.</p>	<p>Language of Welsh in an accessible and easy read format.</p> <p>Individuals with a learning disability, parents and carers, staff and all stakeholders who are Welsh speaking will have the option as part of the consultation being discussed with them in the medium of Welsh. We will also support staff and individuals as they work with the Council's internal Welsh Language tutor in order to improve and develop their Welsh skills.</p> <p>RCTs 5-year strategy requires the Council to increase Welsh language skills of our workforce. In addition, the Welsh Government Cymraeg 2050 strategy wants a million Welsh Speakers by 2050.</p>	<p>We will identify providers with Welsh speaking ability to support opportunities and to develop Welsh speaking skills within our community. This links to feedback provided in our consultation on the proposed model.</p> <p>Advise people with a learning disability, parents and carers and staff the 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>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</p>	Positive	<p>The proposed strategy and operating model will have a positive effect on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. It promotes co-production and people leading on developing their own services. As part of</p>	<p>The Consultation documentation is published in hard copy and online in both Welsh and English and in an accessible and easy read format. It will include an accessible and easy read response proforma to enable collection of the views of individuals with a learning</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 the consultation process. This will also enable us to</p>

<p>to see an increase in demand over time</p>		<p>this, a visual presence of Welsh and English is ensured via signage and posters in various settings.</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>disability, parents and carers, staff and all stakeholders.</p> <p>All communication is bilingual. Enquiries / comments/ complaints, emails /out of office notifications are bilingual. We use a range of methods of accessible communication methods within our services for people with a learning disability. These are also available bilingually and if Welsh is the preferred language, they will be responded to in Welsh.</p>	<p>identify providers within our community who are able to offer Welsh language services and will ensure a proactive offer and parity of services. We will also influence the development of the Welsh language when we commission services. The Welsh language will also be promoted throughout the three levels of the proposed operating model.</p> <p>Supporting access to Welsh language for service users/staff via radio, television,& books. Review promotional materials when consulting with residents to ensure compliance with Welsh Language Standards.</p> <p>Service to explore opportunities to deliver Welsh medium co-produced services within the proposed strategy and operating model.</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 <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>Positive</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, which the service follows, as standard within all settings. Regular staff session are held with people to ensure their wellbeing needs are met.</p>	<p>The consultation adhered to the Welsh Language Standards. We also consulted on how we can improve people’s opportunities in using the Welsh language. A range of suggestions were made which included accessible and easy to read documents and signs in the Welsh language . In addition, we will be offering all people the opportunity to have Welsh lessons. These will be developed as part of our offer across all three levels, as will all correspondence with service users and staff.</p> <p>Job descriptions / advertisements are presented in a bilingual and easy read format. When</p>	<p>The service supports Welsh speaking staff to communicate with Welsh speaking individuals with a learning disability, parents and carers in their preferred way of communication.</p>

			<p>organising meetings, we ensure that any invitees are aware that they are welcome to speak Welsh at the meeting and that simultaneous translation facilities are available. All of our meetings also adhere to other relevant Welsh Language Standards.</p> <p>Social care staff participate in the Welsh language training sessions in line with the SCW Induction Framework.</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>	Positive	<p>All service communications, whether via letter, website or telephony is bilingual, with Welsh text first or to the left of English text - this will remove the risk of isolating individuals who communicate in Welsh by failing to provide services in their preferred language.</p>	<p>Promotional materials, website, and all subsequent correspondence available bilingually and in accessible and easy read. In addition, a visual presence of Welsh and English is ensured via signage and posters in various settings.</p>	<p>Ensure greater consistency in terms of the Welsh language services on offer and improve their quality across the service.</p> <p>Staff will be encouraged and supported to utilise technology via tailored apps and online courses on platforms such as the 'Learn Welsh' website. This will make it easier for them to access Welsh language learning</p>

				<p>sessions and will enable them to access the training in more flexible and convenient means.</p> <p>Promote Welsh speaking staff via our rolling advertisement for support workers.</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?
As part of the proposed strategy and operating model, we will co-produce services with all our stakeholders, which will include the promotion of Welsh. We will support staff to develop their Welsh language skills by the use of technology and the offer of activities in Welsh.	On-going	Head of Service
The service will continue to promote Welsh speaking staff and support staff to develop their Welsh language skills	On-going	Day services managers

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
	November 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 13th November 2023 and the feedback will be presented to Cabinet prior to its meeting.
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation

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 further consultation. There will be on going project monitoring of overarching project plan to ensure project is delivered in line with objective 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 assessment confirms there are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications associated with implementing the proposal (as set out in paragraph 2 of the Cabinet report). 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	Alexandra Beckham	Service Director Name:	Neil Elliott
Position	Head of Learning Disability, Substance misuse and Mental Health	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>A Beckham</i>	Service Director Signature	
Date	13 th November 2023	Date	14 th November 2023

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20th NOVEMBER 2023

COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2024/25

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, DIGITAL & FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH COUNCILLOR C LEYSHON

Author: Mr. Matthew Phillips (Head of Service – Revenues & Benefits)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report formally sets the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2024/25.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet agree:

- 2.1 That in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) Regulations 1995 as amended, the amount calculated by the Council as its net tax base for the financial year 2024/25, shall be **£79,696.89**.
- 2.2 That for each defined community area of the County Borough, the 2024/25 tax base for Council Tax setting purposes, shall be as set out at Appendix 1.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement to agree and set the Council Tax Base for the forthcoming financial year prior to 31st December each year.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Under the provisions of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Functions and Responsibilities) (Wales) Regulations 2007, as amended, the “calculation and determination of the council tax base” are specified as functions that may be the responsibility of the Executive. Council, on the 7th December 2005, determined that the responsibility for setting the tax base be discharged by the Cabinet.
- 4.2 Under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) Regulations 1995, as amended, the Council is required to determine its Council Tax Base for the following financial year, prior to 31st December each year.

- 4.3 The Council Tax Base is the measure of the relative taxable capacity of different areas within the County Borough and is calculated in accordance with prescribed rules. The Tax Base represents the number of chargeable dwellings in the area expressed as Band D equivalents, taking into account the total number of exemptions, disablement reductions and discounts. The tax base also takes into account the impact of premiums that are being applied, the effect of which is to increase the tax base. The net Tax Base is calculated by taking account of the Council's estimated collection rate.
- 4.4 The gross Council Tax Base calculated for 2024/25 is **£81,950.53**. It is proposed that the collection rate is estimated to be 97.25%. This produces a net Council Tax Base of **£79,696.89**. This means that for every £1 levied in Council Tax next year, a sum of £79,697 will be generated to meet the budget requirement of the Council.
- 4.5 The Council Tax Base is reported to Welsh Government and is used as part of the distribution of the Revenue Support Grant in the Local Government Revenue Settlement (for this purpose the impact of local decisions with regard to the application of a premium is disregarded). It is also used by the Council when it sets its annual budget i.e. the net annual budget requirement to be funded by taxpayers is divided by the Council Tax Base to produce the amount of Council Tax due for a dwelling in Band D. A set formula is then used to determine the liability for the remaining eight Council Tax Bands (A to C and E to I).
- 4.6 The Council is required to calculate the Tax Base for the County Borough as a whole, in addition to making separate calculations for defined community areas that may have their own Community Council. The Council Tax Base for all parts of the County Borough is set out at Appendix 1.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 There are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications to report.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 There are no consultation requirements emanating from the recommendations set out in the report. The Council's Revenue Budget (including Council Tax levels) is subject to a separate consultation process.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 The contents of this report are determined by a statutory and regulatory framework. The gross tax base is used as part of the distribution of the Revenue Support Grant within the Local Government Revenue Settlement and the net tax base determines the level and quantum of Council Tax levied and therefore the resources available to the Council. This will be dealt with as part of the Tax Setting and Budget Requirement reports that will be considered by Council in March 2024.

7.2 The tax base incorporates the Council's policy with regard to the level of discount for prescribed classes of dwellings, as reviewed and determined by Council on 25th October 2023.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 To fulfil the Council's statutory duty to set the revenue budget and Council Tax for the forthcoming financial year and in line with :-

- The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Functions and Responsibilities) (Wales) Regulations 2007, as amended;
- Local Government Finance Act 1992, Section 33;
- Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) Regulations 1995, as amended; and
- Council Tax (Prescribed Class of Dwelling) (Wales) Regulations 1998, as amended.

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

9.1 The proposals link to the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 "Making a Difference" and the cross-cutting priority of 'Living Within Our Means'.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The Council is required to set its Tax Base annually in accordance with regulations as set out in the report.

2024/25 Tax Base Analysis			
Area		Gross Band D Equivalents (£)	Adjusted Tax Base (assumed collection rate of 97.25%) (£)
Non Precepting Communities			
Rhondda Community Areas	Treherbert	1,704.99	1,658.10
	Treorchy	2,493.23	2,424.67
	Pentre	1,640.86	1,595.74
	Ystrad	1,752.79	1,704.59
	Llwynypia	648.04	630.22
	Cwm Clydach	842.13	818.97
	Tonypanyd	1,174.50	1,142.20
	Trealaw	1,222.36	1,188.75
	Penygraig	1,708.92	1,661.92
	Cymmer	1,790.34	1,741.11
	Porth	1,874.40	1,822.85
	Ynyshir	991.77	964.50
	Tylorstown	1,425.86	1,386.65
	Ferndale	1,280.81	1,245.59
	Maerdy	902.87	878.04
Cynon Valley Community Areas	Penywaun	795.42	773.55
	Llwydcoed	703.39	684.05
	Aberdare	5,242.15	5,097.99
	Cwmbach	1,837.41	1,786.88
	Aberaman	3,221.23	3,132.65
	Abercynon	1,987.98	1,933.31
	Mountain Ash	2,421.58	2,354.99
	Penrhiwceiber	1,691.11	1,644.60
Precepting Communities			
Cynon Valley Community Areas	Ynysybwl & Coed y Cwm	1,477.59	1,436.96
	Rhigos	293.41	285.34
	Hirwaun	1,733.70	1,686.02
Taff Ely Community Areas	Pontypridd	11,073.88	10,769.34
	Llantwit Fardre	6,816.64	6,629.18
	Taffs Well	1,489.00	1,448.05
	Pontyclun	3,591.11	3,492.35
	Llantrisant	5,565.20	5,412.15
	Tonyrefail	4,303.59	4,185.24
	Gilfach Goch	1,054.33	1,025.34
	Llanharan	3,531.41	3,434.30
	Llanharry	1,666.53	1,620.70
Grand Total		81,950.53	79,696.89



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20th NOVEMBER 2023

COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2024/25

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE,
DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT
PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR LEYSHON)**

Background Papers

Officer to contact: Matthew Phillips

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20th November 2023

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 30th September 2023 (Quarter 2)

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR – FINANCE, DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR LEYSHON)

AUTHOR: Paul Griffiths, Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides Members with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, based on the first six months of this financial year (to the 30th September 2023).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

Revenue

2.1 Note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 30th September 2023 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary).

2.2 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

2.3 Note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 30th September 2023 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).

2.4 Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 30th September 2023 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

Corporate Plan Priorities

- 2.5 Note the Quarter 2 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.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To agree the Council's financial and operational performance position as at the 30th September 2023 to enable elected Members and other stakeholders to scrutinise the performance of the Council.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This report provides Members with the second update of the Council's financial and operational performance position for the financial year ending the 31st March 2024.

- 4.2 The aim of the report is to bring together the Council's performance into an Executive Summary and make available more detailed information to the reader through electronic links. Information contained in the Executive Summary includes financial data and progress against our Corporate Plan priorities (with exceptions highlighted within the detailed sections to ensure that elected Members and other readers are able to quickly identify the key issues) alongside updates on delivery of projects supported through additional investment.

- 4.3 Members will note that the on-going difficult economic conditions, including high levels of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis, continue to contribute to significant cost pressures and increases in demand across a number of services. Within this very challenging environment, the Council is prioritising its focus on frontline service delivery, as set out in the Executive Summary, to help support the needs of residents and businesses.

5.0 QUARTER 2 REPORT

- 5.1 The Quarter 2 report is attached and comprises:
- **Executive Summary** – setting out, at a glance, the overall performance of the Council as at Quarter 2 (i.e. 30th September 2023).

- **Revenue Monitoring** – sections 2a – e setting out the detailed projected financial spend against budget across our Revenue Budget with exceptions highlighted.
- **Capital Monitoring** – sections 3a – e setting out capital spend across our Capital Programme with exceptions highlighted and section 3f covering Prudential Indicators.
- **Organisational Health** – includes information on turnover, sickness absence, organisational health related investment areas and Council strategic risks.
- **[Corporate Plan](#) Priorities** – three action plans (Sections 5a – c) setting out progress updates for the priorities of People, Places and Prosperity, as well as progress to deliver Climate Change ambitions.
- **The Council's work to tackle Climate Change** – Section 6 providing an overview of progress to date to support the delivery of the Council's [Climate Change Strategy 'Think Climate RCT'](#).

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCI-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 The Council's Performance Report provides an update on financial and operational performance for the first 6 months of 2023/24; as a result, there are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications to report.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Following consideration by Cabinet, this Report will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny for review, challenge and where deemed required, the scrutiny of specific areas in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 There are no legal implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

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

10.1 The Corporate Plan progress updates included within this report align with the priorities as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 "[Making a Difference](#)". With regard to the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), at the 4th March 2020 Council meeting, it was agreed that the Corporate Plan priorities would also serve as its Well-being Objectives in line with the Act.

11.0 CONCLUSION

11.1 This report sets out the financial and operational performance of the Council as at Quarter 2 2023/24, that is, 30th September 2023.

11.2 The Quarter 2 revenue budget position is projecting a £2.701M overspend and is primarily due to sustained increases in demand for services, particularly social care services, and additional inflationary cost pressures, for example, home to school contract costs and food costs. Work is continuing as part of the Council's robust financial and service management arrangements to review all areas of expenditure and income to bring the revenue position closer in line with budget by year-end. The Council is continuing its engagement with Welsh Government, like all local authorities in Wales, to set out the on-going service and financial pressures faced and at the same time setting out the clear case for additional funding to be made available by the UK Government to support the on-going delivery of vital public services.

11.3 Capital investment as at 30th September 2023 is £66.641M, with the programme updated to reflect changes in costs and delivery timescales for individual schemes, and also new external grant funding approvals received. As set out within the first quarter Performance Report, the Council's Capital Programme for 2023/24 represents a sustained programme of investment that is supporting visible improvements to infrastructure and assets across the County Borough.

11.4 With regard to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of People, Places and Prosperity, and its work to deliver Climate Change ambitions, on-going and clear progress has been made in the first half of the year to support service development and improvement for the benefit of residents and communities across the County Borough.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Paul Griffiths

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

20th November 2023

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 30th September 2023 (Quarter 2)

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR –
FINANCE, DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE
RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR LEYSHON)**

Item:

Background Papers

Officer to contact: Paul Griffiths

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT
QUARTER 2 2023/24
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Contents

Section 1 – INTRODUCTION

Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET

Revenue Budget Performance – more detailed breakdowns are included in the following sections:

- 2a Education and Inclusion Services;
- 2b Community and Children’s Services;
- 2c Chief Executive;
- 2d Finance, Digital and Frontline Services; and
- 2e Authority Wide Budgets.

Earmark reserve update – Section 2f provides a breakdown of expenditure against service areas.

Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Capital programme budget – more detailed breakdowns are included in the following sections:

- 3a Chief Executive;
- 3b Finance, Digital and Frontline Services;
- 3c Education and Inclusion Services;
- 3d Community and Children’s Services; and
- 3e Capital Programme Funding.

Prudential Indicators – a detailed breakdown is included in Section 3f.

Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

- Turnover;
- Sickness Absence;
- Organisation Health related investment areas; and
- Council Strategic Risks.

Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN

Corporate Plan priority progress updates including Climate Change – Quarter 2 position statements are included within the following sections:

- 5a – People,
- 5b – Places, and
- 5c – Prosperity.

Section 6 – THE COUNCIL’S WORK TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Progress update on the work being progressed across services to support the delivery of the Council’s Climate Change Strategy ‘Think Climate RCT’.

Section 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Executive Summary brings together and summarises the Council's financial and operational performance position as at 30th September 2023 (Quarter 2).

The Quarter 2 update is set in the context of the on-going difficult economic conditions including high levels of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis, that continues to contribute to significant cost pressures and increases in demand across a number of services. Within this very challenging environment, the Council is prioritising its focus on frontline service delivery, as set out in the Executive Summary, to help support the needs of residents and businesses.

Throughout the Executive Summary electronic links have been included that enable the reader to access more detailed information, as required.

Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET

Revenue Budget Performance

	2023/24 – as at 30th September 2023 (Quarter 2)		
Service Area	Full Year Budget £M	Projected Expenditure as at Quarter 2 £M	Variance Over / (Under) £M
Education & Inclusion Services (2a)	223.000	222.749	(0.251)
Community & Children's Services (2b)	202.148	205.000	2.852
Chief Executive (2c)	28.499	28.325	(0.174)
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services (2d)	79.595	80.027	0.432
Sub Total	533.242	536.101	2.859
Authority Wide Budgets (2e)	76.713	76.555	(0.158)
Grand Total	609.955	612.656	2.701

The full year revenue budget variance, projected as at 30th September 2023, is a £2.701M overspend. The main factors and conditions that continue to drive significant budget pressures, in line with the position set out in the quarter 1 Performance Report (and over and above the additional resources built into the 2023/24 revenue budget), are:

- Increases in the cost of social care, reflecting the level of demand for services and the complexity and specialist nature of care required:

- Adult Services – for external residential / nursing placements (specialist placements) and Supported Living Schemes; and
- Children’s Services – for in-house and external residential placements.
- Inflation levels remaining high that is causing further cost pressures and impacting on, for example, home to school contract costs and food costs within the Council’s Catering Service.

A programme of work is progressing, as part of the Council’s robust financial and service management arrangements, to review all areas of expenditure and income to bring the revenue position closer in line with budget by year-end. The outcomes from this on-going work will be incorporated into Performance Reports during the year.

Following on, revenue budget variances, projected at Quarter 2, for each Service Group are set out below.

Revenue budget variances projected at Quarter 2

1. Education & Inclusion Services

EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES

- Additional Learning Needs (£0.199M underspend); and
- Catering (£0.148M overspend).

2. Community and Children’s Services

ADULT SERVICES

- Long Term Care & Support (£0.220M overspend);
- Commissioned Services (£1.433M overspend);
- Provider Services (£0.662M overspend);
- Fairer Charging (£0.393M underspend); and
- Management, Safeguarding & Support Services (£0.071M overspend).

CHILDREN SERVICES

- Safeguarding & Support (including Children Looked After) (£1.142M overspend);
- Early Intervention (£0.166M underspend);
- Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (£0.061M underspend); and
- Management & Support Services (£0.067M underspend).

PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION

- Public Protection (£0.105M underspend); and
- Leisure, Countryside and Cultural Services (£0.210M overspend).

3. Finance, Digital & Frontline Services

FRONTLINE SERVICES

- Highways Management (£0.123M underspend);
- Transportation (£0.266M overspend);
- Waste Services (£0.176M overspend); and
- Parks Services (£0.064M overspend).

4. Chief Executive

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- Human Resources (£0.051M underspend);
- Corporate Estates (£0.087M overspend); and
- Prosperity & Development (£0.179M underspend).

5. Authority Wide Budgets

- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (£0.227M underspend).

Earmark Reserve Update

- A breakdown of full year expenditure against approved earmark reserves for Service Areas can be viewed at Section 2f by [clicking here](#).

Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Capital Programme Budget

Service Area	2023/24 - as at 30 th September 2023	
	Capital Budget £M	Actual Expenditure £M
Chief Executive (3a)	32.479	8.762
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services (3b)	86.949	25.531
Education & Inclusion Services (3c)	83.484	29.965
Community & Children's Services (3d)	17.295	2.383
Total	220.207	66.641

Key Capital Variances at Quarter 2

- Re-profiling of a number of projects to reflect changes in the total cost of schemes and revised delivery timescales.
- Grant approvals introduced into the Capital Programme: Welsh Government (WG) Local Transport Fund (£1.830M); WG Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant (£1.020M); WG Coal Tips Safety Grant (£11.302M); WG Additional Learning Needs (£1.610M); WG Sustainable Communities for Learning (£10.585M); WG Brilliant Basics Fund (£0.288M); WG Assets Collaboration Programme Wales (£0.250M); WCVA Local Places for Nature Grant (£0.952M); and UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (£0.228M).

For information on how the Capital Programme is funded see section 3e by clicking [here](#).

Prudential Indicators

For a detailed breakdown of Prudential Indicators, see section 3f by clicking [here](#).

Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

- Turnover

Service Area	2023/24		2022/23			
	As at 30 th September 2023		As at 30 th September 2022		As at 31 st March 2023	
	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover
Turnover – Council Wide	10,521	7.26	10,880	7.12	10,896	11.38
Chief Executive’s Division	919	4.46	951	4.42	952	9.14
Education & Inclusion Services	1,245	5.46	1,268	3.08	1,278	6.03
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4,808</u>	<u>8.47</u>	<u>4,957</u>	<u>8.01</u>	<u>5,020</u>	<u>11.16</u>
Primary	2,964	8.64	3,112	6.33	3,142	9.64
Secondary	1,844	8.19	1,845	10.84	1,878	13.68
Community & Children’s Services	2,601	8.07	2,776	9.11	2,722	15.94
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services	948	4.01	928	4.74	924	8.87

- Sickness Absence

Service Area	2023/24	2022/23	
	As at 30 th September 2023 %	As at 30 th September 2022 %	As at 31 st March 2023 %
% days lost to sickness absence – Council Wide	4.80	5.17	5.34
Chief Executive’s Division	3.19	2.97	3.16
Education & Inclusion Services	4.47	4.38	4.73
<u>Schools</u>	<u>3.77</u>	<u>4.37</u>	<u>4.57</u>
Primary	4.18	4.76	5.00
Secondary	3.11	3.70	3.84
Community & Children’s Services	7.19	7.67	7.89
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services	5.47	5.32	5.15

For a more detailed breakdown of 2023/24 staff turnover and sickness absence information, [click here](#).

Organisation Health related investment areas

There will be a continued focus on investing in organisational health related areas, for example, IT infrastructure and invest to save energy efficiency schemes aligned to Climate Change ambitions, with projects being delivered operationally within services across the Council.

- **Council Strategic Risks**

The Council's Strategic Risk Register is reviewed on an on-going basis to take account of the changing internal and external operating environment.

As part of the quarter 2 update process, it has not been deemed necessary to revise Strategic Risk Register risk ratings to those reported at quarter 1. This position will be kept under on-going review and, where revisions are considered necessary, these will be included in future Strategic Risk Register updates.

The Council's updated Strategic Risk Register can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN

Corporate Plan priority action plans for People, Places and Prosperity have been compiled and include a number of performance measures to accompany key actions, to provide Members with a full as picture as possible of the Council's performance.

A summary of progress made across each of the three priorities as at 30th September 2023 (Quarter 2) is set out in Sections 5a - c. Members will note that as part of the summaries of progress, electronic links have been included to each priority action plan, providing more detailed information on the progress during the third quarter of the year.

Corporate Plan Priority Progress Update

- **PEOPLE** (Section 5a)

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

Summary of progress to 30th September 2023

Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life.

We have continued our work to support our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life. Linc Cymru have appointed a new contractor to resume construction of the new Extra Care facility in Porth. We had hoped that work would resume on site in September 2023 but this has been delayed whilst funding is agreed. Work will now commence in quarter 3. We are working on the development options of a further three Extra Care facilities in Mountain Ash, Ferndale and Treorchy. The development of Extra Care homes offers an opportunity for older people to lead a more independent life and **prevent** unnecessary admissions to residential care. Extra Care also enables people to have more control and be more **involved** in decisions about their environment and the services they receive. All of the new Extra Care homes have also been designed to achieve 'BREEAM' excellence, the world's leading sustainability assessment.

Work has not yet begun to build a new specialist care accommodation for people with learning disabilities in adulthood and older age, on the [former Bronllwyn Residential Care Home site in Gelli](#). The contractor that was appointed has entered administration so we are now sourcing a new contractor to take on this work. Work is progressing as planned on a supported accommodation scheme as part of the '[Big Shed](#)' development in Tonypany. The scheme will contain 8 apartments for adults with learning disabilities alongside staff accommodation. We are also progressing design options for a new supported living scheme for people with a learning disability in Church Village.

We continue to invest in services to **prevent** escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. We worked with Health to provide new intermediate care beds at Parc Newydd Care Home in Talbot Green to support timely discharge for people not yet ready for home. Refurbishment of the reablement facility was completed however, in line with future anticipated demand and the lack of placements to meet increasing current demand, we will now utilise this facility for Elderly Mentally Infirm Dementia placements ensuring that the buildings and gardens can safely accommodate individuals in line with their care requirements.

We will continue to maximise new technology and ensure services are accessible and available to people and their families. This includes **collaborating** with Cardiff CBC and Merthyr Tydfil CBC

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

to procure a digital Alarm Receiving Centre solution which will provide more opportunities for broadening the assistive technology that we currently offer that meets the needs of residents.

We continue to deliver and monitor Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for both RCTCBC and Merthyr Tydfil CBCs ensuring residents homes are adapted in order to support them to live in their home independently. In Quarter 2, it took an average of 357 calendar days to deliver a DFG. 112 DFGs were approved in RCT with a total grant award of £1.2M. Of those DFGs completed, 97% respondents agreed that they feel more confident and independent after the adaptation and 95% respondents agreed that it was easier for a family member/carer to assist in meeting their daily needs.

We continue the transformation of day services so that people with a learning disability have access to meaningful activity and opportunities in their own communities, including employment to achieve their personal goals and live ordinary lives. The draft day services strategy was presented to [Cabinet in May 2023](#) and it was agreed that targeted consultation would take place with people who use day services, their families and carers, staff and other associated stakeholders. We will support service users and their families and carers to understand and engage with the consultation process and the potential implications for them by offering face to face consultations, where requested, and creating an information pack for service users to ensure the relevant information is presented in an accessible and clear format. Following this work, we anticipate awarding a tender of a Supported Living scheme in December 2023.

Encouraging residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing.

We continue to encourage all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing as we know that this is key to living a long and healthy life, and reducing the risk of long-term illnesses such as heart disease, stroke and Type 2 diabetes. Building on our leisure investment programme, we are focusing on delivering [Our Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27](#). We are developing new initiatives and programmes to increase customer membership and visitor numbers across the service area e.g. [Student Summer Holiday pass](#) and [free swimming sessions](#) during the summer holidays. At the end of Quarter 2 2023/24, there had been over million (1,007,037) visits to our indoor and outdoor sports facilities (1,003,658 in Q2 2022/23) including over 115,340 visits to Lido Ponty (112,216 in Q2 2022/23). We also exceeded our Leisure 4 Life membership target with 10,517 members (9,332 in Q2 2022/23).

We also want to strengthen how we **involve** customers by reintroducing customer surveys and evaluating the feedback to inform service changes and improvements. We are exploring how the survey can focus more on the softer, personal outcomes as a new way of gathering feedback to inform services.

We want to increase levels of engagement and participation in the arts and culture, and are developing and delivering new initiatives and programmes to increase visitor numbers to our cultural facilities. We promoted local events in our libraries including the 60th birthday of Aberdare Library in September 2023 and this celebration included an exhibition of the history of the library. We also promoted the RCT Sporting Heroes project in our libraries. Linked to the Summer Reading Challenge and funded via the Altered Images Project, we developed an activity pack to engage local children's with the history of sporting heroes and sporting tales of RCT linked to the wider [Sporting Heroes project](#). The packs were aimed at primary age children and every completed activity pack returned to the local library was entered into a draw to win a £100 sports voucher. A total of 36 entries were received across RCT. We also continued to offer special events at

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

Rhondda Heritage Park [including free activities for kids every day throughout the summer holidays](#) and special guided sessions on Tuesdays and Fridays. The activities changed weekly to provide multiple opportunities for families to enjoy free activities.

We continue to prioritise and strengthening relationships with residents and community groups and finding out what is important to residents utilising our Neighbourhood Networks. The aim of Neighbourhood Networks is to bring local partners together to help better connect our communities enabling groups and residents to have a say in shaping local priorities, and providing a place for local groups and partners to talk about things that are important to the community and identify solutions to any issues. During Quarter 2, a total of 22 Neighbourhood Network meetings have taken place across the County Borough. Each Neighbourhood Network that has met this quarter are working together to deliver service and activities and to develop communities further and have discussed **preventive** partnership and community coordination around Tempo Time Credits, Safe Places Scheme, Healthy Start Voucher Scheme, new project ideas, use of Community Insight Reports, use of consultation, any gaps in provision, Community Catalysts, Dementia Friends, and to showcasing other venues.

In total, our Community Co-ordinators based within our Community Resilience Hubs have received and responded to 337 resident requests for support via a coordinated community-based approach. Focussing particularly on early intervention and **prevention**, the information, advice and assistance and wider **preventative** approaches delivered enables residents to access support as early as possible, thus reducing demand on health and social care by encouraging the greater personal independence of residents and build the sustainability of the Third Sector.

Integrating health and social care and providing support for those with mental health problems and complex needs.

We continue to work with our partners to implement an **integrated** health and social care model. A regional model has been agreed based on two priority pathways of **integrated** care:

1. The urgent pathway of care: unscheduled community response for intensive, wrap around multidisciplinary team support that is time limited.
2. The population health management: a multidisciplinary response to population segmentation to embed a **preventative** ethos across all levels of need.

The aim of delivering **integrated** services is to improve health, care and wellbeing including **prevention** through a proactive approach and ensuring people will spend more time at home, with improved individual and population outcomes.

We will now focus on developing an implementation plan to deliver the new model.

We continue to **collaborate** with our partners to support older people to stay in their homes longer, **prevent** unnecessary stays in hospital and to help get people home from hospital more quickly when they are well enough. We continue to implement a home first model approach to hospital discharge to meet the requirements of Discharge to Recover then Assess (D2RA). As part of this we have worked with Health to introduce the new electronic transfer of care (E-TOC) discharge referral process to manage the discharge of people from hospital on the right D2RA pathway. This will be monitored throughout the year.

Our work to review and redesign Community Mental Health Services with Health is ongoing. As part of this we will complete a review of current Community Mental Health Services and develop options to redesign our joint service offer to meet current and future **long term** need and demand pressures. A new work programme and timescales have been agreed with Health for 2023/24.

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

We are also **collaborating** with our partners on early intervention and **prevention** work to reduce the number of Public Protection Notices issued and referrals to statutory services through the South Wales Police Early Help project. Following a successful pilot in 2022/23 this work has now been mainstreamed following funding from South Wales Police. The Early Help app provides Police with a referral pathway when they are attending calls to the public. It aims to ensure that residents that appear vulnerable or in need of support but do not meet statutory service thresholds are able to be referred for support within the community, quickly. For this reporting period, 134 referrals were received via the South Wales Police Early Help pathway of which 82 received a non-statutory wellbeing assessment, and 48 were referred/signposted to community organisations/groups for support. The non-statutory wellbeing assessment is designed with the resident at the centre of their support, ensuring their needs, goals and outcomes are achieved, which results in them taking control of their own lives and wellbeing. This [case study](#) provides an example of how this referral pathway has impact in the community.

We continue to raise awareness and develop the resident support offer within our communities. There has been a range of activities in Qtr 1 and 2 that strengthen our community offer including providing bundles of period products, 70% of which are reusable/sustainable, promoting Dementia Friendly Pontypridd during Dementia Action Week and developing a Dementia Listening Campaign for those with a lived experience of dementia to share their stories to build a picture of what dementia care looks and feels like in RCT. Following on from this event, several activities have emerged and continued to run. An Information Pop-Up Community Cuppa at Pontypridd Museum provides an informal setting where residents can get access to information and advice.

Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do.

We continue to focus commissioning to improve access to and support engagement in early intervention and **prevention** services for children, young people and families to reduce demand on statutory services. This quarter we have begun to implement the findings from the [Outside](#) review to ensure services are accessible to neurodivergent children, young people and families. This has included delivering sensory environments training within our youth club environments and sensory training for our families services providers. We also continue to monitor the take up of Welsh medium Flying Start childcare as a result of the change to our commissioning arrangements that was designed to actively encourage the take up of Welsh medium provision. This quarter we have supported an additional Welsh setting to apply to provide Welsh medium Flying Start childcare in an area that does not currently have any local provision. We are also working with [Mudiad Meithrin](#) to review how English medium settings can be supported to increase the use of Welsh within settings.

We continue to implement our Children Looked After **Prevention** Strategy to ensure that services are targeted towards family support and that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after. A key priority within the strategy is to improve the numbers of children who can reunify home who have spent some time being looked after by the local authority. Work continues on refreshing our permanence policy. We have completed work to review our current policy and identified what works well and what needs to change. We have held focus groups with staff and interviewed family members as part of this work. Practice is developing and a report and action plan is being developed. We are also piloting an RCT Parent Advocacy project to improve support for parents within the child protection system. Parent advocacy provides voice and choice to parents, by supporting parents to navigate the child protection system, and to be fully **involved** in the decision-making processes. An evaluation of the pilot will now be completed by the end of March 2024.

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

In line with the Welsh Government ambition of removing profit from children's care, we are implementing our **long-term** Residential Transformation Strategy which was agreed by Cabinet in February 2023. We will develop new provision of Children's Homes that meets need and matches statutory sufficiency duty including identifying those providers who will **collaborate** / convert to not for profit. This is a **long term** project and work has commenced.

Our Participation strategy outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services approach to supporting the rights of children, young people, parents, carers, and families in receipt of care and support, to have their voices heard and to actively participate in decisions about their life and help to shape future service developments. Implementation of the strategy includes further developing accessible information for children and carers utilising a range of media e.g. website, digital text. An [summary of our participation work for 2022/23](#) was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in [July 2023](#). The report included the [results of the 'Get Involved' survey for care experienced children and young people](#). We used this information with Voices From Care Cymru staff to develop the work programme for 2023 to 2024 based on what young people are asking for with focus on wellbeing, peer representatives and outdoor activities.

We are working with our schools to develop strategic approaches to supporting children and families in poverty. We continued to [roll out universal free school meals](#) in line with Welsh Government policy to our Year 3 and 4 pupils by September 2023. We are also promoting our breakfast clubs to increase the number of children accessing this provision. Following Covid, there has been an increase in the number of children attending breakfast clubs but we need to better understand if this increase is impacting on children in poverty. We will seek to implement a system to better understand the eFSM make up of those attending breakfast club.

We are delivering the Early Years Transformation agenda in RCT in order to ensure early years services are universally available and specialist services are targeted by need and not geographical location. This will also improve early intervention and **prevention** outcomes across the County Borough. We continue to develop the use of the Early Years Vulnerability Profile as a means to plan and target early years services and support the expansion of the Flying Start programme. Data from the Autumn term will be used to inform the January Flying Start intake.

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 2

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PEOPLE		
Investment Area	Investment Value¹ £M	Quarter 2 Update
Extracare Housing	7.772	<p>This investment funding covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Porth - agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 3rd December 2020. Progress to date includes: the vacation of the building; site surveys and demolition works completed; and planning permission granted 16th December 2021. The development has been delayed due to the main contractor entering administration, noting that a re-tendering process has now been completed and a new contractor will be recommencing works on site. <p>(For information, previous projects delivered in this area include: the former Maesyffynnon Home for the Elderly site (Aberaman) and Pontypridd "Cwrt yr Orsaf" Extra Care Housing Scheme, opened in May 2020 and October 2021 respectively).</p> <p>Plans for additional extra care facilities are being developed in line with the Council's residential care homes for older people strategy, this being supported via additional investment of £2M as agreed by full Council on 20th September 2023.</p>
Tackling Poverty Fund	0.300	<p>This investment funding is to help address areas where there are high levels of poverty (including fuel poverty) to increase the disposable income of households, for example, by supporting households to reduce energy bills, helping to overcome barriers to find employment. In parallel, funding has been secured via the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, to deliver a local scheme for Heating Grants and Solar Panels, to further support this priority area.</p>
Total	8.072	

¹ Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

o **PLACES** (Section 5b)

PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play

Summary of progress to 30th September 2023

Keeping RCT clean through efficient street cleaning services, minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint

We continue to promote good recycling practices through campaigns and education. The Alun Maddox [Education Centre at Bryn Pica](#) continues to extend an [invitation](#) to Schools and Community Groups to take an interactive trip in to the world of recycling to discover how household items are collected from the kerbside, sorted in to waste types and turned in to new items. This quarter, 6 educational visits have been made to the centre. Online sessions have also been made available to those schools not able to physically visit the centre, and we continue to look at ways to help with transport costs for physical visits.

We commenced changes to [the 3-weekly black bag waste collections](#) in July, which has seen an [increase in households recycling](#). The tonnage of recycled waste during Qtr 2 is marginally lower than the same period last year (39,360 tonnes compared to 39,847 tonnes in Qtr 2 2022/23) and our overall recycling percentage has increased compared to last year at 68.08% compared to 66.74% in Qtr 2 2022/23. The tonnage of residual waste sent to landfill continues to positively decrease from 1,513 tonnes (2.53%) in Qtr 2 2022/23 compared to 579 tonnes (1.00%) this quarter.

Work continues with landlords, agents and residents to encourage good recycling practices that will reduce municipal waste and have a positive effect on the environment. We continue to promote the changes in legislation regarding non-domestic waste collections i.e. the separation of residual and recyclable waste, in advance of the April 2024 implementation date. In addition, we continue to work with Caru Cymru (Keep Wales Tidy) to support community activity e.g. litter picks. This quarter we also invited residents to [recycle](#) small Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) at our Leisure Centres.

The Council's Enforcement Team continues to monitor environmental offences, enforce off street parking restrictions and 'school keep clear zones' to ensure the safe passage of both residents and drivers. The extension to the RCT Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) was also [agreed by Cabinet](#) in September following public [consultation](#). We also continue to take appropriate action to enforce the PSPO for dog controls.

We continue to look at sustainable fleet transport options, attending seminars on alternative sustainable fuel options and trialling vehicles as and when the opportunities arise and continue to support the Council's decarbonisation agenda to reduce single use plastic across the Council. The [Environmental Protection \(Single-Use Plastic Products\) \(Wales\) Act 2023](#) became law in September 2023, which will make it a criminal offence to supply or offer to supply (including for free) certain single-use plastic products to consumers in Wales.

Keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality

Our highways investment programme activity continues across the County Borough. This quarter, we have progressed bridge work schemes including [Llanharan Railway Footbridge](#), [Nant Gelliwion Bridge](#), [Maesycoed](#), Bridge works beneath [Llanwonno Road in Stanleytown](#) and [progressed the installation](#) of the historic Iron Tram Bridge in Trecynon following its restoration.

PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play

[Traffic light replacement](#) has taken place on the A4119 at Miskin Road and [resurfacing works](#) have been undertaken at Gwaun Bedw in Cymer. Other work includes the [reviewing](#) the Individual Disabled Parking Bay Scheme to ensure that it continues to meet resident need; advising motorists of [changes to road layouts](#) as part of the A4119 Dualling Scheme; undertaking [wall repairs](#) at Berw Road, Pontypridd; and commencing the [second phase of wall repairs](#) between Ynysybwl and Glyn Coch.

We also continue to progress the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act and flood risk flood mitigation measures. A Report was presented to [Cabinet in July](#) to Commence the Formal Statutory Consultation on the Authority's Review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan. Flood alleviation continues to be a priority for the Council with major work completed at [Glenboi Pumping Station](#) and flood alleviation works commencing at [Cwmaman](#), [Llwyncelyn Road in Porth](#), at various streets in [Mountain Ash](#) and at Park Street, [Tylorstown](#). We have also commenced a [four-week consultation](#) on flood alleviation measures for Treorchy.

We are also progressing active travel schemes across Rhondda Cynon Taf and have commenced the first phase of work on [the Rhondda Fach Active Travel Route](#), and have commenced work to [improve the cycling provision](#) in Llantwit Fardre and Efail Isaf.

In August we received [confirmation of funding](#) from Welsh Government for Sardis Road bus Corridor improvements, and in the same month undertook a successful [subsidised £1 single bus fare scheme](#) during the school summer holidays.

Ensuring the County Borough is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion and where residents feel safe

During the quarter, work to improve community cohesion has been progressed. Wi-Fi capability is now available at 13 Community Centres and the 2 RCT Bowls Centres.

The 2023/24 Shared Prosperity Fund RCT Community Support Grant Programme to support community groups in need with a financial resource (revenue and capital) continues through an application process. Small, Medium and High-level applications have been received and assessed, with small grants issued to eligible applicants. Medium and High-level grant applications are considered by a panel that includes Cabinet Members and the Council Leader. The 'RCT Community Asset Transfer Policy' is expected to be presented to Cabinet next quarter.

Our work to prevent anti-social behaviour continues in partnership with South Wales Police. 10 additional PCSOs have been employed to work with Community Wardens and Community Safety Staff to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and increase public perception of feeling safe in RCT.

Our work to support individuals with chronic substance misuse, mental health needs and offending backgrounds continues with a focus on those requiring support because of their complex needs and issues with housing. We also continue to work with partners to provide services to children and young people through educational sessions in schools and youth clubs. [Barod](#) our integrated Substance Misuse Service provider, continues its multi-agency work to ensure identification of unmet need, sharing of good practice and responding to challenges and

PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play

issues. A multi-agency working group has also been set up to respond to the recommendations of the Health Equity Audit.

Our domestic abuse support services are now integrated through the new 'One Front Door' domestic abuse support programme, operating out of the Oasis Centre in Pontypridd. We continue to progress our Outreach service with the securing of an RCT vehicle to take out into the community later this year to target parts of our society that are known to experience domestic abuse.

To keep people that live and work in RCT safe, we continue to provide information to raise awareness of fraudulent activity e.g. information to the taxi trade to make them aware of 'Courier Fraud' so that they can identify it and report suspected incidents to the police. We also continue to publish cases where rogue traders have been prosecuted on the Council's website including a [Sofa Company](#) fined for offences contrary to labelling requirements, required by the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety) Regulations 1988, and a store selling [unsafe food](#).

Getting the best out of our parks by looking after and investing in our greenspaces

We continue to invest in our green spaces and increase biodiversity. Significant progress has been made in the major improvements at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park. The construction of the new [Canolfan Calon Taf](#) is complete. The restoration of the old toilet block into a staff welfare facility is complete. The Bandstand and surrounding area have been restored, and work on the Sunken Garden area is ongoing. The redevelopment of the former pitch and putt golf area in the northern part of the park is making good progress. A bid for funding to the Visit Wales Brilliant Basics Programme has been successful. Design work for the new events space has taken place and a public engagement exercise undertaken, and a procurement exercise has been completed and contract awarded with site works beginning in September. Works should be completed during the next quarter. [Feedback](#) from the engagement sessions held has been positive and considered when progressing the events space scheme.

Our Playground Investment Programme is also progressing to deliver planned improvements during 2023/24.

We continue to progress activity in support of the [2024 National Eisteddfod for Wales](#) to promote, raise funds and support the delivery of the event. The [official announcement](#) of the Eisteddfod in Pontypridd took place in August.

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#)

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 2

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value ² £M	Quarter 2 Update
Highways Infrastructure Repairs	4.880	The additional resources are being used in conjunction with existing resources to deliver a programme of highways infrastructure repairs between 2023/24 and 2025/26 (noting further additional investment funding of £1.5M as agreed by council on 20 th September 2023).
Unadopted Roads	0.591	To support a programme of work to private streets that the Council has identified as requiring specific improvements. Following completion of the necessary works, the streets will be adopted as highways maintainable at public expense. Of the 10 schemes that are included in the 2023/24 programme, 5 were completed by the end of Quarter 2, 3 are on-going and 2 will be progressed during the current year.
Play Areas	0.250	There are 12 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2023/24. As at Quarter 2, 3 had been completed, 3 had been designed and costed, 3 are under construction and 3 are to be designed.
Skate Parks/Multi Use Games Areas	0.330	There are 4 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2023/24 and will be progressed during the year.
Structures: Brook Street Footbridge	0.951	This funding supported the replacement of the footbridge that is now completed and open for public use, noting that minor follow-up works are progressing, including an illuminated handrail which will be completed in October / quarter 3.
Structures	5.943	The investment funding has been allocated to support structure projects (further additional investment funding of £2.5M approved by Council 20 th September 2023), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Street Wall, Llantrisant –minor follow-up works completed in July. • Other major retaining wall refurbishments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dinas Road (Dinas) – completed. ○ Llanharan Railway Footbridge – the new bridge structure is scheduled to be lifted into position in quarter 3. ○ Imperial Bridge – works on-going with focus on the condition of the deck surface. ○ Graig Las Bridge (Gilfach Goch / Tonyrefail) – completed. ○ Lanelay Bridge (Talbot Green) – minor snagging works to be progressed. ○ Bodringallt Bridge (Ystrad) - Infilling – scheme progressing.

² Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value ² £M	Quarter 2 Update
		In parallel with the above, various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.
Parks Structures	1.359	<p>The investment funding has been allocated to support various footbridge repairs and replacements within Parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gelli Isaf Bridge (Ystrad) – Scheduled Monument Conservation Scheme – following completion of phase 1 in 2022/23, the phase 2 scheme is progressing, with some delays due to bats being identified in some areas. • Colliery St Footbridge, Trehafod – works completed. • Various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.
Parks and Green Spaces	1.050	This investment funding is supporting drainage, pavilion and infrastructure improvements to various parks sites. The 2023/24 programme comprises of 53 schemes and as at quarter 2 there are 22 full schemes completed (further additional investment funding of £0.3M approved by Council 20 th September 2023).
Llanharan Link Road	5.363	This investment funding has been allocated to support various stages of development, preliminary design, ground investigations and ecology surveys. The Welsh Government published the findings of the Roads Review in February 2023 and recommended “Welsh Government should not provide further support to the A473 Llanharan Bypass because it would be likely to increase car use. Other interventions to improve active travel and public transport, coupled with demand management would provide a more sustainable basis for meeting future development aspirations”. Funding has been secured from Welsh Government to revisit the case for change in light of the Roads Review recommendation. This will be an on-going area of work.
A4119 Dualling (Stinkpot Hill)	7.035	This investment funding is supporting the dualling of the highway between the South Wales Fire Service Headquarters roundabout and Coed Ely roundabout. A large section of the southbound carriageway was completed in quarter 2 and the traffic has been diverted on to the new carriageway. Works have commenced on the existing road area to construct the northbound carriageway together with associated large culverts and active travel route. Works remain on programme to complete in 2024.
Gelli/Treorchy Link Road	0.386	This investment funding relates to investigatory works for a solution which will help alleviate congestion at Stag Square.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value² £M	Quarter 2 Update
		Further work on this project has been put on hold due to the findings of the Welsh Government's Road Review on other road building projects.
Cynon Gateway (North), Aberdare Link Road	1.329	This investment funding relates to the preliminary design, planning application and tender preparation for a link road from A4059 Aberdare to join the A465 Heads Of the Valleys road. The Welsh Government published the findings of the Roads Review in February 2023. The report recommended that "Welsh Government should not provide further support for the Cynon Gateway North scheme because its construction would result in substantial increased emissions of Carbon; there would be impacts on sites that are protected for their environmental value; and it would facilitate a car-dependent approach to economic development". Funding has been secured from the Welsh Government to revisit the case for change in light of the Roads Review recommendation. This will be an on-going area of work.
Porth Interchange Metro + LTF	--	As set out in the Porth Regeneration Strategy, a new Transport Hub in the Town Centre is currently under construction, funded by UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, WG Local Transport Fund and Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (total project costs £5.4M). During Quarter 2, works continued mainly on the external areas of the Transport Hub.
Leisure – Darran Park 3G Pitch	0.175	Scheme complete and in use.
Leisure – Leisure Centres	0.400	Additional investment funding agreed by Council 20 th September 2023 for additional refurbishment works across Leisure Centres.
Total	30.042	

- **PROSPERITY** (Section 5c)

PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper

Summary of progress to 30th September 2023

Investing in our town centres, bringing jobs and homes into our town centres to create vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise

A new package of support for local businesses was agreed by [Cabinet on 27th March](#), and is now being implemented. The [4 new grant programmes](#) utilise the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund and Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant. Work is continuing with Business Wales and other agencies to provide joint support for individual businesses, including providing co-ordinated help to start ups, and we also continue to encourage businesses to work together through the Business Improvement Districts.

We continue to work with RCT visitor based businesses on the delivery of the RCT Tourism strategy. A proposal has been [presented to Cabinet on 17th July](#) for the repurposing of Rock Grounds from Council offices to a hotel and spa facility, in line with the aims of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy and also the Council's accommodation strategy. Progress has now been made to tender for developers to come forward with proposals to lead the redevelopment. WG Transforming Towns Loan funding has been approved for developer acquisition of HSBC Pontypridd, with plans including tourist accommodation on upper floors.

Design development has been commissioned for active travel schemes within Aberdare and Pontypridd town centres and work is progressing.

Work is also continuing to improve the accessibility of Council tenders to local Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, including the continued development of the local business directory through a marketing campaign.

Delivering major regeneration and transportation schemes, maximising the impact of the South Wales Metro, to create better places to live and work, whilst protecting and enhancing the County Borough

A formal consultation on the draft Aberdare town centre strategy, which was [approved by Cabinet](#) on 28th June, has now been [completed](#). Results are being analysed and will be used to inform the final strategy. Continued progress is being made on the regeneration of town centre properties, including the redevelopment of the Rates Building supported by a Welsh Government grant.

Early draft proposals for the Tonypandy Town Centre Strategy have been prepared which will form the basis for further development and agreement of the programme. In the interim, support for the private sector to deliver key projects is ongoing, with demolition works relating to the Big Shed now complete.

In Porth, the [Transport Hub](#), the anchor project of the [Town Centre Regeneration Strategy](#), is nearing the final stages of completion and work on the new extra care facility at Dan y Mynydd site is progressing.

The Pontypridd Placemaking Plan delivery is [progressing](#) with the next phase focusing on the implementation of the Southern Gateway projects. A £1.28M grant was secured from Welsh Government for the demolition of the Marks and Spencer/Dorothy Perkins buildings and work is underway. The Bingo Hall site is also progressing and designs include the development of a bus

PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper

interchange and high quality public realm. A detailed update on progress on the Southern Gateway Project was [reported to Cabinet on 15th May](#) and further information is available via the Council's [Lets Talk Southern Gateway](#) page. Also in Pontypridd, June saw the [opening of the YMa](#) following a major refurbishment of the former YMCA building and on 4th September, work started on site towards the [redevelopment of the Muni Arts Centre](#).

Work to deliver the [A4119 Coed Ely dualling scheme](#) is progressing to programme, along with the construction of the traffic free community route from the South Wales Fire Service headquarters roundabout to the Coed Ely roundabout. The [contractor](#) provided an update in their [project bulletin for August 2023](#).

Working with Cardiff Capital Region, we continue to progress [Housing viability gap funding](#) to remediate contaminated land conditions across 3 brownfield sites at the former Cwm Coking works, former Aberdare hospital site and Heol y Wenallt. Funding has been secured for the remediation of Cwm Coking works for development. However, progress has proved difficult due to the complex nature of contamination at the site and discussions are ongoing between the developer and Cardiff Capital Region. Planning consent has been granted for the former Aberdare hospital site and the Council is having pre-application discussions with the developer for the Hoel y Wenallt site.

Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great Education

Following the publication of the positive [Estyn inspection of local authority services in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council](#) at the end of March, work is continuing to address the three recommendations highlighted to sharpen approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning, strengthen approaches to Welsh medium education and build on existing work to further improve attendance and reduce exclusions.

Work is currently underway to review existing self-evaluation processes and data reports and improved processes are being put in place where need is identified. A pupil and family voice strategy has been developed and will now be implemented, to ensure the views of young people are central to evaluation and decision making.

Review of year one progress against the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan has been positive. This has not yet translated into an increase in learners accessing Welsh Medium Education, which has remained largely static in line with the picture across Wales, but many of the actions are long-term and will take time to demonstrate impact. Delivery of School organisation developments continue to strengthen Welsh Language provision (see below) and a specialist teacher has been recruited for Welsh language immersion.

Following on from Wellbeing events held in Q1, Attendance case studies have been completed with Colleagues in Neath Port Talbot and shared with Welsh Government for inclusion in revised national attendance guidance. 2 RCT schools have also been invited to complete case studies for inclusion. A new attendance action plan for the academic year 2023/24 is now in place.

Following the positive [evaluation of Step 4 provision](#) presented to Cabinet on 27th March, 8 schools submitted proposals for Tranche 4 which received approval and will now be implemented. However, significant challenges are being faced by schools in the post pandemic period with increasing numbers of learners experiencing challenges conforming to school rules and expectations, and support for schools is being put in place. Two conferences delivered on whole school approaches to behaviour in spring and summer terms received good evaluations from schools. Headteachers have

PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper

reported back on how schools are utilising the practices shared and impact will be reviewed during the autumn term. Further information on exclusions is available in the [report to Education and Inclusion Scrutiny committee on 27th April 23](#). This continues to be an area of support and challenge for schools through the Team Around the School process.

Following service delivery consultation with ALN co-ordinators, revised ALN service delivery models have been shared with schools, which balance the need for specific case support with the development of whole school approaches. Processes for referrals have also been reviewed and streamlined, whilst still complying with statutory processes, following stakeholder feedback.

To ensure alternative provision continues to meet the needs of learners across the local authority, guidance detailing school and governing body roles and responsibilities relating to alternative provision has been circulated to schools, along with a survey. Information gathered from schools will be analysed as part of a new quality assurance process which will begin following October half term.

An evaluation of Year one of the Early years language project has shown a positive impact in pilot schools in terms of increasing capacity to deliver both universal and targeted approaches to develop early language skills in children, as well as a small increase in children achieving age related expectations. Year 2 of the project is now underway with 45 schools and 7 early years settings participating.

Work continues in partnership with Central South Consortium to regularly review the progress of all schools. This includes further embedding the Team Around the School protocol for schools requiring co-ordinated LA/CSC support. Some schools have been supported and improvements have been made in areas such as exclusions and attendance, for example at Pontypridd High School and Ty Gwyn, with further monitoring planned to ensure these are sustainable. Two new prewarning notices have been issued to schools with performance concerns and meetings have taken place. Work is ongoing with CSC to ensure consistency of reporting on school/project support to enable the early identification of schools causing concern. However, ASOS is having a negative impact on the amount of time improvement partners are able to work with some schools, and we are discussing ways to address this with CSC.

Investment in our school buildings continues, to invest more in Welsh medium education, ensure improvements in special school provision, deliver improved 21st Century learning environments and create more community facilities. Construction work is underway and on track across the sustainable communities for learning programme. Work is well underway at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Awel Taf (Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin), Ysgol Bro Taf (3 – 16 school in Pontypridd), Ysgol Afon Wen (3 – 16 school in Hawthorn), and YGG Llyn y Forwyn, with all projects on programme and due to open in September 2024. Completion of work at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive to deliver improved sports and sixth form facilities has been slightly delayed due to a water connection issue but the new block will be available after half term. Work is also progressing at [three MIM Primary Schools](#) (Pontyclun: Penygawsi; and Llanilltud Faerdref), with [steel signing ceremonies at Llanilltud Faerdref and Penygawsi](#) held in July. However, there has been a delay in planning approval for the new Welsh Medium Primary school at Llanilltud as a consequence of ecology issues, and discussions with NRW are ongoing to resolve the issues identified. Public consultation also took place on the proposal to develop a new special school in RCT, with progress to date [reported to Cabinet on 23rd October](#).

Capital improvement work is also planned for Trehopcyn Primary School, Porth Community School & Treorchy Primary School to provide facilities which will support the community focussed schools

PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper

approach, enabling co-location of services and stronger engagement with the school community. A funding decision is awaited from WG for similar works at Hawthorn high school. WG funding decisions are also awaited for refurbishment of 2 childcare settings. In addition, small capital grants will assist 61 childcare settings to improve their facilities.

Increase the number of quality homes available and affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents

The Council is working in partnership with Registered Social Landlords to meet local housing need and increase the supply of energy efficient, low carbon homes. £59.9M funding has been allocated to RCT Social Housing Grant for the next 3 years and is fully committed, with a total of 26 schemes included in the programme development plan. As of the current reporting period, 10 schemes have utilised local contractors. Hafod Housing's [Clos Heddfan and Llys Ty Garth schemes](#), which have recently been completed, demonstrate successful delivery supported by previous social housing grants. SME housebuilders have also been engaged in the preparation of the new local development plan, putting forward sites for consideration and airing their views on the main issues for the LDP to address.

The draft Local Housing Strategy has been completed and engagement activities will now be undertaken prior to presenting to Cabinet in 2024. An inventory of housing and land assets, including strategic voids and unlettable properties, which will provide data for future potential land sharing and projects in partnership with Registered Social Landlords, has also been completed and will be shared with housing leaders groups to agree next steps.

Recruitment of staff to the new Assessment and Support Team has been completed, and will be in post by the end of November. This will enable implementation of new pathways for prevention of homelessness, with the aim of ensuring more effective access to services. A suitable property has been identified for accommodation for homeless single individuals and a decision is awaited on the planning application. The [social letting agency](#) continues to develop to enhance housing options and provide affordable accommodation, with 22 properties currently on the scheme. There has been a delay in evaluation of the operation of the Housing Allocations Policy due to resource issues, but work has now begun on the review.

The National Empty Homes Grant Scheme launched at the end of January, with RCT acting as lead administrator, and 16 local authorities across Wales are now participating, with a large percentage of schemes approved to date within RCT. Proactive work continues to be taken in line with the [Empty Homes Strategy](#) 2022 – 2025, including delivery of Houses into Homes and Owner occupier loads to support bringing properties back into use, and the use of enforcement action and enforced sales where appropriate.

There will be a broad offer of skills and employment programmes for all ages

Council services have worked together to identify and improve potential referral and progression pathways into work and skills support, for example through the Leisure GP referral scheme and Adult Community learning courses. A single referral pathway has been developed so that referring organisations can indicate the type of support required and this can be matched with the services and funding pathways which best fit needs. This has been promoted both to partners and internal services, resulting in a steady flow of referrals to employment support services. Discussions are underway with Housing Support Teams to create referral routes for clients who need support with

PROSPERITY - Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper

numeracy and budgeting skills. Work is also ongoing to re-establish and expand the Employment Routes programme with the NHS, and to pilot a scheme with the creative industries.

10 graduates and 49 apprentices commenced employment with the Council on 4th September and will support staffing needs and succession planning across a variety of service areas. The Council also continues to support opportunities for vulnerable young people and those with specific needs to access employment support and work placements, including 5 care experienced young people who commenced the Step in the Right Direction traineeship programme in September. The Council has also been [accredited as a living wage employer](#).

Following a [successful collaboration with Treorchy Business Improvement District](#) last year, a Customer2Care Summer programme in Pontypridd in collaboration with Your Pontypridd BID provided work placements for 13 young people in local businesses. Discussions have also commenced with Our Aberdare BID to potentially extend the programme into Aberdare in summer of 2024.

We continue to work with schools to support pupils to engage in careers. Training has been provided to 3 new careers leads and work undertaken to further develop the Gatsby Career benchmark criteria to provide a focus on careers using the Welsh language and link to the curriculum for Wales. An 'Inspire me' event, a programme of inspirational talks, activities and work experiences by people from the local community, will be held in Ysgol Nantgwyn in January 2024, with a focus on careers benefitting from Welsh language skills.

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#)

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 2

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value ³ £M	Quarter 2 Update
Empty Property Grant	--	Support to bring empty homes back into use is being funded from external funding during 2023/24 and the RCT investment has been re-profiled into future years. Further information on the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme is included within the Prosperity Priority Plan.
Schools	0.652	<p>This investment funding is supporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YGG Llyn Y Forwyn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The construction of a new 240 place Welsh medium primary school, including 30 nursery places (net zero carbon in operation) with external facilities including a MUGA, and on site Cylch Meithrin and community facilities. ○ Works on site are progressing well and to programme, the building will be watertight by end of December 2023 and the project is due for completion end of August 2024 in readiness for the start of the new school term in September. • Y Pant – the investment funding will contribute to the delivery of a 2-storey extension and first floor fit out for 4 Classrooms. The new block was completed September 2023.
Transport Infrastructure	1.894	<p>This investment funding is supporting a wider programme of highways capital works including (further additional investment of £0.537M agreed by Council on 20th September 2023):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Llanharan signal controlled pedestrian crossing construction is scheduled to start in November 2023 to replace the footbridge. • A4059 / Bowls Club junction - feasibility study completed to investigate junction / traffic flow improvements along the A4059. • A4059 Quarter Mile junction - feasibility proposals have been developed and the next steps will be preliminary design including ground investigation work.
Park and Ride Programme	0.754	<p>This investment funding is supporting the development work needed to create additional and formalised 'park and ride' car parking spaces with new and improved facilities such as Access for All, improved CCTV coverage and Electric Vehicle charging points at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Porth – phase 3 detailed design work has been completed.

³ Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value ³ £M	Quarter 2 Update
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pontyclun – further feasibility work to be undertaken to investigate opportunities for additional car parking near Pontyclun station.
Drainage	0.559	This investment funding is supporting drainage and culvert network works by delivering, as match funding, 21 Welsh Government grant funded schemes across the County Borough (further additional investment of £0.059M agreed by Council on 20 th September 2023).
Total	3.859	

Section 6 – THE COUNCIL’S WORK TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

The Council's Climate Change Strategy [agreed in June 2022](#), contains a series of actions which are being developed to mitigate and adapt to the impact of Climate Change and to take steps that will reduce our Carbon Footprint and enable the Council to meet its ambitious targets by 2030, i.e.:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf will be a Carbon Neutral Council;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough will be as close to Carbon Neutral as possible; and
- Rhondda Cynon Taf will have contributed to the Welsh Government’s ambition of a Net Zero Public Sector.

Since June 2022, a number of progress reports on climate and environment related projects have been presented to Cabinet, the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee and to Scrutiny Committees in accordance with agreed work programmes. Cabinet also agreed that the monitoring of the Climate Change Strategy is included in the Council’s quarterly Performance Reports, with updates reported during 2022/23.

In 2023/24, the Climate Change Strategy and carbon reduction actions were further embedded into the Council’s three Corporate Plan priorities: Think Climate People; Think Climate Places; and Think Climate Prosperity.

In Quarter 1, the format of the update was well received by the [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee](#) at its meeting on 27 September. However, the Sub Committee requested further information in respect of the procurement element of the Carbon Footprint be included. This has been developed in the Quarter 2 summary for Members’ consideration in advance of further more detailed information reports in respect of procurement. At the same time, the Procurement Service is also developing a detailed information/training session for elected Members to support their skills and knowledge in this area.

Section 6a provides an overview of climate related progress for Quarter 2 across four areas of focus within the Climate Change Strategy: **Council Specific, Climate PEOPLE, Climate**

PLACES and Climate PROSPERITY. Where there are actions or projects that do not have a clear 'home', these items are included in the areas of 'best fit'. A Summary of progress can be viewed by [clicking here](#).



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH NOVEMBER 2023

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION

Author: Hannah Jones – Council Business Unit

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Cabinet with the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Under the Leader's Scheme of Delegation (the 3A) the Corporate Parenting Board, comprising of a cross party membership was formed to take the lead in ensuring that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as corporate parent's to children who are looked after and formulate Council policy in respect of children who are looked after and children in need.

- 3.2 As part of the Board's Terms of reference, the Board must report its work to the Cabinet and it has been agreed that this will take the form of an Annual Report.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The first Annual Report for the Corporate Parenting Board was produced for the 2015/16 Municipal Year.
- 4.2 The contents of the report acted as a useful basis for a number of upcoming topics which the Members felt needed particular attention in the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

4.3 This is the eighth Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board, which provides a summary of the role and work of the Board undertaken in the 2022/23 Municipal Year. The report is attached as Appendix 1.

4.4 The 2022/23 Annual Report was approved by the Corporate Parenting Board at its meeting held on [18th July 2023](#).

5. THE WORK OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD 2022-23

5.1 During the 2022/23 Municipal Year, the Corporate Parenting Board considered the following range of reports, which led to challenging discussions:

- Regulation 73 Reports;
- Social Services Complaints & Compliments;
- Advocacy data;
- Employment, Education and Training Programmes for CLA;
- Independent Reviewing Officer Updates;
- Member Frontline Visits;
- Fostering Wales;
- Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service;
- All Wales Protocol for reducing the criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young People 2022;
- Pupil Deprivation Grant;
- Virtual School Model;
- Child Practice Review;
- Participation and Engagement Updates;
- Independent Sector Placements;
- Charter for Parents in Care & Leaving Care;
- Children Looked After Prevention Strategy;
- Miskin & Therapeutic Families Team Annual Update;
- Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Annual Update;
- Young Carers Annual Update;
- Fostering Service Quality of Care Report;
- Local Authority's Housing Offer for Care Leavers; and
- Implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act 2018 and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code 2021 In Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

5.2 The Corporate Parenting Board has developed a robust and varied Work Programme for the 2023/24 Municipal Year, to continue good practice and to enhance transparency. Members can also raise any matters that they would like to add to the programme during the year.

5.3 In addition to its standard items, the following key elements of focus have been identified by the Corporate Parenting Board for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

- The review of performance data;
- Elected Member Training opportunities;
- Government Initiatives in relation to CLA;
- Participation and Engagement with CLA;
- Mental Health & Wellbeing Support for CLA;
- Updates in respect of the Children Looked After Residential Care Strategy 2022-2027;
- Safeguarding;
- Virtual School Model; and
- Magu project.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

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 There is no consultation required for this report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATION(S)

9.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 The report has been prepared in accordance with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's constitution.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

11.1 The work of the Corporate Parenting Board links directly to the Council's Corporate Plan priority – 'Rhondda Cynon Taf's Children will receive a great start in life...'

- 11.2 In respect of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the work of the Corporate Parenting Board meets the Five Ways of Working:

1. Working together with other partners to deliver objectives

The Corporate Parenting Board considers reports and presentations from various service areas of the Council. Members are aware that a number of partners and areas must contribute to tackle the range of different issues, which young people may experience, such as mental health, education and budgeting.

2. Involving those with an interest and seeking their views

The Corporate Parenting Board provide looked after young people and care leavers in RCT with the opportunity to attend meetings and have their voice heard. It allows them to promote their life experiences at a strategic, policy and legislative level and provides Members with the chance to hear first-hand experiences.

12. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Corporate Parenting Board Annual report outlines the work undertaken in the 2022/23 Municipal Year and features the priority areas to consider moving forward, which will ensure that the Council provides continuous improvement to the services that it delivers for its children and young people within the Looked After System.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
ANNUAL REPORT
2022/2023



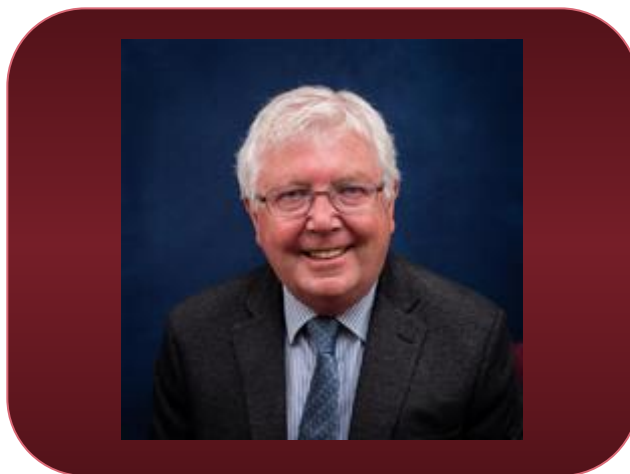
RHONDDA CYNON TAF



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FOREWORD



Councillor Gareth Caple
Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care
Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board

It is with great pleasure, that I present to you the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report which provides a summary of the role and work undertaken by the Board in the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

As the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care and the newly appointed Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, I, firstly, wish to take the opportunity to thank my predecessor, Christina, who remains a valued member of the Board. I hope the Annual Report highlights that during the past year, the Corporate Parenting Board and myself as Chair, have continued to build upon the positive work already established over the years.

During the 2022/23 Municipal Year, Members and Officers have come together as critical friends on several occasions to consider a wide range of reports. We endeavour to create a safe environment which allows us to comfortably challenge information with the benefit of our care experienced children and young people within our care in mind.

Unfortunately, during the year, two meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board were postponed due to unforeseen circumstances, one being the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Despite having fewer meetings, the Board continued to receive its key updates and ensured that all business needs were met. It was particularly pleasing to note that so many services have recovered so well following the pandemic, but also that so many had developed and embraced new ways of working to the benefit of staff and the young people.

As always, it has been pleasing to receive first hand experiences from care experienced young people during the year, which has played an integral part in keeping us focussed on our priorities.

Moving forward, it is vital that we continue to improve as corporate parents and to prioritise the safe reduction in children looked after numbers, in order to deliver the best possible outcomes.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all Members and Officers of the Corporate Parenting Board for their continuous work and I look forward to working with you during the next Municipal Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Kaple', with a horizontal line underneath.

WHAT IS THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD?

The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced in 1998 by the then Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, who outlined the duties of members towards Children who are Looked After: *“For children who are looked after, your council has a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of loyal support that any good parents would give to their children...you should do your utmost to make sure that those children in public care get a good start in life...”*

LEGISLATION

- Chapter 6 of the [WLGA’s Corporate Parenting Workbook](#) states:

You can make sure there is a dedicated group of Councillors who focus specially on these corporate parenting responsibilities. It might be called a Panel, or a Scrutiny subcommittee. Whatever it is called, it should:

- meet regularly and often enough to carry out the three central functions we identify here effectively
- bring all those who contribute to Corporate Parenting together and draw on their experience and wisdom
- talk with and listen to groups of our children, who are encouraged and helped to speak out - theirs are the most important voices
- interrogate all relevant performance and management information
- where possible, compare the Council’s performance with other similar authorities, and look at trends over time
- identify where things are not good enough, and ask for remedial action from officers, partner agencies, or the Council itself
- track that the action is taken and is effective, and escalate if not
- focus special attention on the most vulnerable children and young people, and seek to ensure their safety and well-being

- The goals set out in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#): -

1. A more Equal Wales - A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances);
 2. A Healthier Wales - A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood; and
 3. A Wales of Cohesive Communities - Attractive, safe, viable and well-connected.
- **The Council's [Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' 2020-2024](#), which is guided by the Vision of making Rhondda Cynon Taf "the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy and prosperous.**
1. PRIORITY: Ensuring **PEOPLE:** are independent, healthy, and successful - *Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do.*

Useful links

[Children's Commissioner for Wales Annual Report](#)

[Welsh Government's Response to the Annual Report of the Commissioner](#)

MEET THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD



*Councillor G Caple
(Chair)*



*Councillor R Lewis
(Vice-Chair)*



Councillor C Leyshon



Councillor S Rees



Councillor J Bonetto



Councillor S Evans



Councillor S Trask



Councillor P Evans

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To take the lead in ensuring that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as corporate parent to children who are looked after and formulate Council policy in respect of children who are looked after and children in need.
- To ensure that all Groups and divisions within the Council work together in order to promote best outcomes for children who are looked after and children in need.
- To promote effective relationships with key partner agencies in the best interests of children who are looked after and children in need.
- To monitor the implementation of the Action Plan arising from the Best Value Review of Services to children looked after, in addition to monitoring outcomes for children looked after and children in need.
- To consider the outcomes and promote positive learning practices following consideration of Child Practice Reviews.
- In accordance with HMIP to routinely review the offending rates of CLA by gender to ensure that the Corporate Parenting Board understand patterns of offending by girls and are able to take actions to address where necessary.
- To consider the impact of relevant other systems/agencies (e.g., health, courts, schools) and see how these could be improved.
- To seek the views of children looked after - the advocacy service will be asked to facilitate.
- To invite representatives from other agencies to attend as appropriate.
- To report directly to Cabinet through an Annual report of the Board.

Vision of the Corporate Parenting Board

The role of the corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The local authority has a legal and moral duty to provide support to the children it is responsible for looking after.

All Elected Members must be confident that the children who are looked after within RCT:

- Are safe and healthy;
- Have good homes in a secure and caring environment;
- Are placed within the local authority area, close to their homes and communities, as far as is possible;
- Have good experiences of education and can fulfill their potential;
- Are not being drawn into antisocial behavior;
- Are developing socially and emotionally;
- Are provided with help to cope with the problems they have in growing up;
- Are prepared for their transition to adulthood;
- Have ambitions for themselves and are supported to access leisure and hobbies;
- Are helped to achieve to the maximum of their ability;
- Have high aspirations and can show pride in their achievements; and
- Are provided with support when they need it.

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Children Looked After remains a key priority and the Council continues to strive for a safe reduction in Children Looked After numbers and to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children and young people.

As at the 31st March 2023, there were a total of 624 children and young people within the Local Authority's care. The demographic has been broken down and compared to that of the previous year in the tables below.

Children Looked After by Age Group

Age Band	Total as at 31/03/2022	Total as at 31/03/2023
0-3	99	70
4-7	111	115
8-11	166	156
12-14	130	132
15	49	52
16	46	55
17	54	44
Total	655	624

Figures show that the highest age band remains at 8 - 11 years.

Children Looked After by Gender

Gender	Total as at 31/ 03/ 2022	Total as at 31/03/23
Female	284	264
Male	371	357
Other	0	3
Total	<u>655</u>	<u>624</u>

Children Looked After by Placement Type

CLA Placement Type	Total as at 31/03/2022	Total as at 31/03/2023
Independent Sector Foster Placement	119	96
Third Sector Independent Foster Agency	0	6
RCT Foster Carers	153	147
RCT Relative Foster Carers	229	212
Other LA Foster Care	0	1
Parent & Child Foster Placement	0	2
Placed for Adoption	17	22
Placed with Parents	66	63
Education Placement	2	1
Other Lodgings	6	8
Independent Sector Residential Sector	52	54
RCT Residential Care	10	9
Secure	1	1
Other Placements	0	2
Total	<u>655</u>	<u>624</u>

It is recognised that each young person's needs are unique and that the most suitable placement type is unique to the individual bearing in mind their background, wishes and circumstances.

The data shows that most children and young people within Rhondda Cynon Taf are placed in foster placements, and in particular, with Relative Foster Carers.

Where safe and possible to do so, children and young people are placed with their parents.

It is noted that a key priority of the Regional Adoption Collaboration is to increase its supply of adopters.

UPDATES TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

REGULATION 73 REPORTS

Regular updates are presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in respect of the current position of the residential Children's Homes and respite service. The reports are exempt from the public to ensure that the Board receive a detailed overview of each home. The reports are inclusive of up-to-date case studies, which inform us of the everyday occurrences, challenges faced by our hardworking staff, any areas of concern and, of course, the wellbeing of the children who occupy the homes.

Each of the reports received during the Municipal Year, provided the Corporate Parenting Board with honest and reliable feedback from the young people who occupy the homes.

SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

The Corporate Parenting Board receives quarterly updates in respect of the operation and effectiveness of the statutory Social Services complaints and compliments procedure. At each meeting, Members monitor the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints and any lessons learnt, along with noting those enquiries received from Elected Members, A.M's and M.P's.

The importance of feedback from those who use the services is invaluable to the Corporate Parenting Board. During the year, Members were provided with detailed and honest feedback in response to questions around the updates. It was pleasing to note that the service had continued to be used by Elected Members and A.M and M.P colleagues, which builds upon the already strong relationship with officers.

ADVOCACY

The Corporate Parenting Board receive quarterly updates from the Local Authority's advocacy services, Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) Cymru. The Board are provided with a detailed breakdown of issues by age, gender, referral source and type, along with information on the take up of the active offer. This information enables both TGP Cymru and Children Services to discuss issues that affect service delivery in the community on a strategic level and to work in partnership to provide improved and better outcomes.

[Further information on the services provided by Tros Gynnal Plant \(TGP\) Cymru can be found here.](#)

INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER UPDATES

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (referred to as the SSWB Act) and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015 and 16 (referred to as the CPPCR Regulations) provide legislation and guidance pertaining to the role and functions of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The Adoption and Children Act 2002 requires the Local Authority to appoint Independent Reviewing Officers to conduct reviews for Children who are Looked After and monitor the Local Authority's performance in relation to implementing the care plans for individual children. As such, reports are presented to the Board to monitor the activities of the IRO service.

MEMBER FRONTLINE VISITS

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board undertake scheduled visits to front line staff working in Children's Services. The visits are led by the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care and the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language in their roles as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, respectively. An invitation to each visit is also extended to all Elected Members appointed to the Corporate Parenting Board.

The visits are intended to be informal and to better inform Members of the work undertaken by staff to safeguard the health and wellbeing of children in Rhondda Cynon Taf, particularly those who are in our corporate care and their various needs. The visits are an opportunity for Members to gain a better understanding of the needs and wellbeing of the staff, particularly at a time when the way of working may have changed following the pandemic. During the year, several visits were undertaken by Members and a report of the Chair detailing the key themes will be presented to the Board.

FOSTER WALES COLLABORATION UPDATE

The National Fostering Framework was established as part of a work programme, led by the Ministerial Advisory Group. The group aims to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people, and the people and families who care for them. The programme identified the need for a national framework for Local Authority fostering services. A collaboration of fostering professionals from across Wales who share a common purpose to meet the evolving needs of foster children and the people who foster them. The NFF became Foster Wales in July 2022 and the fostering service in tern became Foster Wales RCT.

Members were provided with an update in relation to the recruitment and retention of foster carers, with a particular focus on the regional front door for fostering recruitment and the changes to operational delivery within fostering recruitment.

[Further information on Foster Wales Rhondda Cynon Taf can be found here.](#)

CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) is a statutory partnership legislated by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and provides services across two local authority areas, namely Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. The local authority YOS areas merged to form Cwm Taf YOS in August 2014.

The aim of the service is to prevent offending and re-offending of children and young adults who are either referred into the service or become subject to statutory interventions by the Law Courts. The statutory partners to the service are: South Wales Police; Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board; HM Prison and Probation Service; and the local authority areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. These partners provide financial and staffing contributions to the Youth Offending Service and external grant funding is provided by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), Welsh Government (WG) and the Police and Crime Commissioner's office (PCC).

During the period, the Corporate Parenting Board received an update on the work of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) for 2022/23. The update included information on service delivery following the restructure of the service in August 2021, current priorities, challenges, risks and future service priorities.

Members discussed the importance of age-appropriate work within primary schools to teach children the consequences of anti-social behaviour to prevent the escalation of issues; and agreed that it would be beneficial to receive a future update on the progress.

ALL WALES PROTOCOL FOR REDUCING THE CRIMINALISATION OF CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2022.

The Corporate Parenting Board were provided with the [All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young People 2022](#) for consideration.

The protocol is intended to help professionals who encounter care experienced children and young adults while carrying out their work, and in sharing a common framework of principles and expectations informed by an approach that actively promotes children's rights and which safeguards and promotes their wellbeing.

Members agreed to receive future updates in respect of local/regional data and how progress and improvements made contributes to better outcomes for care experienced children.

PUPIL DEPRIVATION GRANT FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER– EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL CLUSTER MODEL 2020-2022

The Corporate Parenting Board receive annual updates in relation to the ongoing cluster – based funding mechanism for distributing PDG LAC grant funding and the processes in place to evaluate its impact on the provision made for Children Looked After in schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Upon receiving the information, Members requested future reports in relation to the PDG and also the Virtual School Head appointment and its progress.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL MODEL

The Virtual School Model is well established in England and, under the Children’s and Families Act 2014, local authorities have a statutory duty to appoint a Virtual School Head whose key role is to promote the educational achievement of CLA. In May 2020, Sir Alisdair Macdonald, Raising Attainment Advocate, published a research paper commissioned by Welsh Government - [An integrated approach to improving educational outcomes for looked after children in Wales](#). Based on the recommendations of the report, Welsh Government agreed to progress an integrated approach in Wales to improve the educational outcomes for CLA. As such, grant funding was provided up to 31st March 2023 to interested local authorities to develop a Virtual School. In response to the offer of grant funding, RCT submitted a successful expression of interest to Welsh Government, together with a Virtual School Implementation plan that is underpinned by a set of key principles.

The Corporate Parenting Board received an update on progress made during year 1 of the Virtual School for CLA Pilot, specifically looking at the steps taken to address and complete actions that form the Virtual School Implementation Plan; and requested future updates on progress.

UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND EDUCATION TRIBUNAL (ALNET) ACT 2018 AND ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN) CODE 2021 IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Wales Act (2018) came into force in September 2021 in year one of a three-year phased implementation plan. The ALN Implementation timetable extends from September 2021 to August 2024 by which time the ALNET Act will be fully enacted having replaced the current outgoing Special Educational Needs (SEN) system. The Act is supported by the implementation of a new statutory ALN Code.

Under the new legislation all children and young people with ALN regardless of the severity or complexity of their learning difficulty or disability will be entitled to a statutory support plan called an 'Individual Development Plan' (IDP). Children and young people with an ALN will receive support called additional learning provision (ALP) which will be set out in their IDP.

The Corporate Parenting Board were provided with information on the implications of the ALNET Wales Act (2018) and ALN Code 2021 for Children Looked After with an ALN and an update on the implementation of the above in Year 2 of the National ALN Implementation timetable in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

The Board recognise the plethora of new statutory responsibilities for the Local Authority and that it is an area of pressure within the Education service, which requires additional funding and resource.

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Supporting children who are looked after to achieve the best possible outcomes supports the Council's Corporate Priorities to build a strong economy and to promote independence and positive lives for everyone and ensures that the Sustainable Development principle and the Wellbeing Goals of the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act (Wales) underpin the vision and working practices of the service.

The Corporate Parenting Board recognise the educational disadvantages often experienced by young people who are looked after, which can have an adverse effect on opportunities moving into higher education and into adulthood. As such, the Corporate Parenting Board request an annual update in respect of the Council's dedicated programmes to support Children Looked After, Care Leavers and those with care and support needs into employment, education and training.

During the period, the Board received a breakdown of outcomes from April 2022 – March 2023 in respect of the Step in the Right Direction and Care2Work programmes and spoke highly of the array of opportunities available for the young people.

PARTICIPATION UPDATE FOR CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE VOICES FROM CARE CYMRU RCT GROUP

Following the development of a Participation Strategy for 2023 and the implementation Plan to take forward actions and key milestones as part of a Children and Young People Steering group, the Corporate Parenting Board receive regular progress updates.

The Corporate Parenting Board note that during the year, progress had been made to engage with care experienced children and young people, through key staff from Children's Services, along with Voices from Care Cymru.

The Board look forward to the next steps of such an integral piece of work and are particularly interested on receiving feedback from the consultation with care experienced children and young people about the 'My Voice, My Review' and the 2 sides website.

As part of the participation updates, the Corporate Parenting Board have been fortunate enough to receive updates from a young person at the Voices From Care Cymru RCT Forum. The young person summarised the recent activities undertaken, highlighted the positive experiences they have had as part of the group and the impact on their life.

The RCT Forum provides looked after young people and care leavers in RCT with opportunities to have their voice heard and to enable their life experiences to contribute at a strategic, policy and legislative level both locally and nationally.

Receiving first-hand feedback on the effectiveness of the service is fundamental in helping the Corporate Parenting Board ensure that the provision and support provided by the Council are of benefit to those that require them.

The Corporate Parenting Board welcome young people to attend future meetings and wish to reiterate that their contribution is invaluable.

MISKIN SERVICES 2021-22

Miskin Services work co-productively with families and aim to deliver family focused evidence-based interventions, responsive to family need, supporting parents/carers/children (0-17 years of age) to improve parenting capacity and enable them to care for their children with the minimum statutory interventions.



Miskin Services are organised into four main areas (1) Miskin Teams (2) Integrated Family Support Team (IFST) (3) Therapeutic Families Team (TFT) (4) Glyncornel Centre. The Corporate Parenting Board receive annual updates in respect of the Miskin service, including a breakdown of information in relation to each of the above-mentioned categories.

During the period:

- 96% of children remained at home living with either parents or extended family members at the end of the Miskin Intervention where the aim was to prevent children from coming into care;
- 79% of children 11-17 years of age remained living in the same foster care or residential children's home placement at the end of the Miskin Intervention where the aim was to prevent the placement from breaking down;
- 90% of children supported by IFST, where children were deemed to be at risk as a consequence of parental behaviours including drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health, and domestic violence, either remained at home or returned home to family; and
- 62.12% of children supported by TFT during 2021-22 were closed to Children Services on 01/11/2022

VALE, VALLEYS & CARDIFF REGIONAL ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT

Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) provides a regional adoption service to the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cardiff Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. VVC is one of the five regional Collaboratives which form part of the National Adoption Service in Wales (NAS). All adoption services are required to provide an annual review of their service as set out in Regulation 22 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007.

The Board considered VVC's seventh annual report, which covered the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2022. The report was extended to cover the first six months of the 2022 reporting year to incorporate the requirement to review the service under Regulation 39 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019. It incorporated the reporting requirements set out in the governance arrangements for the region in one report.

The Corporate Parenting Board were pleased to note that VVC had approved a significant pool of adopters with the result that more children can be placed within the region but noted that there was a need to continue to recruit more adopters for more complex children. Adoption Support remained a large set of challenges for VVC and the need to reduce the waiting list for services and to ensure that the service is targeted to those most in need was a priority.

FOSTERING SERVICE QUALITY OF CARE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

The Fostering Service Quality of Care Annual Report is compiled as required under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. Regulation 52 of the Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 also requires the Local Authority Manager to put suitable arrangements in place to establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and improving the quality of service.

The Rhondda Cynon Taf fostering service is currently Hybrid/agile working and is responsible for the recruitment, retention, preparation, assessment, supervision and support of mainstream and Kinship (family and friend) foster carers.

The Corporate Parenting Board monitored the progress in relation to the service and were provided with detailed plans and developments for the service going forward.

YOUNG CARERS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The support service for young carers (aged 5-17) continues to be provided on a commissioned basis by Action for Children. Specific support is available via an externally funded post for Young Adult Carers (aged 18-25). Sibling carers (children whose sibling has additional needs) is now provided on a commissioned basis by Action for Children.

The report provided the Corporate Parenting Board with a summary of the support provided to Young Carers, (aged 0-17) and Young Adult Carers (aged 18-25). It highlighted the key developments achieved during a year of recovery from the impact of Covid.

LOCAL AUTHORITY'S OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION AND HOUSING SUPPORT RELATED SERVICES TO CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that children in care and former children in care receive appropriate support in their transition into adulthood. Section 1.34 of the Welsh Government's Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness Guidance (March 2016) confirms Local Authorities have a range of duties to care leavers who represent a particularly vulnerable group and require Children's Services and Housing to work together to meet the needs of young people in care as they move to independent living.

During the Municipal year, the Corporate Parenting Board were provided with an update in respect of the plethora of housing projects and support assistance available to young people leaving care for the period 1st April 2022 to the 31st of October 2022.

The Corporate Parenting Board was assured that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken to address the immediate housing and support needs of young people leaving care but noted that further work was needed to explore long-term support and accommodation options.

INDEPENDENT SECTOR PLACEMENTS

The Corporate Parenting Board recognise the importance of effective placements and continual support for children and young people in RCT. Receiving an overview and update on RCT Children's services commissioning and monitoring of external placements for Children Looked After assured Members that children looked after, placed with external providers, receive quality placements that are adequately monitored on cost and quality through monitoring of placement commissioning.

CHARTER FOR PARENTS IN CARE AND LEAVING CARE

Under the Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014, the Council has a duty to continue to provide supportive services to looked after young people and care leavers, this includes supporting young people when they become a parent. Recent research has highlighted the experiences of care experienced young people and care leavers when they become parents and provided opportunities to improve services and approaches. This has given rise to the development of a charter by young people that outlines young people's expectations, in light of the learning from research, and the Council's duties.

The Corporate Parenting Board agreed that the Council sign up to the Charter and keep this area of business under review with a view to continuous improvement.

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER PREVENTION STRATEGY

Under the Social Services and Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014, the Council has a duty to provide preventative family support services that promote family resilience and prevent family breakdown. In January 2022, [Cabinet](#) endorsed the updated Looked After Prevention Strategy, and the funding proposal that accompanies it.

By implementing the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy, the Council is providing families with the strongest possible service model for reducing the risk of family breakdown and preventing avoidable entries to the looked after system.

The Corporate Parenting Board was provided with information on the four significant areas of improvement:

- Model of Practice
- Better Pre-Birth Services
- Developing Reunification
- Improve support for kinship carers and special guardians

It was noted that the aim was to increase the evidence-based family support and to work towards keeping families safely together, when appropriate.

The Corporate Parenting Board wish to receive further updates in terms of the implementation of the areas for improvement.

CHILD PRACTICE REVIEW

A Child Practice Review is conducted in line with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Children Board's duties under Working Together to Safeguard People Volume 3) which is issued under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The process is focussed on positive outcomes for children and young people through learning lessons to improve multi agency safeguarding practice. It includes different types of reviews; concise and extended as well as multi agency practitioner forums.

The report was exempt from the public to ensure that the Board receive a detailed overview of the recommendations of 2 Concise Child Practice Reviews (CPR's) conducted by Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Children Board (CTMSB) and the measures Children Services had taken to embed and evaluate review learning in response.

THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – MOVING FORWARD

In the 2023/24 Municipal Year, key areas of focus of the Corporate Parenting Board will include:

REGULAR PERFORMANCE DATA

It is essential that the Corporate Parenting Board regularly receive the qualitative data and statutory updates. The monitoring of regular performance data allows the Corporate Parenting Board to effectively analyse key areas and determine ways to further improve and enhance the services the Council provides. The updates will include:

- Regulation 73 Reports
- Social Services Complaints & Compliments
- Advocacy Updates
- CIW Inspections reports of the Children's Homes
- Child Practice Reviews
- Performance (IRO)
- Accommodation
- Education
- Adoption
- Foster Care
- Education

The Corporate Parenting Board will receive annual updates from the following services to continue to monitor the progress, achievements, and future aspirations:

- Miskin Services
- Youth Offending Service
- Vale, Valleys & Cardiff Regional Adoption Service
- Fostering Services Quality of Care
- Registered Childcare Provision
- Young Carers
- RCT Forum

ELECTED MEMBER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

It is recognised that the role of the Corporate Parent is a collective duty of the Council as a whole and as such, refresher training is welcomed to Board Members and to all Elected Members of the Council to further enhance knowledge and to strengthen the Council's commitment to the children and young people within our care. This will be particularly beneficial for newly Elected Members.

UK GOVERNMENT AND WELSH GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The Corporate Parenting Board wish to be kept up to date with any key policy changes or ambitions of the Government in terms of Children Looked After.

PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

The Corporate Parenting Board acknowledge the need for better engagement with young people who are at the heart of its work. The Board wish to receive future updates in respect of the work to establish the Participation Strategy for our care experienced young people and the events and questionnaires which form part of it. As always, the Corporate Parenting Board welcome the attendance of looked after young people and care leavers at meetings and recognise that their voice must be at the centre of all discussions. The Board receive reports containing data and statistics, but the opportunity to hearing the first-hand experiences of the young person is invaluable.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER AND YOUNG CARERS

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Corporate Parenting Board appreciate that issues with mental health and wellbeing are likely to have risen.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Board were unable to receive the above-mentioned update during the 2022-2023 Municipal Year and therefore, wish to receive an update on the available support to young people during the next Municipal Year.

UPDATE IN RELATION TO THE CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER: RESIDENTIAL CARE STRATEGY 2022-2027

The increasing demand, juxtaposed with increasing scarcity of registered children's homes has led to a risk of the Council being unable to avoid reliance upon settings that are recorded as Operating Without Registration (OWR) by the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW). This happens where a placement is required but there is not one available due to scarcity of supply. Every effort is made to avoid reliance on OWR.

The Corporate Parenting Board wish to receive regular updates in relation to the Children Looked After Residential Care Strategy to monitor the Council's position.

SAFEGUARDING INFORMATION

During the 2022-2023 Municipal Year, the Corporate Parenting Board received an update in respect of two Child Practice Reviews. During the update, Members raised several questions in relation to safeguarding and resolved to receive further information multiagency training and the wider learning framework from a partner agency perspective.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL MODEL

In line with Welsh Government policy, an integral part of the Corporate Parenting Board's ambition is to improve the to improve the educational outcomes for Children Looked After.

The Corporate Parenting Board recognise the success of the Virtual School Model in England and wish to receive future updates on the implementation Plan and Pilot in RCT.

THE MAGU PROJECT

The Magu Project delivers an integrated care pathway for pregnant women and their families across early intervention and edge of care services, that focuses on building skills and resilience and reducing risk. A single agreed early intervention approach will deliver the opportunity to prevent children entering care at birth as well as provide consistency and continuity for families whose care requires step to statutory intervention.

The Magu Project has been developed in line with the Welsh Government Strategy of Keeping Families Together and reducing the number of Looked After Children in Wales. The term "Magu" translates from Welsh as "to bring up, rear, nurture, raise, gain" and it promotes the ongoing long-term nature of the support required to deliver better outcomes for children and their families.

Following the update in respect of the Charter for Parents in Care and Leaving Care, the Corporate Parenting Board were pleased to note that progress had been made by the Magu Team and wished to receive an update on its progress during the 2023-2024 Municipal Year.

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

2023-2024

A 2023-24 work programme for the Corporate Parenting Board is set out below. The work programme is a fluid document, which can be amended by Members at any given point to accommodate a change in priorities. The programme is based on factors highlighted within the Board's Annual Report and does not include the statutory updates presented to the Board.

REPORT
JUNE 2023
Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme 2023-2024
Proposal for an 'Inform' Session
CLA Prevention Strategy Update
CIW Inspection Report
JULY 2023
Frontline Visits Findings
Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2022-23
Participation Update & RCT Forum
Radical Reform
Foster Wales Collaboration Update
OCTOBER 2023
CLA Mental Health Support – Joint Report
Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service - All Wales Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young People 2022
Safeguarding Information
Magu – a new pre-birth service
IRO Update
NOVEMBER 2023
Miskin Annual Report and Therapeutic Families Team Annual Report 2022-23
Vale, Valley & Cardiff Regional Adoption annual report 2022-23

Participation Update & RCT Forum

Evaluation of the School Cluster Model for expenditure of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) Looked After Children (LAC) during the financial years 2022 - 2023
--

JANUARY 2024

RCT Children's services commissioning and monitoring of external placements for children looked after.
--

ALNET Act and ALN Code for Children Looked After
--

Fostering Quality of Care Annual Report

ND service developments

MARCH 2024

Employment, Education and Training Programmes for Children Looked After

Participation Update & RCT Forum

Virtual School Model pilot – Interim Evaluation of Year 2

Registered Childcare Provision Annual Update 2023-24
--

Young Carers Annual Report 2023-24

Draft Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2023-2024

CONCLUSION

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year.

The report highlights the breadth of work undertaken by the Board during the period and the areas we believe need monitoring in the coming year. To honour our commitments, we will agree a full and varied work programme for 2023-2024 Municipal Year, with the understanding that business may vary dependent on urgent or topical needs.

The Corporate Parenting Board and the Council are committed to its safeguarding duties and during the 2023-2024 Municipal Year, Members will work together with officers to challenge and improve our services for the best possible outcomes for the children and young people within our care.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH NOVEMBER 2023

HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS, STREETCARE AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CLLR ANDREW MORGAN OBE

Author: Andrew Griffiths, Service Director - Highways and Engineering

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Further to the approval of additional 2023/24 investment by Council on 20th September 2023, this report sets out the supplementary capital programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the Supplementary Capital Programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects as detailed within this report.
- 2.2 Agree that the current allocations form part of a 3-year capital programme and delegate authority to the Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services, to extend activity to deliver additional projects during the financial year. Furthermore, where capacity exists to accelerate delivery in accordance with the purpose of the wider programme, or to suspend programmes/projects and reallocate funding to optimise delivery.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report has been developed to identify commitments for RCT capital funding. The programme is impacted by several external factors that cannot be fully assessed at this time and this relates to both physical issues and funding.

- 3.2 Our ability to deliver projects and programmes may again be affected by on-going supply chain issues, high inflation, and skill shortages. Despite these challenges, good progress has been made through 2023 in most areas.
- 3.3 Projects will again be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, aligned to deliverability and risk; flexibility to suspend individual projects and commit resources to other projects within a programme will be key to successful delivery.
- 3.4 The previous 2 years programmes, included significant flexibility to switch resources and this has enabled the Council to continue to deliver significant infrastructure improvements against the backdrop of uncertainty due to the unprecedented situation regarding storm events, funding, supply chain issues, cost escalation and the aftereffects of COVID19. Continued flexibility within the envelope of pre-approved schemes enables resources to be re-aligned to maximise opportunities to deliver projects and draw down grants in the best interests of RCT.
- 3.5 This report considers the detail against the specific 2023/24 additional capital allocations of £4M in favour of Highways Technical Services and £0.550M in favour of Strategic Projects, to safeguard the long-term integrity of the highways and transportation network and to reduce flood risk. An additional £200K revenue allocation is included for drainage. Detail for consideration is submitted under the following areas;
- Highways Improvements
 - Drainage
 - Structures
 - Making Better Use Programme

4 SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL PROGRAMME

4.1 Highways Improvements

- 4.1.1 The Highways Network represents the most significant asset of the Council, valued at over £3.4Bn and comprises of carriageways, footways, structures (bridges, retaining walls, culverts, etc.), street lighting, traffic signals and signs, safety barriers, highway drainage, etc.
- 4.1.2 The network has now benefitted from twelve years of enhanced levels of investment, and this will continue into 2023/24.
- 4.1.3 The total additional allocation of capital resources for the Highways Improvement Schemes, as included in the Capital Programme for 2023/24 is £1.5M and is broken down into works packages in the table below. Spending plans for this programme of works are detailed in the Appendices of this report.



Work Area	£M
Carriageways	1.146
Footways	0.304
Patching	0.050
Total	1.500

4.1.4 A further £275,000 from existing highway resources will also be utilised for 3 improvement areas at £75,000 each for Llanharan, Aberaman and Treherbert wards on the highway infrastructure asset, and £50,000 for repairs and replacement of defective ironwork across the network

4.2 Drainage

4.2.1 Recent investment into drainage by the Council has seen an improvement in the surface water sewer network within the borough. Furthermore, the Council has also entered into a framework contract with a utilities services contractor for the cleaning and CCTV surveys of the surface water sewer network within RCT. As a result of the findings of the surveys, to date repair works to the surface water sewer system have been identified, coupled with increasing capacity and resilience within the surface water drainage network and improving access arrangements to culvert structures. A sum of **£200k** has been allocated to undertake these works at various locations throughout the borough.

4.3. Structures

4.3.1 There are significant challenges associated with maintaining highway structures with several structures in a poor / critical condition. Investment in previous years has increased the resilience of the highway structures. There are many structures which cross rivers/watercourses due to the topography of the borough and are therefore subject to the regulatory constraints imposed by Natural Resources Wales.

4.3.2 A sum of **£2.5M** is allocated to continue the repair and maintenance of the highways structure assets in undertaking preliminary design, detailed design and construction for the structures indicated in Appendix 2.

4.4 Making Better Use Programme

4.4.1 The Council continues to invest in a Making Better Use (MBU) programme. The ethos of this programme is to identify low cost, high value improvements for congested sections of the Council's highways network, to improve traffic flows, ease congestion and have a positive impact on road safety. A sum of **£550k** is to be invested in these improvements.

4.4.2 The proposed programme of MBU projects is included at Appendix 3.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

5.1 Equality and Diversity issues will be considered as part of determining the final detail of the proposed schemes.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 There are no consultation requirements relating directly to the report but the proposed schemes will (or have) involve varying degrees of consultation, some of which will relate to statutory processes (such as Traffic Regulation Orders).

7 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment is not necessary at this time.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The additional funding allocations to support schemes contained within this report was agreed by Cabinet on 18th September 2023 as part of the additional investment priorities for 2023/24 and approved by Council on 20th September 2023. This report does not commit any additional spend over and above this agreed allocation.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 There are no legal implications as a result of the recommendations set out in this report.



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

- 10.1 This investment programme supports the Council’s Corporate Plan Priority ‘Places – Where people are proud to live, work and play’.
- 10.2 The programme deals with the maintenance and provision of transport assets created to meet travel demand.
- 10.3 The programme also seeks to reduce flood risk and insulate communities from the damaging impacts of climate change in light of more frequent extreme weather events.
- 10.4 The programme supports the Well-Being goals fostering prosperity and resilience with inclusive and sustainable transport options supporting more cohesive and vibrant communities.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The above programme continues the enhanced levels of investment under the RCT Invest initiative, providing additional in-year funding beyond that already committed.
- 11.2 Consequently, Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services will coordinate and deliver additional significant investment during 2023/24 and the proposed programme is accordingly recommended for approval.
- 11.3 The programme is as always subject to minor changes due to possible engineering difficulties or programming and coordination issues with statutory undertakers. Programme delivery and coordination will remain immensely challenging due to supply chain challenges and cost escalation. Flexibility to switch funding across programmes will ensure the best outcomes for RCT.

Appendix 1

Table 1a Additional schemes for Inclusion in Carriageway Works Pool

<u>Carriageway Improvements</u>		
Street Name	Town	Budget (£)
Rhiwgarn Road	Trebanog	41,000
Peterstone-Super-Ely Road	Groes-Faen	49,500
Tan Y Bryn	Trebanog	43,000
Aubrey Road	Penygraig	120,000
Duffryn Street	Ferndale	88,000
Llangorse Road	Cwmbach	77,500
Heol Y Deri	Graigwen	15,000
Ash Square	Rhydyfelin	56,000
Neyland Close	Tonteg	39,000
Argoed Avenue	Llanharan	64,000
Landsdale Drive	Tonteg	37,000
Graig Crescent	Abercwmboi	22,500
Heol Horeb	Cymmer	98,000
Dover Street	Mountain Ash	44,500
Broncynon Terrace	Cwmdare	59,000
Bryn Terrace	Tylorstown	40,500
Abercynon Road to Avondale Street	Tyntetown	27,500
Heol Gwranfryn	Rhigos	20,500
Vale View	Llanharan	51,000
Valley View Street	Aberaman	63,000
Hill Street	Maerdy	29,000
Elm Street	Ferndale	35,000
Lanelay Close	Talbot Green	25,000
TOTAL		1,145,500

NB. All budget figures are based on initial estimates and will vary in practice due to a range of factors

Table 1b Additional schemes for Inclusion in Footways Works Pool

Footway Improvements		
Street Name	Town	Budget(£)
Sunnybank Street	Aberaman	5,000
Wyndham Crescent	Aberaman	14,000
Penycoedcae Road	Beddau	26,000
Clyngwyn Street	Blaenrhondda	19,000
The Avenue	Cefnpennar	15,000
Glan Road	Cwmdare	12,000
Cambrian Avenue	Gilfach Goch	24,000
Vale View	Llanharan	32,000
Bridgend Road	Llanharan	25,000
Chapel Street	Penygraig	26,000
Lewis Street	Pontyclun	28,000
Ash Square	Rhydyfelin	36,000
Bryn Dinas View	Trealaw	8,000
Egypt Street	Trealaw	11,000
Club Row	Ystrad	18,000
Cwm Cynon Estate	Mountain Ash	5,000
Total		304,000

NB. All budget figures are based on initial estimates and will vary in practice due to a range of factors

Appendix 2

Structures

Structure	Location	Works
Afon Cynon Bridge, A4059	Cwmbach	Bearing and bearing plinth replacement
Rheola Bridge	Porth	Bearing replacement
Glan Road Bridge	Aberdare	Structural repairs
Retaining walls	Various Locations	Refurbishment
Llanwonno Road Railway Bridge	Stanleytown	Strengthening / infill or possible replacement
Glan Y Llyn Bridge	Glantaff	Concrete repairs and water management
Various	Various	Advanced Preparation



Appendix 3

Making Better use Programme

Scheme/Location	Work Description
A4059 Corridor Enhancements	Preliminary design and project development

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH NOVEMBER 2023

DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR CAPLE, CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Author: Neil Elliot, Director of Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the final draft of the Director of Social Services Annual Report for 2022/23 for approval prior to its publication.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 approves the Director of Social Services Annual Report for 2022/23 (Appendix 1).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To meet the statutory requirements on the Director of Social Services in respect of the publication of the annual report.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In accordance with Part 8 of the Code of Practice of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the Director of Social Services must prepare and publish an annual report about the exercise of the Local Authority's Social Services functions. This annual report must be published as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of a financial year and address the following requirements:

- It must evaluate the performance of the local authority in relation to the delivery of its social services functions in respect of that year and include lessons learned.
- It should be presented in such a way as to set out how the Local Authority has achieved the six quality standards in relation to well-being outcomes as described in the code of practice in relation to

measuring social services performance, issued under section 145 of the Act.

- It must include details of the extent to which the authority has acted in accordance with relevant requirements for assessing and meeting needs (Part 3 and 4 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014)
- It must set out how the Local Authority has exercised relevant requirements contained in the code of practice so as to provide:
 - a) Assurances in terms of structural arrangements within the Local Authority that enable good governance and strong accountability.
 - b) Assurances in relation to effective partnership working via Partnership Boards.
 - c) Assurances in relation to safeguarding arrangements.
 - d) Information in relation to the performance of the handling and investigation of complaints and representations.
 - e) A response to any inspections undertaken in relation to social services functions.

4.2 Directors of Social Services are required to provide an update on Welsh language provision and their implementation of More than just words as part of the annual report.

4.3 It is important that the views of service users in relation to the way the Local Authority has discharged its social services functions are included in the annual report. People, including children, who have experience of using care and support services, the parents of children who have care and support needs, and carers in the local authority area must be engaged in the process of producing an annual report and the annual report must set out how the Local Authority has engaged with people in its production.

4.4 Annual reports are a way for local authorities to demonstrate accountability to citizens and should, therefore, be accessible to people, including service users. The Director of Social Services should, therefore, ensure that annual reports are not overly long and are written in a clear and concise way.

4.5 To ensure effective accountability, the annual report must be presented to the Council by the Director of Social Services, a copy of the published annual report sent to Welsh Ministers and copies made available on the local authority website.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications associated with 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 Council's website.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 A draft report was considered by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 25th September 2023. In addition the report has been shared with key partners and stakeholders in the region and with our staff.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The Annual Director's report is required under Part 8 of The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

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

- 10.1 The Annual Director's report publishes the delivery, performance and planned improvements of the Social Services function in the Council, providing the public with a summary of performance in meeting the corporate priorities for Social Services.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Director of Social Services Annual Report 2022/23 sets out how the Council's Social Services performed last year, highlighting the direction and priorities we have set for the year ahead.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH NOVEMBER 2023

**DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT
2022/23**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH
THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, CLLR GARETH CAPLE, CABINET
MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

Background Papers

Community Services Scrutiny Committee - 25th September 2023.

Officer to contact:

Neil Elliott, Director of Social Services

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Annual Director of Social Services Report

2022/23



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section

1

Director of Social Services – Introduction



It gives me great pleasure to publish this year's annual report. At the beginning of 2022/23, Paul Mee was the Director of Social Services, and I would like to thank him for his direction and leadership of social services before becoming the Council's Chief Executive in December 2022. I became Interim Director in December 2022.

Each year, the Statutory Director of Social Services is required under the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 to publish an annual report on how the local authority has exercised its social services functions and provides an opportunity to evaluate our performance and the action taken to further improve our services and support. This year, I have summarised my assessment of the key developments and challenges in Children's and Adult Services, emphasising the links to our Council Corporate Plan and providing examples of how our work has promoted and improved the wellbeing of those that we help. We also set out our service priorities for 2023/24.

In recent years, living and working through the pandemic, have been incredibly difficult and challenging for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf and our social services workforce. The impact of the pandemic continues to affect health and social care services and all our communities, compounded by the additional challenges caused by the cost-of-living crisis.

Neil Elliott

Interim Director of Social Services

Our ability to keep delivering services has only been possible because of the dedication and immense efforts of our social services workforce, commissioned providers, foster carers and people who come forward to adopt children and our partner organisations. We are also fortunate to have strong corporate support from across the Council and support of colleagues from other departments and our Elected Members.

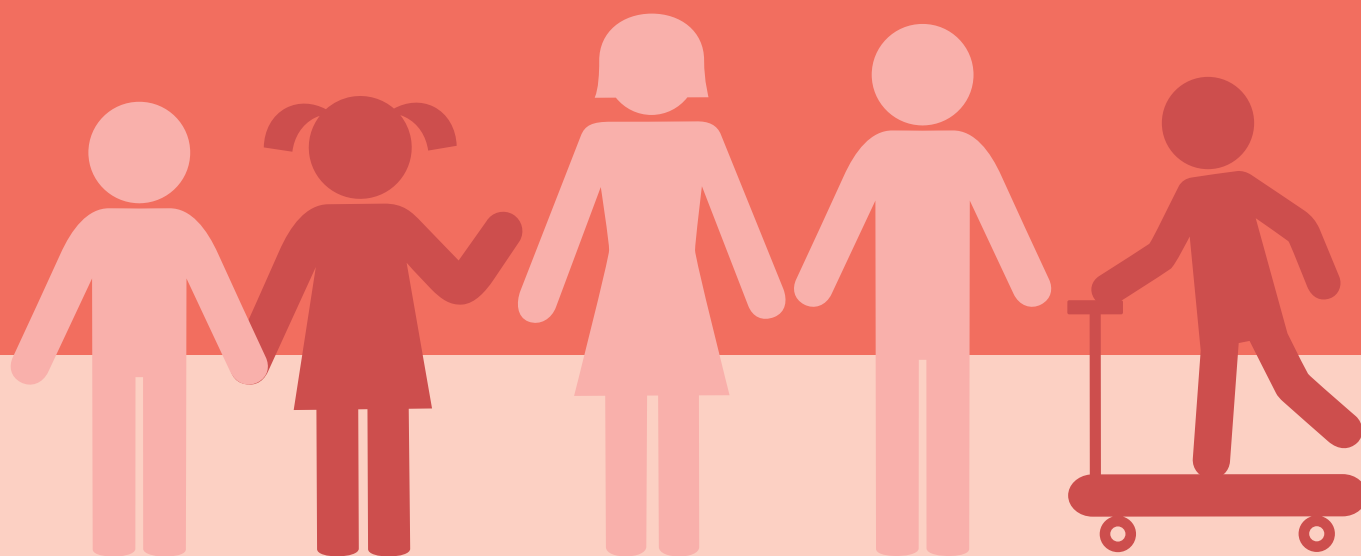
Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has ensured that the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf have received the care and support they need, and I hope that this report shows the results of their hard and tireless work over the past year.



section

2

Children's Services Overview



In Children's Services, we contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan **"Making a difference"** and specifically the wellbeing priority **"Ensuring PEOPLE are independent, healthy and successful"** by


“ *Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do.* **”**

In this Section, we provide data and information to evidence key service achievements, developments, and challenges in Children's Services in 2022/23, together with our key service priorities for 2023/24, where further developments and change have been identified.

Our key achievements in 2022/23


This year has seen continued high demand, particularly at the front door and increasing complexity for Children's Services. This is expected to continue as we see the long-term impact of COVID-19 harm on children and their families. This reinforces the need to deliver against our strategic priorities that are intended to support us to manage demand and shift the balance of care. An overview of demand and related performance is set out below:

26,712 
contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year (up from 24,385 2021/22)

98% 
of the contacts received, a decision was made by the end of the next working day (98% in 2021/22).

45% 
of the contacts received, advice or assistance was provided (up from 43% 2021/22).

407 
children on the Child Protection Register on 31st March (up from 378 2021/22).

5,633 
new assessments completed for children (up from 5,238 in 2021/22).

4,628 
within statutory timescales (up from 4,567 in 2021/22).

1,904
children with a care and support plan (up from 1902 in 2021/22).



1,264
families known to Resilient Families Service with increased resilience (up from 1065 in 2021/22).



Despite these pressures, teams across Children’s Services have continued to deliver high quality safe services to vulnerable children and families, as evidenced by some of our key achievements set out below:

- In Spring 2023, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) identified many positive aspects of our work and practice following a **review of how we support children and families subject to the Public Law Outline pre-proceedings** as part of a national review.
- We have continued to take forward our Children Looked After Prevention Strategy resulting in an increase in the number of families remaining together and an associated reduction in the rate of children becoming looked after.
 - At the end of March 2023, we had 624 Children Looked After compared to 655 in 2022, and 717 in 2020, leading to a further reduction in the rate of Children Looked After.
 - Our new Magu Team staffing has been established to respond to the need to improve pre-birth services and seek to reduce the number of children under one becoming looked after. In the year, we have managed the first early permanence case in Wales making it possible for an 8 week old baby to move straight to adopters without the disruption of an interim period with foster carers.
- Our new **Children Looked After Residential Transformation Strategy 2022-2027** was approved by Cabinet in February 2023. Developments underway, include:
 - opening a second new home that offers therapeutic care for up to 3 young people.
 - developing emergency accommodation for up to 3 young people.

This has resulted in an increase in use of our own children’s care home accommodation rather than independent sector. The percentage of Children Looked After placed with relative carers remains consistent with that reported in 2021/22, at 34%.

- In terms of our Children Looked After, we have:
 - increased the number of Rhondda Cynon Taf Foster Carers to 286 from 281 in the previous year. There has also been an increase to 1329 users of the Council’s Leisure 4 Life Foster Family Access scheme in the year.
 - worked well across Council departments on projects including Children’s Looked After Team collaborate with Love Treorchy on Employment Programme
 - implemented the Basic Income Pilot alongside our care leavers.
 - extended our work under the Trauma Recovery Model and developed therapy provision alongside partners, guiding how we make sure traumatised young people can access the right therapy without delay.
 - involved staff in the update and re-set of Miskin services.
- We have implemented phase one our Children’s Workforce strategy activities aimed at improving staff wellbeing and maximising the retention of staff, which has involved influencing national attraction work: **A week in the life of a social worker**



How are people shaping our Services?

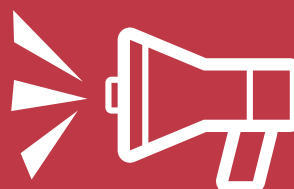
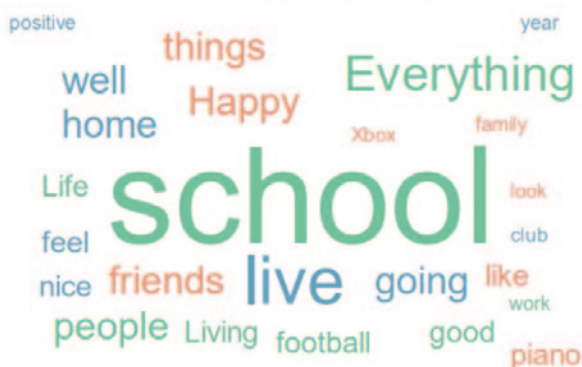
We have continued to strengthen participation of children and young people to promote engagement and involvement specifically with Children Looked After and partner agencies to ensure co-production and that the voice of children and young people are heard in service development and delivery.

In 2022/23, we have developed a Children's Services Participation Strategy which incorporates different communication approaches when engaging with children and young people.

In line with the Participation Strategy, all looked after children and care leavers, aged 4-25 years old, have been given the chance to take part in our 'Get Involved' **survey**.

We have asked children what is going well, what could be better for all care experienced children and young people and how would they like to get involved with Children's Services? In total, we received 66 responses from children aged between 4 – 25 years old. We shared survey feedback with staff and we developed an **infographic** which includes 'You Said' and 'We Will' statements which we shared with children and young people via the YEPS website, our foster/kinship carers and Voices from Care Cymru.

What is positive (going well) for you?



The Vision for the Participation Strategy:

The Participation Strategy outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Children's Services approach to supporting the rights of children, young people, parents, carers, and families in receipt of care and support, to have their voices heard and to actively participate in decisions about their life and help to shape future service developments.

Get Involved Survey -

What did children tell us was important?

- Make sure that all trusted adults explain who they are. Consider leaving child friendly information such as 'All about me' profiles or a child friendly letter to the young person before meeting them or with a change of Social Worker/ key member of staff.
- Access to information. To develop information in a range of formats that can be easily accessed and shared. Young people 16+ have told us they want easy access to information for benefits, housing, tenancy support and funding entitlements.
- Children and young people have told us how they want to get involved. They would like more in person meet up events, activities with nature, sports, arts and crafts and music and drama.
- To look at different ways to keep in touch with family. Young people have told us they would like more contact with their families.
- Mental Health and wellbeing support. Young people would like further support with their mental health and wellbeing activities.

Further examples of work undertaken in 2022/23 to engage and involve care experienced children and young people were presented to the **Corporate Parenting Board in January 2023** and includes the following case study below:

Supporting care experienced children and young people – The Sky’s the Limit Project

Case study



This project supports care experienced children to access drama, art, sporting activities, dance, gardening, choir, film making and digital sessions created, designed and delivered by children and young people to achieve a national reach. We are supporting mental health issues by preventing and empowering children's confidence through hobbies and activities that give positive experiences.

An example of one of the sessions:

- 9 young people attended the ‘Sky’s the Limit’ Nature workshop for 8 to 13 year olds on Saturday 22/10/22. Activities included:
 - Paint and press on to tote bags and sewing supported by Growing Space
 - Pumpkin carving, games and a nature walk.



- Some direct and email feedback included:

“ I’ve never done sewing before and I really enjoyed the arts and crafts. I didn’t realise I was good at sewing. I would definitely like to come again.
(aged 11) ”

“ Just wanted to say thank you for the event today, the children had lots of fun and kept saying how lovely it was, also both are interested in build your strength and Halloween party. If you have more info with dates and where would be great.
(Foster carer via email) ”

In addition, we have continued to increase opportunities for young people and families to have greater say, involvement and choice in their plans and the services they receive, for example, we have:

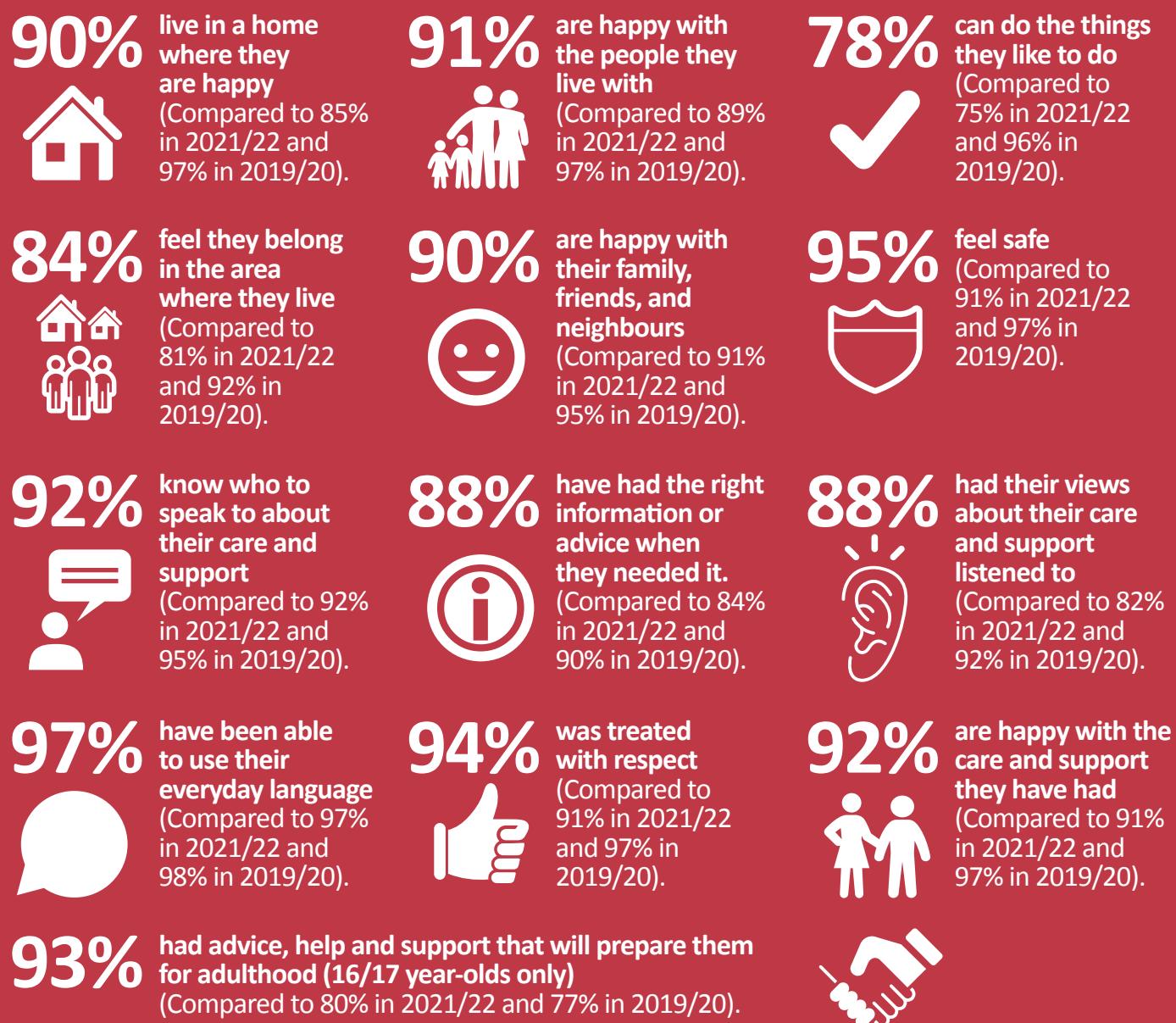
- embedded our **Advocacy Services offer** in line with the National Offer, providing support to 73 young people and families during the year, where the ‘active offer’ for advocacy had been made. Commenced a parent advocacy pilot from January 2023.
- 42 families referred to the Family Group Meeting Service and 24 Family Group Meetings provided, to provide a structured decision making and planning process for the wider family network.
- developed a new **Family Support Website** aimed at making it easier for families to navigate the support that is available.
- with the input of care experienced parents, signed up to the **Charter** for parents in care and leaving care.
- engaged with Parents to seek their views of what works to inform reunification work under the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy.
- involved young carers in appointments Panel and provided access to the Young Carers Card and promotional videos for the Young Carer Card are available in **English** and **Welsh**.
- care experienced young people have made some short clips to explain to Councillors and staff why local care is so important to them.

As in previous years, we have carried out an annual service user survey which asked a sample of children and young, who had a care and support plan on the day the sample was drawn, how they feel about the care and support they receive. This year 140 children completed the survey and overall responses to the survey were positive, as shown in the table below, with improvement or same results compared to last year in all but one of the thirteen service quality measures, although we recognise that performance is still below pre-pandemic levels in most of the measures.

Comments made by children and young people were generally complementary, reflecting some very positive experiences which were having a good impact on their lives. There was a variety of reasons for negative comments, including the other children living with them and neighbours.

Service quality measure

Of the 140 children and young people who responded to the survey:



Children's Services compliments and complaints

The Social Services statutory compliments and complaints process provides the opportunity for service users and their families and carers to provide feedback. The following table summarises the number of complaints and compliments received this year and in the three previous years.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of complaints received	59	29	47	70
Number of compliments received	59	92	116	75

As in previous years, the number of complaints for Children's Services in overall terms remain low although there has been an increase compared to last year. When, occasionally, we have not been able to meet people's expectations, we use the feedback to learn what we can do better and, where necessary, we make changes to do this.

Our developments and improvements

Excellent Practice leading to better outcomes

In Spring 2023, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) reviewed how we support children and families subject to the Public Law Outline pre-proceedings as part of a national review.

The review identified many positive aspects of our work including:

- the framework that we have established and the supporting documentation that supports timely decision making.
- child focussed, thorough and timely care and support assessments.
- prevention of breakdown and maintenance of the family unification is at the forefront of practice.
- good quality, readily available legal advice.
- families subject to legal planning and pre-proceedings work are given extensive support and opportunities to make effective changes, before further legal action is taken, even where the legal threshold for intervention has been reached.
- children and families benefit from a good range of established provision, such as Resilient Families Service, the Information, Advice and Assistance Team and the Miskin service.
- timely safeguarding action is taken where there is a risk of harm, with swift entry to the Public Law Outline process where needed. Effective support from partners within the safeguarding process was evidenced by well attended strategy meetings and initial case conferences.

It was acknowledged that in common with other Local Authorities that there are challenges of increased demand and difficulties in recruitment and retention that are impacting our work. They identified that there is more work to be done to improve some of our communication by making sure that easy to understand supporting information is for available for parents and carers. It is also important that we continue to further promote advocacy for parents and carers.



Early intervention and prevention

We have continued to improve access to timely information, advice and assistance to facilitate improved access to, and engagement in, early intervention and prevention services for children, young people and families. A review and redesign of our Information, Advice and Assistance has commenced to ensure we can continue to provide a high quality service with changing needs and demand following the pandemic and will be completed in 2023/34.

We launched the new Rhondda Cynon Taf Families Website www.rctfamilies.co.uk in October 2022. It has been promoted to staff within the Council and our relevant partners,

including schools, childcare providers and community partners and has received nearly 18,000 views so far with the Tips for Parents and Programmes and Courses being the most popular.

We want to make better use of our Children and Family Centres, so we are currently reviewing the capacity and ability to develop multi-use areas and evaluate building capacity to support the development of an access plan for community groups, during daytime, evenings and weekends going forward. As part of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Families Website and other social media opportunities, the promotion and profile of Children and Family Centres is being raised, showing the resources available and signposting to sources of advice and support in community settings.



Making best use of our Children and Family Centres

Utilising the Winter Hardship Fund, we held 3 open/information days in our Children's Centres in Aman, Penrhys and Rhydyfelin to promote access to the centres and better understand what the local communities would like to see in the future. Supported by local partners, community groups and schools we offered a range of interactive activities for children and young people ranging from 0-11 & 11+. There were several information stands for families on a range of topics (CAB, energy saving & Police) where they could seek advice and where to go for further support.

We provided free food and drinks and issued a family pack containing ingredients for 2 meals per family that attended. We also distributed some of the family packs to the wider community through locally identified families who needed some extra support.

In total across the 3 events, 160 adults and 250 children were supported with 91 volunteers involved in the delivery of the events.

We have continued to focus our services on early intervention and prevention to improve the life outcomes for children in Rhondda Cynon Taf and have been embedding a suite of 16+ Support Projects that are being offered to young people including the **Becoming Independent Project** and the **Reducing Risk of Youth Homelessness Project** to provide targeted support to those children and young people who are at risk of youth homelessness. Children Looked After are one of the Welsh Government’s targeted groups to provide early intervention and prevention in the fight against youth homelessness. With links already formed prior to and over the pandemic with the 16+ Looked After Children’s team we discussed activities that the young people may participate in to maintain the links and to support the young people with any advice and guidance they need regarding housing and homelessness.

Becoming Independent Project - Ysgol Nantgwyn

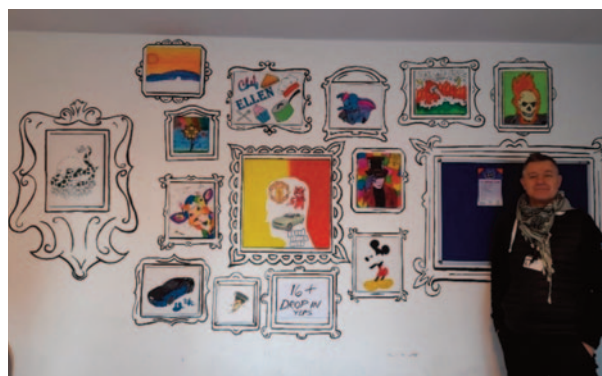
The aim of the Ysgol Nantgwyn “Becoming Independent Programme” was to engage and provide information, advice, guidance and support to young people who are leaving or transitioning from school into college, and to support those young people that potentially become homeless in the future based on Welsh government targets, specifically LGBTQI+, and generational family homelessness, in order to provide or enhance life skills and experiences that will support young people in their independence, whether at home with their family or in independent living accommodation in the future.

Our 16+ support team delivered programme to a total of 7 young people, age from 13 to 16. Feedback was positive and the young people asked if we could go back to do a sexual health/porn awareness session to the whole class. This is currently being arranged with support from a Sexual Health Nurse.

Reducing Risk of Youth Homelessness Project

This project was set up to support Children Looked After aged 16+ with advice and guidance to prevent youth homelessness. These young people were allowed the opportunity to design, prepare and decorate the main wall inside the chill out room at the 16+ drop-in centre using a graffiti style of artistry, allowing any new children attending the centre to add to the art wall in the future or allow those that participated the option of taking their art with them when they progressed on.

The project was a success in that the young people attending the sessions all engaged in some part to complete the artwork with an extra session planned in to allow the provider time to display the art in the centre. As a follow up and to maintain the link, regular activities are to be planned to support the 16+ team as requested by the young people.





We have delivered sessions in youth clubs focusing on independent life-skills such as cookery, finance sessions and CV writing, and safety. Sessions have been held in colleges with a focus on wellbeing, sexual health, exam stress, bullying, drug awareness, trafficking and exploitation. The team have also offered support at drop-in sessions at the job centres in Porth, Llantrisant, Tonypany, Treorchy and Pontypridd. In total we delivered 50 sessions in 2022/23 in schools, colleges and for home schooled children and 248 participants attended.

In 2022/23, we have appointed an additional Mental Health & Wellbeing Officer to increase capacity in YEPS to meet the increased demand. We are also revising existing Children and Communities Grant contracts with providers to understand areas that

could be improved to encourage more to join the Approved Providers List. This supports the delivery of integrated support pathways supporting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children, young people and families.

We have begun work to establish a Safe Spaces Scheme across the county borough and we will take this forward in 2023/24. We have also continued to provide **YEPS mobile hubs** which regularly visit areas across the County Borough, at evenings, after school and during school holidays, offering information, advice and guidance as well as a range of activities to complement the existing Local Authority and voluntary organisations youth clubs. The services are aimed to provide support for young people aged between 11 and 25.

Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPs) 'Around the World in a Day' Cultural event

Utilising funding available via the Winter Hardship Fund, YEPS organised an event for young people and their families as part of the RCT anti-Racism agenda in a bid to raise cultural awareness. Several cultural activities were offered, one of which was sampling different foods from around the world.

The aims of the event were to:

- identify young people to form an RCT wide Ethnic Minority forum group.
- raise awareness of Ethnic Minority cultures and experiences within RCT through workshops and activities
- educate people on the impact of racism on individuals as well as the wider community.
- create a platform for young people and staff to have a safe space to share their experiences, gain support, give feedback, and share best practices to become anti racist

In total, **118 children attended the event**, with each receiving a warm drink and snack.

We have continued to provide support to families as early as possible to increase resilience and prevent the need for statutory services. In 2022/23, we engaged with 1264 families who increased their resilience after completing work with our Resilient Families Service.

Resilient Families Service

Case study



The family consisted of mother, father and 2 children under 5 and expecting their third child imminently. A referral was made by the families Health Visitor for support to address the families housing situation as well as parental mental health and wellbeing. Also, additional support was requested in relation to the family being able to meet challenges which may impact upon the children’s wellbeing.

Family plan goals were identified to source carpets and other required items for their new home and to improve the father’s emotional wellbeing, exploring his thoughts and feelings and share any worries. Following the intervention, the family’s resilience improved from a score of 59 to a score of 39 and feedback from the family and professionals was positive:

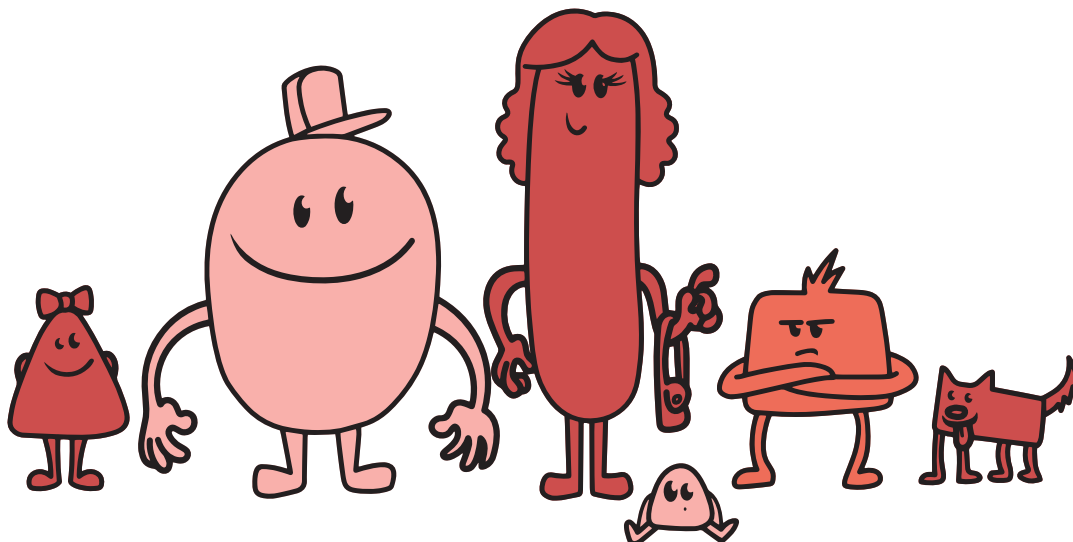
“ Thanks we are now cleaning more and working together better. ”
(Father)

“ You have motivated us. Thanks for all the stuff you got us. Its been great to speak to you. I feel better as I have cleared the room upstairs. Me working on that 1 day a week has improved my wellbeing. ”
(Mother)

“ ...Thank you for all your support. ”
(Health Visitor)

“ ... I can’t believe how much work you have carried out with this family! ”
(RFS Midwife)

“ ...The family have been fantastic to work with and I will miss them. I have got to know the family really well with 12 visits to their home. They have taken on board every single piece of information shared. ”
(RFS Intervention worker)



Children Looked After

We have continued to provide support for families so that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after. As part of this support we have continued to deliver our **Children Looked After (CLA) Prevention Strategy 2022/25**, resulting in reduction in the rate of children becoming looked after. As a result, we have reduced the number of children who are looked after and moved from previously being the Council with the second highest rate of Children Looked After in Wales to being in 4th position in July 2022 to 6th position in May 2023 from where we strive to see further progress. Despite a downward trend of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR), the number of children has increased from 378 in 2021/22 to 407 in 2022/23. This is lower than pre-pandemic levels, but we will continue to focus our support to reduce the number of children on the CPR.

A key aspect of the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy 2022/25 is providing better pre-birth support our most vulnerable families including those who are themselves care or social care experienced or have had another child already removed from their care. The new MAGU Team is aimed at delivering an integrated health and social care pathway for pregnant women and their families across early intervention and edge of care services, that focuses on building skills and resilience and thereby reducing risk. Integrated health and social care services will be available to women from 12 weeks of pregnancy through to the child's first birthday. This will improve pre-birth services and seek to reduce the number of children under one and children of parents who themselves are care leavers becoming looked after. The team is now fully staffed and has started to take on new cases.

Another key aspect of the CLA Prevention Strategy is improving support for kinship carers and special guardians. Following a pilot in 2021/22, we commissioned **Kinship Cymru** to offer a **Kinship Connected** service to improve outcomes for special guardians and other kinship carers in the county borough. Kinship Connected helps kinship carers develop long-term supportive networks which result in a more stable and supportive environment in which the children in their care can thrive. The support includes one to one support, peer support, advice, support to access grants and free online workshops to ensure that the kinship carers have the help that they need to support the children that they look after.

Kinship Connected Project

"I have received everything, and the iPad is really good. Thank you so much for everything you have done for me and the children – it has really made a difference. I am most grateful, thank you.

(A special guardian for two grandsons aged 12 and 14)

"It was absolutely wonderful, the children and I enjoyed every minute of being away, I was given a loan of a mobility scooter and was able to go out on my own at times and have some time to enjoy.

(Elderly grandmother caring for four grandchildren, two under the age of 15 who have behavioural issues)

"The Kinship project worker is always there if I need her to chat to, she always gives me a call to catch up and see if there's anything she can do. Having the support has made a difference for my family as it has given me tools to help manage my grandson's outbursts.

(Step-grandmother aged 54)

"I will always access the (peer) group as well as I feel I have made friends when before was so lonely now I am not so much.

(Grandmother aged 46)

"I cannot recommend the support offered by Kinship Cymru enough, and really hope the service continues and hope that we can continue working alongside each other in the future with different families. It was also positive that I could also contact the project worker with any queries too, and she would always get back to me.

(Social Worker RCTCBC)

Through our work around early intervention and prevention, we have also established a Therapy Panel alongside partners, which coordinates access to therapy and enhances trauma informed and therapeutic approaches within children’s services to make sure traumatised young people and their carers can access the right therapeutic support and guidance without delay.

For those children that cannot remain with their families, we want to make sure that they can be looked after closer to home. We are continuing to work with providers to develop placement sufficiency close to home, making sure that the Council provides the accommodation and support that our looked after children need. This year a **Residential Children’s Services Strategy** and action plan for the next 5 year has been agreed by Cabinet in **February 2023**. The central purpose of the Strategy is to develop Council owned and run residential care at pace. This will lead to better outcomes for young people and is in line with the Government’s intention to legislate to remove profit from care. This work has begun, and we have applied to register Willowford House as a children’s home to accommodate 3 young people and have re-registered Ystrad Fechan as a children’s home to accommodate up to 3 children and young people.

Whilst registration is pending, it has been necessary to place a small number of young people in an Operating Without Registration setting where the unacceptable alternative would be to provide no accommodation and care for the young person concerned. This is due to increased demand, increasing complexity of need and scarcity of registered children’s homes.

We are also working with **Foster Wales** to increase the **recruitment of foster carers** in Rhondda Cynon Taf, in particular, those who are able to support children with more complex needs. Enquiries are increasing and 13 new foster carers have been approved to date against a target of 19 but more work is needed to improve ongoing recruitment of foster carers.

We are also developing a revised Housing Options model for care-leavers to whom the Council owes a corporate parenting duty in order that they can leave care placements in a safe, planned way which avoids homelessness wherever possible. Two dedicated Housing Solutions Officers have been appointed and a referral pathway document has been drafted.

Young Carers

In 2022/23, the Young Carers Support service contract was retendered and awarded to **Action For Children (AFC)**. AFC provide regular monthly support groups for young carers, as well as specific events through the year to allow young carers to experience new things and have a break from their caring role. As part of the new contract, AFC will offer support to Sibling Carers. We also continue to promote the opportunities available to Young Carers as part of our quarterly **Carers newsletter** including access to our Young Carers card. The **Young Carers Annual Report 2022/23** provides more information about how we support these children.

Young Carers Support in numbers.



Early Years

We have been delivering the Early Years Transformation agenda to ensure early years services are universally available and specialist services are targeted by need and not geographical location.

We made a full contribution to ensure the second stage of the **evaluation** of the Early Years Transformation Programme, which focused on the systems and processes which underpin the model, was completed on time. We are now beginning to see progress in overcoming organisational and cultural barriers inherent in truly integrated deliver models, attributable to the strong leadership and management from Community Wellbeing and Resilience Families Service working alongside the Health Board to deliver the first model of its kind in Wales. The evaluation commented on the integration journey so far:



*Our own recent research in England has highlighted that making big change happen in this space is typically a three-to-five year endeavor, as integration involves relationships between multiple systems with many moving parts. Given the scale of ambition of the Resilient Families Service, we think the progress made already in early intervention integration puts RCT ahead of many local areas. **Beyond Boundaries** (2022)*



The recommendations from this evaluation are being used to improve both structural and technical aspects of the pilot.

We are also working with Health to produce an Early Years Vulnerability Profile that will enable us to plan services based on need. Central to the development of the profile is the sharing of health data with the Council. The technical side of the data transfer and testing is complete however, full information sharing protocols are yet to be agreed. We continue to pilot the new integrated Early Years delivery model in Rhondda Cynon Taf on behalf of the region which is being externally evaluated. The data continues to be reviewed and reported on a regular basis to Senior Managers in the Council and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

Why is the Early Years Transformation agenda important? What does the data tell us?

In the period between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, 10,657 children were supported through the Resilience & Wellbeing Health Programme in RCT. A total of 1557 children received a 20-month Schedule of Growing Skills (SOGS) assessment in this period.

An example of the impact that the Early Years transformation agenda is having on families is demonstrated by our speech and language referrals. Of the 488 referrals that we received from health visitors following an age 20 month Schedule of Growing Skills assessment, 67% were from non-Flying Start geographical areas, and 33% from Flying Start geographical areas, demonstrating the importance of identifying children according to need rather than according to geographical location.

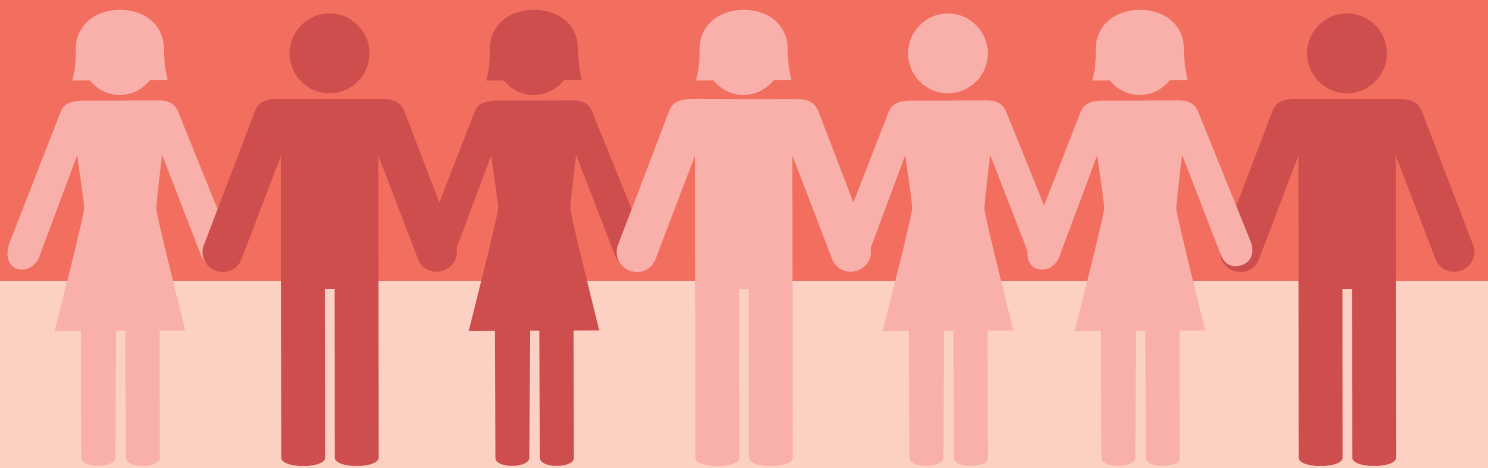
What are our priorities for 2023/24?

- We will implement the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy- Targeting evidence based services towards family support to ensure that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after.
- We will deliver the Residential Transformation Strategy- Making sure that the Council provides the accommodation and support that our looked after children need.
- We will deliver the Participation strategy which outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services approach to supporting the rights of children, young people, parents, carers, and families in receipt of care and support, to have their voices heard and to actively participate in decisions about their life and help to shape future service developments.
- We will ensure that Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services' workforce is motivated, engaged and valued; staff have the capacity, skills, competence and confidence to meet the needs of children and families.

section

3

Adult Services Overview



In Adult Services, we contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan **"Making a difference"** and specifically the wellbeing priority **"Ensuring PEOPLE are independent, healthy and successful"** by

“ Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life. ”

“ Integrating health and social care and providing support for those with mental health problems and complex needs. ”

In this Section, we provide data and information to evidence key service achievements, developments, and challenges in Adult Services in 2022/23, together with our key service priorities for 2023/24, where further developments and change have been identified.

Our key achievements in 2022/23

Adult Services has faced continued high demand for care and support during 2022/23. While this levelled off towards the end of the year, volume and complexity of casework remains higher than pre pandemic levels and combined with challenges in staff recruitment and retention have continued to put pressures on the health and social market, in particular the availability of care provision. Supporting our care providers and addressing our recruitment and retention issues remain a key priority for the coming year. An overview of demand and related performance is set out below:



14,013
contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year (up from 11,923 in 2021/22).

Of which,
11,444
were new contacts received (new for 2022/23 no trend data available).

76%
of the new contacts received, advice or assistance was provided (new for 2022/23 no trend data available).



8,315
new assessments completed for adults during the year (down from 8,452 2021/22).

Of which,
1,490 (18%)
had a care and support plan outcome (up from 1,284 (15%) in 2021/22).

4,260
adults with a care and support plan on 31st March 2023 (up from 4,117 in 2021/22).



2,890
reviews completed in the year (down from 3,438 in 2021/22).

Of which,
40%
were completed on time (up from 32% in 2021/22).

79.3% 
of adults supported in the community during the year (up from 78% in 2021/22).



1,087
reablement packages completed during the year (down from 1,290 in 2021/22).

Of which,
62%
returned to self-caring following intervention (down from 67% in 2021/22).



2,027
services for adults started during the year (up from 1,780 in 2021/22).

Of which:
• 505 were residential care placements
• 1,235 were domiciliary care packages
• 287 were for respite support

Despite this context, good progress has been made on delivering service improvements to help us meet the current and future challenges, as evidenced by some of our key achievements set out below:

- Following a huge effort by our Teams to tackle waiting lists in 2022/23, that had increased following the pandemic, we have reduced the following assessment waiting lists during the year:
 - Care and Support: from 339 in April 2022 to 186 in March 2023.
 - ACE (Occupational Therapy) from 735 in April 2022 to 201 in March 2023.
 - DoLS from 414 in April 2022 to 255 in March 2023.
- In addition, we have reduced the number of people waiting a home care package from 82 in April 2022 to 40 in March 2023. Despite this improving trend, home care capacity still needs to increase to meet demand and therefore we launched a new project with **Community Catalysts** to support people and local partners to develop small enterprises and ventures that can provide real choice and increase the number and range of homecare and support options for local people.
- We have continued to work closely with Health to introduce a new hospital discharge approach since January 2023 called “Discharge to Recover then Assess” to improve the flow of patients through hospitals, supporting people to be discharged from hospital as soon as they are well enough. The introduction of this new approach along with continued investment in our award winning Stay Well@Home Service and new investment to increase the capacity of our Hospital Social Work Team has positively avoided an in-patient admission or supported the safe discharge of, on average, 48 people per week.
- Through our Lifeline Service we have continued to support 3777 people, so they can continue to live safely and independently at home. As part of our Lifeline+ Services, our Mobile Responder Service attended 6,972 visits and avoided 5,737 conveyances to hospital. The target of a response within 1 hour is consistently met for over 90% of visits.
- In **February 2023**, Cabinet agreed a projected £60m capital investment in four new state-of-the-art care accommodation in Treorchy, Ferndale, Mountain Ash and Church Village to modernise our residential care accommodation and meet people’s changing needs, as well as retaining five Council care homes. We have also:
 - opened Elm Road in Llanhari creating new bespoke accommodation for autistic adults in November 2022.
 - developed proposals for redevelopment of the former Bronllwyn Care Home in Gelli to provide new specialist accommodation with care to support people with learning disabilities in adulthood and older age – construction planned for Summer 2023, following planning consent in April 2023.
 - commissioned the development of bespoke supported living for people with complex mental health needs at Abergoki in Treorchy- due to open in Spring 2023.
- We have continued to take forward our “My Day My Way” learning disability transformation programme, co-producing a new operating and service offer for day services opportunities, which was presented to Scrutiny in March 2023. As part of this work, we have developed Ty Draw to provide new community daytime support for adults with learning disabilities and Café 50 to offer supported employment opportunities.





How are people shaping our services?

Individual service areas have well-established processes for collecting feedback as part of their quality assurance processes. Below are some examples of service related engagement and service user involvement undertaken in 2022/23 and how these have shaped our services:

- residents in the Council's care homes are encouraged to provide comments and suggestions through resident meetings and comments/suggestion boxes to inform service improvement. Some examples of how this feedback has shaped services include:
 - menus being updated based on changes requested by residents.
 - types of entertainment and activities offered including trips to the seaside.
 - being involved in choosing the colour schemes of some of our residential care homes following redecoration.
- introduced 'Magic Moments' in Older People Day Services to capture examples of service user and staff experience in our day centres. This has resulted in both staff and service users gaining a sense of value and purpose, capturing how we have worked together to help achieve service users' personal goals and outcomes.

Magic Moments' at Cwmni Dda Day Centre

Case study



Cwmni Dda has been supporting a man who had experienced life changing events. His wife had died and following this, he decided to move in with his daughter. The change in his living circumstances combined with a progression in his dementia meant a change to his social activities, which centred around going out to pubs and live music events which he enjoyed attending with his wife. The remaining family did not have the capacity to provide this level of support and he could not attend independently.

Initially when attending Cwmni Dda, he found it difficult to settle. Filling in his life history with the team, he told them that he was a musician and had travelled nationwide with a band that were very successful.

As a result, staff were able to access a guitar for the 'music corner'. The man picked it up but struggled to play at first, however, staff encouraged him to persevere and over a series of visits, he managed to tune the guitar and started to play recognisable tunes. Staff observed that he was starting to move to the rhythm and tapping his feet and it was evident that he was quite a showman! They have continued to encourage him, and he has now progressed to taking requests for specific tunes.

This has been a very positive outcome, enabling the man to pursue an activity that appears to have given him a new sense of purpose. It has also enabled him to settle in at Cwmni Dda. From a health perspective, encouraging him to use his hands, has enabled him to retain dexterity and the ability to co-ordinate his movements. So encouraging activity can help to retain skills for longer.

- Co-production has continued to be a central part of Learning Disability Transformation Programme during the year, and it has significantly shaped how things are done. Council Officers have been involving people in their work, by listening to and acting upon a wider range of views and opinions when developing learning disability services.

Learning Disability Transformation Programme

Between June to November 2022 the Learning Disability Transformation Programme developed a co-produced model for gathering and analysing engagement data called **My Day, My Way**. A multi-stakeholder ‘task and finish’ was established to draw out key themes from the data gathered and to produce a report, using **video** and other accessible methods to communicate the findings.

These findings have helped to develop a Day Services Strategy which was presented to Scrutiny in March 2023 and to Cabinet in the Spring of 2023, whereby a model of day opportunities was proposed.



“ By using methods such as face-to-face interaction, roadshows, video storytelling and online meetings, as well as eye gaze technology for those with complex communication needs, we have been able to actively involve as many individuals as possible during the development of the Daytime Services Strategy.
(Council Officer)

“ Coproduction should be used all the time, I felt valued during the project.
(A person with a learning disability)



In addition, the “RCT Transformers” citizen panel, made up of people with a learning disability, carers, parents, and others has continued. By working in equal partnership with those who draw on our services, has ensured that all voices that may not necessarily be part another interest group, can be heard. RCT Transformers has been involved in the “My Day, My Way” Transformation Programme and is currently supporting the development of our supported living retender process as part of the “My Home, My Way” programme.

- led the engagement with people living with dementia to co-produce a job description, personal specification and care pathway for a new Dementia Connector role. This role is required to meet the All-Wales dementia pathway standards, but to ensure the role reflected local needs, its responsibilities and function originated from the experience and perspective of local people. Starting with an engagement event to explore peoples experience the outcome was further tested in a face-to-face survey with a wider cohort of people. A pilot across the region to introduce the connector role is in progress.
- used Neighbourhood Network meetings to better understand local need and to identify where additional support is required locally.

Dementia Café Pilot Project – Gilfach Goch

Through a Dementia Listens Campaign and conversations with a range of local partners and residents at Taf Ely Neighbourhood Network meetings to better understand local need and to identify where additional support is required locally, it was identified that there is a lack of provision for those with dementia and their carers’.

Feedback included:

“ There’s isn’t anywhere for us to signpost people to locally if they have dementia. ”

“ There is no support for people with dementia in this area, when my mum needed help there was nothing. ”

“ There needs to be more help support and opportunities for carers and more things for families who care for someone with dementia to do. ”

“ Something informal could work, there are dementia cafes in other areas, perhaps this could be replicated. ”

Following this feedback, we consulted with the NHS Memory Team, Age Connect and the Alzheimer’s Society and a pilot project was initiated to give local people with dementia and their carers somewhere safe to go, where they will be able to access a range of information, opportunities, advice, and support helping people with dementia and their families to better maintain health, wellbeing, social connections.

The project increased local capacity to meet identified need and gaps in dementia provision in Gilfach Goch. A community café now acts as a hub for information and advice, helping people access appropriate local support and more opportunities .

7 people with dementia and 5 carers are attending the group and benefitting so far. They were referred to the group via local partnership working with the relevant groups and agencies.

Feedback has been positive:

“ It’s wonderful to have a group like this on the doorstep. ”

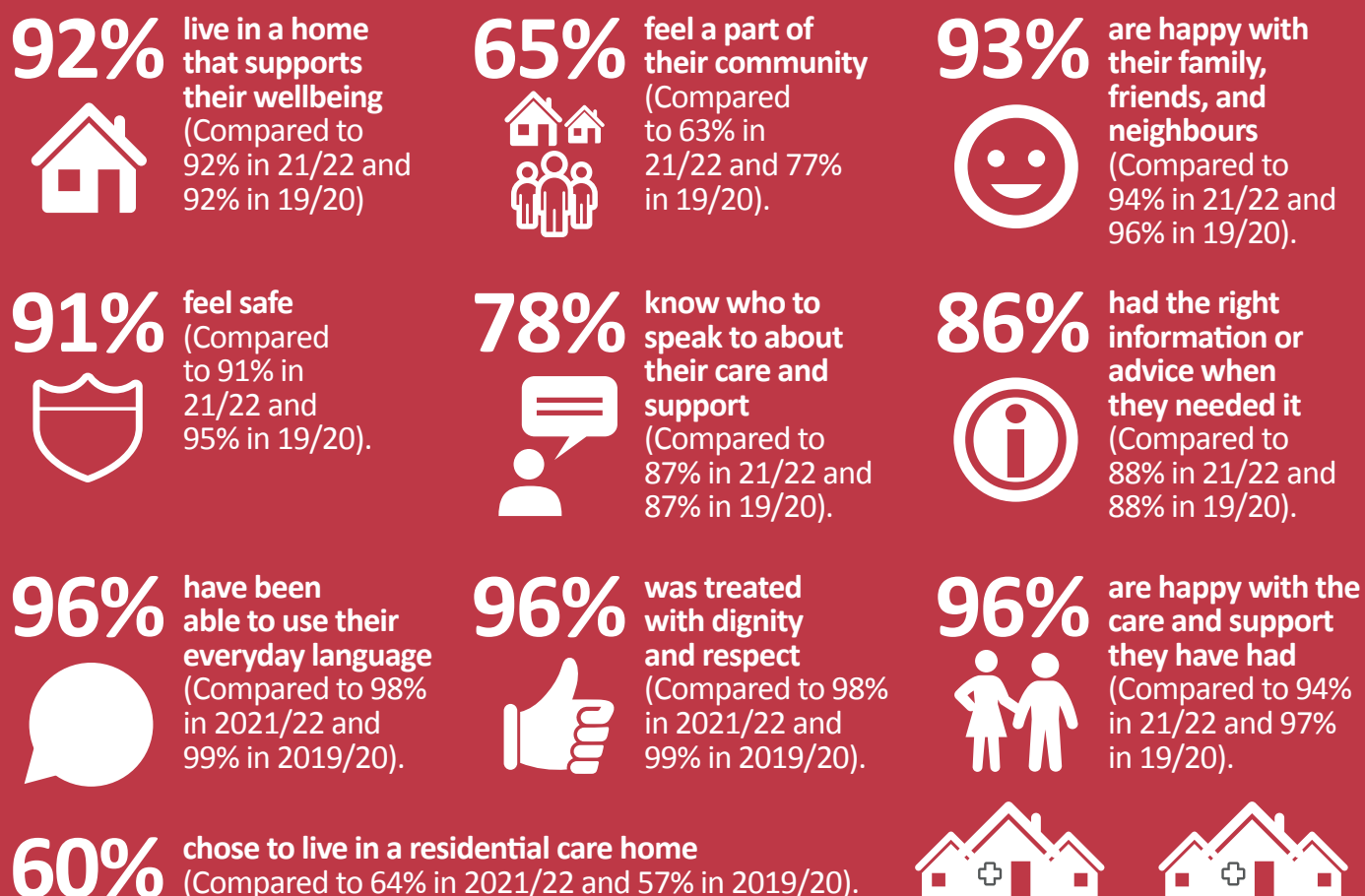
“ It is great to have somewhere locally to come to get support as a Carer and heart-warming to see the delight on my partners face when playing games and making friends with others. ”

- In addition, we engaged with:
 - service users, carers and staff and providers to contribute to the revised specification for advocacy service and the revised specification for the direct payments advisory service.
 - carers to understand expectations for alternative forms of respite which alongside further engagement will inform the development of a new carers respite service specification for tender later in 2023.

As in previous years, we carried out an annual service user survey which asked a sample of adults aged 18 and over, who had a care and support plan on the day the sample was drawn, how they feel about the care and support that they receive. This year 465 people responded to our survey. Overall, performance compared to last year is mixed with half of the service quality measures improving or remaining the same compared to last year and half showing a reduction in performance, with the majority still below pre-pandemic levels. We note that there is work to do when communicating with service users. We will focus on this during our review of the Information, Advice and Assistance Service in 2023/24 to ensure that service users have the information that they need.

Service quality measure

Of the 465 adults who responded to the survey:



25 carers completed a carers questionnaire in 2023. 44% of carers agreed with the statement 'I can do the things that are important to me' and 52% said they could sometimes do the things that are important to them. 58% said that they felt part of their community and 21% said they sometimes felt part of their community. Comments received indicate that carers can feel isolated and unable to access the things that they would like to. We will continue to offer support for carers including a review of our respite provision.

Adult Services compliments and complaints

The Social Services statutory compliments and complaints process provides opportunity for service users and their families to provide feedback. The following table summarises the number of complaints and compliments received this and in the three previous years.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of complaints received	54	25	63	57
Number of compliments received	93	91	66	70

As in previous years, the number of complaints for Adult Services in overall terms remain comparatively low in contrast to the number of people that access services. When, occasionally, we have not been able to meet people's expectations, we use the feedback to learn what we can do better and, where necessary, we make changes to do this.

Our developments and improvements

Developing new accommodation options

We have continued taking forward the Council's review on the future shape of residential care for older people to ensure we create the right model of service delivery to respond to increasing demand and changing needs in the long term. In **February 2023**, following extensive consultation with existing care home residents and their families, staff and the wider public, Cabinet agreed **proposals to modernise local residential care services** including a major £60 million capital investment in four state-of-the-art care accommodation in Treorchy, Ferndale, Mountain Ash and Church Village, modernising residential care services and meet people's changing need in the long term while retaining five Council care homes.

Construction started on new extra care housing at Danymynydd in Porth in Spring 2022 but stopped due to the main contractor entering administration in Winter 2022. We are working with Linc Cymru, our extra care housing development partner to recommence work on site in Summer 2023 following retender of a new contractor. Extra care housing offers older people with a care and support need the opportunity to live independently in their community. and prevent or delay the need for a move to a care home.

Extra Care

Case study



Mum and daughter, who has a learning disability and is unable to live independently have always lived with together. They were living in a first floor flat- Mum's mobility had deteriorated and was struggling to use the stairs so trips out were very limited. Mum and daughter wanted to continue living together and to be able to take their cat with them.

They were supported to move to a flat in our extra care scheme at Maesyffynon and the general outcome is that it has given both 'a new lease of life'. Maesyffynon has supported them to continue living together, enabling them to remain living in the community safely. They have the reassurance that someone is around during the day and night especially if either were feeling unwell or fell and therefore could reduce future dependency on services.

Both now have opportunities to socialise with other residents which is having a positive impact on their overall wellbeing. They have nutritious regular meals in the on-site restaurant. As the extra care flat is on one level, the risk of falling on the stairs has been removed. Extra care may prevent future admission to a more specialist placement in the event that mum is no longer able to support her daughter. Maesyffynon will offer a home for life without the worry of having to move.

Working with **Trivallis**, we opened a **supported accommodation scheme** in Llanhari following a refurbishment of Elm Road accommodation. This scheme provides a safe and high quality environment for adults with learning disabilities and autism. Assessments have been completed and individuals have started to move into their new modern accommodation. A similar supported living scheme in Treorchy is under construction in partnership with **Cynon Taf Housing Association** and is due to be completed in Spring 2023.

In July 2022, Cabinet approved development of a new specialist care accommodation for people with a learning disability in adulthood and older age, to be built on the **former Bronllwyn Care Home in Gelli. Construction of the new care accommodation is due to commence in Summer 2023.**

Support to remain independent.

We have continued to invest in reablement services to prevent escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. In 2022/23, we completed 1,087 packages of reablement, with 62% of people returning to self-caring following intervention.

In 2022/23, we completed our ACE (Occupational Therapy) Team remodelling and following a huge effort by the Team we have reduced the ACE waiting from 735 in April 2022 to 201 in March 2023 that had developed during the pandemic.

As a result, demand for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) have increased with 687 referrals received in 2022/23 compared to 461 referrals in 2019/20, up by 49%. DFGs are a non-repayable grant available to finance the cost of adaptations to properties to be able to aid vulnerable or disabled persons to live independently in their home. Examples, include provision of appropriate toilet and bathing facilities and alterations to improve access to and within the property, e.g. ramps, rails, stair lifts etc. The number of DFGs completed increased to 336 in 2022/23 from 211 in 2021/22.

Customer feedback, once a DFG and housing adaptation has been completed, includes:

96% of individuals agree that they feel more confident and independent.

93% agree that their quality of life has improved and **98%** were overall satisfied.

In addition, we have commissioned Cwm Taf Care and Repair to provide minor repairs up to the value of £500 via their in-house Handyman Service and deliver minor adaptations via the Council's "ENABLE" programme. The type of work completed would cover:

- Undertaking minor home repairs which make them safe and comfortable.
- Preventing health problems caused by poor housing and heating.
- Preventing accidents, slips, trips and falls from hazardous housing.
- Undertaking adaptations to housing to minimise the necessity for residential care, hospital admission and facilitate speedier hospital discharge.

In 2022/23, our commissioned Handyman Service supported 383 vulnerable people to receive repairs and adaptations to their home and 971 minor adaptations were delivered through our ENABLE programme.

Case study



Mrs C had an outside toilet that was not working and due to her medical condition, she had difficulty using the stairs to access the toilet in her upstairs bathroom. Mrs C asked for an assessment for a downstairs toilet in order for her to make it to the toilet on time.

Mrs C had the outside toilet repaired, although due to safety, Mrs C was advised not to use the facility during the winter months or when alone as it is an outbuilding. During our assessment, a stairlift was recommended, so that Mrs C was able to access her existing indoor facilities safely. During the assessment it was also identified that Mrs C was unable to access the shower cubicle due to a very high step in place, this had caused her to have a previous fall and didn't use it. It was also recommended that the shower cubicle be removed and replaced with a level access shower.

Mrs C was delighted with the outcome of her assessment and is now able to access her essential facilities safely and independently.

Our approach to Information, Advice and Assistance has remained largely unchanged since the introduction of the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act and a review and redesign of our service was needed to ensure we can continue to provide a high quality service with changing needs and demand following the pandemic. During 2022/23, a series of engagement events with key stakeholders, including staff and external agencies, was completed and the findings used as the cornerstone for the redesign of new offer.

A new working model was developed during a series of workshops, and this will be presented to key stakeholders in 2023/24 to ensure it accurately reflects their views. Once implemented, it is envisaged the new offer will allow us to:

- support people more effectively to find solutions within their networks and communities.
- work more cohesively and intensively with people during a crisis whilst adopting an enabling approach.
- provide seamless transition to further assessments of care and support needs.

Following the implementation of the Social Service and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, social work services for adults were restructured in 2017, which included changes to social work services for people with a learning disability. We created a new Care & Support Service, who worked with a wide range of individuals with long term care and support needs, including older people with mental health problems, people with a physical or sensory disability and people living with learning disabilities, who had less complex needs, along with a dedicated Complex Learning Disability Team.

Following the restructure, we continued to seek the views of those affected by these changes through a range of consultation and engagement methods. This included people with a learning disability, their parents and carers, RCT staff and partner organisations. Through these conversations, we recognised that people wanted a specific social work service for people with a learning disability. As a consequence, in 2022/23, we entered into a remodelling exercise which resulted in the creation of two new specialist learning disability teams and seven long term locality based Adult Teams. Through working effectively with all our staff through a process of change we succeeded in completing this remodelling in April 2023. Whilst, still in its infancy,

feedback from those who use our services are positive and we will be reviewing the impact throughout 2023/24.

During the year, following another huge effort from our Social Work Teams we have reduced our Care and Support waiting list from 735 to 339 in April 2022 to 186 in March 2023 that had developed during the pandemic.

We have continued to maximise use of technology in 2022/23 and develop digital projects to enhance people's independence and assist with care and support delivery, alongside work to an Adult Services Digital Strategy and work plan, which will be finalised next year.

In January 2023, we commenced a pilot **'Just checking'** project across our Supported Living Services to explore opportunities available for adults with a learning disability to live more independently and safely within their supported living homes. Whilst, still in its infancy, the project is progressing well, and we will be reviewing the impact in 2023/24.

During 2022/23 more than 1,200 new installations of technology equipment to enable independent living were completed. Of these, around 350 installations were for a bespoke Telecare package linked to a care and support plan, aimed at meeting people's care and support needs in innovative and enabling ways by using technology and remote monitoring.

The remainder of the installations were for one of our Lifeline packages, in order for people to live safely and independently at home, allowing people to connect remotely to our Lifeline Monitoring Centre in urgent situations, for example if they fall at home. At the end of March 2023, there were 3,777 live Lifeline connections.

Building on the existing Lifeline Service, we have expanded our enhanced Lifeline+ Services, and continued to provide the offer of additional support of a 24/7, 365 days a year mobile responder service. As part of our responder service offer, we will provide assistance in an attempt to avoid conveyances to hospital. During 2022/23 the Responders attended 6,972 visits and avoided 5,737 conveyances to hospital. The target of a response within 1 hour is consistently met for over 90% of visits.



Carers

We have continued to support unpaid carers to balance their caring roles and maintain quality of life. In 2022/23, 300 carer assessments for adults were undertaken during the year, compared to 485 in 2021/22. The role of unpaid carers intensified during the pandemic, which led to an increase in people requesting support from Adult Services during. Numbers have now dropped due to less demand.

During the year, we have involved unpaid carers and other relevant stakeholders to co-produce a new outcomes-based Carer Short Break Service, which replaces our existing Sitting Service. The new offer aspires to enhance our current respite options for unpaid carers by increasing choice and control for individuals through the use of direct payments, and by encouraging more creative, innovative ideas for Carer Short Breaks. Implementation and further development of the offer will continue into 2023/24 to increase the availability and variety of options.

A pilot with Young Adult Carers started towards the end of the year, delivering bespoke targeted support which focusses on person centred planning and individual outcomes. Development has also started in relation to a transition programme for Young Carers moving into Young Adult Carer support.

In 2022/23, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved Carer Confident Employment status and is now a Carer Confident Council, introducing a new Carer's Leave Policy and setting up a Working Carers Support Group. The Support Group offers employees (44 current employees) information, advice and support through regular events.

The Carers Support Project

The Carers Support Project (CSP) has continued to offer high quality services in the form of information and carer short breaks and have successfully linked in with more than 40 third sector organisations to support their delivery:

- Total number of unpaid carers subscribed to CSP - 2706
- Unpaid carers receiving specialist counselling support - 150
- Number of CSP carer short break events – 107, with 1976 attendees

We have started to develop workstreams that align more closely with the Welsh Government Strategy for Unpaid Carers, ensuring that moving forward we can deliver on the new National Priorities. In readiness, we have started a consultation process with unpaid carers, which so far has focussed on the type of support they feel benefits them in their caring role, checking what we are doing well, how we can improve and the barriers they face. Our evaluation of the work offered by CSP has also shifted to include outcomes more closely reflecting desired Welsh Government outcomes.

Direct Payments

We have continued to promote direct payments as a way of empowering people to be more independent and manage their individual care needs. The number of adults using direct payments to meet their needs have increased to 423 in 2022/23 from 412 in 2021/22.

Following engagement with service users and staff, we reviewed our direct payment policy, public information and staff guidance to simplify the process and make it more accessible for people to understand. The Policy was launched in January 2023 and a programme of training and awareness raising is progressing to support. At around the same time, we awarded the contract for direct payments support and advice to Dewis CIL a local service user led organisation and long term partner with us for this work.

In 2022/23, we have commissioned **Community Catalysts** to work alongside us to support local people to develop new community micro-enterprises. A micro-enterprise is a small sole trader business that is autonomous and not directly employed by the person receiving care but able to manage a direct and flexible relationship with their service users. Their development will increase the range of care and support options for service users and unpaid carers across Rhondda Cynon Taf. Our focus is initially in the **North Cynon** area with the intention of monitoring and evaluating progress throughout 2023/24 to inform expansion across the County Borough.

communitycatalysts[®]
unlocking potential **effecting change**

Domiciliary Care

We have continued to review and redesign our home care service model to ensure that people receive good quality home care based on the outcomes that they want to achieve whilst also ensuring that there is sufficient provision available at the right level to meet demand.

Our priority in 2022/23 has been to support our home care workforce as it recovers from the negative effects of the pandemic. The key areas of concern were supporting the recruitment and retention of staff, a situation that showed signs of improvement towards the end of 2022/23, although some areas remain problematic with regards to attracting sufficient staff to support demand.

Despite these significant workforce challenges across the home care market, the Council has continued to receive fantastic support from our commissioned home care providers who provide, on average, around 15,000 hours of care and support each week to over 1,200 people in their homes. Together, we reduced the number of people waiting for a home care package from 82 in April 2022 to 40 in March 2023.

The Council's in-house home care service delivered around 2,900 weekly hours of care and support during the year. The service includes long term home care provision as well as short-term services such as reablement and intermediate care aimed at supporting people to regain their independence. During 2022/23, the in-house home care service also adapted to changing processes and demands by trialling a new "Home First" approach with Health to allow people to return home from hospital sooner with a package of care before receiving a full assessment of their care and support needs.

Supporting older people to live in their own home

Case study



EH was admitted to hospital in Oct 2021 following a fall. In January 2022, EH was moved into a residential care home specialising in care for people living with dementia as an interim arrangement until an appropriate package of home care was available to support her wish was to return to live in her own home.

EH's family had concerns about EH returning home and didn't feel she had the mental capacity to make the decision. The social worker was allocated to assess her capacity to make the decision about where she should live and to plan her care with her once the outcome was established.

EH was assessed as having capacity to make the decision about where she wanted to live and demonstrated that she was able to explain what support she would need at home, what the risks were and how these could be minimised. Although EH was clear in her decision making, she was worried about upsetting her family as she was aware they wanted her to remain in a care home.

The social worker completed an assessment and developed a care and support plan with EH that would meet her needs for personal care and minimise the risks associated with falling using fall detectors. Community meals were also arranged and against the families wishes EH returned to her home.

EH moved home in March 2022. Once home EH worked with the older persons memory occupational therapy and this has enabled her to develop her independent living skills and start doing even more for herself than before her hospital admission. EH is now able to use her microwave, manage her personal care and shower with the assistance of carers. EH's original package of care and support has now reduced since she returned home and her health, confidence and mobility have increased significantly.

EH remains in her own home (May 2023) and has re-started attending services at her local church once a week, her situation is stable at home, and she no longer needs her social worker involved.

Day Services

Our five year **Learning Disability Transformation Programme**, which was launched during 2020, has continued this year with co-production at the core of the programme. This has been recognised as **good practice** by the Social Care Institute for Excellence.

Building on our **My Day ,My Way** involvement and engagement in 2021/22 and learning from the pandemic, we have continued to inform the on-going transformation of day services so that people with a learning disability have access to meaningful activity and opportunities in their own communities, including employment to achieve their personal goals and live ordinary lives. As a result of this work, we have developed a new co-produced operating and service offer for day services opportunities, which was presented for Scrutiny in March 2023 and due for Cabinet approval in Summer 2023.

Building upon the knowledge gained through working in a co-produced way we have launched My Home My Way in 2023 which, focuses upon giving more people an opportunity and a safe space to have a voice and be part of the design, delivery and implementation of Supported Living Services and the Council's retender in 2023/24.

Co-production and My Day, My Way

You can hear more about co-production and the My Day, My Way engagement project by listening to this **Podcast** from the Social Care Institute for Excellence or watching this **video** that was produced by users of the service.



From the success of My Day My Way and our current work on My Home My Way, we have recognised the importance and value of working in a co-produced way with people with lived experience to shape our services and we are currently sharing this learning across adult services.



Community Resilience

We have undertaken significant work to strengthen the relationship between the Single Point of Access Team in Adult Services and the Community Hub community resident support offer within communities so that residents can access good quality information, advice and assistance which support the social prescribing model.



Over 670 resident requests for support have been responded to in 2022/23, which may otherwise have been dealt with by statutory social services, ensuring that residents receive the support they need in a timely manner through community support. To strengthen relationships staff in Adult Services have attended awareness raising sessions to ensure that the referral pathways for resident support and the community support on offer in the community are understood and can be referred to.

Single Point of Access – Strengthening links to our Community Hubs

Case study



Following a referral via the Single Point of Access, resident support was requested for an elderly couple in their 80's. During the "What Matters" to you conversation, they explained they usually received online food deliveries, but this was no longer an option and required long term shopping support. They explained further that they had enough food to last them through to the weekend but were anxious and concerned how they would manage going forward. The Community Co-ordinator utilised links through the Neighbourhood Network and contacted Valleys Kids, who were able to provide a volunteer to attend the house on the same day and helped the couple complete an online order, showing them basic ICT skills and gave a small food bundle to last until the delivery. They now have regular delivery from their local superstore and Valleys Kids volunteers regularly check in on them.

“ Thank you so much for listening and offering us support. Putting us in touch with valleys kids has been most useful. I would never have gone to them for help as I thought they only helped children let alone old ladies like me.

(Resident)

“ We are happy to support RCT Together and any resident in the area. They were so grateful and I'm glad we could help.

(Volunteer Valleys Kids)

In 2022/23, we have continued to roll out **wellbeing assessments** for the wider community, ensuring that the Community Hubs can document and plan support around an individual's wellbeing needs. This included the launch of a Winter Pressures Pilot with partners in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Primary Care Team and GP Cluster within the Taf area. Teams within the hub receive direct referrals from Health Colleagues within this area and Community Coordinators are then able to offer **wellbeing assessments** for these residents if necessary. At the end of March 2023, 53 wellbeing assessments have been requested and 21 referrals were received during the Winter Pressures pilot.

During the year, we have also collaborated on an Early Help pilot with South Wales Police which provides them with a "referral app" when they are attending calls to the public. The aim is to ensure that residents that appear vulnerable or in need of support but do not meet statutory service thresholds are able to be referred for support within the community, quickly.

The pilot ran from mid-September 2022 for two months. It was expected that 6 referrals would be received a week, however, 77 referrals were actually made by the Police. 50 wellbeing assessments were completed by our Community Co-ordinators and 38 people, who may not have otherwise had any support, were signposted for further help within the community. Following this success, the pilot will now be mainstreamed in 2023/24.



South Wales Police Early Help Referral

Case study



Following the recent death of Miss K's partner, Police officers felt she needed further support due to her shock, anxiety and low mood. A referral was made using the early help referral 'app' to the Community Co-ordinators. Miss K was contacted to undertake a wellbeing assessment and have a 'what matters' conversation to find out if there was any support that she needed. Through the conversation it was identified that Miss K would benefit from Citizens Advice assistance on funeral costs and claiming benefits and would also benefit from speaking to somebody about how she was feeling.

Following this conversation, a referral was made to Citizens Advice Family Law and Benefits Team and an appointment was sent out 3 days later. A referral was also made to Mothers Matters who provide free counselling services to single parents. A counsellor contacted Miss K the same day and she now receives telephone counselling.

Miss K said:

“ *I'm really grateful for your help today. I just don't know where to start with it all and was feeling so overwhelmed. Thank you for listening and putting me in touch with the support I needed.* **”**

Hospital Discharge

We have continued to collaborate with regional partners including the Health Board to ease hospital pressures. The winter months were particularly challenging, as experienced across the rest of Wales, and considerable effort was focussed on supporting providers to keep people in their own home where appropriate or co-ordinating a safe discharge.

From January 2023, “Discharge to Recover and Assess (D2RA)” has commenced across Cwm Taf Morgannwg to support people to leave hospital earlier (at the right time), continuing their care, recovery, and assessment for any long term needs in either their own home or a community setting (the right place). In 2022/23, significant activity was focussed on introducing the electronic system on the wards as part of D2RA, using an Electronic Transfer of Care (EToC) and developing a discharge HUB to co-ordinate the transfer of EToC referrals to community services including Adult Services. D2RA will continue to progress into 2023/24.

The introduction of this new D2RA approach along with continued investment in our award winning Stay Well@Home Service and new investment to increase the capacity of our Hospital Social Work Team has positively avoided an in-patient admission or supported the safe discharge of around 48 people per week.



Integrated Community Services

The partnership focus for 2022/23 has been on reducing the length of stay in hospital and introducing D2RA.

However, there was also recognition that more work to strengthen community services was required. The **Regional Partnership Board** agreed to support an Integrated Community Services model in October 2022 with the long term aim of strengthening community services particularly for older people to reduce reliance on hospital admission and keep people at home for longer whilst also emphasising actions to reduce and prevent the long term effects of chronic conditions and ill health. Further partnership work is required to set out the implementation details for the model which will continue in 2023/24.

Mental Health

Our work to review and redesign Community Mental Health Services in partnership with Health is progressing but at a slower pace than we would like.

As part of this work we will complete a review of current Mental Health Services, including older people with mental health problems and develop options to redesign our joint Service offer to meet current and future long term need and demand pressures. Redesign work will continue in 2023/24.



Safeguarding

We now know that planned Government changes to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and commencement of new Liberty Protection Safeguards will not be introduced. In 2022/23, with additional Welsh Government Grant funding, we have been able to increase the number of DoLS assessments completed compared with the previous year by 360%, reducing the DoLS waiting list from 414 in April 2022 to 255 in March 2023. We will need to consider the on-going challenge of managing DoLS assessment in 2023/24 and beyond.

Our Safeguarding Team manage all adult safeguarding reports into the Cwm Taf Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, making decisions about actions required to protect and promote the wellbeing of adults at risk of abuse or neglect in accordance with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019. In 2022/23, our Safeguarding Team received 1,149 reports with an additional 2,419 Public Protection Notices from South Wales Police and 191 referrals of professionals causing concern. All reports were screened, and safeguarding procedures were triggered where necessary, resulting in 516 Safeguarding enquiries being undertaken and 282 initial multi-agency strategy meetings being held.



Safeguarding

Case study



D is 77 years old and is living with advanced dementia. She usually lives at home with her husband, who is her main carer but who is supported by their 2 daughters and granddaughter. Whilst residing in a care home for a period of respite care, D had 2 falls which her husband had been made aware of and was reassured that she sustained no injuries, but, when she was collected by car to return home, she was taken to the car in a wheelchair and could not weight-bear. D was subsequently diagnosed with a fractured femur and required surgery to replace her hip. She was unable to give any account of how she sustained the injury because of her dementia. Her care manager reported the concern as a case of suspected neglect, as D's husband said she could not walk when she went home but had been mobile before she was admitted.

Extensive Section 126 enquiries that included inspection of the care home records, incident reports, the falls policy, reflective accounts from staff on duty at the time of the falls and a full account from D's husband of events from his perspective, were undertaken and a strategy meeting was held. It was established that the concern of neglect could not be substantiated and that the care home had acted appropriately and in line with their policies. D's husband and daughters were upset by this outcome and could not accept that the home had acted properly when D's mobility declined. The Safeguarding Coordinator offered a Case Conference where the findings of the enquiries could be explained in more detail to the family. The offer was accepted but D's husband said he wanted the meeting at the couple's home. The Safeguarding Coordinator agreed with D's husband a plan for how this could work, and the Case Conference duly took place at the couple's home with only essential parties present, rather than the whole strategy group. D's husband commented at the end of the meeting that he *"he was not pointing the finger at anyone, and he wanted to meet to see that things would improve, but now he can't see what could have improved and is happy that he has had the answers"*.

We have led on the development of the Regional Self-Neglect Practice Toolkit and Escalation protocol. The Rhondda Cynon Taf Panel, which is chaired by the Adult Safeguarding Service Manager and has representation from managers from relevant partners, received 29 referrals in 2022/23, with 46 since implementation of the Panels in October 2021, and is proving that it is making a real difference to the people referred and to the professionals supporting them.

Self-Neglect

Case study



S lives alone in a RSL adapted flat and has no informal support networks. She has osteoarthritis and has mobility problems and uses a mobility scooter to access the community. She presented to her GP with severely infected flea bites. S's flat was infested with fleas from her 5 cats. There was an attempt by the RSL 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, S 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 wellbeing assessment with S in person and with the support of her housing support worker, rather than a proportionate assessment over the phone. This resulted in S having a reablement package from Adult Services that focused on enabling her to recover her independence.

Vision Products – equipment and supported employment.

Vision Products is a supported business, within Adult Service Department in Rhondda Cynon Taf, which provides a range of diverse services including a windows manufacturing service, technology and servicing service, mobility retail shop and an Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Region. It employs, trains and supports individuals with a range of disabilities and is a Disability Confident Leader.

A number of people are supported through employment, traineeships, volunteering and work experience opportunities. In 2022/23, we supported 9 individuals through our various programmes at Vision Products.

One of the key areas of the business is the ICES which delivers services across Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend providing a fully managed service for Social Care, Education and Health through a Section 33 Agreement. This key

service contributed to support people to live independently in the community, to have a quicker turnaround for community equipment in particular to facilitate discharge from hospital and to ensure equipment was available when people need it through the collection and recycling of equipment.

In 2022/23, ICES performance across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region, included the delivery of around 23,500 items delivered, of which around 5,900 (25%) were classed urgent and just under 18,800 items no longer required were collected.



What are our priorities for 2023/24?

- We will continue to progress the Council's vision and strategy for care accommodation for older and vulnerable people to ensure we create the right service offer that responds to increasing demand and changing needs, enabling more people to live independently in their community.
- We will continue to invest in services to prevent escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence.
- We will work with unpaid carers and partners to ensure respite provision is meeting their needs and the needs of individuals who use services so that people are able to live in their family homes for longer.
- We will empower people to commission their own care and support through greater promotion of direct payments.
- We will continue work with domiciliary care providers to ensure that people receive good quality home care based on the outcomes they want to achieve and that there is sufficient provision available at the right level to meet demand.
- We will co-produce our day services offer for older people to improve access to outreach and community based services that will meet their needs.
- We will co-produce the transformation of our service offer for people with a learning disability to improve access to meaningful activity and opportunities in their own communities to achieve their personal goals and live ordinary lives.
- We will continue to work with Health to explore options for the development of an integrated community health and social care locality model.
- We will work with Health to improve patient experience and redesign pathways to improve admission avoidance and "home first" services to ensure timely transfers between health and social care settings so that people are in the most appropriate care setting.
- We will work with Health to complete review and redesign Community mental health services to provide responsive access and effective mental health support.
- We will ensure that Rhondda Cynon Taf Adult Services' workforce is motivated, engaged and valued; staff have the capacity, skills, competence and confidence to meet the needs of older and vulnerable people.

section

4

How we do our work?



Our workforce

Our workforce is our most important asset without whom high-quality care and support services could not be delivered without an adequate number of well trained, experienced staff with the right skills and approach needed to work with our service offers and effectively in partnership with other organisations. Rhondda Cynon Taf Council is fortunate to have amongst its workforce a talented and committed group of staff – we are incredibly grateful to them.

As in previous years, challenges have continued regarding workforce recruitment and retention. Recruitment and retention remains a corporate priority for Rhondda Cynon Taf, with dedicated HR officers employed in 2022/23 to help improve recruitment and retention across Children’s and Adult Services. There have been a number of positive outcomes from this focussed work as evidenced in more detail below.



In **Children’s Services**, our Workforce Strategy includes activities aimed at improving staff wellbeing and maximising the retention of staff.

Some of the initiatives that we have carried out this year include:

- running an enhanced and ongoing attraction campaign to promote practitioner recruitment. We have also launched a recruitment campaign for our Children’s Residential service. This has included advertising on the local radio station & across social media, a virtual recruitment event and the creation of **residential webpages**. We also have created ‘Day in the life’ videos on our **Residential Roles** webpage as a part of this recruitment campaign.
- trialling a new exit interview process to gather leaver feedback. Leavers are invited to complete an exit questionnaire with the option to undertake an exit interview so that ‘push’ factors can be better understood by management.
- undertaking an annual practitioners survey which found that overall, 69% of those that responded to the survey indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their current working arrangements. 19% were neutral, whilst 13% were either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied.
- establishing a practitioner forum, providing an opportunity for practitioners to share information and knowledge. It also provides a means of staff becoming involved in service developments including the communication cycle.
- implementing structured Psychology Led Supervision and being first in Wales to implement **Schwartz rounds**.



In Adult Services, we set up a Workforce Steering Group, chaired by the Director of Adult Services, to drive actions to improve recruitment and retention.

A new Workforce Strategy for Adult Services is in development and some of initiatives undertaken this year, include:

- developing bespoke social media campaigns, initially to support recruitment in our **"Support @Home" Service**. Results have been positive, with 79 "Support @Home" workers appointed since the campaign started in October 2022. This work will continue in 2023/24, expanding across other areas in Adult Services to support our recruitment efforts.
- launching new "roundabout" advertising and contributing to two Council's Career Fairs and organised dedicated adult direct care events with the Department for Work and Pensions and Communities at Work.
- reviewing our work experience offer with schools and colleges, for roll out in 2023/24.
- implementing the We Care "Guaranteed Interview Scheme".
- commencing onboarding interviews to evaluate effectiveness of new staff inductions to increase retention.
- commencing enhanced exit interview processes to better understand reasons for leaving.
- supporting our in-house residential care staff to complete their first time registration in line with Social Care Wales requirements by October 2022.
- commissioning external support to work within our Care and Support Service to reset staff and management expectations around engagement and communication given the changes made following the pandemic.

In addition to the above and in response to our ongoing workforce recruitment and retention challenges, we have:

- increased our investment in our "Growing our Own" supporting 8 home grown students in 2022/23 and a further 8 in 2023/24.
- supported 7 apprentices in 2022/23 and created 15 new apprentices to work in our direct work services in 2023/24.
- continue to partner with universities – supporting around 60 student work based placements across social care

We remain concerned regarding the morale and resilience of our workforce as the impact of staffing pressures increase due to workforce challenges, increased demand and complexity, and it is therefore important to continue to prioritise staff wellbeing.

In 2022/23, "Care First" the Council's new confidential support intervention, open for all RCT staff was launched. They offer a 24-hour helpline, where staff can speak to a counsellor for any work or personal issues. The website also offers a wide range of online support.

Workforce recruitment and retention, wellbeing and resilience will remain priority areas, as part of our Childrens and Adults Workforce Strategies, with continued focus over the coming year.

Welsh Language

We continue to be committed to giving people the opportunity to receive services delivered and/or funded by us in Welsh and expect our services to provide the Active Offer, which means providing a service in Welsh without anyone having to ask for it, on every occasion. Our approach reflects the Welsh Language Standards and the Welsh Government’s “More than Just Words” Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health and Social Services.

People who prefer to receive services and support through the medium of Welsh are highlighted in our system. The total number of new assessments completed for children during the year was 5,633. There was evidence of the active offer of Welsh in 1,713 cases (30%). The offer was accepted in 6 cases. In Adult Services, the total number of new assessments completed during the year was 8315. There was evidence of the active offer of the Welsh language in 8,199 cases (98.6%). The offer was accepted in 46 cases.



Our Finances

2022/23 has been an extremely challenging year financially for the Council and in particular social services as increased demand and complexity along with the cost-of-living crisis and high inflation placed substantial pressure on our care providers and service costs.

The net budget for social services for the year was £162.9 million, but the added pressure on the service, mainly relating to increased placement costs across Children’s and Adult Services, resulted in an overspend of £0.563million following the draw-down of approved earmarked reserves (one-off funding) set aside to manage the risk of additional in-year costs in the above service areas. In the year, we have made use of national grants to manage some service pressures as well as to develop our services in an innovative way and in partnerships, as referenced

throughout this report. Capital funding was also received to progress our accommodation modernisation programmes in both Children’s and Adults Services.

Due to the financial position facing public services, there will be substantial pressures across the Council and social care for 2023/24 and beyond. That brings its own challenges, and we will build on work completed in 2022/23 to continue to review the financial situation of Social Services, including short and medium efficiencies, as part of the Council’s medium term financial plan this year.



Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability

The Council’s political and corporate leadership is strong. Social Services continues to be a high priority, receiving strong and proactive support from the Cabinet Members for both Adults and Children’s services.

We are accountable through a variety of mechanisms including monthly performance reviews and quality assurance checks, regular discussions with Cabinet Members and senior staff using the data we collect, reports to Council Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees, and Corporate Parenting meetings, and engagement with staff.

Our Partnerships

Partnership working is key to the delivery of high quality and responsive services. We continue to work closely with key partners on an individual and strategic level to improve services and to achieve efficiencies.

We continue to play a significant part in the:

- Regional Partnership Board
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board
- Regional Learning Disability and other sub-groups
- Cwm Taf Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Partnership
- ICES Partnership Board

In addition, we have a strong record of partnership working and we describe throughout the some of the services and initiatives that we have developed with our partners.

However, as set out in last year’s report, there continues to be a need to develop and implement new plans that accelerate the pace of integration of health and social care services with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. Whilst progress is being made, we currently face challenges in achieving the integrated approach that is required to ensure the health and social system is delivering the outcomes we need and that these essential services are sustainable going forward. This will continue to be addressed as we plan our approach in 2023/24.



Cwm Taf Morgannwg
Bwrdd | Regional
Partneriaeth | Partnership
Rhanbarthol | Board



Cwm Taf Morgannwg
Bwrdd Diogelu
Safeguarding Board

section

5

Promoting and improving the wellbeing of those we help – The six quality standards.



The tables below demonstrate how our priorities are delivering the six quality standards and where more information can be found in the main body of this report:

Quality Standard 1 - Working with people to define and co-produce personal wellbeing outcomes that people wish to achieve.

Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
Reduce waiting times in Adult Services and monitored performance monthly.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Waiting times .
Review and redesign our Information, Advice & Assistance Service in both Adult Services and Children's Services to ensure it meets changing needs and increasing demand.	Further information can be found by clicking this links: Adults IAA Children's IAA
Ensure effective working arrangements with South Wales Police to implement the new legislative framework set by Section 1 of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 (Children Wales Act) which came into force on 21 March 2022.	We have established effective working arrangements with South Wales Police to implement the new legislative framework. Referrals have been low, and no issues have been identified from the legislation and its implementation.

Our 2023/24 Priorities

1. We will continue to invest in services to prevent escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence.
2. We will implement the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy- Targeting evidence based services towards family support to ensure that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after.

Quality Standard 2 - Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
Complete development and implementation of Home First and discharge to recover to assess hospital model that enables timely and safe discharge.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Hospital Discharge .
Complete work with Health to agree new model of sustainable integrated primary and community services and implement.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Integrated Community Services .
Work with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board to review and redesign community and older people mental health services to provide more responsive access and effective joined up mental health support.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Mental Health .
Panel, which coordinates access to therapy and enhances trauma informed and therapeutic approaches within children's services.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Therapy Panel .

Our 2023/24 Priorities

1. We will continue to work with Health to explore options for the development of an integrated community health and social care locality model.
2. We will@ Work with Health to improve patient experience and redesign pathways to improve admission avoidance and "home first" services to ensure timely transfers between health and social care settings so that people are in the most appropriate care setting.
3. We will@ Work with Health to complete review and redesign Community mental health services to provide responsive access and effective mental health support.
4. We will implement the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy- Targeting evidence based services towards family support to ensure that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after.

Quality Standard 3 - Taking steps to protect and safeguard people from abuse, neglect, or harm

Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
Continue development of, and progress on, the implementation of the MAGU project to integrate health and social care services available to women from 12 weeks of pregnancy through to the child's first birthday.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: MAGU .
Continue to prepare for the commencement of the Liberty Protection Safeguards, equipping staff with the necessary knowledge and skills and ensuring effective delivery of obligations such as assessments.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Safeguarding .

Our 2023/24 Priorities

1. We will implement the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy- Targeting evidence based services towards family support to ensure that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after.

Quality Standard 4 - Encouraging and supporting people to learn, develop and participate in society.

Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
Complete development of our new co-produced day service offer for people with a learning disability to improve access community based services and volunteering and employment opportunities.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Day Services .
Develop an engagement and coproduction plan for Adult Services, building on the work already undertaken through the Learning Disability Transformation Programme.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Co-production .
Finalise and commence implementation of Children's Services Participation Strategy.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Participation Strategy .
In line with the recommendations of the report by the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru which was published at the end of the financial year, we will take action to increase the take-up of social care by people from minority ethnic communities.	We are embarking on a process of cultural competence with a view to increasing awareness about the needs of the BAME community in RCT, and ensure that our responses are informed and attuned.

Our 2023/24 Priorities

1. We will co-produce our day services offer for older people to improve access to outreach and community based services that will meet their needs.
2. We will co-produce the transformation of our service offer for people with a learning disability to improve access to meaningful activity and opportunities in their own communities to achieve their personal goals and live ordinary lives.
3. We will deliver the Participation strategy which outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services approach to supporting the rights of children, young people, parents, carers, and families in receipt of care and support, to have their voices heard and to actively participate in decisions about their life and help to shape future service developments.

Quality Standard 5 - Supporting people to safely develop and maintain healthy domestic, family, and personal relationships.

Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
<p>Make a contribution to ensure the second stage of the evaluation of the early Years Transformation Programme, which is focusing on the systems and processes which underpin the model, and it was completed on time.</p>	<p>Further information can be found by clicking this link: Early Years.</p>
<p>To further develop the relationship between the Single Point of Access and Preventative Services in Adult Services with the Community Hubs to promote a Social Prescribing approach.</p>	<p>Further information can be found by clicking this link: Community Resilience.</p>
<p>To roll out Wellbeing Assessments for the wider community, this will ensure that the Community Hubs can document and plan support around an individual's wellbeing needs.</p>	<p>Further information can be found by clicking this link: Community Resilience.</p>

Our 2023/24 Priorities

1. We will work with unpaid carers and partners to ensure respite provision is meeting their needs and the needs of individuals who use services so that people are able to live in their family homes for longer.
2. We will implement the Children Looked After Prevention Strategy- Targeting evidence based services towards family support to ensure that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after.

Quality Standard 6 - Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

Our 2022/23 Priorities	Where to find out more in the Director's Report?
Continue to work with Linc to deliver the Council's extra care housing development programme.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Developing new accommodation options .
Continue to review and develop proposals for the ongoing redevelopment and modernisation of the Council's residential care homes to ensure we create the right model of service to respond to changes in demand and need.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Developing new accommodation options .
Complete Supported Accommodation Strategy and work with Housing Providers to continue build modern fit for purpose supported housing options for vulnerable people.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Developing new accommodation options .
Develop commissioning intent to shape a sustainable home care market in line redesigned service model.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Domiciliary Care .
Commission Community Catalysts to support people and local partners to develop small enterprises that can provide real choice and increase the number and range of homecare and support options.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Direct Payments .
Continue to implement the Residential Action Plan and Feasibility Study for looked after children.	Further information can be found by clicking this link: Residential Strategy .

Our 2023/24 Priorities

1. We will continue to progress the Council's vision and strategy for care accommodation for older and vulnerable people to ensure we create the right service offer that responds to increasing demand and changing needs, enabling more people to live independently in their community.
2. We will continue work with domiciliary care providers to ensure that people receive good quality home care based on the outcomes they want to achieve and that there is sufficient provision available at the right level to meet demand.
3. We will empower people to commission their own care and support through greater promotion of direct payments.
4. We will work with unpaid carers and partners to ensure respite provision is meeting their needs and the needs of individuals who use services so that people are able to live in their family homes for longer.
5. Deliver the Children's Residential Transformation Strategy - Making sure that the Council provides the accommodation and support that our looked after children need @We will'.



Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Annual Director of Social Services Report

2022/23

52396-12 • September 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.



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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20TH NOVEMBER 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 item 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 20th November 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
Community Services Scrutiny Committee – 25th September 2023	Director of Social Services Annual Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members raised concerns over the waiting time for aids and adaptations to enable independent living. • Members commented on the financial support available for Carers and details were provided in respect of the Carer's support project • Members queried the work being undertaken to empower the young carers voice and welcomed further updates when available • The role of Elected Members as Corporate Parents and advocates for vulnerable people is essential, with continued support available to assist Members in their role.

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

20TH NOVEMBER 2023

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

Item: **PRE – DECISION SCRUTINY**

Background Papers

By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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