



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

13th DECEMBER 2021

**CONSULTATION OUTCOMES ON THE EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES
DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2024**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION
SERVICES (COUNCILLOR JOY ROSSER)**

Author: Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on stakeholder consultation outcomes on the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024.
- 1.2 To provide Cabinet with the opportunity to contribute to the non-statutory consultation process in respect of the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the information provided in respect of the stakeholder feedback on the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 and determine if any amendments are required.
- 2.2 Note the comments and observations of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee which provided feedback as part of the consultation process on the 13th of October 2021, and pre-scrutiny of the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan on the 8th of December 2021 following the consultation process.
- 2.3 Subject to 2.1 and 2.2 above, approve the amended Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan and agree to the slightly revised timescales for the plan's implementation from 2021-2024 (academic year) to 2022-2025 (financial year).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that Education and Inclusion Services has a clear strategic direction for the Directorate and schools over the next 3 years, and shared mission, vision, values and priorities for improvement during this critical renew and reform phase in Education.

4. BACKGROUND TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

- 4.1 The pandemic has shone a light on the critical and invaluable role that our schools play in supporting our learners, their families, and wider communities. Our workforce has worked tirelessly and creatively throughout the pandemic to keep our learners and staff safe, maintaining continuity in learning and supporting the most vulnerable during a period of unprecedented challenge. The highly effective partnership working displayed across our schools and Council departments has demonstrated that together we can make a real difference to the lives of the learners and the communities that we serve.
- 4.2 Learners and their families have shown resilience and perseverance in adapting to the impact of the pandemic, acquiring new ways of accessing education and well-being support. These changes have not been without their challenges, but the invaluable support provided by the educational workforce has ensured that barriers to learning have been proactively addressed and tackled, and learner progression sustained. Nevertheless, we know that some learners and families have been more adversely affected than others, and it is imperative that these learners are well supported to ensure their progression during this next phase of recovery and reform.
- 4.3 There is currently tremendous change within the Education system as schools prepare and implement transformational plans for the delivery of the new Curriculum for Wales and Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act (2018). Enhanced well-being for all, ensuring progression for all learners and closing the gap in outcomes between our most and least disadvantaged and vulnerable learners remain high priorities for improvement as we work together to ensure that our learners access the best possible opportunities in the early years, throughout their formal education and beyond.
- 4.4 As an Education Directorate, ensuring that every learner in Rhondda Cynon Taf has access to excellent schools and positive and enriching educational experiences that enable them to achieve the very best possible outcomes that they are capable of is our core purpose. We also need to ensure that those who suffer socio-economic disadvantage are well supported to overcome any barriers to learning that they face. The Strategic Plan sets out the direction for the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate and schools for the next 3 years, describing our mission, vision and ambition for our schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 4.5 Our mission quite simply is: **‘To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all’**. The robust partnerships that have been forged

between the local authority and non-maintained settings, schools and PRUs throughout the pandemic has strengthened our collective drive and purpose to ensure that all learners access the highest quality teaching and learning experiences, so that they are able to progress and grow as lifelong learners. Our aspirations for our learners have remained high despite the challenges faced, as our children have the right to access a first-class education that enables them to realise their ambitions.

- 4.6 Our mission will be achieved by us realising our vision: **‘To inspire and support excellent leadership and professional practice so that all learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf make good progress and become ambitious, capable, creative and ethically informed’**. Excellent leadership and professional practice are critical to ensuring that we create an effective culture of equity and excellence in education and high expectations for all, so that we can ensure the success of all schools and learners across the County Borough.
- 4.7 We need to collectively address the educational impact of the inequalities that have been compounded by the pandemic and ensure that funding and pedagogical policies support the progression and development of all learners, including the most vulnerable groups. Ensuring that all learners attend school regularly and engage with learning is of critical importance during this recovery phase.
- 4.8 Disruptions to learning and to social interactions and experiences have affected some learners’ physical and mental health and well-being, as well as the staff that support them. This plan reaffirms our commitment to learner and staff well-being and mental health, and the vital importance of ensuring that everyone’s emotional needs are well supported.
- 4.9 Stakeholder responses are detailed in the Consultation Report in Appendix 1, and these have been used to inform changes to the revised strategic plan, located in Appendix 2. In light of the robust consultation processes and extended deadlines, it is proposed that the timescales for implementing the strategic plan are amended from 2021-2024 (academic year) to 2022-2025 (financial year). The updated Education and Inclusion Services Strategic Plan sets out the high-level strategic actions the Directorate will take over the next three years. The revised timescales will ensure that the plan is aligned with corporate self-evaluation and delivery planning processes which take place on a financial year rather than an academic year basis.
- 4.10 Our amended strategy will give priority to those areas proven to be effective in achieving our mission, vision and the areas identified from robust self-evaluation and stakeholder feedback. These are also reflective of our local corporate priorities and are set within the context of national and local recovery and reform.

Priority 1: Developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels.

Priority 2: Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.

Priority 3: Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families.

Priority 4: Enhancing the well-being of our learners and the workforce.

Priority 5: Delivering 21st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (with Social-Economic Duty) for the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan is detailed in Appendix 3.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment for the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan is detailed in Appendix 4.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

7.1 The Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan was subject to a non-statutory consultation process with a range of stakeholders, including the public, headteachers, governing bodies, trade unions and Education and Inclusion Services staff. The views of young people were also sought. The public consultation was undertaken from Monday the 11th of October 2021 to Thursday the 4th of November 2021.

7.2 The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee provided comments on the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan on the 13th of October 2021 and undertook pre-scrutiny on the 8th of December 2021.

7.3 Full detail on the consultation outcomes are provided in the Consultation Report in Appendix 1. The feedback from the consultation process was extremely positive with a clear mandate supporting the proposed mission, vision, values and five overarching priorities. Consultees came forward with a number of positive suggestions in respect of the actions they felt the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate should focus on strategically and these are summarised within the Consultation Report. These have subsequently been incorporated into the final version of the amended Education and Inclusion Services Strategic Plan in Appendix 2 where appropriate.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 There are no legal requirements aligned to this report.

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

10.1 The Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan links to the Corporate Plan, specifically the priority:

- Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper:
 - Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.

10.2 The delivery of the Education and Inclusion Services Strategic Plan will also contribute to all seven well-being goals within the Future Generation (Wales) Act. In addition, due regard has been made to the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 The recent pandemic has presented us all with unprecedented challenges and the workforce has worked tirelessly in partnership to overcome these for the benefit of our learners and communities. As we now progress to the next phase of recovery and reform, it is imperative that this momentum is sustained and that the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate works collaboratively with schools and other partners to achieve our shared mission, vision, values and priorities for improvement across the education system. A clear and cohesive strategy is now essential for ensuring that our learners have the best start in life and access the right support at the right time so that they can achieve their aspirations. The need to intervene early and effectively is critical so that the inequalities and difficulties that have been compounded by the pandemic are overcome and greater equity is achieved.

11.2 Our school leaders and our education workforce need to access the highest quality professional learning so that our next generation of learners have the right qualifications, knowledge, and literacy, numeracy and digital skills to succeed in the rapidly changing and digitally connected world that we inhabit. The last 18 months have demonstrated to us that our current and future generations of learners and workforce need to be resilient, adaptable, and creative. We cannot be certain what challenges we will be presented with for the duration of this plan. However, we can be confident that by working collaboratively as 'one team' we are better placed to achieve our mission for equity and excellence in Education, improved well-being for all and a better and brighter future for our learners and communities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
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**Item: CONSULTATION OUTCOMES ON THE EDUCATION AND INCLUSION
SERVICES DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2024**

Background Papers: None

Officer to Contact:
Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF
EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES DIRECTORATE**

Consultation report on the Draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024

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

APPENDIX 1:

CONSULTATION REPORT: EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2024

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Consultation Report presents the outcome of the consultation on the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan 2021-2024.
- 1.2 Section 2 provides the background and context to this strategic plan.
- 1.3 Section 3 presents the methodology used to undertake this consultation.
- 1.4 Section 4 details the consultation findings and analysis of the responses provided as part of the consultation process.
- 1.5 Section 5 provides an overview of the Consultation Report and key findings.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As an Education Directorate, ensuring that every learner in Rhondda Cynon Taf has access to excellent schools and positive and enriching educational experiences that enable them to achieve the very best possible outcomes that they are capable of is our core purpose. The Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 sets out the direction for the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate and schools for the next 3 years, describing our mission, vision and ambition for our schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 2.2 Our mission quite simply is: **‘To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all’**. The robust partnerships that have been forged between the local authority and non-maintained settings, schools and PRUs throughout the pandemic has strengthened our collective drive and purpose to ensure that all learners access the highest quality teaching and learning experiences, so that they are able to progress and grow as lifelong learners. Our aspirations for our learners have remained consistently high despite the challenges faced, as our children have the right to access a first-class education that enables them to realise their ambitions. The need to aspire to excellence in Education and enhanced wellbeing for all has never been greater.
- 2.3 Our mission will be achieved by us realising our vision: **‘To inspire and support excellent leadership and professional practice so that all learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf make good progress and become ambitious, capable, creative and ethically informed’**. Excellent leadership and professional practice are critical to ensuring that we create an effective culture of equity and excellence in education and high expectations so that we can ensure the success of all schools and learners across the County Borough.

2.4 Our revised strategy will give priority to those areas proven to be effective in achieving our mission, vision and the areas identified from robust self-evaluation and stakeholder feedback. These are also reflective of our local Corporate priorities and are set within the context of national and local recovery and reform.

Priority 1: Developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels.

Priority 2: Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.

Priority 3: Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families.

Priority 4: Enhancing the well-being of our learners and the workforce.

Priority 5: Delivering 21st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The purpose of this consultation was to gather views on the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan 2021-2024.

3.2 The Director of Education and Inclusion Services and senior officers worked in partnership with headteachers across Rhondda Cynon Taf schools to co-construct and shape the content of the draft Strategic Plan prior to consultation.

3.3 The draft Strategic Plan was subject to a comprehensive public consultation with a wide range of stakeholders from the 11th of October to the 4th of November 2021. An online survey was designed and made available to the public via the Council's consultation webpage.

3.4 The draft Strategic Plan and an in-depth survey was also sent directly to:

- All Headteachers;
- All Chairs of Governors;
- RCT Governors' Association;
- Central South Consortium;
- Trade Unions; and
- Education and Inclusion Services staff.

- 3.5 In addition, the draft Strategic Plan was considered by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on the 13th of October and pre-scrutinised on the 8th of December 2021.
- 3.6 To capture learner voice in relation to matters that are important to children and young people, engagement sessions took place in a cross section of schools across the County Borough which included:
- Schools across Rhondda, Cynon and Taf;
 - A secondary faith school;
 - Two Welsh medium schools (one primary and one all through school);
 - An English medium secondary school; and
 - A special school.

A total of 130 learners were involved in this consultation process.

- 3.7 Current circumstances inevitably limited the opportunity for face-to-face engagement; however, the local authority made the best use of a variety of digital tools to engage with stakeholders.
- 3.8 In total, 13 responses to the public consultation were received. The results are outlined in paragraph 6.3.
- 3.9 A total of 47 responses were received from the following stakeholders:
- Headteachers;
 - Chairs of Governing Bodies;
 - RCT Governors' Association;
 - Education and Inclusion Services staff; and
 - Trade Unions.

4. CONSULTATION RESULTS

Headteachers, Chairs of Governing Bodies, Education Staff and Trade Union Responses

- 4.1 A total of 47 responses were received. The stakeholder group included: 19 from Headteachers; 13 from Chairs of Governors; 13 from Education staff; 1 from the RCT Governors' Association; and 1 from a Trade Union. Please note that comments have been summarised for ease of reference but both negative and positive comments are included to provide accurate and fair representation of the feedback provided.
- 4.2 95.7% of the stakeholder group either strongly agreed or agreed that 'Section 3: Our local context' reflected our local circumstances very well and that further improvements could be made by as reflected in the following comments:
- Continued funding for Family Engagement Officers to allow schools to be proactive in engaging with parents/carers.

- Further analysis on vulnerable learners, including trend and national comparative data.
- Reference to Welsh medium learners, Welsh Government and local WESP targets.
- Including information on housing and the standard of this.
- RCT's overarching priorities reflect a commitment to securing growth and improvement but we have to ensure that these are fit for purpose and are relevant across the authority given the socio-economic variations that exist.
- There is absolutely no criticism of the ambition but when pushing ahead with restructuring of schools as part of the 21st Century Schools plan, there has to be an evaluation of the impact on outcomes, the fitness for purpose of staffing structures, results and the wellbeing and opportunities of the workforce in these schools.
- There is no real pointer towards the value of consultation via social partnership. This has always been a strong feature of RCT but in the context of emergency Covid planning and the raft of directives from Welsh Government, this appears to have become less of a priority.
- More information on involving parents within schools, e.g., sessions with parents helping them develop skills to help their children at home with their learning.
- The delivery of the transformational curriculum in 'settings', schools and PRUs should include non-maintained settings.
- Further information should be provided on the pandemic experience and reference to an Emergency Plan, with some evaluation on what has happened previously.
- More information on 'pupil voice' and how this would be obtained and publicised would be helpful.
- The document should state how governors should be supported other than through training. Regional Leaders of Governance have been appointed, can this group be used as a reference group to assist governors? If so, can this be stated. If not, who can governors refer to?
- How can governors support the planning to close this skills deficit?
- Section 3 lists key achievements but there needs to be some detail on how everything was done for future use/reference.

4.3 The stakeholder group either strongly agreed or agreed in 97.8% of cases that Section 4: on 'The Changing Educational Landscape' highlights all the national and local contextual factors affecting the education system in Wales. It was felt that this could be further improved as reflected in the following comments:

- Greater information in relation to progress against Welsh Government's ambition to create a million Welsh speakers and our local progress towards achieving targets.
- Reference to capacity pressures to implement reforms due to staffing challenges.

- Details on how the new curriculum lacks the opportunity for learners to be taught manipulative skills, these skills have become more delayed due to the pandemic.
- Developing wellbeing and self-knowledge should be mandatory skill on a level with literacy, numeracy and digital competence.
- Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act (2018) creates a heavy workload for the ALNCo – this is not 'cost neutral' for schools' budgets as non-contact time is required to implement the Act.
- Helping parents understand the changes and improvements.
- All of the points are relevant and there is a reference to improving wellbeing by involving regional bodies and partner agencies alongside schools.
- It would be good to see the strategic plan facilitating more cross-sector provision to enhance health, wellbeing and the longer-term prosperity and employment opportunities.
- The Changing Educational landscape is now a reality, and a significant amount of work has been undertaken by the workforce to ensure that the new Curriculum will be fit for purpose in their settings. This has considerable implications for teaching and learning and in the longer term, the future of education post-14 and post-16. Consultation with stakeholders is more important now than ever before and RCT must be mindful of the pressures on teachers and support staff as well as school leaders. In his “Renew and Reform” report, the Education Minister talks about giving space to teachers to reduce the toll of the new Curriculum. RCT must ensure that this does not result in added bureaucracy passed onto teachers.
- Reference to the latest Educational Workforce Council survey in respect of the new Curriculum would be helpful including data that states that 33.3% of schoolteachers either strongly agreed or agreed they were prepared to deliver the new curriculum. A total of 64.5% of School Leaders said that more time to prepare for the New Curriculum would be of most benefit.
- Reintroducing the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme within schools, and a focus on giving back to the community in the volunteering sector would be helpful in learning valuable life skills.

4.4 A total of 97.8% either strongly agreed or agreed that Section 5: 'Our Key Achievements from March 2020 – July 2021', reflected the successes of the Directorate and schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf from March 2020-July 2021 very well. Comments received are detailed below:

- Could not fault this aspect.
- More emphasis could have been made of the super-human efforts of all school staff involved in carrying out these changes, e.g., headteachers and site managers doing extra shifts, teachers covering for others who were shielding or vulnerable; staff taking work to children's homes, etc.
- Grateful for the advice and support the school has been given throughout the past year.

- Response and support offered through the initial Covid-19 outbreaks and resulting lockdown periods was very strong and certainly helped in providing the right response to our school community.
- Section 5 lists Key Achievements but there needs to be some detail on how everything was done for future use/reference.
- There is reference to 'pupil voice' but no information on how this is obtained or how frequently, and how it is publicised.
- Document does not state how governors will be supported other than through training. Regional Leaders of Governance have been appointed, can this group be used as a reference group? How can governors support the planning to close this skills deficit?
- These achievements are commendable in challenging times.
- Reference to partnership working with representative Trade Unions and social partnership working and its benefits would be helpful.

4.5 Section 6 of the strategic document outlines 'Our Mission' statement 'To deliver equity and excellence in education and enhanced wellbeing for all'. A total of 97.8% either strongly agreed or agreed that the Mission statement outlined our fundamental purpose very clearly and concisely. Comments received are detailed below:

- More information required on the role of CSC and RCT in regard to school improvement.
- No further improvements - excellent mission statement.
- Less is more - keep it simple but relevant to the audience.
- Interested to be involved in the strategies/structure (because it is absolutely the right thing).
- Relentless focus on ensuring excellent educational experiences and teaching and learning that meets the needs of all learners.
- Additional Needs Funding - real concerns about the ability to provide equity as we move forward.
- There is a strong commitment to achieving equity and excellence and promoting wellbeing for teachers and learners. Partnership working and listening to the needs and achievements of teachers and learners in particular would helpfully facilitate this.
- Enhanced wellbeing is a recognised priority and is a key factor to secure a committed workforce that feels valued, recognised and motivated.

4.6 Section 7 outlined 'Our Vision' which is 'to inspire and support excellent leadership and professional practice so that all learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf make good progress and become ambitious, capable, creative and ethically informed'. A total of 97.8% either strongly agreed or agreed that this reflected the Education Directorate and schools' future goals well. It was identified that further improvements could be made by:

- Reference to systems to support leader wellbeing – good to see a commitment to this in this section - leader wellbeing goes hand in hand with effective leadership.

- Role of CSC and role of RCT in professional learning.

4.7 **Section 8 outlined the five Strategic Priorities over the next 3 years**

A total of 100% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with Strategic Priority 1: Developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels is an appropriate high level.

A total of 100% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with Strategic Priority 2: Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all is an appropriate high-level priority.

A total of 97.8% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with Strategic Priority 3: Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families is an appropriate high-level priority.

A total of 97.8% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed Strategic Priority 4: Enhancing the wellbeing of our learners and the workforce is an appropriate high-level priority.

A total of 84.8% % either strong agreed or agreed with Strategic Priority 5: Delivering 21st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities is an appropriate high-level priority.

Further improvements could be made to the strategic priorities by:

- Ensuring greater reference to the specific and unique challenges faced by Welsh medium schools and the need to develop learners' language skills in English, Welsh or ALN settings;
- Focusing on good teaching and learning, rather than trying to do a little of everything;
- Making explicit reference to partnerships across different agencies/sectors and how schools can be central to targeting and directing different types of provisions that are in tune with student, staff and community needs;
- Placing emphasis on Children's Mental Health Services, knowing how the pandemic has affected learners and their families; There should be more support available at all levels to address unmanageable behaviour and issues with parental involvement that colours learners' attitudes to school;
- Encouraging wider consultation and periodic evaluation;
- Reviewing the range of specialist provisions to ensure there is enough scope to meet the needs of learners requiring provision over and above that which could be expected in a mainstream;
- Referencing PCP somewhere as this underpins success in all elements of transformation agenda;
- Addressing issues with tarmac on yards and sloping play areas that do not lend themselves to outdoor learning and activities to enhance well-being.

How will the narrowing of the attainment gap ever be achieved if all pupils never have the same resources available to them; and

- Building on the lessons learned in providing support to schools, teachers and learners during the closure of schools and home schooling.

4.8 100% of respondents agreed that Section 9 'How will we achieve our priorities?' reflected the core values that will underpin our work well. Further comments made included:

- Maintaining the high standards in place already with flexibility adopted where needed.
- These are ideal priorities and aspirations but for these to be achieved there has to be consultation, effective planning and leadership and due regard for the wider priorities associated with educational transformation. We must not forget the role of teachers and support workers and regularly seek their views and experiences;
- We need to move quicker in supporting families with sustaining good school attendance, some families only seek help at crisis point; and
- Leadership unfortunately is not the same in every school, thus priorities are different in each school. Stricter monitoring should ensure a more consistent approach, making schools accountable.

4.9 A total of 97.8% either strongly agreed or agreed that Section 10 'How will our success be measured?', provided a good overview of what will be achieved together if our strategic plan is effectively implemented. Further improvements to Section 10 could be achieved by:

- Using the before and after measures and evaluating the impact and the benefits achieved;
- Referencing social partnership working and joint consultation between key stakeholders and representative professional organisations; and
- Referencing increased attendance; happier children/pupils; higher grades; increasing school leavers accessing higher education/employment.

4.10 A total of 97.8% either strongly agreed or agreed that Section 11 provided an appropriate conclusion to the document. It was considered that further improvements to Section 11 (Conclusion) could be made by:

- Providing an affirmation that an emergency plan is in place which builds upon the experiences during the past 18 months to address any further challenges the Education Directorate may face; and
- Addressing the impact of the past two years and how we navigate the next challenges in education. Clear direction, funding, supporting wellbeing, regular consultation through social partnership and strategic leadership are more important now than ever.

4.11 Further comments noted included the following:

- The document contextualises our direction, as schools and local authority, very well and it is positive to note a variety of indicators of success, with wellbeing of pupils and staff being high on the agenda;
- An inspirational and fair document. More focus on how we develop Welsh medium education for all learners (and the challenges faced) and celebration of the fact that we are creating and expanding the next generation of Welsh speakers;
- RCT should be recognised for providing bespoke support throughout the pandemic rather than a one size fits all;
- As a governor, the wellbeing/mental health of senior leaders, all staff and pupils is a priority;
- It is a well set out plan taking into account all areas. I cannot fault it;
- The last two years have certainly emphasised the importance of collaboration and this plan is right to highlight its importance. Given the pace of our working environment it is going to take a very robust structure and the commitment of many to make this happen when all around is expecting excellence, the definition of which is a debate in itself;
- The document sets out very aspirational aims and I look forward to my school community contributing to its success;
- This is a much-needed document and will be beneficial in supporting strategic planning at a service level with a common vision and aims on which to build our planning and operational service delivery;
- I'm looking forward to using this to underpin service improvements;
- There are a few typos; and
- Thorough and well-thought out document, clearly showing main focus and aims, and how they will be achieved.

4.12 A total of 69.6% felt that the strategic plan could have a positive impact on opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh language. 28.3.% had no opinion on the matter.

4.13 A total of 4.4% considered that the strategic plan treated the Welsh language less favourably than the English language. 73.9% disagreed that this was the case.

4.14 There were no significant comments relating to how negative and positive effects could be overcome, other than to comment that WESP targets required monitoring and mitigating actions if these were not met. Developing pride in the Welsh language was considered to be important as was the development of free courses in the workplace.

5. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

5.1 The public consultation was undertaken from Monday the 11th of October 2021 to Thursday the 4th of November 2021. A total of 13 respondents completed the questionnaire – 7 teachers and support staff and 5 parents/carers and 1 other.

- 5.2 A total of 92% agreed with the mission statement 'To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all'.
- 5.3 Of the responses received, 83% agreed with the vision of 'To inspire and support excellent leadership and professional practice so that all learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf make good progress and become ambitious, capable, creative and ethically informed'.
- 5.4 Feedback was also provided on the five strategic priorities.
- A total of 100% agreed with Strategic priority 1: Developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels.
 - A total of 100% agreed with Strategic Priority 2: Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.
 - A total of 100% agreed with Strategic Priority 3: Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families.
 - A total of 92% agreed with Strategic Priority 4: Enhancing the well-being of our learners and the workforce.
 - A total of 83% agreed with Strategic Priority 5: Delivering 21st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities. A further 8% did not agree with Strategic Priority 5 and a further 8% did not know.
- 5.5 A total of 75% felt that the Strategic Plan could have a positive impact on opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh language and 17% did not know.
- 5.6 A total of 67% did not think the Strategic Plan treated the Welsh language less favourably than the English, 25% did not know and 8% felt that it did.
- 5.7 Further comments made during the public consultation included some observations in relation to the investment into a specific Welsh medium school which was deemed to be unfair given that the building was relatively new, and it was perceived that schools with older Victorian buildings required more urgent investment. It should however be noted that investment into this specific school was due to capacity pressures and the works were deemed to be essential from a school planning perspective due to increasing pupil admissions.
- 5.8 Further comments were made in relation to statementing and Individual Development Plans and the need to ensure that learners were placed in settings that were suitable to their needs.

6. LEARNER VOICE

- 6.1 Learner voice activities took place in a cross section of schools during the weeks commencing the 8th of November and the 15th of November 2021.
- Ysgol Garth Olwg – Welsh medium 3-19 school;

- St John's School – faith secondary school;
- Ferndale Community School – 11-16 secondary school;
- Ysgol Llyn y Forwyn – Welsh medium primary school;
- Maesgwyn Special School – secondary special school.

6.2 A total of 130 children and young people took part and included learners eligible for free school meals, children and young people with additional learning needs and learners of a non-white British ethnicity.

6.3 Learners were asked a series of questions and were encouraged to provide responses to the queries posed. Collated responses were then submitted electronically to the local authority. There have been summarised and grouped together according to key themes identified. Responses are summarised but all are included for reference.

i) What types of teaching and learning experiences, activities and opportunities help you to learn best?

Trips	I enjoy going on trips; more educational school trips to theatres, museums.
Visitors/External speakers	Science workshops; visits from the Police, Fire Service or School Nursing staff.
Teachers	They provide us with experiences every day; good teachers; teachers in our school.
ICT	Plenty of computers in the class for everyone; more use of devices/more on-line learning; blended learning to be able to re-visit lessons in order to review and check; podcasts.
Books	Plenty of books in the class for everyone; good books; when people read stories.
Resources	Resources and things that I can see; good resources.
Assemblies	Assemblies.
Discussion/reflection	Time to discuss and think.
Creative activities	Performances 'in character'.
Governors	Governors coming to school to observe and opportunities to discuss our work with them.
Sporting activities	Sporting Marvels; school tours.
Wellbeing/Social/Emotional Development	Wellbeing lessons to help us deal with things; life skills lessons; timetabled access to the sensory room; regulation and reflection sessions really help; listening to music; removing unnecessary rules (e.g., coats in classrooms) to make students more comfortable in their learning environment.
Teaching and Learning/Curriculum/Qualifications	More option choices linked to our interests; more practical lessons/interactive lessons; less testing; more exam practice; quick quizzes, individual learning;

	learning step by step; enquiry work; theme work, specific subjects, a combination of working through books and tools/ digitised methods - e.g., online quizzes; group work, research and expression of opinion; debating; flip activities to pre-learn before lessons.
World of work	More opportunities for work experience.

ii) How could we improve your learning environment to help with your learning, health and wellbeing?

Communication	Having our voices heard so we make a difference.
Outdoor facilities	Level yard and more space to play; school yard is awful, and this makes me feel sad – I am looking forward to our new school; school yard/walls have holes; MUGA; external fitness equipment; outdoor gym.
Health and Wellbeing	Safe room where I can go if I feel sad; the lego 'cwtch' helps provide a quiet space for us; reflection garden; bigger sensory room; longer breaktimes to spend time with friends; more wellbeing sessions like relax kids; friendship bench for lonely pupils; feeling safe on the school site – Covid regulations; drop-in sessions with school counsellor; get to know staff; teacher understanding of wellbeing; counsellor on site; designated sensory rooms.
ICT/technology	Allow pupils to use their phones in class more; more iPad/ICT access; internet that is reliable all of the time; digital resources - e.g., C-Touch; sufficient investment in digital equipment; on-line learning.
Resources	Bigger budget to buy resources.
Food/refreshments	Coffee machines; water fountains; healthier lunches; know what is in food choices.
Facilities	More cooking facilities; comfortable premises; flexible space to work with pens; enough facilities for sport; facilities during break time; indoor gym; new toilets; better cloakrooms; larger reading corner – our new school will help; more space in which to learn.
Teaching and learning/curriculum	After school learning for all subjects; remove seating plans; smaller classes; remove sets; more PE lessons; smaller classes; more practical subjects (Art, PE, etc.); more off-site learning.

iii) What are the biggest challenges faced by children and young people and what support would help?

Teaching and learning	Learning to read is difficult – I get help; improving written and reading – we’ve been home for a long time, but we need to improve now.
Poverty	Children without food; children without paper and pencils; children without a dictionary.
Family	Children without supportive parents; sometimes things happen in my home that make me sad, but I come to school and tell my teacher.
ICT	It is difficult for children without a computer at home; some find working on chrome books difficult – the prefects help.
Health and Wellbeing	Feeling lonely since Covid/missing friends; travelling on my Taxi with others (Covid concerns); help with my anger which has got worse since Covid; social media issues; pressure to do well; mental health support; balancing life’s demands; working at home and at school; Covid systems.
Academic performance	Getting a job when I leave school; falling behind because of Covid; examination/homework pressures; external assessments within the context of Covid; daily classroom pressures to keep up with the work/do well; difficulties in keeping up with the work online when learners are absent; making the right GCSE choices; uncertainty in relation to examinations; more support to help with gaps in work; revision classes in and outside of schools.
Support	Buddy system with the older year groups; additional study sessions; Year 8 is too young to choose your options; better communication between teachers when setting homework and tests to even it out; job apprenticeships; help when you leave school; more transition for Yr 11; do not like walking through the older students into school.

iv) What else do you think we need to do to improve your education and how can we make sure that your voice is heard by the Council?

Learning Environment	I am looking forward to having a new school – this will improve things for us; changing room for PE; give us a new school; newer learning environments.
Support/Communication	Talk to us; emails; phone calls; making contact with officers on the Council website; school council meetings/regular meetings with the Council; Teams

	meeting with the Director; newsletters from the Council to pupils; using online questionnaires more consistently to feedback/raise concerns; need to know how beneficial our knowledge is; someone to speak to from the Council; provide a list of sites that would tell learners what is happening in Education.
Class sizes	Smaller classes.
Funding	Bigger budgets for schools; more funding and checks that it is spent on learner support.
Wellbeing	A greater capacity for personal mentoring.
ICT	A personal digital resource for all pupils; having every lesson online to revisit.

v) How can we support your parents/carers and communities to ensure that you make good progress in school?

Communication	Use the web to notify parents; visit our school; send letters/newsletters; by ensuring learner voice and listening to learners; more phone calls when we've done well; more newsletters home; more information on qualifications; Seesaw – shows our parents/carers us having fun and doing well; more training on Seesaw for parents/carers; home school books; open a complaints and question centre; more parents days/communication as most parents do not know what is going on; keep parents informed of homework; share good news with parents/communities.
Sharing work	Show work to parents/including on site; parents' evening/more meetings; communication from the school; using the web to advertise/communicate things to people.
Resources	Provide free books to parents.
Food	Ensure every child has a meal.
Mental health and wellbeing	Mental Health and other support groups; make it known that the school is a safe place; give support to our key workers.
ICT	Digital equipment for every learner; improve school website; develop an App that tells parents/carers and communities about schools.
Careers	Better careers advice outside lesson time.

vi) Do you have any comments to make?

Come to our school - it is a special school; Welsh is the best language – that is why I like coming to school.
The condition of our school is not acceptable.

I love Mathematics and Science.
I have good friends in this school.
It`s been really hard in schools since Covid.
Concerns about the future after Year 11; worried about the loss in learning; need help when choosing Year 12 options as we do not know the teachers; more advice and support for Year 11.
Feel forgotten at the top of the valley. Need to improve transport provision.

vii) Do you have any questions for the Director of Education in the Council?

When will our new school be ready? Can we have changing rooms and a level yard please? Thanks for listening and for giving us a new school! Would you like to come to visit our school to talk to us?; We would like to meet you!
Can we have Internet that`s reliable all of the time, as this is so frustrating when it`s not working.
Fair budgets for schools.
Can we have healthier food menus?
How can you help year 11 and year 10 in planning for their next steps?
Can all year 11 leavers have a free bus pass for 2 years?
Can we have more meetings with the Council to discuss our future?
Will our voices be heard, and will it make a difference?

7. CONCLUSION

The feedback provided from the survey responses provide a strong mandate for continuing with the outlined mission, vision, values and five identified priorities for improvement over the next three years. Suggestions made by stakeholders have been considered and adaptations made to the Strategic Plan where required. The extremely helpful learner voice feedback has also provided an opportunity to cross reference the views of learners with the contents of the Strategic Plan to ensure that there is alignment.

The Strategic Plan will inform annual delivery plans in the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate for a 3 year period. These will be monitored on a quartely basis.

Appendix 2



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF
EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES DIRECTORATE**

Draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

Content

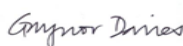
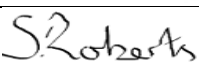
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Section 1: Foreword

Now more than ever, a clear and renewed mission and vision is required for the Education and Inclusion Service and schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf as we 'renew' and 'reform' and tackle the impact of the pandemic on our communities.

The pandemic has shone a light on the critical and invaluable role that our schools play in supporting our learners, their families, and wider communities. Our workforce has worked tirelessly and creatively throughout the pandemic to keep our learners and staff safe, maintaining continuity in learning and supporting the most vulnerable during a period of unprecedented challenge. The highly effective partnership working displayed across our schools and Council departments has demonstrated that together we can make a real difference to the lives of the learners and the communities that we serve. Learners and their families have also shown resilience and perseverance in adapting to the impact of the pandemic, acquiring new ways of accessing education and well-being support, with learners gaining qualifications through new centre assessed and determined grade processes. These changes have not been without their challenges, but the invaluable support provided by the educational workforce has ensured that barriers to learning have been proactively addressed and tackled, and learner progression sustained. Nevertheless, we know that some learners and families have been more adversely affected than others, and it is imperative that these learners are well supported to ensure their progression and engagement during this next phase of recovery.

A new and exciting era is now upon us as schools prepare and implement transformational plans for the delivery of the new Curriculum for Wales and Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act (2018). Good well-being for all, ensuring progression for all learners and closing the gap in outcomes between our most and least disadvantaged and vulnerable learners remains a high priority for improvement as we work together to ensure that our learners access the best possible opportunities in the early years, throughout their formal education and beyond. Our ambitions for our learners remain very high and this strategy outlines our shared vision for improvement and the key actions that we will take together to ensure that this is realised.

	Councillor Joy Rosser Cabinet Member for Education and Inclusion Services
	Gaynor Davies Director of Education and Inclusion Services
	Simon Roberts Chair of the Federation of Primary Headteachers
	Justin O'Sullivan Chair of the Association of Secondary Headteachers
	David Jenkins Chair of the Association of Special School/PRU Headteachers

Section 2: Introduction

As an Education Directorate, ensuring that every learner in Rhondda Cynon Taf has access to excellent schools and positive and enriching educational experiences that enable them to achieve the very best possible outcomes that they are capable of is our core purpose. This Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 sets out the direction for the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate for the next 3 years, describing its mission, vision and ambition for our schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Our mission quite simply is: **‘To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all’**. The robust partnerships that have been forged between the local authority and non-maintained settings, schools and PRUs throughout the pandemic has strengthened our collective drive and purpose to ensure that all learners access the highest quality teaching and learning experiences, so that they are able to progress and grow as lifelong learners. Our aspirations for our learners have remained steadfastly high despite the challenges faced, as our children have the right to access a first-class education that enables them to realise their ambitions.

It is recognised that the pandemic has placed the education system under immense pressure and impacted on the health and well-being of our learners, workforce and communities. The economic, social and emotional impact of COVID-19 on our communities has been considerable and we have seen a significant growth in families living in poverty. We know that deprivation can cause inequalities and some families have faced multiple adverse experiences, including financial hardship, bereavement, loss, trauma, poor mental and physical ill-health. Among the learners who have been the most significantly impacted by school closures and other restrictions, basic skills, learning, well-being and attendance have regressed, and it is imperative that we now focus on improving learner progress and mental health and well-being. Ensuring that we secure improved attendance rates is an absolutely priority against a backdrop of ongoing anxiety about the transmission of COVID-19 in our communities.

Our schools’ unwavering commitment to achieving continuity in learning and meeting the well-being needs of our school communities throughout the pandemic has made a real difference to the lives of children, young people and their families. This has been achieved through sheer hard work and excellent partnership working within and across schools, local authority departments and the regional school improvement service. The sense of ‘one team’ pulling together to achieve our shared priorities has remained strong and these solid foundations and robust partnerships will stand us all in good stead as we now progress towards the next phase of renewal and reform, and a brighter and more optimistic future for our learners and our communities.

Our mission will be achieved by us realising our vision: **‘To inspire and support excellent leadership and professional practice so that all learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf make good progress and become ambitious, capable, creative and ethically informed’**.

Excellent leadership and professional practice are critical to ensuring that we create an effective culture of equity and excellence in education and high expectations, so that we can ensure the success of all schools and learners across the County Borough.

The financial environment for the Council, the wider public sector and residents continues to be challenging and we need to ensure that we invest in our priorities and draw on research so that we make informed decisions about the most appropriate high impact strategies and approaches that need to be adopted. Our policies must ensure that they impact positively on those who experience socio-economic disadvantage and vulnerable groups.

We need to collectively address the educational impact of the inequalities that have been compounded by the pandemic and ensure that funding and pedagogical policies support the progression and development of all learners, including the most vulnerable groups. Ensuring that all learners attend school regularly is of critical importance.

Disruptions to learning and to social interactions and experiences has affected some learners' physical and mental health and well-being, as well as the staff that support them. This plan reaffirms our commitment to learner and staff well-being and mental health, and the vital importance of ensuring that everyone's emotional needs are well supported.

A smooth transition across all phases of education is important if learners are to thrive and achieve the best outcomes possible. Early years is a key area for development as it provides the platform on which future development and learning is built upon. It is important that learners start school with the necessary pre-requisite skills to make expected progress, as this will impact on their future educational experiences. Providing effective intervention in the early years and ensuring high quality provision and intervention for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners will remain key priorities so that educational standards are raised, attendance is improved, and the attainment gap narrowed. Learners in examination years require specific support to ensure that they achieve their goals and progress to further education, employment, apprenticeships or training.

As a Council we will continue to invest in our schools as part of our ambitious 21st Century Schools and Capital Investment Programme so that our learners have access to stimulating learning environments that will adequately prepare them for life in a digitally connected and rapidly evolving society. Our learners need a transformational curriculum that will develop their attributes, skills and knowledge so that they become ambitious, capable, confident and ethically informed individuals.

We will undoubtedly rise to the new challenges that we will face as we 'renew' and 'reform', and together we will ensure that we deliver on our co-constructed priorities for 2021-2024.

Section 3: Our Local Context

The Council's Corporate Plan for 2020-2024 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"**.

Its proposed main purpose is: **"To provide strong community leadership and create the environment for people and businesses to be independent, healthy and prosperous"**.

The current Corporate Plan focuses on three key priorities:

1. Ensuring People: are independent, healthy and successful;
2. Creating Places: where people are proud to live, work and play;
3. Enabling Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.

The Corporate Plan sets out a vision, priorities and principles that continue to maximise the Council's contribution to the seven national well-being goals outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Act requires all public bodies in Wales 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. These national goals, together with the five Ways of Working, will continue to be incorporated into the detailed action plans that will deliver the Council's three priorities. The Education Directorate's Strategic Plan will reflect these overarching priorities and a golden thread will run through the Corporate, Directorate and Service Plans to ensure that there is alignment in strategic developments.

The Corporate Plan places an important emphasis on the climate change agenda and highlights the Council's ambition to being a 'A net-zero Green House Gas Council by 2050', to meet the recommendation of the UK Committee on Climate Change. Modernisation of our school buildings and ensuring that they are energy efficient remains a priority, and there is excellent support for our ambitious 21st Century Schools Programme and the effective delivery of our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. The Band B funding envelope provisionally approved by Welsh Government equates to £252M and this investment will build on the excellent work achieved as part of Band A developments.

Effective early intervention and preventative approaches are central to the Corporate Plan so that we overcome the barriers commonly associated with disadvantage and avoid the need for the involvement of statutory services. A clear focus on providing the right support at the right time is imperative if we are to give our children the best start and chances in life. There is a corporate recognition that learning occurs both within the home and educational context, and effective parental engagement and high-quality early years support is essential for getting our learners ready for statutory schooling. This need has been heightened by the pandemic as countless learners have missed out on invaluable early learning, play and social interaction opportunities during this challenging period.

Ensuring and facilitating the engagement of parents/carers in their children's learning and mainstream services is imperative if children are to achieve their potential.

Our schools and the Education Directorate have a critical role in ensuring that the needs of learners are considered in everything that we do and that their voices are heard. A clear focus on school and service improvement is essential to ensure that our learners have access to the highest quality teaching and learning, and the specialist services to meet their needs. Continuous school and service improvement is critically important and our commissioned school improvement service, Central South Consortium (CSC), is instrumental in ensuring that we have a self-improving system across the five local authorities which it represents regionally.

Stakeholder feedback will be routinely sought to ensure that we provide services that are fit for purpose and meet the needs of our learners, schools and the wider community. The importance of social partnerships in securing partner feedback will continue to underpin and shape strategic developments so that we can ensure continued service and school improvement, and effective collaborative working. Narrowing the attainment gap that exists between vulnerable groups so that all learners, including those with the most complex additional learning needs and disabilities, achieve their potential is an important Corporate strategic priority. The delivery of a transformational curriculum in excellent schools and PRUs will provide our learners with the best possible chance of achieving their potential and progressing on to further education, employment, training or apprenticeships when they leave school. Providing first-class educational opportunities will be critical in breaking the poverty cycle that exists in some of our communities.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's population continues to grow and at the time of writing has a population of 241,873. It is the third largest local authority in Wales by population and has lower levels of employment than the Welsh average, with 67.3% of the population (aged 16+) in employment compared with 72.8% across Wales. A total of 18.6% of the population is aged 0-15 (17.8% in Wales). The growth in the number of learners across the County Borough that are eligible for free school meals has been significant and approximately one in four (25.72%, April 2021) learners are now eligible which reflects the significant economic impact of the pandemic on our communities.

Prior to the pandemic, improving attendance and reducing exclusions were priorities for improvement and this remains to be the case. It is imperative that significant improvements in engagement and attendance are secured particularly at a time when anxiety relating to the COVID-19 virus remains high. Schools require strategies to secure good attendance and to improve patterns of behaviour through the development of highly effective whole school, group and targeted approaches. To enhance the capacity of secondary and all through schools to meet need of learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural needs, an additional investment of £1.1M has been made to strengthen the continuum of provision and bespoke learning opportunities for the most disengaged young people. This investment will be instrumental in supporting mainstream inclusion for some of our most disadvantaged learners, reducing incidents of fixed term exclusion and the demand for more costly specialist PRU placements.

In addition to this enhanced investment, Cabinet has supported the funding of family engagement officers within some of our most disadvantaged communities. These family engagement roles strengthen the capacity of schools to engage with families beyond the school gate, promoting multi-agency working and access to timely family support to overcome hardship and any barriers to learning and engagement. There is well documented research evidence which highlights that family involvement is one of the strongest predictors of children's school success, and that families play pivotal roles in their children's cognitive, social and emotional development from birth through adolescence. Nevertheless, many families require support to develop resilience and to overcome the multiple stress factors commonly associated with financial hardship, so they are better placed to support their child's learning and engagement in education. Strong partnership working across Council departments, school and families will be essential if we are to achieve sustainable improvements in learner outcomes.

Economic prosperity, social cohesion and well-being are built on the foundations of excellent schools and education and delivering on our Corporate and Education Strategic Plans will be critical in improving the life chances and prosperity of current and future generations of children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Section 4: The Changing Educational Landscape

The educational landscape is significantly changing and there will be a new curriculum for schools and funded non-maintained settings in Wales from September 2022. The Curriculum for Wales has been shaped by international research and evidence from across the world. A defining feature of the new curriculum framework is the emphasis on learner progression, which will be supported by new assessment arrangements that enable each individual learner to make progress at an appropriate pace, taking into account their diverse needs. To support these developments there are new approaches to professional learning and to supporting schools which will collectively complement and enhance the new 3-16 curriculum. The need for a new curriculum is self-evident, as the current national curriculum was introduced in the late 1980s, when life bore little resemblance to the fast paced, digitally connected and technologically advancing age that we now find ourselves in. Life now is very different, and society is changing. As educators we need to equip our learners with the skills, knowledge and experiences that will ensure that they play a full and active role in their communities and in wider society.

The four core purposes of the new curriculum will form the basis for all future decisions about national and local educational priorities and should underpin all teaching and learning in Rhondda Cynon Taf so that we develop:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and

- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The new curriculum will be an important vehicle for embedding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in the experience of learning and teaching and for giving our learners an understanding of their rights. Six areas of learning and experience (AOLEs) have been developed as a central element of the new curriculum.

These are:

- Languages, Literacy and Communication;
- Mathematics and Numeracy;
- Science and Technology;
- Health and Well-being;
- Humanities; and
- Expressive Arts.

Literacy, numeracy and digital competence are mandatory skills that have to be taught across all AOLEs and will need to be considered within all curriculum design. It will be the responsibility of all teachers to ensure progression in these skills across and within all the AOLEs.

In addition to these areas, the school's curriculum will also cover:

- human rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- diversity and respecting differences;
- experiences and skills for careers and the workplace;
- local, national and international aspects of all learning; and
- relationships and sexuality education.

The new curriculum should be considered as a journey that builds on knowledge, skills and experiences. There may be times when learners move forward quickly, slow down to make sure they understand a topic, or even take a detour because they discover something that interests them. Progression will not always be linked to a learner's age as learning does not happen in the same way and at the same time for everyone. Learners will progress as their knowledge increases, understanding deepens, communication skills grow, and skills improve. Assessment will be built into a school's curriculum and will be part of children's everyday learning experiences, planned in a way that fosters the teachers' and learners' understanding of individual progression. As a result, it is vital that the curriculum that is taught and experienced by learners prepares them to thrive in a future where digital skills, adaptability and creativity, alongside knowledge, are crucial. In essence, we are preparing our current generation of learners for jobs that do not yet exist.

There is a recognition that leadership development will be a prime driver in delivering these transformational reforms. The National Academy of Education Leadership (NAEL) has been put in place alongside new developmental teaching and leadership standards for

Wales. The main purpose of NAEL is to contribute to the development of the professional capabilities of current and aspiring leaders across the education system by providing coherence and quality assurance for the range of educational leadership development opportunities available in Wales. Strong leadership is essential if schools are to evolve into creative learning organisations and to promote the 'readiness' of staff to deliver the new curriculum. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (the OECD) report in 2020, 'Achieving the New Curriculum for Wales', emphasised the importance of all aspects of the school system aligning with the new curriculum and its underlying principles. To support this, the 'School Improvement Guidance - Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability' was published by the Welsh Government in January 2021. This draft guidance provides a new point of reference for schools, local authorities, diocesan authorities, regional consortia and Estyn and outlines the expectations of them in contributing to school improvement. Welsh Government plan to make this draft guidance statutory in September 2022.

The introduction of the new curriculum contributes to our national goals as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The underlying importance of promoting well-being is a theme that runs through the new curriculum and in particular the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience. This is further strengthened by Welsh Government's recently published Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being (2021). This provides a basis for schools, PRUs and education settings to review their own well-being landscape and to develop strategic approaches for securing improvements. The framework recognises that schools alone cannot meet all the needs of a population of children and young people and sets out the role of regional bodies and partner agencies in supporting schools. Strengthening partnership working for those with the most complex mental health needs is vitally important if we are to upskill the workforce and ensure that learners access the vital services that they require.

The new curriculum also supports another of the Act's overarching goals, namely 'A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language'. Welsh Government's strategy 'Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers', has been devised to achieve this goal. The Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) has recently been updated and sets out the priorities for improvement over the forthcoming ten years, up to and including 2032, to make progress towards the achievement of a growth of between 8-12% in the percentage of year one learners in Welsh medium education. This equates to an increase from 506 learners to between 720 and 825 year one learners in Welsh medium education.

Our strategic decisions will be informed by the need to safeguard children's rights and to ensure that the needs of children and young people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage are effectively met. Children's rights are enshrined in Welsh law under the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 - underlining Wales' commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In 2004, the Welsh Government formally adopted the UNCRC as the basis of policy making relating to children and young people. In Rhondda Cynon Taf we will ensure that children's rights are given appropriate consideration so that we support children and young people's

right to be safe, to play, to have an education, to be healthy and be happy. There are four key articles which form the basis of the rights set out in the UNCRC which includes:

- Right to non-discrimination (article 2)
- Commitment to the best interests of the child (article 3)
- Right to life, survival and development (article 6)
- Right to be heard (article 12).

Article 12 of the UNCRC is about the rights of children and young people to express their views, feelings and wishes, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right will be an important focus as part of the three-year strategic plan.

The current educational landscape has been significantly complicated by the pandemic. Jeremy Miles, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, issued a statement in June 2021 outlining Welsh Government's priorities for renewal and reform and the need to place learners' progression and well-being at the heart of everything as we recover from the pandemic. To support schools to progress with recovery and the implementation of key reforms the Minister has implemented a number of key changes to reduce unnecessary burdens on school. These include:

- the suspension of end of key stage assessment and moderation requirements;
- the suspension of key stage 4 and legacy sixth form performance measures has been extended to the 2021/22 academic year. Qualification awards data will not be used to report on attainment outcomes at a school, local authority or regional consortium level and will not be used to hold schools to account for their learners' outcomes;
- school categorisation will not take place in the academic year 2021/22 and schools will not be assigned a published category as part of this support process;
- all schools will be required to undertake effective self-evaluation to support continuous improvement. Evaluation, improvement, and accountability arrangements will require consideration of a broad range of information, relevant to a school's own context. This should include support from local authorities and regional consortia, using the learner level information to reflect on and improve their existing arrangements. A national evaluation and improvement resource is also being produced which will support schools in undertaking robust self-evaluation.

Alongside these key reforms is a national commitment to equity. Significant emphasis has been placed on well-being and the support for learners with additional learning needs (ALN) with significant policy development. The implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act (2018) (ALNET Act) has commenced and a phased approach to its implementation will be adopted over the next three years. Strong strategic leadership of these transformational ALN reforms will be essential to ensure that schools are compliant with our new statutory responsibilities and effectively meet the needs of our most vulnerable learners and their families.

Estyn extended the suspension of their core inspection programme for schools and pupil referral units to include the autumn term 2021, although monitoring visits to schools in a statutory category have continued. During 2021–2022, Estyn will support the education system in renewing and reforming, with a particular focus on supporting the preparation for Curriculum for Wales and additional learning needs reform. From spring 2022, Estyn will pilot the new inspection arrangements in a small number of schools and PRUs.

New socio-economic duties came into force in Wales 2021 under Section 1 of the Equality Act (2010). This places a clear duty on public bodies to consider the impact of strategic decisions on improving the outcomes for those who suffer economic adversity. This legislation aims to improve the lives of those who are most vulnerable by addressing the inequalities most commonly associated with poverty and all policy decisions will be informed by this important duty.

The pandemic has undoubtedly created additional pressures on the education system in Wales at a time of significant reform and change. Our local authority strategy will work in synergy with this changing national landscape whilst recognising and addressing the particular needs of Rhondda Cynon Taf and its communities. It reflects both national and local priorities and sets out a road map of activity for the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate and schools for the next three years so that we deliver sustainable school and service improvements and improved outcomes for our learners.

Section 5: Our Key Achievements from March 2020-July 2021

Since March 2020, school leaders and Education officers have radically adapted traditional delivery models to focus on maintaining continuity in learning through blended learning approaches and ensuring that the well-being needs of all learners, and in particular the most vulnerable, have been supported. Emergency childcare hubs for vulnerable learners and the children of key workers were quickly established at the start of the pandemic and strategic plans swiftly refocussed to ensure that these were reflective of new and emerging priorities. It is impossible to capture all of the strategic achievements of the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate and schools during this period and to capture the sterling efforts of our workforce, but key achievements are summarised as follows:

Keeping learners and staff safe

- The local authority routinely published robust, well-informed and regularly updated guidance and protocols to support schools to keep learners and staff safe;
- Schools developed and regularly updated complex risk assessments and business continuity plans to reflect changes in national and local guidance and presenting risks;
- Parents and carers were regularly provided with information and guidance to keep their children and communities safe;

- Effective and wide-ranging communication strategies were established with stakeholders to ensure swift and consistent messaging;
- Highly effective systems, support networks and processes for managing high numbers of COVID-19 cases were established for stakeholders 7 days a week, which minimised disruption to learning and maintained continuity in learning. Excellent partnerships and team working both within schools and across Council departments ensured that high numbers of cases and close contacts were efficiently and effectively identified, and swift action taken to mitigate risks;
- The Directorate and schools worked in partnership to establish 25 emergency childcare hubs, ensuring that the children of key workers and vulnerable learners were effectively identified and supported in safe environments;
- Data information systems were aligned across Directorates to produce management information for schools on vulnerable learners as defined by Welsh Government thus ensuring timely targeted support and attendance information was shared to ensure professional oversight and targeted support for our most vulnerable learners and families;
- Schools were swiftly supplied with PPE, signage, sanitiser, thermal devices and face coverings to minimise transmission risks in schools;
- School and classroom layouts were remodelled, and standard operational procedures significantly changed to minimise transmission risk to staff and learners;
- The Education Directorate developed guidance, processes and procedures to deliver a mass lateral flow testing (LFT) pilot on a secondary school site;
- Schools and families were provided with detailed advice, guidance and supplies to undertake lateral flow testing for school staff and secondary school learners; and
- The vaccination programme for eligible school staff was made available to mitigate risks for the most vulnerable learners.

Continuity in Learning

- In partnership with Central South Consortium (CSC), schools had access to advice, guidance and professional learning on blended and remote learning;
- Education and CSC shared best practice on blended and remote learning, which facilitated school to school support;
- Working collaboratively with schools and ICT colleagues, the Education Directorate ensured that all learners had access to digital learning and that digitally excluded learners were identified and provided with appropriate devices (in excess of 5,400 devices were provided across RCT);
- We ensured that learners and staff were safeguarded on-line through the provision of appropriate advice and written guidance for schools;
- In partnership with CSC and schools, the remote learning offer across schools was quality assured and strategic support provided where required;

- We collated and analysed stakeholder feedback (including parent/carer surveys) to shape and further improve the blended learning offer and Council Services; and
- Schools worked tirelessly to develop robust processes and procedures to produce Centre Assessed/Determined Grades that accurately reflected learners' abilities.

Supported the most vulnerable

- Effectively delivered the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme across 99 settings for 747 children;
- Administered and delivered breakfast clubs for in excess of 3,500 learners on a termly basis;
- Ensured access to free school meals in the community for approximately 8,500 learners at the start of the pandemic;
- Provided BACS payments for in excess of 10,000 learners eligible for free school meals;
- Provided targeted support and transport to engage the most vulnerable in childcare hubs and in distance learning;
- Provided virtual, telephone and home visits to support vulnerable learners and their families;
- Remodelled local authority services and school support for those in need, ensuring that non-statutory and statutory duties were met;
- Secured funding and the provision of family engagement officers for 6 all through/secondary schools;
- Secured additional funding to extend the family engagement officer pilot to 13 primary schools in the areas of greatest deprivation;
- Secured in excess of £1.1M for step 4 provisions in targeted all through/secondary schools which supported the development of bespoke provision for learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural needs;
- In partnership with a range of Council departments and school staff, co-ordinated and delivered a summer activity programme for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers across 7 educational settings; and
- Delivered the Summer Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) in 16 school settings.

Enhanced digital capacity across the system

- Developed digital and agile working capacity across the Directorate and schools through the effective use of Zoom, Microsoft Teams and other digital applications and ensured access to training and guidance for the workforce on the use of applications;
- Improved the use of digital technology and management information systems across the Directorate and evaluated data to improve service delivery and secure improvements. This included:

- ▶ collation of data on attendance at childcare hubs according to vulnerable groups and key worker status
- ▶ production of live data reports attendance, exclusions, admissions, COVID-19 cases in schools and in-year transfers
- ▶ data reporting on engagement and targeted support for vulnerable groups
- ▶ data reporting on service engagement and involvement with the most vulnerable
- ▶ use of e-forms for wide ranging online applications
- ▶ use of Microsoft forms to inform swift multi-disciplinary decision making on COVID-19 cases and the reduction of transmission risks
- ▶ introduction of Microsoft forms for undertaking stakeholder feedback
- ▶ convened Hub leads, headteacher, governor and multi-disciplinary recovery planning meetings virtually
- ▶ introduction of 'My Concern' across all settings to digitise safeguarding procedures and to ensure consistency in approaches across settings;
- Implemented the Hwb Infrastructure programme and delivered improved connectivity across school sites; and
- Developed and consulted on a 5-year Digital Strategy for Schools.

School Improvement

- Schools and services continued to progress with Curriculum for Wales and ALNET Act (2018) reforms through professional learning opportunities, cluster workshops, strategic planning and implementation;
- Schools delivered an improved blended learning offer and demonstrated increased learner engagement over time;
- A total of 3 schools were removed from Estyn review during the pandemic;
- Historical red/amber schools actively engaged in progress meetings and have made good or strong progress on recommendations and Post Inspection Action Plans in nearly all cases;
- All schools in budget deficit have made excellent progress in delivering their budget recovery plans;
- Schools have effectively used step 4 funding to establish bespoke provision for learners with significant social, emotional and behaviour difficulties in 11 secondary schools;
- Induction for new and acting headteachers in RCT has been provided;
- A further cohort of aspiring headteachers have successfully completed a local authority leadership programme which was widely reported as transformational by participants;
- A cohort of middle leaders have completed a positively evaluated Leading from the Centre professional learning course; and
- In partnership with CSC and Human Resources, support and guidance for headteacher/staff well-being has been provided.

Continued to deliver on 21st Century Schools Developments

- Secured approval in principle of £167.39M (enhanced to £252.207M in September 2021) from Welsh Government for the delivery of Band B Capital projects:
 - ▶ a new school for Hirwaun Primary School has been finalised and £10.2M invested
 - ▶ significant works to increase capacity and provide early years childcare are being undertaken in Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar with an investment of £4.5M planned
 - ▶ Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun is undergoing significant refurbishment with an investment of £12M
 - ▶ plans for a new Welsh medium primary school for Rhydyfelin are underway at an estimated cost of £13M
 - ▶ a new 3-16 school is planned on the Pontypridd High School site, with an estimated investment of £8M
 - ▶ a new 3-16 school is planned on the Hawthorn High School site, with an investment of £21M
 - ▶ new block/remodelling for Bryncelynnog Comprehensive is planned at a cost of £15M;
- In addition to the Band B Capital projects, the Council has a number of Mutual Investment Model (MIM) schemes in development including 3 new schools for Llanilltud Faerdref Primary, Pontyclun Primary and Penygawsi Primary at an estimated cost of £23M;
- The Council secured a brand new site for a new school planned for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyny-y-forwyn at an estimated cost of £8.5M;
- The significant expansion of Dolau Primary School is planned with an investment of £10M estimated;
- The Council has provided a new £1M early years setting at Treorchy Primary School;
- A new classroom extension has been put in place at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llantrisant at a cost of £800k;
- A new £700k Cylch Meithrin has been established at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen;
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Abercynon has received an investment of approximately £200k to create a new Welsh medium sessional care provision;
- Significant work at a cost of £730k is being undertaken at Dolau Primary School to create new Welsh medium sessional care provision;
- A new early years provision at Gwauncelyn Primary School will be established at a cost of £745k with completion planned for January 2022;
- A new early years provision at Cwmlai Primary School, costing £750k, is in progress with completion planned for April 2022;

- A small capital grant scheme has resulted in improvements in a number of early years settings to make adaptations to support the effective management of COVID-19; and
- A substantial amount of funding has been invested as part of the schools' Capital Programme during the pandemic.

It should be noted that the partnership working with schools extended to other Council departments including Public Health and Protection, Health and Safety, Human Resources, Corporate Estates, Finance, ICT, Children's Services and many others. A culture and ethos of 'one team' working together to make a difference has been a strong feature throughout the pandemic and has enabled the Council and our schools to deliver positive outcomes for our communities.

Section 6: Our Mission

Our mission in Rhondda Cynon Taf is to:

**'To deliver equity and excellence in Education
and enhanced well-being for all'**

Our mission is to strive for excellence in all we do, where excellence is defined as the gradual result of always striving to do better and securing improvements. The benefits achieved from effective short, medium and long term improvement work focused on a set of key priorities will ensure improved outcomes for our learners and will take us on our journey to a better brighter future.

It is widely acknowledged that excellence 'takes hard work, strong leadership, clear vision and relentless commitment to achieve' (Estyn 2020). We will ensure that our schools are well supported on their journey to achieving equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all. For settings where practice is already deemed to be excellent or very strong, opportunities for sharing best practice and for facilitating school to school support, in partnership with the Central South Consortium, will be encouraged.

Equity can only be achieved if we ensure that the system successfully identifies and addresses the unique challenges that present themselves to individuals or groups of learners. Our learners deserve to experience equity in education and have access to the right support at the right time to overcome barriers to learning, engagement and attendance. Deprivation, gender, sexuality, adverse childhood experiences, ethnicity, additional learning needs or disability should not prevent our learners from reaching their potential and achieving positive outcomes. To achieve the four core purposes of the new curriculum, strong leadership and a relentless focus on ensuring excellent educational

experiences and teaching and learning that meets the needs of all learners will be essential.

Section 7: Our Vision

Our vision is:

'To inspire and support excellent leadership and professional practice so that all learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf make good progress and become ambitious, capable, creative and ethically informed'

Our workforce is central to us making a difference to the lives of our learners and communities. Despite the challenges faced during the pandemic, we remain positively focused on ensuring that we have the highest quality school leaders and educational practitioners in our schools. Having a highly skilled and trained workforce will enable us to deliver a transformational curriculum and high-quality educational experiences across our schools, which will remain a critical focus over the next three years and beyond.

An emphasis on strong leadership and professional learning, will help deliver on the high expectations we all share for our learners and schools. By investing in the professional development of our school leaders and workforce we aim to create high quality teaching and learning that is underpinned by a robust understanding of pedagogy, child development and subject knowledge. The challenges we face in closing the attainment gap are such that our teaching approaches and interventions need to be research informed and based on best practice at local, regional, national and international levels. Securing improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of school support will be critical in securing the four core purposes of the new curriculum and sustaining excellent practice across all schools. Central to this vision is good school attendance and engagement in education where all teachers are skilled in meeting the needs of learners with significant ALN and promoting successful inclusion.

Investment in professional learning needs to span the education workforce so learners are well supported across the spectrum of staff with responsibility for teaching, supporting learning, engagement and well-being. Staff with skills in establishing warm, caring and positive relationships and learning environments will be critical in supporting our learners during this important phase of renewal and reform. Clarity in the professional learning offer will be important in minimising duplication across the system.

Section 8: Our Strategic Priorities

Our revised strategy will give priority to those areas proven to be effective in achieving our mission, vision and the areas identified from robust self-evaluation and stakeholder feedback. These are also reflective of our local corporate priorities set within the context of national and local recovery and reform.

Priority 1:	Developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels.
Priority 2:	Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.
Priority 3:	Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families.
Priority 4:	Enhancing the well-being of our learners and the workforce.
Priority 5:	Delivering 21st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities.

Strategic Priority 1:	Developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels.
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This priority focuses on developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels by:

- Ensuring that governors, senior and middle leaders have the highest ambition and expectations and achieve consistency in the implementation of key policies and systems;
- Ensuring school governance is strong through high quality training, support and challenge;
- Ensuring effective social partnerships to support the effective development and implementation of strategic developments;
- Ensuring effective self-evaluation and the collation of regular stakeholder feedback, including learner voice, to shape strategic improvement plans at local authority and school level;
- Establishing a headteacher reference group to assist with strategic developments;

- Ensuring that school improvement support is aligned with the new draft framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability, and delivers the necessary school improvements;
- In partnership with CSC, further developing our schools as learning organisations as a means of realising the new curriculum;
- Providing excellent professional learning for staff, in partnership with CSC;
- Exploring and evaluating different models of professional leadership at school and cluster level through professional learning opportunities and strategic support;
- Improving the quality of teachers' pedagogy and research informed practice;
- Ensuring the effective implementation of professional standards for teachers and other professionals;
- Ensuring school leaders develop effective plans to keep their school communities safe;
- Ensuring that all newly appointed school leaders access induction and a mentor;
- Ensuring that there is a robust succession planning strategy in place and that there is an investment in leadership training for aspiring headteachers;
- Identifying staffing pressures and developing effective approaches to attracting and retaining the highest quality school leaders and staff to RCT; and
- Working with partners to ensure the quality and sufficiency of staff for schools, particularly in the Welsh medium sector.

Strategic Priority 2:	Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.
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Strategic priority 2 focuses on supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all. This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring that our commissioned school improvement service reflects our unique local context and supports our schools to continuously improve and deliver improved teaching and learning and positive learner progression for all;
- Strengthening the development of a self-improving system, effective school to school support and the sharing of best practice;
- Ensuring that the schools with the greatest needs access bespoke and effective support to improve and to get Curriculum for Wales ready;
- Ensuring a fully integrated cross directorate early years strategic plan for 0-7 year olds that ensures that learners access the right support at the right time;
- Ensuring that non-maintained and maintained early years settings provide the necessary development of appropriate cognitive, social and emotional skills and the necessary pre-requisite skills for learning and progression;

- Ensuring that teaching and learning in all schools and PRUs is improved and aligned with the new requirements of the AOLEs;
- Connecting new curriculum developments to innovative projects aimed at supporting the Council's ambitious Climate Change Strategy;
- Ensuring that there is synergy between the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experiences and the Framework for Embedding A Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Well-being;
- Strengthening cluster-based approaches to develop and deliver the new curriculum and to share best practice;
- Explore cross sector partnerships to develop the new curriculum with a view to improving learning and wellbeing and longer term health, prosperity and employment benefits;
- Improving evaluation approaches at all levels to understand the progress made by all learners;
- Ensuring that schools effectively track learner outcomes, and robustly evaluate targeted strategies and interventions aimed improving learner progression;
- Ensuring that schools are supported to be research-informed and apply local, national and international evidence based best practice to their own settings;
- Ensuring that schools have a shared understanding of Equity and Excellence in Education;
- Ensuring that all learners make progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT; and the attainment gap between the most and least affluent peers is narrowed;
- Implementing and evaluating the impact of the Council's literacy project aimed at improving standards in writing in secondary schools;
- Developing and evaluating a strategic initiative aimed at improving the development of speech and language skills in the early years;
- Ensuring that all schools have a programme of cultural, sporting, creative and recreational enrichment activities for learners throughout their statutory schooling;
- Ensuring that parents/carers are kept informed about key reforms and are supported to enhance their child's learning; and
- Working in partnership with CSC to ensure that schools are supported to develop bilingual competence and the development of Welsh language skills.

Strategic Priority 3:	Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families.
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Strategic priority 3 focuses on ensuring the right learning pathway and support for vulnerable learners and their families. This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring that all school staff have received appropriate professional learning on the ALNET Act and are fully aware of their statutory duties and the principles of person centred practice;

- Supporting schools to effectively self-evaluate ALN provision and strategically plan for improvement;
- Ensuring that governing bodies receive an annual report on ALN and scrutinise provision;
- Establishing sustainable and self-reliant cluster-based approaches to ALNET Act transformation;
- Strengthening partnership working with schools, health, social care and FEIs in order to deliver improved outcomes for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged;
- Continuing to improve the quality of targeted support so that the educational outcomes of all vulnerable groups, including learners eligible for free school meals, with ALN, ethnic minority groups and children that are looked after are improved;
- Ensuring that those most adversely affected by the pandemic are identified and access enhanced support to make measurable progress;
- Implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of strategic programmes and interventions aimed at overcoming the barriers to attendance and engagement for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable;
- Ensuring that all schools engage in provision mapping for ALN and can demonstrate impact;
- Ensuring that models of enhanced capacity funding for ALN is aligned with the ALN reforms and supports effective mainstream inclusion;
- Ensuring that parents/carers are well informed about the ALNET Act (2018) and are supported and empowered to meet their children's needs;
- Exploring the viability of establishing a sub-regional sensory service;
- Further improving outcomes for children that are looked after by piloting a Virtual School for looked after children;
- Reviewing and remodelling individual and group tuition provision;
- Ensuring that elective home education processes, procedures and provision are effective in meeting the needs of learners;
- Ensuring that there is an integrated early years offer for learners with ALN;
- Ensuring seamless transition across all phases and ensuring greater continuity in education, particularly in the Welsh medium sector;
- Developing more extensive alternative learning pathways for 14-19 year olds and evaluating the effectiveness of step 4 provision development across key schools;
- Providing learners with access to high quality careers information and guidance that enables them to make informed decisions about their future educational path and careers;
- Strengthening approaches to Gatsby and preparation for the world of work, training and further education;

- Supporting effective family engagement and partnership working across the Resilient Families Service, families and schools; and
- Further extending and evaluating the effectiveness of the SEREN programme.

Strategic Priority 4:	Enhancing the well-being of our learners and the workforce.
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Priority 4 focuses on enhancing the well-being of our learners and the workforce. This will be delivered by:

- Supporting schools to self-evaluate against the 'Framework on Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Well-being' and to deliver effective strategic plans aimed at improving staff and learner well-being;
- Developing professional learning to support effective implementation of the Framework, in partnership with our regional school improvement service;
- Extending trauma informed practice across all schools, including train the trainer models;
- Establishing cluster well-being champions and effective cluster initiatives and practice;
- Using evidence based research to inform best practice in the support of vulnerable learners and enquiry based research and intervention;
- Further extending family engagement roles across the County Borough and evaluating the impact of funding on outcomes;
- Ensuring that the continuum of support for learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is fit for purpose and delivers improved outcomes for learners;
- Re-aligning the Attendance and Well-being Service to ensure effective support for schools and learners to overcome barriers to attendance and engagement;
- Ensuring enhanced wellbeing support is in place for learners and staff which is clearly defined and accessible (e.g., counselling services, mentoring schemes);
- Developing integrated well-being pathways for learners in partnership with Children's Services, Youth Services and CAMHS;
- Extending PERMA across schools and evaluating impact;
- Developing consistent and holistic measures of well-being and data packs;
- Routinely capturing learner voice across the system about issues relating to well-being and learning, ensuring that this shapes strategic priorities;
- Ensuring that approaches relating to children's rights are embedded across all schools and that learner's voices are listened to and inform strategic developments;
- Promoting access to breakfast clubs and free school meals for eligible learners;
- Ensuring that schools are proactively involved in healthy schools' schemes and actively promote physical activity and lifestyles;

- Promoting opportunities for learners to actively engage in their communities, through active participation in sport, leisure and play activities; and
- Implementing an effective anti-bullying strategy.

Strategic Priority 5:	Delivering safe 21 st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities.
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Strategic Priority 5 focuses on delivering safe 21st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities. This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring effective delivery of our ambitious Band B 21st Century Schools Capital and Mutual Investment Model (MIM) Modernisation Programme;
- Ensuring new schools are built to Net Zero Carbon standards wherever possible and are low in carbon emissions and energy efficient;
- Delivering on Welsh Government's Early Years Grant and further developing the Childcare Offer;
- Creating well designed and accessible schools that deliver the requirements of the ALNET Act;
- Further developing effective approaches to outdoor learning and enhancing the external environment and the biodiversity of our school estate;
- Supporting schools to deliver on the Council's Climate Change Strategy;
- Ensuring that developments are aligned with the Local Development Plan and address the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan;
- Develop, implement and closely monitor the implementation and impact of the new 10 year WESP;
- Developing effective partnership approaches to promoting community cohesion and the Prevent agenda;
- Ensuring that schools have robust safeguarding processes and procedures, and consistent information management approaches;
- Building on our Community Focused Schools approaches and opportunities for strengthening joint working between schools and communities for the benefit our learners and their families;
- Delivering on our Digital Strategy for Schools and our Hwb Transformation Programme so that schools are well placed to deliver on the new Curriculum for Wales;
- Developing more effective platforms for sharing digital information, guidance and policy documents for learners, schools, parents/carers and other stakeholders;
- Enhancing opportunities for securing stakeholder feedback on all aspects of service design and delivery;
- Strengthening engagement and communication channels with learners; and

- Establishing an effective multi-agency approach to substance misuse and community safety challenges.

Section 9: How will we achieve our priorities?

Our work across the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate and schools will be underpinned by the four core values of:

Collaboration – Aspiration – Inclusion – Innovation

- Partnership and effective **collaboration** will be integral to supporting our most vulnerable learners and families so that they have the best chance of achieving success. Strong partnerships will be established across the system in pursuit of excellence and improved outcomes for all learners. Schools will be supported to address under-performance and timely action taken when there is concern about leadership, school performance or educational outcomes. With CSC, we will identify and provide access to the most effective practice in order to build capacity for improvement throughout the system. Headteachers, governors, senior and middle leaders and all practitioners will be supported to make a full and active contribution to system leadership and to build capacity for school to school support across the system.
- All learners will be encouraged, challenged and supported to have high **aspirations** and expectations of themselves. All learners will have the right to access the highest quality teaching and learning opportunities and support to enable them to achieve their ambitions and the best outcomes of which they are capable. There must be a relentless focus on securing learner engagement, attendance and improvement in the outcomes achieved by all: only the highest level of ambition and expectations will do. We will work in partnership with families and the communities that we serve so that current and future generations of children and young people have the best possible chance of achieving success and prosperity.
- All learners and families face different and unique challenges and will access timely support and/or guidance to overcome potential barriers. Our schools will be supported to ensure they promote **inclusion** and restorative practices which offer solutions to assist learners to overcome barriers to learning and engagement. The well-being and rights of all learners will be at the core of everything we do, and their rights will be respected and their views on the decisions that affect them will be listened to and given due consideration. All learners will be safeguarded from harm and should feel safe and secure in their schools, homes and communities. All

learners will have access to opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills and awareness of their cultural heritage. Difference and diversity will be embraced, and equity actively promoted.

- We must ensure that school leaders and all other partners share the belief that all learners are entitled to an education of the highest quality, recognising that their journey through school occurs only once. We will invest in the professional and personal development of our staff so as to maintain a highly skilled, resilient, aspirational workforce that is committed to **innovation** and creative practice. All learners will be educated in calm, purposeful and safe environments that are fit for 21st Century learning. We will take positive steps to protect our natural environment and assets for current and future generations to come. Resources, support and challenge must be targeted intelligently and placed where the need is greatest. There must be clear lines of accountability and rigorous evaluation of impact to ensure value for money from deployed resources: we must all be accountable for the successful deployment of resources for the benefit of our communities.

Section 10: How will our success be measured?

Success in achieving our priorities will result in:

- A highly skilled and trained workforce with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to deliver on the Curriculum for Wales and ALNET Act (2018);
- Strong leadership and professional practice across our schools resulting in the improved educational attainment, attendance, and exclusion rates of learners, particularly in targeted cohorts of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners;
- Greater equity in the outcomes of learners experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and more affluent peers, resulting in a narrowing of the attainment gap between different groups of learners;
- Improved teaching and learning across our schools, and a curriculum that is both innovative and strongly aligned with the AOLEs;
- More learners achieving their aspirations and securing places in further education, employment, training, and apprenticeships on leaving school;
- Improved strategic planning and provision for ALN across all schools, inclusive schools and improved outcomes for learners;
- Improved mental and emotional well-being for staff and learners;
- Good progress will be made on our Band B 21st Century Schools Programme, with significant developments across the school estate;
- Our schools will make a significant and active contribution towards the Council's climate change agenda;

- More learners will be accessing Welsh medium education with good progress reported against the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan;
- More learners and parents/carers reporting high levels of satisfaction in relation to the education provided for them;
- More stakeholders valuing the specialist support provided by the local authority;
- More partners actively involved and engaged in the delivery of our strategic plans, working collaboratively for the benefit of our communities; and
- Increased uptake and use of our school premises by the wider community, with greater community engagement in cultural, sporting and youth engagement activities.

Section 11: Conclusion

The recent pandemic has presented us all with unprecedented challenges and we have all worked tirelessly to overcome these for the benefit of our learners and communities. As we now progress to the next phase of reform, it is imperative that this momentum is sustained and that we work in partnership to achieve our shared mission, vision, and priorities for improvement across the education system. A clear and cohesive strategy is now essential for ensuring that our learners have the best start in life, access to the right support at the right time so that they become successful lifelong learners. The need to intervene early and effectively is critical so that the inequalities and difficulties that have been compounded by the pandemic are overcome and greater equity is achieved.

Our school leaders and our education workforce need to access the highest quality professional learning so that our next generation of learners achieve good qualifications and have well established literacy, numeracy and digital skills so that they are well prepared for the rapidly changing and digitally connected world that we inhabit. The last 18 months have demonstrated to us that our current and future generation of learners and workforce need to be resilient, adaptable, and creative. We cannot be certain what challenges we will be presented with for the duration of this plan. However, we can be confident that by working collaboratively as one team we are stronger and better placed to achieve our mission for equity and excellence in Education, improved well-being for all and a better and brighter future for learners and communities.



Appendix 4: An Equality Impact Assessment (with Social-Economic Duty) for the Education and Inclusion Service Draft Strategic Plan 2021-2024

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 Generations (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: Gaynor Davies

Service Director: Andrea Richards

Directorate: Education and Inclusion Services

Date: 23rd November 2021

1. a) What are you assessing for impact?

Strategy / Plan	Service Re-Model / Discontinuation of Service	Policy / Procedure	Practice	Information / Position Statement
X				

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

Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024

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

As an Education Directorate, ensuring that every learner in Rhondda Cynon Taf has access to excellent schools and positive and enriching educational experiences that enable them to achieve the very best possible outcomes that they are capable of is our core purpose. The Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 sets out the direction for the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate for the next 3 years, describing its mission, vision, and ambition for our schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan for 2020-2024.¹

Our mission is: **'To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all'**. The robust partnerships that have been forged between the local authority and non-maintained settings, schools and PRUs throughout the pandemic

¹ [RCTCBC Corporate Plan 2020-2024 – Making a Difference.](#)

has strengthened our collective drive and purpose to ensure that all learners access the highest quality teaching and learning experiences, so that they are able to progress and grow as lifelong learners. Our aspirations for our learners have remained steadfastly high despite the challenges faced, as our children have the right to access a first-class education that enables them to realise their ambitions.

Our mission will be achieved by us realising our vision: **‘To inspire and support excellent leadership and professional practice so that all learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf make good progress and become ambitious, capable, creative and ethically informed’.**

The Strategic Plan will give priority to those areas proven to be effective in achieving our mission, vision and the areas identified from robust self-evaluation and stakeholder feedback. These are also reflective of our local Corporate priorities set within the context of national and local recovery and reform. These priorities are:

Priority 1: Developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels.

Priority 2: Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.

Priority 3: Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families.

Priority 4: Enhancing the well-being of our learners and the workforce.

Priority 5: Delivering 21st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities.

The main strategies and policies that are linked with the Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 are:

National:

- Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- Prosperity for All: The National Strategy – 2017.
- The Programme for Government: Taking Wales Forward – 2016 to 2021.

- Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers.
- The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
- The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing the Demand (Wales) Regulations 2013.
- Professor Donaldson's Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales – 2015.
- Curriculum for Wales – 2022.
- Cymraeg 2050 Action Plan – 2019.
- Education in Wales – Our National Vision – 2017 to 2021.
- Welsh in Education Action Plan – 2017 to 2021.
- Welsh Medium Capital Grant.
- Childcare Act 2006.
- WG Childcare Offer.
- Reducing Infant Class Sizes.
- The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.
- Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales.

Regional:

- CSC JES: Business Plan – 2021 to 2022.
- Cwm Taf Public Services Board: Wellbeing Plan – 2018 to 2023.

Local:

- RCTCBC Corporate Plan – 2020 to 2024: Making a Difference.
- RCTCBC Local Development Plan – 2006 to 2021.
- RCTCBC Education and Inclusion Services' Directorate's Strategic Business Plan: Every School a Great School.
- RCTCBC Welsh Language Promotion Strategy – 2016 to 2021.
- RCTCBC WESP – 2017 to 2020.
- RCTCBC Childcare Sufficiency Assessment – 2017 to 2022.

More specifically:

- Education in Wales – Our National Mission, sets out how the education sector will move forward to ensure that the new curriculum is implemented effectively. The intention is for learners to become increasingly bilingual with a strong grasp for other languages. To support this, the Welsh in Education Action Plan and Cymraeg 2050 Action Plan sets the direction for the development of Welsh medium education.

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

- Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper:
 - Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.

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

- Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

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 upon 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 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.

Protected Characteristics	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>Age (<i>Specific age groups i.e., young people or older people</i>).</p>	<p>Positive.</p>	<p>The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people of all ages. The Strategic Plan will support the Education Directorate as we ‘renew’ and ‘reform’ and tackle the impact of the pandemic on our communities through the achievement of our strategic priorities:</p>	<p>The positive impact that the achievement of our strategic priorities will have upon children and young people of all age groups will be evidenced by exclusion, attendance data, inspection outcomes, evaluation of school performance by CSC based on the gathering of first-hand evidence by improvement partners in schools e.g., book looks, classroom observations, learner voice/stakeholder feedback. Due to the suspension of end of key stage data reporting and the restrictions on the publication of local, regional and national data during the pandemic, analysis of impact will be at an individual school level. LA level data will be possible for attendance, bullying, exclusions</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 1: Developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels. • Priority 2: Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all. • Priority 3: Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families. • Priority 4: Enhancing the well-being of our learners and the workforce. • Priority 5: Delivering 21st Century learning environments 	<p>and reduced timetable data but trend data is not reliable at present due to the pandemic and the suspension of a number of key performance measures which are no longer reported on at a LA, regional or national level. Impact will be monitored by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a highly skilled and trained workforce with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to deliver on the Curriculum for Wales and ALNET Act (2018) – engagement in training will be reviewed and school performance evaluated by school improvement partners; ○ strong leadership and professional practice across our schools resulting in the improved educational attainment, attendance, and exclusion rates of learners, particularly in targeted cohorts of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners; ○ greater equity between the outcomes of learners from
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		<p>and innovative services for our learners and communities.</p>	<p>economically and/or disadvantaged families and their more affluent peers, resulting in a narrowing of the attainment gap between different groups of learners. This will be evaluated at an individual school level and will be based on a range of holistic measures;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ improved teaching and learning across our schools, and a curriculum that is both innovative and strongly aligned with the AOLES. Feedback will be provided via CSC on schools' performance, inspection reports etc;○ more learners achieving their aspirations and securing places in further education, employment, training, and apprenticeships on leaving school as demonstrated from an analysis of key performance indicators;○ improved strategic planning and provision for ALN across all schools, inclusive schools and improved outcomes for learners. This will be evaluated
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			<p>by Inclusion Service professionals from provision maps, school-based reviews and data analysis of outcomes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ improved mental and emotional well-being for staff and learners as reflected from key datasets e.g., PERMA, attendance and exclusion data;○ good progress will be made on our Band B 21st Century Schools Programme, with significant developments across the school estate. Progress will be monitored quarterly and reported on routinely;○ our schools will make a significant and active contribution towards the Council's climate change agenda. This will be reported on to Cabinet where appropriate;○ more learners will be accessing Welsh medium education with progress reported against the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Annual delivery plan will be devised and routinely evaluated for progress. There
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			<p>will also be Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee reporting on this;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ more learners and parents/carers reporting high levels of satisfaction in relation to the education provided for them as reflected on survey outcomes; ○ more stakeholders valuing the specialist support provided by the local authority. This will be evaluated via stakeholder feedback and engagement; ○ more partners actively involved and engaged in the delivery of our strategic plans, working collaboratively for the benefit of our communities; and ○ increased uptake and use of our school premises by the wider community, with greater community engagement in cultural, sporting and youth engagement activities.
<p>Disability (<i>People with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions</i>).</p>	<p>Positive.</p>	<p>The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people of all ages. The strategic priorities have been developed to ensure equity between the</p>	<p>The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the ALNET Act 2018) was introduced in January 2018. The ALNET Act 2018 requires LAs</p>

		<p>outcomes of all learners, irrespective of deprivation, gender, sexuality, adverse childhood experiences, ethnicity, additional learning needs or disability</p>	<p>to keep the arrangements for supporting learners with ALN under review and consider whether these arrangements are sufficient. The ALNET Act 2018 is supported by new regulations, including secondary legislation and a new statutory ALN Code (The New Code).</p> <p>For learners with significant ALN, who experience difficulties in coping in mainstream primary and secondary schools, specialist provisions are required. There are a range of specialist provisions located throughout the County Borough which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 44 Learning Support Classes (LSCs).• 2 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).• 4 Special Schools. <p>The quality of these provisions will be assessed in partnership with CSC improvement partners and judgements made on performance based on Estyn inspections, responses to strategic and</p>
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			<p>improvement partner support, available data (exclusion, attendance, PERMA and other data), stakeholder feedback, first hand evidence of learner progress as gathered by Inclusion Service professionals and Improvement Partners. School level data and learner outputs will also be scrutinised to evaluate progress.</p> <p>In addition, approximately £3.4 million Additional Needs Funding (ANF) is available to mainstream primary and secondary schools to ensure robust, inclusive provision for learners who attend mainstream primary and secondary schools with severe and persistent ALN. LSC datasets will be routinely analysed to ensure learner progress and outcomes of vulnerable groups for attendance and exclusion will be extracted and reviewed.</p> <p>It is a funding condition of the Band B 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme that all new school facilities delivered under the Programme must be compliant</p>
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			with the Equality Act 2010. Design development within RCT's 21 st Century Schools Programme to date already incorporates total accessibility at the heart of the design.
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>).	Positive.	The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people of all ages. The strategic priorities have been developed to ensure equity between the outcomes of all learners, irrespective of deprivation, gender, sexuality, adverse childhood experiences, ethnicity, additional learning needs or disability	The delivery of new school buildings and facilities under the Band B 21 st Century Schools and Colleges Programme will see the inclusion of toilets which are non-designated (gender neutral), with full height cubicles for privacy and shared hand wash facilities. The inclusion of these facilities on previous schemes under the Band A Programme have been welcomed for the numerous advantages they bring. Schools will be encouraged to have inclusive policies and practices that are respectful of diversity and promotes acceptance. Success would be measured by evaluating attendance/engagement/wellbeing data as appropriate.
Marriage or Civil Partnership (<i>People who are married or in a civil partnership</i>).	Neutral.	N/A.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an

			impact on people that share this characteristic.
Pregnancy or Maternity (<i>Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave</i>).	Neutral.	N/A.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic.
Race (<i>Ethnic and racial groups i.e., Gypsy, Roma and Travellers</i>).	Positive.	The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people of all ages. The strategic priorities have been developed to ensure equity between the outcomes of all learners, irrespective of deprivation, gender, sexuality, adverse childhood experiences, ethnicity, additional learning needs or disability	The achievement of the strategic priorities will ensure equity between the outcomes of all learners, resulting in a narrowing of the attainment gap between different groups of learners.
Religion or Belief (<i>People with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs</i>).	Neutral.	N/A.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic.
Sex (<i>Women and men, girls and boys</i>).	Neutral.	N/A.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic.
Sexual Orientation (<i>bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight</i>).	Neutral.	N/A.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that 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:

Protected Characteristics	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.	<p>Based on 2021 data, there are 114 school aged learners who are service children attending 48 English and Welsh medium primary and secondary schools across the County Borough.</p> <p>In total, there are 32 school aged learners who are service children attending 10 Welsh medium primary and secondary schools across the County Borough with 19 primary school aged learners and 13 secondary school aged learners.</p>	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic.
Carers <i>(Anyone of any age who provides unpaid care).</i>	Neutral.	N/A.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic.

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. Therefore, the Education Directorate will continue to implement the draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024, subject to Cabinet approval. The evidence to support these conclusions is fully outlined in the draft Strategic Plan and the Cabinet report dated 4th October 2021. This Equality and Socio-economic Impact Assessment is a live document and as such it will be reviewed by the Education and Inclusion Services on a continual basis and will form part of annual Service Self Evaluations.

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

Name: Gaynor Davies.

Position: Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Date: 23rd November 2021.

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 groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single parents and vulnerable families. • Pensioners. • Looked after children. • Homeless people. • Students. • Single adult households. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living in the most deprived areas in Wales. • People with low literacy and numeracy. • People who have experienced the asylum system. • People misusing substances. • People of all ages leaving a care setting. • People involved in the criminal justice system.
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Socio-economic disadvantage	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p>Low-income / income poverty <i>(Cannot afford to maintain payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.).</i></p>	<p>Positive.</p>	<p>The implementation of this strategy will see the Education and Inclusion Services continue to support low-income families across the county borough. The number of learners across the County Borough that are eligible for free school meals has grown significantly during the pandemic, with approximately one in four learners (25.72%, April 2021) now eligible which reflects the significant economic impact of the pandemic on our communities. This Strategy commits to the continued promotion of access to</p>	<p>RCTCBC ensured access to free school meals in the community for approximately 8,500 learners at the start of the pandemic and provided BACS payments for more than 10,000 learners eligible for free school meals. We also provided targeted support and transport to engage the most vulnerable learners in childcare hubs and in distance learning.</p> <p>The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 (the Measure) places a statutory duty on all local authorities to provide learners with free transport to their nearest</p>

		<p>breakfast clubs and free school meals for eligible learners.</p> <p>It also commits to continuing to improve the quality of targeted support so that the educational outcomes of all vulnerable groups, including learners eligible for free school meals, with ALN, ethnic minority groups and children that are looked after are improved.</p> <p>It also promotes enhanced support for those experiencing challenges or hardship via funding for step 4 provisions or family engagement support,</p>	<p>suitable school if they reside beyond safe walking distance to that school. The term suitable school applies to the catchment area for English and Welsh medium, dual language or voluntary aided (faith) mainstream primary, secondary, special school/class or PRU as appropriate. The law relating to safe walking distance is defined as two-miles for learners of compulsory school age receiving primary education and three miles for learners of compulsory school age receiving secondary education.</p> <p>The Council has exercised the discretionary powers afforded to it under the Measure to make a more generous provision to learners as set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The eligibility criterion for walking distance for learners receiving compulsory primary education at their nearest suitable school has been set at one and a half miles, instead of two miles.
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free transport to the nearest suitable school, where places are available, is provided to learners who meet the one and a half mile eligibility criterion from the start of the Foundation Phase (the start of the school term after their third birthday), rather than from the start of compulsory education (the start of the school term after their fifth birthday).• The eligibility criterion for walking distance for learners receiving compulsory secondary education at their nearest suitable school has been set at two miles instead of three miles.• Free transport is provided to post 16 learners who meet the two mile eligibility criterion for two years after the end of compulsory education, rather than until the end of compulsory education (the last Friday in June of the school year in which a learner reaches the age of 16). This provision applies to full time attendance
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			<p>at the nearest school or college to the learner's home at which the approved course of study that they wish to pursue is offered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free transport to their nearest suitable school is provided to learners (as set out above) in accordance with their preferred religious denomination. <p>The Council's Learner Travel Policy, Information and Arrangements contains information and advice to parents / carers and learners on how the policy is practically implemented and ensures that it is applied consistently and equitably. We have also invested heavily in provision for vulnerable groups and those suffering socio-economic disadvantage e.g., FEO, step 4 provision development. Impact of this investment is routinely evaluation and is reported on to Cabinet.</p>
<p>Low and / or no wealth (<i>Enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings</i>)</p>	<p>Positive.</p>	<p>This strategy commits to continuing to improve the quality of targeted support so that the</p>	<p>We recognise that throughout the pandemic some disadvantaged and vulnerable families have faced</p>

<p><i>to deal with an unexpected spends and no provisions for the future).</i></p>		<p>educational outcomes of all vulnerable groups, including learners eligible for free school meals, with ALN, ethnic minority groups and children that are looked after are improved.</p>	<p>multiple adverse experiences, including financial hardship. The Strategy will ensure that there is continued support to those learners who have been the most significantly impacted by school closures and other restrictions through making effective intervention in the early years and ensuring high quality provision and intervention for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners' key priorities.</p> <p>Achieving our strategic priorities will ensure strong leadership and professional practice is in place across our schools resulting in the improved educational attainment, attendance, and exclusion rates of learners, particularly in targeted cohorts of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners.</p>
<p>Material deprivation (<i>Unable to access basic goods i.e., financial products like life insurance, repair / replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.</i>).</p>	<p>Positive.</p>	<p>Material deprivation of some learners in RCT has become more pronounced during the pandemic due to financial hardship and other adverse experiences, as learners without access to the necessary equipment during school closures were at risk of reduced</p>	<p>Working collaboratively with schools and ICT colleagues, the Education Directorate ensured that all learners had access to digital learning and that digitally excluded learners were identified and provided with appropriate devices (more than 5,400 devices were</p>

		<p>engagement and widening the attainment gap. The Education Directorate will continue to support these learners through multi-agency working between families, schools, and the Resilient Families Service.</p>	<p>provided across RCT). This offer of support to digitally excluded learners during the pandemic evidences the Education Directorate's commitment to support children and young people from low-income and deprived backgrounds to ensure financial circumstances do not prevent our learners from reaching their full potential and achieving positive outcomes.</p> <p>This strategy commits to redoubling our efforts to support these families through family engagement officers. These family engagement roles strengthen the capacity of schools to engage with families beyond the school gate, promoting multi-agency working and access to timely family support to overcome hardship and any barriers to learning and engagement. Good access to school uniform grants has been secured and is actively promoted. There is also a pilot on the extension to the school day in one of our RCT schools.</p>
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<p>Area deprivation (<i>Where you live (rural areas) where you work (accessibility of public transport).</i>)</p>	<p>Neutral.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have an impact on people that share this characteristic.</p>
<p>Socio-economic background (<i>Social class i.e., parents' education, employment and income).</i>)</p>	<p>Positive.</p>	<p>Increased multi-agency working between families, schools and the Resilient Families Service will improve engagement with families in this category to ensure they have the necessary support to overcome barriers to their child achieving their potential and achieving positive outcomes.</p>	<p>Families play pivotal roles in their children's cognitive, social and emotional development from birth through adolescence. Many families require support to develop resilience and to overcome the multiple stress factors commonly associated with financial hardship, so they are better placed to support their child's learning and engagement in education. Family engagement roles are instrumental in supporting those facing socio-economic disadvantage.</p>
<p>Socio-economic disadvantage (<i>What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i>)</p>	<p>Positive.</p>	<p>The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas, also known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). There are 1,909 LSOAs.</p> <p>Based on 2019 data, 18.0% of LSOAs in the County Borough are in the most deprived 10.0% of LSOAs in Wales.</p>	<p>The Education Directorate has secured funding and the provision of family engagement officers for 6 all through/secondary schools, with additional funding secured to extend the family engagement officer pilot to 13 primary schools in the areas of greatest deprivation in the County Borough.</p> <p>Delivery of the Summer Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) in 16 school settings, providing food</p>

		<p>The Strategy will support learners and their families living in the most deprived areas of the County Borough through enhanced engagement with families through family engagement officers and multi-agency working.</p>	<p>and nutrition education, physical activity, enrichment sessions and healthy meals to children in some of the most deprived communities in the County Borough.</p>
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SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

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

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a disproportionate / negative / adverse impact on a protected group.

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

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a disproportionate / negative / adverse impact on a protected group.

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.

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a disproportionate / negative / adverse impact on a protected group.

4. d) Give details of how you engaged with services 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.

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a disproportionate / negative / adverse impact on a protected group.

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

Yes: X No:

SECTION 5 – MONITORING AND REVIEW

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

The Education and Inclusion Services will keep the Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 under continuous review throughout the duration of the three year plan through self-evaluation and stakeholder feedback.

The Strategic Plan will also be subject to annual review as part of the Education and Inclusion annual Services Service Self Evaluation, in accordance with the assessment criteria: 'to what extent has Leadership and Management established a clear strategic direction and vision, planned innovatively and improved outcomes for the community'.

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

Annually following Cabinet approval.

The Strategic Plan is intended to set out the progress we will achieve over the next three years and will be subject to continuous monitoring and review, with annual reviews taking place as part of the Service Self Evaluation.

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

Director of Education and Inclusion Services

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

The Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 will give priority to those areas proven to be effective in achieving our mission, vision and the areas identified from robust self-evaluation and stakeholder feedback. The results of the monitoring of our Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 will be used to develop future strategies and will give priority to those areas proven to be effective during the course of this current Strategic Plan.

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

As part of the Impact Assessment process all proposals that fall within the determination 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 EqIA guidance document provides more information on what a Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so 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 7 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

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

In summary, this Equality and Socio Economic Impact Assessment identifies positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts upon the protected characteristics.

The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people of all ages. The Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 will provide a clear and cohesive strategy, ensuring that our learners have the best start in life and have access to the right support at the right time so that they become successful lifelong learners. The Strategy will emphasise the need to intervene early and effectively, as this is critical so that the inequalities and difficulties that have been compounded by the pandemic are overcome and greater equity is achieved.

As the Education Directorate looks to the future, its mission is: 'To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all', with a specific focus on the need to 'renew' and 'reform' and tackle the impact of the pandemic on our communities through continued support for our most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

This mission will be achieved by us realising our vision:

'To inspire and support excellent leadership and professional practice so that all learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf make good progress and become ambitious, capable, creative and ethically informed.'

The Education Directorate will deliver this vision by supporting children to have the best start in life and be ready for learning through an improved early years' system, supporting families through the childcare offer and multi-agency working, and by investing in new and significantly improved school and community facilities through the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme.

In developing this Strategy, all current and relevant local, regional and national legislation, strategies, policies and action plans have been taken into consideration in order to encourage and facilitate a Strategy that is fit for purpose.

SECTION 8 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer:

Name: Gaynor Davies

Position: Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Date: 23rd November 2021

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 of socio-economic disadvantage:

Head of Service / Director Approval:

Name: Gaynor Davies

Position: Director of Education and Inclusion Services

Date: 23rd November 2021

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

Appendix 5: A Welsh Language Impact Assessment for the Education and Inclusion Services Draft Strategic Plan 2021-2024

WELSH LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA) enables the Council to consider the principles and requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015² to ensure compliance with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011³.

It is to be read alongside the draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 and the Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment, as the information in all documents is related and the themes within them are cross-cutting.

Stage One – Information Gathering	
Proposal Name	Draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024
Directorate / Department	Education and Inclusion Services
Service Director	Andrea Richards
Officer Completing the WLIA	Gaynor Davies
Email	Gaynor.Davies@rctcbc.gov.uk
Brief Description	<p>The Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 sets out the direction for the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate for the next 3 years, describing its mission, vision, and ambition for our schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf. As an Education Directorate, ensuring that every learner in Rhondda Cynon Taf has access to excellent schools and positive and enriching educational experiences that enable them to achieve the very best possible outcomes that they are capable of is our core purpose.</p> <p>The Strategic Plan will provide a clear and cohesive strategy, ensuring that our learners have the best start in life and have access to the right support at the right time so that they become successful lifelong learners. The Strategy will emphasise the need to intervene early and effectively, as this is critical so that the inequalities and difficulties that have been compounded by the pandemic are overcome and greater equity is achieved.</p>
Date	23 rd November 2021.
Outline who this Proposed Strategy / Plan Affects?	<p>The Strategic Plan is specific to the Education and Inclusion Services. As such all children, learners, parents/carers, and the wider communities serviced by our schools could benefit from it.</p> <p>In addition, several external groups and organisations could benefit from the draft Strategic Plan. These include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSC JES).

² [Welsh Language Standards \(No.1\) Regulations 2015](#)

³ [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coleg y Cymoedd. • Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB). • Mudiad Meithrin. • University of South Wales. • Welsh Government.
<p>Aims of the Proposed Strategy / Plan? How do these Relate to the Welsh language?</p>	<p>The overarching mission set out in the Strategy is: ‘To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all’.</p> <p>Our mission will be achieved by us realising our vision: ‘To inspire and support excellent leadership and professional practice so that all learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf make good progress and become ambitious, capable, creative and ethically informed’.</p> <p>The Strategic Plan will give priority to those areas proven to be effective in achieving our mission and our vision. These are also reflective of our local Corporate priorities set within the context of national and local recovery and reform. These priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 1: Developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels. • Priority 2: Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all. • Priority 3: Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families. • Priority 4: Enhancing the well-being of our learners and the workforce. • Priority 5: Delivering 21st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities. <p>The strategy will ensure that all learners will have access to opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills and awareness of their cultural heritage and in doing so will support the implementation of RCTCBC’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for 2022-2032.</p>
<p>Current Linguist Profile of Geographical Area(s) Concerned</p>	<p>Every ten years the nation sets aside one day for the Census. It is a source of information about the number of people who can speak Welsh.</p> <p>The 2011 Census⁴ indicated that of the 225,555 residents living in the County Borough, 12.3% (27,779) were able to speak Welsh, whilst the remaining 87.7% (197,776) were not able to speak Welsh. This can be</p>

⁴ [2011 Census](#)

compared to all-Wales figures that showed of the 2,955,841 residents living Wales, 19.0% (562,016) were able to speak Welsh, whilst the remaining 81.0% (2,393,825) were not able to speak Welsh.

The Annual Population Survey⁵ 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 Annual Population Survey for the quarter ending September 2020, reported that 19.3% of respondents living in the County Borough said they could speak Welsh, this is compared to the all-Wales percentage of 28.8% of respondents. This can be further broken down to the data contained in the table that follows.

Welsh Language Skills of Residents – (%)		
	County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf	All-Wales
Can Read Welsh	18.2%	25.8%
Can Write Welsh	16.7%	23.5%
Can Understand Spoken Welsh	23.5%	33.0%

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 2011 Census.

When asked about their frequency of speaking Welsh, the table that follows shows a breakdown of responses of respondents living in the County Borough compared to the all-Wales responses.

Welsh Language Skills of Residents – (%)		
	County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf	All-Wales
Speak Welsh Daily	6.9%	16.2%
Speak Welsh Weekly	5.0%	4.8%
Use it Less Often	5.7%	6.2%

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

The Welsh Language Use Survey⁶ for the years 2013 to 2015, contains detailed information about Welsh speaker's fluency and their use of the

⁵ [Annual Population Survey](#)

⁶ [Welsh Language Use Survey 2013 to 2015](#)

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 and 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 for Adults' courses.

The table that follows outlines the total percentage of statutory school aged learners (aged 5 to 15) who access their learning through Welsh medium primary, middle and secondary schools across each of the five LA areas that comprise the CSC JES for the previous three academic years and is derived from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC):

Total Percentage of Statutory School Aged Learners Who Access their Learning Through Welsh Medium Primary, Middle and Secondary Schools

LA	Academic Year		
	2018	2019	2020
Bridgend	7.8%	7.5%	7.4%
Cardiff	14.8%	15.0%	15.3%
Merthyr Tydfil	7.3%	7.6%	7.72%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	18.8%	18.0%	18.8%
Vale of Glamorgan	12.4%	12.7%	12.8%
CSC JES	13.9%	14.0%	14.2%

The Council has the highest percentage of statutory school aged learners who access their learning through Welsh medium primary, middle and secondary schools across each of the five LA areas that comprise the CSC JES for the previous three academic years.

There are seventeen Welsh medium primary schools located throughout the County Borough. There are two all through schools for 3 to 19 year olds, three dual language primary schools for 3 to 11 year olds and twelve primary schools for 3 to 11 year olds. The table that follows outlines the total number of primary school aged learners attending schools in the County Borough, split by English and Welsh medium for the previous three academic years and is derived from the PLASC:

Total Number of Primary School Aged Learners Attending Schools in the County Borough Split by English and Welsh Medium

Category	Academic Year					
	2017		2018		2019	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%

Total Number of Learners Attending English Medium Primary Schools	18,241	80.9%	18,153	80.9%	18,078	81.0%
Total Number of Learners Attending Welsh Medium Primary Schools	4,291	19.0%	4,269	19.0%	4,220	18.9%
Total Number of Learners Attending Primary Schools	22,532		22,422		22,298	

The data demonstrates stability in the ratio split of primary school aged learners attending English and Welsh medium primary schools for the previous three academic years.

There are four Welsh medium secondary schools located throughout the County Borough. There are two all through schools for 3 to 19 year olds and two secondary schools for 11 to 19 year olds. All learners who attend these schools' study all of their education through the medium of Welsh. The table that follows outlines the total number of secondary school aged learners attending schools in the County Borough, split by English and Welsh medium for the previous three academic years and is derived from the PLASC:

Total Number of Secondary School Aged Learners Attending Schools in the County Borough Split by English and Welsh Medium						
Category	Academic Year					
	2017		2018		2019	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total Number of Learners Attending English	12,550	80.7%	12,685	80.6%	12,868	80.4%

Medium Secondary Schools							
Total Number of Learners Attending Welsh Medium Secondary Schools	3,010	19.3%	3,058	19.4%	3,141	19.6%	
Total Number of Learners Attending Secondary Schools	15,560		15,743		16,009		

The data demonstrates stability in the ratio split of secondary school aged learners attending English and Welsh medium secondary schools for the previous three academic years.

The table that follows shows the transition rates from each Key Stage for the previous three years academic years in the County Borough and is derived from the PLASC:

Transition from Each Key Stage for the Previous Three Years in the County Borough			
Transition	Academic Year		
	2017	2018	2019
Foundation Phase to Key Stage Two	97.7%	98.2%	98.3%
Key Stage Two to Key Stage Three	111.7%	113.9%	110.1%
Key Stage Three to Key Stage Four	95.5%	98.4%	97.3%
Key Stage Four to Key Stage Five	62.2%	55.5%	59.6%

The transition data indicates that transition of learners between Key Stages does not appear to be a significant problem.

Other Relevant Data / Research

The main strategies and policies that are linked with the Draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 are:
ational:

- Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

- Prosperity for All: The National Strategy – 2017.
- The Programme for Government: Taking Wales Forward – 2016 to 2021.
- Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers.
- The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
- The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Assessing the Demand (Wales) Regulations 2013.
- Professor Donaldson's Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales – 2015.
- Curriculum for Wales – 2022.
- Cymraeg 2050 Action Plan – 2019.
- Education in Wales – Our National Vision – 2017 to 2021.
- Welsh in Education Action Plan – 2017 to 2021.
- Welsh Medium Capital Grant.
- Childcare Act 2006.
- WG Childcare Offer.
- Reducing Infant Class Sizes.
- The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.
- Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales.

Regional:

- CSC JES: Business Plan – 2021 to 2022.
- Cwm Taf Public Services Board: Wellbeing Plan – 2018 to 2023.

Local:

- RCTCBC Corporate Plan – 2020 to 2024: Making a Difference.
- RCTCBC Local Development Plan – 2006 to 2021.
- RCTCBC Education and Inclusion Services' Directorate's Strategic Business Plan: Every School a Great School.
- RCTCBC Welsh Language Promotion Strategy – 2016 to 2021.
- RCTCBC WESP – 2017 to 2020.
- RCTCBC Childcare Sufficiency Assessment – 2017 to 2022.

More specifically:

- Education in Wales – Our National Mission, sets out how the education sector will move forward to ensure that the new curriculum is implemented effectively.
- RCTCBC Corporate Plan – 2020 to 2024: Making a Difference includes the priority of 'Prosperity' – creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper. More specifically, the Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 is linked to the measure of: Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.

Stage Two – Impact Assessment						
Will the Proposed Strategy / Plan Affect Any / All of the Following?						
	Yes	No	No Impact / Negligible	Why it will have a + VE + / - VE - Impact on the Welsh Language?	Evidence	Action(s) to Mitigate – VE – Impacts / Better Contribute to + VE + Impacts?
1. Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language.	X			<p>This Strategy will facilitate the implementation of the new curriculum in RCT schools, which in turn will contribute to achieving our national goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. One of the Act's overarching goals is to create 'A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language'. As such, under the Strategy all learners will have access to opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills.</p> <p>The Council recognises the importance of immersion in the Welsh language for learners who wish to transition from English into Welsh medium education, in order to further encourage the uptake of Welsh medium education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan focuses on the effective implementation of the Council's Band B 21st Century School and Colleges Programme which will focus on improving the quality of Welsh medium provision and enhancing provision. • The school-based workforce will be supported with continued professional learning, networking, and opportunities to share best practice. Welsh medium professional learning opportunities. Welsh medium schools also have a bespoke approach to delivering school improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of access to Welsh medium education will be undertaken through the effective implementation of the WESP and promotional approaches including the Council's website, Starting Schools booklet and other marketing approaches. Our Welsh medium schools have significant surplus capacity and interventions will be put in place to attract learners

			<p>In contributing towards the vision of one million people in Wales being Welsh speakers by 2050 and in line with the County Borough's current WESP and in order to achieve the targets of the new WESP, it is vital to ensure a school-based workforce of sufficient size and capability. In order to create more Welsh speakers, our education system is dependent on its school-based workforce, and we must work locally, regionally, and nationally to ensure we create a school-based workforce with robust linguistic skills, able to inspire and motivate learners in Welsh medium and Welsh language education.</p> <p>In recent years, support has been given to promote and increase learner's 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</p>	<p>services, which is proving to be high effective in strengthening partnership approaches.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote and increase learners' use of the Welsh language in primary and secondary schools with all English medium primary and secondary schools being supported to achieve the Cymraeg Campus Bronze Award. <p>CSC will continue to roll out Siarter Iaith developments.</p>	<p>from the English Medium to the Welsh medium sector. This will include the potential development of a Welsh language immersion class in the County Borough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that schools are supported locally and regionally, including by the CSC JES Welsh in Education Officer to share best practice. The Welsh Language Charter and Cymraeg Campus will continue to be implemented by CSC.
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			<p>the CSC JES and the Urdd. These include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the Welsh Language Charter in all Welsh medium primary and secondary schools in order to develop learners' use of the Welsh language. • Implementing Cymraeg Campus in a number of English medium primary schools and piloting it in two English medium secondary schools. • Supporting English medium secondary schools to provide informal opportunities to use the Welsh language and intensive Welsh language learning opportunities through the Urdd's Cymraeg Bob Dydd project. <p>The aim has been to embed positive habits and attitudes</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Urdd will continue to implement the Cymraeg Bob Dydd Project. • Learn Welsh Glamorgan, the nationally approved Welsh Language training provider are soon to be launching Welsh Language lessons tailored to parents and carers and more general courses for anyone with an interest in learning Welsh. Headteachers have been encouraged to promote this upcoming opportunity to increase opportunities for persons in our
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				<p>towards the Welsh language through purposeful planning within primary and secondary schools and to promote the informal use of the Welsh language amongst learners inside and outside primary and secondary schools. Facilitating the use of the Welsh language, across the curriculum and in wider contexts in primary and secondary schools, to ensure a continuum of linguistic progression to support learners in the transition between key stages offers all learners the opportunity to become fully bilingual and aligns with the Curriculum for Wales – 2022.</p> <p>The Local Authority will continue to keep ALN provision under review and ensure that there is growth in specialist ALN provision where there is an identified need.</p>	<p>Further consideration will be given to consulting on a proposal to establish a learning support class in Ysgol Gartholwg. These plans were temporarily suspended due to the pandemic and resources allocated to the school as step 4 provision. A commitment has been provided to consulting on a possible proposal to</p>	<p>communities to speak and learn Welsh.</p> <p>A proposal to consult on any changes in Welsh medium ALN provision will be presented to Cabinet in December 2021.</p>
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				<p>Funding for Family Engagement Officers has been provided in the most deprived communities, and this included Ysgol Heol Y Celyn.</p> <p>The Digital Strategy will have positive impacts for Welsh medium education.</p>	<p>establish ALN provision in the new school in Rhydfelin.</p> <p>Resources have been provided to Ysgol Heol y Celyn to support family engagement.</p> <p>Significant improvements in the digital infrastructure of Welsh medium schools have taken place and will continue to do so.</p>	<p>The support provided will enhance the capacity of one of our dual language schools to engage learners in WM education.</p> <p>Monitoring the implementation of the plan will ensure continued improvements are delivered.</p>
2. Numbers and / or percentages of Welsh speakers.	X			<p>The Welsh Language Use Survey⁷ 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</p>	<p>The development and implementation of targeted marketing and promotion strategies to ensure the benefits of Welsh medium and Welsh language education are promoted to parents/carers from the initial early years, through to primary and</p>	<p>As part of work undertaken to deliver the new WESP, the Education Directorate will develop and implement targeted marketing and promotion strategies to ensure the benefits of Welsh medium and</p>

⁷ [Welsh Language Use Survey 2013 to 2015](#)

				<p>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 and 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 for Adults' courses.</p> <p>The Education Directorate will work to ensure the benefits of Welsh medium and Welsh language education are promoted to parents / carers and demonstrate that it is never too late be educated through the medium of Welsh with the use of Welsh language immersion classes to support learners who are late comers.</p>	<p>secondary education, then progressing through to higher and further education for all learners, whatever their learning need is fundamental to increasing the percentage of year one learners in Welsh medium education. The impact of these strategies will be closely monitored to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies adopted.</p> <p>The impact of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme and any investment in ALN provision on the numbers of learners accessing Welsh medium education will be closely monitored and evaluated.</p>	<p>Welsh language education are promoted to parents/carers.</p> <p>The Band B 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme has a significant number of Welsh medium projects. The Council has allocated resources to establish Welsh medium ALN provision in Ysgol Gartholwg and has committed to consulting on establishing a potential WM learning support class provision in the new school in Rhydyfelin.</p>
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					The effectiveness of any language immersion provision on numbers of learners transitioning into the Welsh medium sector will be evaluated and closely monitored.	The Council has secured funding from Welsh Government for grant funding relating to the development of language immersion provision. A report will be presented to Cabinet to consider a long term plan for language immersion provision in RCT shortly.
3. Opportunities to promote the Welsh language.	X			<p>This will be achieved by investing significantly in new or significantly refurbished Welsh medium 21st Century Schools.</p> <p>Plans are afoot to promote stakeholder access to information on Education Services, including</p>	<p>The development and implementation of targeted marketing and promotion strategies under the new WESP to ensure the benefits of Welsh medium and Welsh language education are promoted.</p> <p>Access to the Education landing page on the Council website will be significantly</p>	<p>As part of the annual Service Self Evaluation, progress towards completing our mission and vision as set out in the Strategy will be reviewed. This will inform annual delivery plans, which will be the focus of quarterly monitoring and reporting. As part of this process, the impact of the strategy upon the promotion of the Welsh language within RCT schools will be reviewed.</p>

			<p>Welsh medium services and provisions.</p> <p>The WESP has been consulted on and is due to be presented to various committees for approval and consideration. It has extensive detail included within it in relation to the promotion of the Welsh language.</p>	<p>improved and more readily accessible in due course.</p> <p>Progress against the WESP will be reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee and an annual report will be produced.</p>	
4. Compliance with the Council's statutory Welsh language standards.	X		<p>The Strategy will comply with the Council's statutory Welsh language standards.</p> <p>The strategic plan is accessible in both English and Welsh.</p>	<p>In developing the draft Strategic Plan for 2021-2024, all current and relevant local, regional and national legislation, strategies, policies and action plans have been taken into consideration.</p>	<p>As part of the annual Service Self Evaluation, progress towards completing our mission and vision as set out in the Strategy will be reviewed. As part of this process, the impact of the strategy upon the Welsh language across our schools will be evaluated.</p>
5. Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably than the English language.	X		<p>As the Education Directorate looks to the future, its mission is: 'To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all'. Equity is central to the strategy, this included treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.</p>	<p>As part of the routine self - evaluation undertaken in the Education Directorate, an evaluation of the impact of the strategy on the Welsh language and provision will be undertaken. The impact of the WESP will also be routinely evaluated.</p>	<p>Opportunities will be actively sought to develop and invest in Welsh medium provision via the WG Childcare Offer Capital Grant Scheme, Welsh Medium Capital Grant Scheme and the 21st Century</p>

					<p>Schools and Colleges Programme. Current projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dolau Primary School (including Welsh unit).• Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Abercynon.• Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar.• Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James.• Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen.• Ysgol Gynradd Gymunedol Gymraeg Llantrisant.• Ysgol Llanhari. <p>The Council's ambitious Band B 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme, alongside funding directly from the Council, will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amend the language medium of Penderyn Community Primary
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						<p>School from a dual language primary school to a Welsh medium primary school (following the opening of Hirwaun Primary School). The catchment area of Penderyn Community Primary School will also be extended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver an extension to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar.• Deliver a new Welsh medium primary school for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn y Forwyn.• Deliver a new Welsh medium primary school on the current Heol y Celyn Primary School site, to accommodate pupils currently attending Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Pont Sion Norton and the Welsh medium pupils
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						<p>attending the dual language Heol y Celyn Primary School.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a new dual language primary school, in the first instance, as an extension to the dual language primary school Dolau Primary School, as part an extensive housing development. • Deliver a new school for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda. • Deliver a new school for Ysgol Llanhari. • Improved and extended accommodation with a new sports facility for Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun.
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Stage Three – Strengthening the Proposal		
What?	When?	Who?
Ensure that all prospective parents are given the 'Starting Schools' and the 'Being Bilingual'	Ongoing. This will be a continued collaborative effort between all stakeholders.	RCT / Schools / Partners

booklets to promote the positive experiences that can be achieved through seeking an education through the medium of Welsh.		
Submit an application to WG in relation to language immersion proposal.	By late October.	RCT.
Consult on the strategy and amend the document to reflect stakeholder feedback.	At the end of the consultation period.	Director of Education and Inclusion Services.

Stage Four – 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
Officer Review Comments	Brief Description	Date Considered
Consultation Comments	Brief Description	Date Considered

Stage Five – Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing

The Director of Education and Inclusion Services will keep the Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 under continuous review throughout the duration of the three year plan through self-evaluation and stakeholder feedback, monitoring progress over the three year period.

The Strategic Plan will also be subject to annual review as part of the Education and Inclusion annual Services Service Self Evaluation, in accordance with the assessment criteria: ‘to what extent has Leadership and Management established a clear strategic direction and vision, planned innovatively and improved outcomes for the community’.

The Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 will give priority to those areas proven to be effective in achieving our mission, vision and the areas identified from robust self-evaluation and stakeholder feedback. The outcome of annual reviews of our Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 will be used to develop future strategies and will give priority to those areas proven to be effective during the course of this Strategic Plan.

Stage Six – Summary of Impacts for the Proposed Strategy / Plan

In summary, this Welsh Language Impact Assessment identifies only positive impact upon the Welsh Language.

The proposal will have a positive impact on children and young people of all ages. The Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 will provide a clear and cohesive strategy, ensuring that our learners have the best start in life and have access to the right support at the right time so that they become successful lifelong learners in both Welsh medium and English medium education.

As the Education Directorate looks to the future, its mission is: ‘To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all’, with a specific focus on the need to ‘renew’ and ‘reform’ and tackle the impact of the pandemic on our communities through continued support for our most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

This mission will be achieved by us realising our vision:

‘To inspire and support excellent leadership and professional practice so that all learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf make good progress and become ambitious, capable, creative and ethically informed.’

The aim of the Education and Inclusion Services is to embed positive habits and attitudes towards the Welsh language through purposeful planning within schools and to promote the informal use of the Welsh language amongst learners inside and outside school. Facilitating the use of the Welsh language across the curriculum and in wider contexts in schools to ensure a continuum of linguistic progression to support learners in the transition between key stages offers all learners the opportunity to become fully bilingual and aligns with the Curriculum for Wales – 2022.

In summary, the proposal will therefore assist with delivering the targets outlined in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council’s (RCTCBCs) current (2017 to 2022) and new (2022 to 2032) Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and will support the aim of Welsh Government’s Cymraeg 2050 target of one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.

In developing this Strategy, all current and relevant local, regional and national legislation, strategies, policies and action plans have been taken into consideration in order to encourage and facilitate a Strategy that is fit for purpose.

Stage Seven – Sign Off			
Name of Officer Completing WLIA	Gaynor Davies	Service Director	Andrea Richards, Service Director for 21 st Century Schools and Transformation
Position	Director of Education and Inclusion Services	I recommend that the proposed strategy / plan	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>Gwynor Davies</i>	<i>A. Rhys</i>	
Date	23 rd November 2021	23 rd November 2021	