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Date: 18th November 2022

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You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided on request.

To Whom It May Concern,

A multi-locational meeting of **Council** will be held in the Chamber, Penallta House and via Microsoft Teams on **Thursday, 24th November, 2022 at 5.00 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. Members of the Public or Press may attend in person at Penallta House or may view the meeting live via the following link: <https://civico.net/caerphilly> .

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina Harrhy'.

Christina Harrhy
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A G E N D A

Pages

- 1 To receive apologies for absence.
- 2 Mayor's Announcements.
- 3 To receive petitions under Rule of Procedure 28(3).

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4 Presentation of Awards.

5 Declarations of Interest.

Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.

To approve and sign the following minutes: -

6 Special Council held on 29th September 2022. 1 - 8

7 Council held on 4th October 2022. 9 - 22

8 To receive and to answer questions received under Rule of Procedure 10(2).
Question from Councillor L. Phipps to the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan.

Will the Leader give a statement on how the Chancellor's recent autumn statement will impact on the Council budget?

9 To receive and to answer questions received under Rule of Procedure 10(4).
Question from Councillor D. Ingram-Jones to the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities, Councillor C. Andrews.

Will the Cabinet Member for Education and Communities explain what CCBC are doing to protect the most vulnerable in these difficult times?

To receive and consider the following reports: -

10 Workforce Capacity and Associated Challenges. 23 - 38

11 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales - Annual Letter 2021/22. 39 - 52

12 Regional Market Stability Report 2022-2025. 53 - 116

13 Regional Integration Fund. 117 - 124

Circulation:

All Members And Appropriate Officers

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Agenda Item 6



SPECIAL COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN THE CHAMBER PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 29TH SEPTEMBER 2022 AT 5.00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor E.M. Aldworth – Mayor
Councillor M.A. Adams – Deputy Mayor

Councillors:

C. Andrews, A. Angel, C. Bishop, A. Pettit-Broughton, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, P. Cook, S. Cook, D. Cushing, C. Cuss, G. Ead, K. Etheridge, C. Elsbury, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, J. Fussell, A. Gair, N. George, C. Gordon, D. Harse, T. Heron, A. Hussey, D. Ingram-Jones, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, J. Jones, S. Kent, A. Leonard, P. Leonard, C. Mann, A. McConnell, B. Miles, C. Morgan, S. Morgan, B. Owen, T. Parry, L. Phipps, M. Powell, H. Pritchard, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Rao, J. Reed, J. Roberts, J. Sadler, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds, J. Scriven, S. Skivens, E. Stenner, J. Taylor, C. Thomas, L.G. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, J. Winslade, K. Woodland, C. Wright

Together with:-

C. Harrhy (Chief Executive), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer) M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), R. Kyte (Head of Planning and Regeneration), R. Thomas (Development Control Manager), V. Morgan (Principal Planner/Statistician), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer). R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Executive reminded those present the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors. D.T. Davies (MBE), N. Dix, G. Enright, C. Forehead, E. Forehead, M. James, D.W.R. Preece, D. Price and A. Whitcombe, together with D. Street (Corporate Director Education and Housing), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services) and R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the start or during the course of the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

3. **CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH 2ND REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN UP TO 31ST MARCH 2035 - PREFERRED STRATEGY**

Consideration was given to the report which sought Council approval for the Preferred Strategy for the 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan to be published for consultation for a statutory 6-week period.

The report advised Council of the progress made in respect of preparing the Caerphilly County Borough 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan (2RLDP), and sought Council approval to use three recommendations from the LDP Focus Group as the basis for the 2RLDP. Council approval was also sought for the identification of the Parc Gwernau site at Maesycwmmmer as a Strategic Site in the Preferred Strategy, for Officers to investigate the options for assisting the early delivery of the access road for the Strategic Site, and to publish the Preferred Strategy for consultation as part of the statutory 6-week Pre-Deposit Consultation process in accordance with Regulation 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2005 (as amended).

Members were reminded that at its meeting on 23rd October 2019, Council resolved to commence a review of its Adopted LDP. The first formal stage of the process was completed in June 2021, with the Council and Welsh Government agreeing the Delivery Agreement that sets out the timetable for the delivery of the plan and when and who the Council will engage with throughout the process. The Preferred Strategy is the first formal stage in the preparation of the 2RLDP document and sets out the overarching strategy that will provide the framework for preparing the detailed Deposit Plan.

The next stage in the process (the Preferred Strategy) has been prepared through an engagement process that included Elected Members, representatives from Community Councils, Council Officers, stakeholders and the Youth Forum. At each stage in the preparation of the Preferred Strategy, the outcome of the engagement process was reported to the LDP Focus Group, who made the following recommendations to Council on the content of the preferred strategy: that (1) the Draft Vision and Aims (included at Appendix 1 of the report) be used as the population and housing projection for the 2RLDP; (2) that Scenario J: Cardiff Capital Region Growth in Working Age Population projection be used as the population and housing projection for the 2RLDP; and (3) that a hybrid strategy comprised of elements of Option 3: Strategic Site, Option 4: Metro Investment Focus and Option 5: Town Centre First be used as the basis for the 2RLDP.

As part of the engagement process, Officers presented a range of population and housing projections and addressed what levels of population and housing the county borough would seek to accommodate through the Plan period. Members were asked to note that it is the Council who decides what level of population, housing and employment the county borough will accommodate during the plan period. A key factor in considering the projection options was that many of these realised a decrease in those of working age, a decrease in the number of children and an increase in the number of older persons. This is an unsustainable position, not only from a demographic point of view, but also that a decreasing workforce would result in economic decline contrary to Welsh Government policy and Cardiff Capital Region economic aspirations.

In order to meet these aspirations, the LDP Focus Group recommended the use of Scenario J as the basis for the plan. The implications of this Scenario were set out in the report, with the main points being a population increase of 10,685, an increase in the economically active

population of 4,126, a total housing allocation requirement of 7,400 dwellings, with a new allocation total of approximately 3,000 dwellings and the need to identify 44.5 hectares of land for new employment provision. The Preferred Strategy has been prepared on this basis, with Members asked to note that this Strategy does not allocate sites, as this will be done through the Deposit Plan, which is the next stage in the process.

It was explained that the only site that is allocated in the Preferred Strategy is a Key Strategic Site at Maesycwmmmer to deliver 2,700 dwellings, although it was noted that only 1,200 dwellings are proposed to be built during this Plan period, with the remainder to be built in a subsequent Plan period. The report also sought Council approval for Officers to work with the proposers of the Strategic Site to investigate options to assist the early delivery of the access road for the site, as this would provide significant benefits and progress on the work which will be reported back at the appropriate stages in the preparation process.

Members were advised that the Preferred Strategy sets out a framework of policies that will inform the preparation of the detailed Deposit Plan, providing a strategic policy basis for more detailed policies to be prepared to manage the future growth of the county borough.

It was noted that a recent Members' Seminar on the 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan had been held on 15th September 2022 and had been well attended by Councillors. One Member also acknowledged the usefulness of the series of seminars held with Elected Members and Community Councils to provide input into the emerging Plan, and thanked the Officers involved for answering many of the questions surrounding the LDP process.

Council discussed the report and a number of queries were raised regarding the proposed Maesycwmmmer Strategic Site. Officers confirmed the proposed access road would be located between Dyffryn Industrial Estate near Llanbradach and Crown Roundabout near Pontllanfraith, and would serve the proposed new development on the Strategic Site for the site. In response to a query around safety inspections of the site in view of its mining history, Officers gave assurances that all of the sites within the 2nd Replacement Development Plan will be subject to rigorous assessment as part of the approval process and will include a requirement for developers to submit a range of detailed evidence. Once an application reaches the development control stage, detailed studies will be undertaken at this point as well as in terms of any future planning application.

A Member raised concerns that a relief road at Maesycwmmmer could add to existing traffic pressures along the A472 road, and Officers confirmed that as part of any proposal for Maesycwmmmer, a full traffic impact assessment will be undertaken. However, indications from a previous traffic movement and modelling assessment suggest that the road running through this new Strategic Site would provide relief to the A472, as it would change the way that people travel in and around that area. It was also highlighted to Members that the new 2nd Replacement LDP aims to fundamentally change the way that people travel around the county borough, which places an emphasis on green infrastructure such as walking or cycling and includes a target in the Plan to achieve this modal shift over the Plan period.

Clarification was sought on the total number of Alternative Growth Scenarios referenced at Section 5.11 of the report, together with the evidence base and calculations for these scenarios. Officers confirmed that there was a typographical error in the report and that 11 scenarios (rather than the 12 referenced) had been generated for consideration. The four scenarios that would result in an increase in the economically active population had been considered for inclusion in the Plan and examined through the engagement process. Members were referred to the Pre-Deposit Plan at Appendix 4 of the report which included the evidence base that underpins the Preferred Strategy, and it was confirmed that all these evidence documents will be published alongside the Preferred Strategy once it is released for consultation, and could also be made available to Members in advance upon request. The complexity of these technical documents was highlighted, and Members were reminded

that Officers are available to assist with any queries around these complex technical documents.

A Member sought clarification on the distinction between Option 4: Metro Investment Focus and Option 5: Town Centre First, given that the five principal town centres also serve as transport hubs for the county borough. Officers acknowledged the presence of these travel hubs but explained that the Preferred Strategy recognises the predominance of bus services and lack of train services across some of these towns, and that both options need to be examined independently and collectively because they are very similar in terms of the sites they will generate, and that as many of the sites available close to town are also close to Metro hubs, there will be some level of hybrid overlap between these two options.

A Member queried the accuracy of the population and household projections used to underpin the Preferred Strategy, in view of the results of the 2021 Census which indicated a reducing population and changing demographics across the county borough. The Member referred to the high numbers of people on housing waiting lists and enquired about the intended purpose of the proposed new dwellings and the benefits that these would bring to local communities.

Officers provided an overview of the components that make up the housing supply calculation, with these assumptions creating an available land supply baseline equating to approximately 4,500 houses. Therefore the 2nd Replacement LDP will seek land for the remaining 3,000 houses up to 2035. The affordable housing targets will be set as part of the Deposit Plan, with the existing affordable housing targets already included in the current LDP and used as a starting point for negotiation with developers at planning stage, and any subsequent allocation is then passed to Caerphilly Homes or a registered social landlord (RSL). Moving forward, these targets will be reviewed as part of the Plan preparation process, and Members were also advised that the Council needs to have regard to the Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA), which is a key piece of evidence for the new Plan and will determine social housing requirements and inform the new targets moving forward.

In terms of the intended purpose of these dwellings, it was explained that the Council needs to plan for societal factors such as under-occupancy and hidden households, and to have regard to the economic growth position that is advocated in the Preferred Strategy to increase and retain the working age population who live in the Caerphilly county borough. It was explained that unless this particular factor is addressed, this will result in a smaller working age population looking after an increasingly aging population, which is not a sustainable position in the long-term. Members were also advised that the Council needs to have regard for Future Wales 2040 and therefore the Council need to plan for growth, rather than decline, in order to conform with this national development plan.

Officers also highlighted the need for caution when comparing the 2021 Census against the 2011 results, explaining that although this has indicated a decline in the Caerphilly county borough population since 2011, from a planning perspective the Council plans for households rather than population, and there has actually been a small increase in the number of households since 2011. Members were also asked to note that the 2021 Census was undertaken during the pandemic, which may not give a true reflection of where people were living at that particular time. Members were made aware that when the 2011 Census was published, it was 5,000 people higher than previously figures had indicated. The ONS reviewed previous mid-year estimates but classed the difference in the figures as 'unattributable' as they could not identify what the cause of this population increase was, and the 2011 Census should therefore be viewed with caution.

The Member expanded on his earlier query about the benefits to local communities and expressed concerns that many new development properties are being purchased by people from outside the area who commute to work outside of the county borough, thereby placing pressure on the local infrastructure without bringing any benefit to communities or

contribution to the local economy. The Member also referenced the significant investment across the Heads of the Valleys and asked if the proposed development at Maesycwmmwr was speculative in nature.

Officers explained that in terms of the Heads of the Valleys investment, the Council is required to prepare a Plan that is deliverable, realistic and achievable, and provided an overview of the Candidate Site Process which provided a call for landowners to submit sites for residential, commercial and tourism development. The sites that have been included in the Candidate Site Register on the Council's website identify the development pressures across the county borough, particularly around the Caerphilly Basin and Mid Valleys Corridor. However, less land is generally available further north due to the topographical constraints on development, and landowners have not submitted sites in this area because of land values and the difficulties in delivering houses via the private sector. It was also emphasised that sites across the Upper Rhymney Valley can only be included within the LDP if the landowners and developers are willing to put these sites forward for consideration and if there is a demonstrable ability to bring these sites forward.

It was explained that the Authority has not submitted many sites for inclusion in the process as it already has surplus social housing in the Heads of the Valleys, and when allocating sites across the county borough, consideration needs to be given to factors including catchment, housing demand, housing need, and housing supply and values, in order to demonstrate that the Plan is sound and holds up to independent examination. Members were also advised that increasing the economically active population will require an element of migration into the county borough, and that from the experience of past development plans, when development was concentrated in the mid valleys, it benefited the whole of the county borough because it put affordable housing and modern housing in the reach of people from the upper valleys as well.

A Member referred to Strategic Transport Improvement Routes detailed within the Pre-Deposit Plan and asked whether consideration had been given to the possible reinstatement of the rail service between Caerphilly, Abertridwr and Senghenydd. Officers explained that the transport routes programmed within the Plan have been agreed with Transport for Wales in terms of the Metro works and that to their knowledge, there are no plans for these particular routes within the new Plan period, as the A472 route will be heavily reliant on bus transportation, but it was confirmed that Officers would look into this query and respond to the Member following the meeting.

Another Member referred to the Safeguarding of Former Rail Lines detailed within the Pre-Deposit Plan and asked if the Council had considered using the former Merthyr line to create a safe cycling route between Bedwas, Maesycwmmwr and the Sirhowy Valley cycle tracks network. Officers confirmed that they work closely with Highways colleagues in relation to the Active Travel Network Maps and that any routes reflected in these Maps will also be reflected in the Deposit Plan moving forward, which will be the next stage of Plan preparation. Additionally, if the Council is made aware of any plans for a national route running through the existing network, these would also be reflected in the Plan. Members were encouraged to bring to Officers' attention any routes that they would actively wish to see included in the Plan. It was emphasised that there will be a general policy in place to safeguard former rail lines, and that this policy is already included in the current LDP to protect against development in order to safeguard these particular routes.

A Member referred to the potential impact on local infrastructure such as GP medical centres and asked if local health boards had been consulted on the proposals. Officers gave assurances that the Council has negotiated and liaised with all relevant authorities including the police, fire service and health service in the preparation of the Plan. However, it was emphasised that the Development Plan is solely a land use document which provides the planning policy framework to enable develop and allocate the land, and subsequently it would be for the provider of the land to develop the infrastructure around its use.

One Member referenced the issue of affordable housing as a pressing concern in view of rising house prices and welcomed the proposals around the 2nd Replacement Local Development, particularly in view of the need to plan for population growth in order to realise benefits such as town centre regeneration. He also highlighted that the use of Scenario J (CCR Growth in Working Age Population) as the population and housing projection for the 2RLDP had received universal support from the cross-party LDP Focus Group.

A Member asked how the Council can ensure that more social housing is included in the new developments and if it would be possible to use local builders and for these new houses to be let locally. The Member also referred to the land to be allocated for employment purposes and asked if it would be possible to distribute this equally across the county borough to allow people to work and live locally, and if the Council had any major employment sites identified or planned at this point in time.

Officers explained that the LDP must have regard to viability when setting social housing targets and so a 100% affordable housing target would not be achievable in every situation. However, the Council can allocate sites for 100% affordable housing where the need has been demonstrated, which would essentially mean that the RSLs and the Council would develop and build on these sites themselves where need is identified. It was emphasised that the LDP is a policy framework document for private market housing as well as social and RSL housing, and under the Section 106 process, the Council will negotiate with the developer on the level of affordable housing provision. Officers also outlined the process that is undertaken in cases where a developer determines that affordable housing provision for their site is not a viable option, and it was emphasised that all the LDP can do is allocate land for housing and set the affordable housing targets and then negotiate on a site-by-site basis through the development management process when planning applications come forward. As an example, if Caerphilly Homes owned the land, then it would be in the Council's remit to determine what the affordable housing split would be, although they would have to meet policy compliance as a minimum requirement.

In terms of the query around land for employment use, it was explained that there are not many available employment land sites remaining in the current LDP, with very few opportunities left in the south of the borough and the Heads of the Valleys. Members were advised that the lack of available land to accommodate new growth and employment needs to be addressed in the new Plan and therefore the Council have carried out a study with neighbouring authorities to address this issue from a regional point of view. The Council will be looking to allocate 44.5 hectares of land for employment use in the new Plan and it is intended to distribute this throughout the county borough, but it has been recognised that there is a particular need for this land within the Caerphilly Basin area.

A Member referred to the Metro scheme and asked if there were any plans to improve the bus services across the Valleys in view of the lack of rail infrastructure in the area. The Member also referred to the Heads of the Valleys Focus set out at Section 5.18 of the report at Option 2 and asked what areas this option referred to, explaining that his ward is not able to secure regeneration opportunities due to its isolated location. Officers acknowledged that the Metro scheme also includes the bus network as well as the rail network and it is the Council's vision under the Metro scheme to move to a system where travel between bus and train routes are integrated and seamless, and therefore the Council are working with their regional partners and TfW to achieve this position during the Plan period.

Officers explained that in terms of the Heads of the Valleys Focus at Option 2 of the report, this targets the majority of the development from the Mid Valleys corridor northwards and towards Bargoed and Rhymney. However, there have been a number of issues around this option, as there would not be sufficient land available that would meet the requirement to have proximity to a principal town on a Metro node, or sufficient land to meet the required growth to take this option forward. The Member was also invited to contact Officers if there

was any particular sites for development or regeneration opportunities that he wished to put forward for his ward, so that these can be discussed in readiness for the Deposit Plan.

A Member suggested that in view of the LDP being a strategic document which is subject to a monitoring process, there is a need to tailor the LDP to circumstances within the local area and requirements around local infrastructure. Officers emphasised that the LDP Annual Monitoring Report demonstrates the delivery of multiple infrastructure schemes that were allocated in the existing Adopted LDP, including new train stations, Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr, GP surgeries, and 21st Century Schools. With regards to future plans, the new Plan will plan for the infrastructure that the new development generates demand for, and it will have regard to policy objectives such as the changing of transport modes and placing a greater emphasis on walking and cycling instead of road building. It was reiterated that the LDP is a land use document which allocates land for housing and other purposes, and it is for the developer, such as local health boards in the case of GP surgeries, to then take forward the associated infrastructure. However, the LDP will plan for the infrastructure that new developments generate, so if highway junction improvements are required as a consequence of a housing site, then this will lead to a Section 106 requirement for these works, and if it is for a strategic piece of infrastructure, then the Plan will make provision for this.

A Member expressed the need to recognise the benefits of the 2nd Replacement LDP in terms of employment provision as well as housing provision. Officers explained that in terms of employment growth, Caerphilly county borough already hosts a number of established businesses which employ a very skilled workforce, and it is a key intention of the Council to help these companies develop by having suitable provisions within the LDP in place for land allocation, appropriate infrastructure and investment growth to accommodate and retain these companies within the county borough should they wish to expand, whilst also attracting new businesses to the county borough at the same time.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 46 for, 1 against and 7 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The progress that has been made in preparing the 2RLDP be noted;
- (ii) The following recommendations made by the LDP Focus Group as part of the process of preparing the draft Preferred Strategy document be endorsed:
 - (A) To use the Draft Vision and Aims outlined in Appendix 1 as the basis for the 2RLDP;
 - (B) To use Scenario J: CCR Growth in Working Age Population as the population and housing projection for the 2RLDP;
 - (C) To use a hybrid strategy comprised of elements of Option 3: Strategic Site, Option 4: Metro Investment Focus and Option 5: Town Centre First as the basis for the 2RLDP;
- (iii) The identification of the Parc Gwernau site in Maesycwmmmer as a Strategic Site in the Preferred Strategy be approved;
- (iv) Officers work in partnership with the landowners/proposers of the site to investigate funding opportunities to assist the early delivery of the access road for the Strategic Site, with progress being reported at appropriate points and at subsequent stages of the plan preparation be agreed; and

- (v) The Preferred Strategy for consultation and that the Preferred Strategy be the subject of a statutory six-week consultation, that will be commenced on 19th October 2022 and will conclude on 30 November 2022, in accordance with Regulation 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2005 (as amended), be approved.

The meeting closed at 6.20 pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2022 they were signed by the Mayor.

MAYOR

Agenda Item 7



COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATION MEETING HELD IN THE CHAMBER PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 4TH OCTOBER 2022 AT 5.00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor E.M. Aldworth – Mayor

Councillors:

C. Andrews, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, P. Cook, S. Cook, D. Cushing, C. Cuss, T.D. Davies MBE, G. Ead, C. Elsbury, G. Enright, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, E. Forehead, J. E. Fussell, A. Gair, N. George, C. Gordon, D. Harse, T. Heron, A. Hussey, D. Ingram-Jones, M. James, L. Jeremiah, J. Jones, S. Kent, P. Leonard, C. Mann, A. McConnell, B. Miles, C. Morgan, S. Morgan, T. Parry, L. Phipps, M. Powell, D.W.R. Preece, D. Price, H. Pritchard, J. Pritchard, J. Reed, J. Roberts, J. Sadler, J. Simmonds, E. Stenner, J. Taylor, C. Thomas, L. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, J. Winslade, K. Woodland, C. Wright.

Together with:-

C. Harrhy (Chief Executive), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), R. Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), D. Lucas (Team Leader, Strategic Planning), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer), R. Thomas (Planning Services Manager), T. McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager), S. Issacs (Rents Manager), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education, Planning and Strategy), G. Jenkins (Deputy Director Social Services, Children's Services), S. Pugh (Head of Communications), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

Also Attending: -

- A. Boulter, C. Jones, A. Goss and
- B. J. Hallett and P. Woods (Ysgol Bro Sannan and Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Baroged)

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Executive reminded those present the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Adams, A. Angel, N. Dix, K. Etheridge, C. Forehead, G. Johnston, A. Leonard, B. Owen, J. Pritchard, R. Saralis, A. Whitcombe.

2. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor referred to the engagement and events she had attended since the last meeting of Council and made specific reference to her invitation to a service of remembrance for Queen Elizabeth II and to meet King Charles III.

3. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 28(3)

There were no petitions.

4. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

Young Enterprise Volunteer of the Year 2022

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities expressed her pleasure in announcing that Antony Bolter had been named Young Enterprise Volunteer of the Year 2022.

Members were advised that Young Enterprise is the UK charitable arm of Junior Achievement Worldwide and would celebrate its 60th Anniversary 2023. The Company and Teams Programmes are designed to give young people the opportunity to learn and practice skills which prepare them for the world of work.

Council noted that Antony first became involved with the Young Enterprise in 2003 as a Business Adviser for students at Heolddu Comprehensive School. He had since a number of voluntary roles, including Business Advisor for Trinity Fields and Coleg Gwent, Link Teacher at Fast Forward, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Board Member, Young Enterprise in Wales Board Member and most recently, Leader of the Volunteer Team in South and Mid Wales.

As there are over 7500 Young Enterprise Volunteers across the UK, the Cabinet Member was sure that Council would agree that this award demonstrates the hard work and dedication shown by Antony.

The Mayor welcomed Antony Bolter to Council and asked Members to join her in congratulating him on this fantastic achievement.

Gwent Association of Voluntary Sector Achievement Awards

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities expressed her pride in introducing Carl Jones an Emergency Medical Technician who had been nominated for an award at the Gwent Association of Voluntary Sector Achievement Awards evening to be held later this month.

Members were advised that while off duty, Carl happened to be passing a street in Bargoed where there was a house fire. Carl proceeded to raise the alarm and rescued 3 families so that the emergency services could rescue the gentleman in a fourth property.

The Mayor welcomed Carl Jones to Council and asked Member to join her in recognising this incredible act of bravery which helped to save lives and prevented further damage to neighbouring properties.

Gold Member Experience Award (Retention People)

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces expressed his pleasure in announcing that Caerphilly's Sport and Leisure Centres had recently been awarded the prestigious Gold Member Experience Award administered by the Retention People.

Council noted that this was a true testament to the hard work and dedication of the Council's Leisure Centre Staff, who had delivered an exceptional Member experience in what has been another challenging year. To achieve this celebrated award, service users were invited to offer feedback on their experience and whether they would recommend our Leisure Centres to others. Utilising externally accredited Net Promoter Score process which ranks organisations across the United Kingdom they achieved the Gold Award for delivering exceptional quality.

The Mayor welcomed Ann Goss, on behalf on Leisure Services, to Council and asked Members to join her in recognising the outstanding work and dedication of our Leisure Centre staff.

Collection Crew of the Year

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces expressed his pleasure in being able to take a moment to remember all the Council's refuse collection staff who worked throughout the recent pandemic, coping superbly with the introduction of additional safety measures including using convoy vehicles to ensure we followed the government rules during lockdown, and dealt with the huge uplift of waste as people took the opportunity to clear out lofts, garages and sheds.

Council noted that three such staff, Russell Hurley, Duncan Mazurczak and Ross Mazurczak worked together as Refuse Round 1 for over 18 years and, throughout that time received commendations and letters of thanks from members of the public. This exceptional team was nominated for the Collection Crew of the Year Award and, although they were unsuccessful, the Cabinet Member shared one incident that demonstrated their willingness to go above and beyond.

In February 22, the crew came across a man covered in blood, carrying a large kitchen knife. Clearly disorientated and a danger to himself and possibly others, the crew calmed him, called the emergency services and stayed with him whilst waiting for assistance. Despite being delayed for about an hour dealing with this traumatic situation, they stayed on to complete their collection round. For his part Darren, Mazurczak received a letter for thanks for his composure, bravery and public service from the Chief Superintendent of Gwent Police.

Although the Team were unable to be present in person the Mayor advised Council that she had met personally all the Members of the Team and had thanked them for their bravery and compassion.

Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargoed and Ysgol Bro Sannan

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities expressed her pleasure in recognising the fantastic work of Mr Jamie Hallett as Executive Headteacher and Mrs Patricia Wood, Chair of Governors of Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargoed and Ysgol Bro Sannan.

Council noted that in October 2019 Ysgol Bro Sannan and Ysgol Gymraeg Gilfach Fargoed had been inspected and judge by ESTYN to require significant improvement. Mr Hallet was appointed as the Executive Headteacher for both schools and by June 2022 the schools had received successful inspection reports and were removed from the statutory category.

Members were advised that Mr Hallet had been an inspirational Leader and he and his staff have continued to make good progress across all ESTYN recommendations. Staff morale is high and both schools are valued by pupils, their families, and their communities. Mrs Wood was nominated by the Local Authority to be the Chair of Governors in both schools, and she had been extremely committed to her voluntary role, giving much time to both schools to ensure that governance has been strengthened.

The Mayor welcomed Jamie Hallet and Patricia Wood to Council and asked Members to join her in expressing their gratitude and appreciation for the efforts made by all involved.

2022 Examination Results

The Leader of Council expressed his pride and admiration for all Caerphilly Learners on their outstanding examination results in 2022. Having faced the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic, he felt it only right and proper that Council acknowledged and showed their appreciation for the efforts of pupils and staff. The Mayor asked Council to join her in showing their appreciation for the pupils and staff of all Caerphilly schools and congratulated them on their examination success.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the start or during the course of the meeting.

6. MINUTES - COUNCIL – 19TH JULY 2022

Subject to an amendment in that Councillor A. Broughton-Pettit had been incorrectly recorded as Councillor A. Pettit-Broughton in the list of attendees it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of Council held on 19th July 2022 (minute nos. 1-10) be approved as a correct record.

7. TO RECEIVE AND TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(4)

Question to the Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces, Councillor C. Morgan from Councillor A. Leonard.

Please can the Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces explain what the Council is doing to preserve our natural wildflowers and insect biodiversity as well as the introduction of a friendlier grass cutting regime?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces to Councillor A. Leonard.

Public Authorities in Wales are already required to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity. Caerphilly County Council makes a significant contribution, notably through the management of land and for the benefit of diversity, including our country parks, our national and local nature reserves and other conversation land. As a Member of the Gwent Green Grid Partnership, we have worked collaboratively to develop green infrastructure enhancement projects at a regional scale, including contributing to the Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy, Access Projects, Biodiversity Projects such as Nature Isn't Neat and Urban Biodiversity Invasive and Non-native Species Management, the preparation of the Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan and habitat enhancement along the Ebbw, Rhymney and Sirhowy Rivers. Another example of strategic tree planting projects, tree planting was undertaken at Ynys Howell Farm and adjacent to the the Sirhowy Valley Country Park delivered a significant wildlife corridor between the Graig Goch Local Nature Reserve and Natural Resources Wales woodland and Sirhowy River. A dedicated volunteer field was planted with some 4500 trees by volunteers working in partnership with GAVO, Groundwork Wales, Keep Wales Tidy and Natural Resources Wales. The strategic tree planting schemes provided benefits to mental and physical health and well-being, with further benefit occurring in the medium and long term by providing space for volunteers, residents and visitors to visit and relax and enjoy the woodland now and in the future.

The pausing of grass cutting services during periods of lockdown had a welcome effect on our environment, a study undertaken in 2021 identified a wide range and variant of verge habitats. Site specific recommendations to enhance biodiversity were made for section of roadside verge and a series of more general measures produced for verges across the county borough. The most important of these were to leave verges and cut through the spring and early summer to allow plants to flower and set seeds and to remove grass cuttings to reduce the dominance of coarse grasses. In addition, the consultation undertaken with Local Members and a number of other locations were identified where the grass would be allowed to flourish and grow. All these changes to our approach to grass cutting were approved by Cabinet in November 2021 and have been implemented over the growing season this year.

Our education role and working with residents and Members are as important as the initiatives as we need their support for managing other areas such as Commons, we aim to adopt a whole ecosystem management approach, where we undertake initiatives for both habitats and species through protection and creation. Grass cutting is just one aspect of how we can maintain and enhance biodiversity. A Members Seminar has been arranged for the 24th October 2022 where there will be an opportunity for Members to learn about biodiversity and the Nature Isn't Neat campaign and also see examples of how our new approach to grass cutting is promoting biodiversity. A further report on grass cutting is scheduled for Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in February and March next year respectively with a view to implementing any further developments in time for the next year's growing season.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

8. LOWER EBBW AND SIRHOWY VALLEY MASTERPLAN

Consideration was given to the report that sought to advise Members on the main issues identified by respondents during the public consultation exercise carried out between the 19th of January 2022 and the 2nd of March 2022 on the draft Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys Masterplan.

Council noted that during the consultation period 27 representation were received and were referred to Appendix 1 of the report and the Report of Public Consultation (ROC) considered the issues raised, provides Officer's responses, and makes recommendations. Members noted the main issues raised in the consultation centred on the potential for tourism beyond Cwmcarn Forest Drive, making town centres safer for people walking, wheeling, or cycling, promotion of the area's industrial heritage, reusing empty buildings and the protection of natural and semi-natural environments.

The Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys Masterplan is one of five masterplans that cover the county borough and provide a more detailed outline of the regeneration opportunities in their respective areas. The masterplan's employment base and tourist economy present real opportunities for economic renewal and growth and seeks to integrate the strong employment, retail, tourism and recreational base to realise added benefit for economic recovery and growth.

It was noted that most of the respondents supported the vision, strategic objectives and the development strategy with many of the proposals support, however there were also some suggested changes and additional projects.

A Member welcomed this version of the masterplan and was pleased to note that observations had been listened to and reference was made to local bus services. The Member confirmed that working with Officers and Stagecoach they had secured a commitment for a half hourly service and hoped that the approval of the Masterplan would see

this formalised. The Member referred to page 72 of the plan and the Well-being Objective contained therein and the fact that there was no reference made to the construction of a waste processing plant at Nine Mile Point or the lorries running through the adjacent villages. The Head of Planning and Regeneration advised that as this related to a specific planning application it would be inappropriate for her to comment on the points raised.

Reference was then made to the Ynys Howell Country Park and its removal from the masterplan and what if anything could be done to enhance or improve the site. Clarification was then sought on the building known as 'the Full Moon Warden's Office' which was currently vacant and whether this could be included within the masterplan.

Officers confirmed that in respect of Ynys Howell it is currently in private ownership, however the Countryside Team were working with the owners and proprietors to improve and enhance the site and to embed it further into the Country Park as a whole. Council noted that the purpose of the Masterplan is to provide a basis for bidding in terms of regeneration projects and so it focused on the country park as a whole rather than its individual parts which is why the empty building isn't listed. The Officer confirmed that is included within the park and would be part of the proposal to enhance the area. As its in private ownership the Council's bidding process wouldn't take account of it, and the empty building forms part of the wider proposal for the Country Park as a whole.

Members were asked to keep in mind that the Masterplan does not go into specific project details, that would happen when projects are prepared to move forward in the bidding process.

By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation and in noting there were 48 For, 0 Against and 5 Abstentions the recommendations contained in the Officers report were approved.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The representations received as part of the public consultation exercise be considered and the Officer recommendations set out in the ROC be endorsed.
2. The Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys Masterplan as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan and as a tool for guiding regeneration activity in the Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys be approved.

9. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN UP TO 2021 ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT (INCLUDING THE ANNUAL COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY REPORT)

Consideration was given to the report seeking Council approval for the Caerphilly County Borough Council Local Development Plan 2022 Annual Monitoring Report and for its submission to Welsh Government by the 31st October 2022, in order to satisfy the Council's statutory requirements.

Council noted that the monitoring data for the 2022 Annual Monitoring Report provided an interesting insight into the implementation of the LDP over the monitoring period and Members were referred to Section 2.2 of the Officer's report and the information contained therein.

Members were advised that Planning Policy SP15 (Affordable Housing Target) was not being delivered and required intervention, as well as Objective 9, which seeks to ensure an adequate and appropriate range of housing sites are available in the most suitable locations. Whilst SP14 (Total Housing Requirement) is being met as it is assessed against a low annual

build rate, the number of completions realised in 2022 remains deficient when assessed against the annual requirement set out in the housing trajectory. SP3 (Development in the Southern Connections Corridor) is also failing as it measures the percentage of development taking place on brownfield land.

In terms of Objective 17, which addresses Caerphilly's role as a commercial and employment centre and Objective 18, which concerns the provision and protection of employment land, they had also been identified as not delivering as required on the grounds of minimal take up and the low level of permissions granted during the monitoring period.

A Member referenced the struggle for young working couples to get on to the property ladder as first-time buyers and the stress and anxiety that this is causing and queried what could be done to improve affordable housing targets.

The Officer explained that the figures presented in the Annual Monitoring Report reflected just one element of the affordable housing target, which is those delivered through the planning system as part of planning applications, and these would generally be in accordance with the wider market and housing development. As a point of clarification, he explained that the policy when referring to affordable housing relates to housing that is socially rented, low-cost home ownership etc., it does not reference market housing as such. It was noted that 334 affordable housing units had been delivered through the planning system during the plan period against a target of 964, however the planning system delivery of affordable housing was a small percentage of the overall delivery of affordable housing, which is also delivered through Social Landlords and now potentially through Caerphilly Homes.

By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation and in noting there were 50 For, 0 Against and 4 Abstention the recommendations contained in the Officers report were approved.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The 2022 Annual Monitoring Report be approved, and its findings be considered and noted.
2. That the 2022 Annual Monitoring Report (including the Annual Community Infrastructure Levy Report) be submitted to the Welsh Government before the deadline of 31 October 2022.

10. PROVISIONAL REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN FOR 2021/22

Council noted that the report had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on the 26th September 2022 and the recommendations in paragraphs 3.1.3 to 3.1.6 had been unanimously agreed. Members were advised that decisions in respect of General Fund Reserve were a matter for Council and so the report was now presented for Council's consideration.

Consideration was given to the report that provided details of the provisional venue budget outturn for the 2021/22 financial year prior to the completion of the annual external audit of the accounts by Audit Wales.

Council was advised that the Authority continued to incur significant additional costs during the 2021/22 financial year due to the Covid 19 pandemic and had also lost income in several key areas. However Welsh Government continued to provide substantial funding to Local Authorities to offset additional costs and income losses through the Covid 19 Hardship Fund, which allocated £19.025m to Caerphilly County Borough Council during that financial year. However, this fund ceased on the 31st March 2022, with Local Authorities now having to manage any ongoing financial impacts of the pandemic from existing budgets.

Members were referred to Appendix A of the report which summarised the outturn position, and its net underspend of £37.815m. This included an underspend of £5.2m for schools and an underspend of £7.342m on the Housing Revenue Account. The schools underspend of £5.923m is ring fenced and as a consequence schools balances have increased from £11.3m to £17.2m as at the 31st March 2022. It was noted that the underspends for schools was greater than initially anticipated due to the receipt of additional grant funding from Welsh Government in the latter part of the financial year.

Council was advised that the HRA underspends would be carried forward to assist in future uses such as increasing the housing supply and maintain the Welsh Housing Quality Standard on existing properties.

Council noted that as was the case in 2020/21 financial year, the level of underspends for 2021/22 was significantly higher than in previous years, reflecting the ongoing impact of the pandemic on changes in working practices and the scale of financial support provided, large elements of which were not received until the latter part of the financial year.

Council was referred to section 5.10 of the Officers report which detailed in the impact on the General Fund and to Appendix C which listed the use of reserves approved by Officers using delegated powers. In terms of the cost-of-living crisis, the significant impact on communities and Council budgets was acknowledged, however the underspend for 2021/22 does present some targeted one-off investment opportunities to provide some much-needed support, albeit that the financial outlook moving forward would be extremely challenging.

Clarification was sought in relation to Education underspends and if this funding would be given back to schools to support learners coming through the Covid Generation who had lost out considerably in terms of face-to-face teaching to fund, for example, additional teaching assistants to support the Covid generation of learners who had been so disadvantaged. The Member also sought assurance that Early Years underspends would also be used to support families and employ more staff rather than bolstering further reserves.

The Section 151 Officer confirmed that normally schools were required to produce an action plan of how they would use their surplus balance, and this would usually be over a period of one year, mindful that these balances are higher than usual, Finance Officers were working with schools, to look at this over a 2-year period but these plans would be a matter for Headteachers and Governing Bodies. In terms of the Early Years Team, it was confirmed that this sits within the General Fund and currently 50% of underspends are clawed back into the general fund balance with the remaining 50% being retained by the service areas, this is a matter of policy and the reason why 50% of the Early Years underspends will be taken back into general fund balances.

Via the meeting chat a Member raised a question in relation to pay awards and the Section 151 Officer advised that the overall cost of the pay award was around 7% on the budget, in February a 3% increase was funded, so the £6.8m based on the latest pay offer would need to be found from within general fund balances as individual service area budgets could not meet this at this time. Members were made aware that this position would need to be funded year-on-year, so when moving into 23/24, the Council would already be in a position where it would have to meet this £7m before any pay awards, awarded in the 23/24 financial year could be looked at.

Reference was made to section 5.1.1 of the Officers report and the loss income in several key areas, clarification was sought as to what specific areas had lost income. The Section 151 Officer highlighted areas such leisure services who had lost income due to various closures and restrictions around social distancing, and tourism services had also experienced a large loss of income. The Officer confirmed that he would provide a detailed summary to the Member following the meeting.

Clarification was then sought in relation to 5.2.7 of the report and the £290k underspend in psychology services and school-based counselling being partly due to with delays in recruitment and if this fund would be retained for later recruitment. The Officer confirmed that there are a number of areas as detailed within the report where the Council has experienced recruitment problems and the base budget in all those areas would still be available in the 23/24 financial year.

The Member then referenced section 5.3.5 and the significant underspend detailed for Business Support, The Section 151 Officer confirmed that this was just the way in which some of the grants that came in from Welsh Government were accounted for. The Member then sought clarification as to what the term 'miscellaneous finance' meant. The Officer advised that this covers several areas like housing benefits, levies on the Council from the Police and Fire Service, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and debt management. Council noted that a detailed report on these matters was presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee throughout the year.

Reference was made as to Council Tax collection deficit and if collection rates were improving. The Section 151 Officer advised that rates were recovering to pre-pandemic levels and would be reviewed at the end of the financial year, if the funds earmarked for the potential deficit are not called on then it would be released into the general fund at that point.

The Member went on to query the £1.5m underspend on the Infrastructure Budget and if this could be used to refund some neglected smaller service areas such increasing the frequency of bus shelter cleansing, cleaning dirty road signs to improve visibility etc. The Corporate Director for Economy and Environment confirmed that there was probably more that the Council could be doing in the areas identified however there were a combination of factors as to why services in certain areas had reduced, budgetary factors, the impact of the Covid19 Pandemic and the impact of the current labour shortages in many service areas where there were ongoing difficulties in recruitment including recruiting to manual labour. The Corporate Director advised Members that if there had any specific ward issues to contact either him or his secretary and he would make sure that they are resolved.

Clarification was sought in relation to the Small School Grant from Welsh Government and its withdrawal and if Education underspends could be used to make up this shortfall. The Section 151 Officer advised that this was a Welsh Government grant and so unfortunately it was in their gift to continue or withdraw. The grant did go to 4 small schools in the borough, and he believed that the schools in question were given an extra 12 months' notice by Welsh Government that the grant was going to be withdrawn. In terms of using Education underspends to assist these smaller schools that would be a matter for Members.

A Member expressed the concern that the Council was 'hoarding' millions of pounds and queried why these sums were not being spent, while asking Caerphilly residents to pay more in Council Tax every year. When considering the impact on recruitment and retention should these reserves be better utilised to pay staff more, to make vacant post more lucrative and attract applicants. Given the rising cost of gas, electric and fuel the Council should be paying their employees more rather than accumulating substantial levels of reserves.

In responding to the points raised the Cabinet Member confirmed that a report would be presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee later this year on reserves and Members would have the opportunity to fully scrutinise and comment then. Regarding the level of reserves, the Cabinet Members advised that with inflation soaring, hikes in interest rates and the cost-of-living crisis there are serious challenges hurtling towards us and residents will be facing unprecedented situations and thankfully due to the sound financial management of this authority and its level of reserves the organisation was in a strong and stable financial position to meet these challenges and help.

The Member welcomed the comments of the Cabinet Member and queried that given the crisis and the level of reserves would consideration be given to not increasing Council Tax charges next year. The Cabinet Member confirmed that when the Medium-Term Financial Plan is reviewed all possible options and what can be done to help residents would be explored.

The Leader of Council explained how reserves had been used as a basis for match-funding leveraging in close to £95m, and emphasised that these reserves meant that Caerphilly was in a stable financial position well placed to help the people of the borough, whether this is through Social Services, Education or the 600 other services provided.

A Member queried the level of funding available to assist residents with the cost-of-living crisis and was referred to section 5.10.2 of the report and the table contained therein and confirmation was given that £3m had been allocated for the Cost of Living Hardship Fund and £2.098m for the Cost of Living Crisis Contingency.

In conclusion Members were assured all options possible would be considered and presented for Members consideration as the budget setting process commences.

Following full consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that each recommendation be the subject of an individual vote, by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation, in relation to Recommendation 1.3(i) there were 45 For, 4 Against and 2 Abstentions and in relation to Recommendation 1.3 (ii) there were 35 For, 10 Against and 7 Abstentions both the recommendations contained in the Officers report were approved.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The recommendation of the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer to maintain the General Fund balance at £11.852m, representing 3% of the 2022/23 net revenue budget be approved.
2. The proposed use of surplus General Fund balances totalling £14.333m as detailed in Section 5.10 of the attached report be considered and approved.

11. AUDIT WALES ENQUIRIES RETURN 2021/22

Consideration was given to the that presented Council with responses to Audit Wales in relation to enquiries around management processes relating to the prevention and detection of fraud, and compliance with laws and regulations in respect of disclosures in the 2021/22 Financial Statements.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the Officer's report which detailed the Council's response to the questions raised by Audit Wales. It was noted that these questions are standard for all local authorities and are not specific to Caerphilly County Borough Council

By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation and in noting there were 51 For, 0 Against and 1 Abstention the recommendations contained in the Officers report were approved.

RESOLVED that the response appended to the Officer's report be endorsed.

12. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL – RESPONSE TO THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

Council noted that the report has been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on the 26th September 22. Cabinet had agreed the initial response from Caerphilly County Borough Council to assist communities and its most vulnerable residents with the cost-of-living crisis and is now presented to Council for information and noting.

Members noted the decision made by Cabinet and consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the work already being undertaken and illustrated the range and extent of the support currently being provided. Members were advised that the concept of the Council assisting residents financially is not new, with inflation at its highest level for over 30 years, energy prices rising at the fastest rate in living memory and fuel costs escalating many people will be unable to find the money for these increases and will face some hugely difficult choices.

Council was advised of the key support areas and acknowledged the wider social and health impacts of the crisis and noted that £3m had been set aside for the Cost-of-Living Hardship Fund that would support a range of initiatives that would assist communities and £2.098m had been set aside for the Cost-of-Living Crisis Fund from the General Fund balances which would assist with anticipated budgetary pressures.

Members welcomed the report and the proposals and suggestions contained therein, and clarification was sought in relation to food banks and food donations. The Member advised that donations to food banks was decreasing so much so that they were now purchasing food to distribute and asked in any of the funding detailed would be set aside for food banks.

Officers confirmed that support would be provided to foodbanks and food share initiatives primarily through Welsh Government grants but one of the areas being looked was enhancing those grants through the £3m set aside to enable them to have additional support.

With regards to the £3m set aside for the Cost-of-Living Hardship Fund and the £2.098m for the Cost-of-Living Crisis Fund, a Member queried whether this amount would be adequate and would like to see it increased to £10m. The Member congratulated Officers on the work already underway.

Council noted that the earmarked funding represented and initial allocation and that work in this area was continual, with Officers working to identify the best ways of providing support across several areas as outlined in the report, with budgets kept under constant review.

Officers confirmed that an extensive level of support had already been provided over the last few months with over 4000 residents already directly supported, 2000 of which were self-referrals through Caerphilly Cares. It was noted that this included administering the winter fuel payment, payments to unpaid carers, Council Tax Reduction Scheme etc. already providing millions of pounds of support to our residents. Council were advised that £3.2m of additional income had already been generated for residents and Officer has already been working with the Citizens Advice Bureau on providing fuel vouchers and pre-payment top-up for residents in fuel poverty. It was further noted that over 12,000 applications had already been received for the winter fuel payments. Resources have been prioritised to expand and enhance community support for those most in need but there was still some work needed internally to remove duplication and complexity, streamlining access so that residents know exactly where to go to access support. The Officer confirmed that another area being reviewed was the development of customer intelligence as this would help the Council to identify exactly who to support and ideally what support is needed before people go into crisis.

The Officer outlined the cost-of-living events that had been run over the last month and confirmed that 142 referrals had been made to various services as a result. All the data collected from the roadshows has been collected and the main areas of concern were predominately food and fuel poverty and access to benefit, eligibility and understanding of

how to access support. Members were advised that the overwhelming theme coming out of the events was the level of anxiety that people were feeling now.

The Chief Executive advised that although the Council was already doing a lot of work in this space, it was just one agency working with a variety of partners and so streamlining and the avoidance of duplication was key. Members were reminded that whilst the Council will do all it can to support its residents it can not cover it all which means there will be some tough choices ahead. It was explained that the role of Local Ward Members would be vital in identifying communities needs and a special edition of the Caerphilly Newsline will be launched that would concentrate on the cost-of-living crisis and the Council's response.

A Member placed on record her thanks to Caerphilly Officers for their assistance with foodbanks specifically for the work of Sharon Peters and Rebecca Owen and to Tina Machaon and her Team for all the support provided.

Clarification was sought in relation to the £150 payment to eligible households and if this payment was available to unoccupied households. The Section 151 Officer advised that this was part of the Discretionary Scheme, and he would be happy to share the detail following the meeting.

A Member applauded the report and what can be achieved when all partners worked together however he was concerned that the Council needed to acknowledge the vital support of volunteer groups, large and small and ensure that essential funding makes it way to them so that they can continue to support communities. The Member also asked colleagues to continue to highlight the Community Empowerment Fund and look at the little things and the little adjustment that the organisation can make that will have a big impact on individuals.

The Member referenced difficulties being experienced by anxious individuals trying to make initial contact the Council and how a small improvement in an area like this can make a huge difference. The Chief Executive shared the Members passion for small changes that make a big impact and acknowledged that there had been issues with back-office telephony technology and reassured Members that Officers were actively working on improvements.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

To note the following report which was considered as an urgent item by Cabinet: -

13. EXTERNALLY COMMISSIONED DOMICILIARY CARE

Consideration was given to the report which had been considered as an urgent item by Cabinet on the 27th July 2022.

The constitution requires that any decision taken as a matter of urgency must be reported to the next available meeting of Council, giving the reason for its urgency. There the report was presented to Council for Members' information.

A Members expressed how essential it was that the Council has an adequate domiciliary care provision both in house and in private sector to facilitate timely hospital discharge, releasing ambulances and alleviating pressures placed on families. The Member questioned whether the £1 increase would be sufficient and queried how this had been calculated.

The Assistant Director for Social Services advised that he did not have that detail but would be able to provide the information following the meeting.

A Member referenced the care being received by a close family member and praised the support workers as community heroes and heroines. He emphasised the vital role they played and that the Council must ensure that they are paid accordingly.

The Cabinet Member for Social Care advised that the £1 increase has been agreed on a Pan Gwent approach across all local authorities and was please to note the positive experience of the Member in terms of the care received.

Clarification was then sought on how the Council could be assured that the £1 was being passed on to employees and the Section 151 Officer advised that Providers had to demonstrate this through their audited accounts.

Members noted the reasons for the urgency and the decision taken by Cabinet

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

To note the following report which was considered as an urgent and exempt item by Cabinet: -

14. WITHDRAWAL FORM TY PONTGWINDY, UNIT 7 DE CLARE COURT, PONTYGWINDY INDUSTRIAL ESTATE.

Consideration was given to the report which had been considered as an urgent item and exempt item by Cabinet on the 27th July 2022.

The constitution requires that any decision taken as a matter of urgency must be reported to the next available meeting of Council, giving the reason for its urgency. There the report was presented to Council for Members' information.

RESOLVED that they report be noted.

The meeting closed at 19:33 pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2022 they were signed by the Mayor.

MAYOR

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COUNCIL – 24TH NOVEMBER 2022

SUBJECT: WORKFORCE CAPACITY AND ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update of some of the major issues and challenges currently impacting on workforce capacity and to seek support for some initial proposals to provide additional resources into key areas.
- 1.2 The report includes a number of recommendations to Council that have been made by Cabinet, who received this report on the 19th October 2022.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Council, its staff and elected members have been attempting to manage a pandemic response, to maintain service delivery, to oversee the introduction of new services such as Caerphilly Cares, and to recover from the pandemic, while also seeking to transform the whole organisation and the communities it serves.
- 2.2 During the pandemic for example, the Council:
 - strengthened its Team Caerphilly Transformation Programme by bringing on stream ten Corporate Reviews
 - launched a £231m pound PlaceShaping Investment Programme
 - introduced a revised Regeneration Strategy
 - began the process of introducing five Regeneration Area Master Plans
 - introduced an Economic Recovery Framework
- 2.3 Since the pandemic, the Council has also found itself needing to resource and manage:
 - the submission of three Levelling Up Fund bids totalling £140m
 - the submission of a number of Shared Prosperity Fund bids totalling circa £35m (including Multiply)
 - the resettlement pressures associated with the War in the Ukraine
 - the impact of the cost of living increases on the Community
 - the impact of the cost of living increases on Council staff

- the fragility of the Social Care sector
 - the covid recovery across our schools and communities
- 2.4 The sheer breadth and depth of the transformation and regeneration work the Council is now involved in, above and beyond regular service delivery, is proving to be a significant challenge. Add into this the wider challenges associated with global conflict, the impact of rising inflation, the progression of Welsh Government's wide-ranging Programme for Government, responding to the COVID-19 Enquiry and the development of a new Corporate Plan and it is clear that the Council's resource base is attempting to deliver against challenges of the size, scale and complexity never previously imagined.
- 2.5 With some of this work being required to provide much needed additional support to our communities as well as other facets having the potential to significantly transform and regenerate the social and economic landscape of Caerphilly and beyond, it cannot simply be parked or put on hold.
- 2.6 The Council has faced further capacity challenges as a result of sickness absence, the loss of experienced staff to retirement; officers thinking differently about their work / home balance; staff moving on to better paid jobs in other organisations as a result of certain skills now attracting greater premiums, as well as the removal of traditional barriers such as long and challenging commutes.
- 2.7 It is unrealistic to believe that the Council can deliver this additional work 'on top of the day job' while also dealing with the ongoing pandemic response and unprecedented workforce capacity issues.
- 2.8 This report seeks to highlight the challenges being faced, sets out the potential impacts of increased expectations and diminished capacity, highlights the work already being done as well as putting forward some specific proposals to bring additional resources into core areas and functions as a foundation upon which to try and address current pressures.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Council is asked to:
- 3.2 Note the Cabinet decision to develop and recruit a new internal recruitment team in accordance with the funding arrangements set out in 8.1-8.3
- 3.3 Note the Cabinet decision to appoint a Cost of Living Co-ordinator as detailed at paragraph 5.51.
- 3.4 Agree Cabinet's recommendation to:-
- create an additional post and designate as a Deputy Chief Executive spot salary of £139,044 i.e. the mid-point between the Chief Executive spot salary and the maximum of the Director salary range. This will need to be adjusted when the national Chief Executive pay award is agreed.
 - create an additional post and designate as Deputy Section 151 officer at Hay Grade B.

- 3.5 Agree Cabinet's recommendation to allocate the budget to support the new posts as detailed in paragraphs 8.1 – 8.3 and specifically note that the proposals will not result in any additional financial resources being required as they will be fully funded through the virement of existing budgets.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Council, like all other public sector organisations, is currently facing many challenges which are impacting on the workforce and its overall capacity to meet the expectations placed upon it.
- 4.2 It is important Members are aware of these pressures and what the Council is trying to do to address them in order to ensure that services can continue to be provided to the public.
- 4.3 The Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet have both previously received and supported the recommendations set out within this report.

5. THE REPORT

Recruitment

- 5.1 The Council is currently facing recruitment and retention challenges across the whole organisation in many service areas and unfortunately, the services affected seem to be under increasing demand in accordance with the national picture. This is by no means a specific challenge to Caerphilly.
- 5.2 In July 2022, the Local Government Associations Head of Workforce, Naomi Cooke, delivered a speech to the LGAs annual conference. In the speech, Naomi referred to *"a crisis of recruitment in local government"* and therefore *"a crisis in capacity"*. According to the LGA, over half of Councils report having insufficient staff to run all services normally.
- 5.3 The LGA also report that over the last ten years every other part of the public sector has grown more than local government, which has, in fact, lost about 40 per cent of its workforce
- 5.4 It isn't just in the local government sector, however. In a survey of 5,700 businesses for its Q2 2022 Quarterly Recruitment Outlook, the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) found that three in five businesses (61%) were currently looking to find staff, while 76% reported recruitment difficulties, dropping just two percentage points from Q1 (78%).
- 5.5 The fact that these challenges are not unique to Caerphilly means that any interventions introduced by the Local Authority to resolve issues it is experiencing will impact on the ability of other Local Authorities to recruit and retain staff. In essence, the more successful the Council is at addressing these challenges, the more acutely those challenges will likely be felt by our partners and neighbours.
- 5.6 Members will be aware that the introduction of Single Status in Local Authorities saw the end of nationally agreed salary ranges for groups of staff, except for Teaching staff who have their own nationally agreed terms and conditions.

- 5.7 Some Council services are also affected by competition from the private sector, for example, I.T., Engineering, Social Care and Construction. The demand for staff in these disciplines has massively increased during and since the pandemic, as have the salaries that the individuals with these skills can now attract.
- 5.8 Whilst the opportunities for agile working can assist some Council services, they can also cause problems in others, as people who were perhaps previously unwilling to travel long distances for work can now look further afield for employment without the need to travel at all in some cases.
- 5.9 For Members information, the headcount as at the close of each of the last five financial years is detailed below:

Date	Headcount	FTE Headcount
31.03.18	8,682	6,318.69
31.03.19	8,533	6,256.64
31.03.20	8,402	6,141.56
31.03.21	8,296	6,124.17
31.03.22	8,348	6,245.04

- 5.10 The table above shows a reduction over the last five years, in the Council's overall headcount and "Full Time Equivalent - FTE" headcount. Whilst it firstly appears a relatively small reduction, these staff numbers are heavily supported with the use of agency staff, as a consequence of the difficulties experienced with recruitment at this time. Consideration must also be given to the volume and complexity of the challenges we are now facing and that it is being stretched over a workforce that has not changed significantly over recent years.
- 5.11 The workforce age profile of the organisation is as follows:

Age Group	Female	Male
Under 20	78	78
21 – 30	759	356
31 – 40	1436	434
41 – 50	1653	507
51 – 60	1613	605
61 – 65	407	190
66 +	162	69
Total	6108	2239

- 5.12 Despite the perceived difficulty in recruitment and retention, Members can be assured that the Council is still making successful appointments. The details of internal appointments and progression for the previous three financial years is set out below:

	2019 / 20	2020 / 21	2021 / 22
New starters	765	500	864
Internal transfers	1,514	1,040	1,487
Total appointments	2,279	1,540	2,351

Of course, internal transfers and promotions, often subsequently create further vacancies which require further recruitment and selection processes. Naturally this places additional pressure on recruiting managers and People Services.

- 5.13 To complete the picture, the details of the leavers from the Council for the previous three financial years is detailed below:

	2019 / 20	2020 / 21	2021 / 22
Leavers	873	597	765

- 5.14 Heads of Service have been working proactively with People Services to attempt to overcome some of the challenges within their services by utilising some of the opportunities already available to the Council. These include:

- workforce planning
- the appointment of Apprentices
- considering run through grades
- review of contracts and hours
- introducing market supplements.

- 5.15 These alone will not, however, help the Council to overcome this national recruitment and retention crisis. It is also worth noting that market supplements are also traditionally only supposed to be used as a temporary measure.

- 5.16 The Council is reviewing its recruitment processes and has begun to make steps to better position the Council as an employer of choice and also to improve the overall experience for prospective candidates. Listed below are some of the areas of improvement currently being progressed:

5.16.1 **Modernising our recruitment** – new application form and portal designed and launched; new web pages created; videos developed to profile the Council, its service areas and the opportunities available.

5.16.2 **Market position** – the Council is trialling a new approach to social advertising; has procured recruiter membership with market leader LinkedIn; has trialled targeted recruitment campaigns for front line posts; has run and attended community recruitment events.

5.16.3 **Apprentices** – the Council has committed recurrent funding for the ongoing recruitment of apprentices and in many cases Heads of Service are growing the number of apprentices by matching this funding form core budgets; strengthened partnership working with Careers Wales and schools.

5.16.4 **Caerphilly's offer** – HR & the Employment Teams are working together to consider how to provide more placement opportunities across the Council that could lead to employment opportunities.

5.16.5 **Recruitment consultant** – the Council has recently trialled the use of a Recruitment Consultancy for a Head of Service post. The trial has given significant insight into the private sector approaches associated with modern recruitment and selection as well as some of the tools and techniques that increase the likelihood of identifying and ultimately employing high quality candidates. Not only has the Council appointed, where it had failed to do so previously but the experience has also given the Council additional insight into

the needs of prospective candidates and the strategies that need to be deployed to positively engage potential recruits.

- 5.16.6 **Exit Survey Process** – the exit survey process has been reviewed and automated in order to increase the number of exit interviews being undertaken, provide trend analysis and benchmarks, as well as provide higher quality insight into why employees are leaving the employment of the Council. Any emerging themes and context can then be used to refine the recruitment, selection and retention processes even further.
- 5.16.7 **Payline Assessment** – exploratory work is underway to assess the pay and grading structure to consider whether the Council's salary ranges are competitive.
- 5.16.8 **HR Policy Refresh** – HR policies are also being reviewed to ensure that our terms and conditions are supportive to recruitment and retention wherever possible. These will be presented in a separate report for consideration.
- 5.17 It is too early in the process to state whether these refinements will make a significant difference but clearly, doing nothing is not an option. The whole matter of recruitment and retention will be subject to continuous review and modernisation and be adaptable to external pressures whilst remaining a safe process.
- 5.18 Members should be aware that it is unlikely that the Council will be able to successfully recruit to all vacant posts and retain all staff due to the national crisis, but it must continue to do all it can to differentiate itself and position itself at the leading edge.

Proposal: Development of an Internal Recruitment Team

- 5.19 As stated, the Council, along with other public sector bodies across the UK is facing a number of recruitment and retention challenges. More traditional methods of recruitment such as placing job advertisements in relevant trade journals or local newspapers are no longer delivering high numbers of quality candidates and, in some cases, no candidates at all.
- 5.20 It is important from a business continuity perspective that the Council develop a leading edge approach to recruitment and selection that maximises its chances of securing the appointment of high quality candidates into roles, especially critical roles, while keeping the very best interests and values of the Council at the centre of the new approaches.
- 5.21 For the reasons set out above Cabinet has approved the appointment of a specialist internal Recruitment Team. The Team will focus on marketing and promoting the organisation to prospective candidates; make use of commercial recruitment tools to identify individuals that meet the Council's needs and engaging potential candidates about the benefits of coming to work for Caerphilly. The Team will also promote more widely the opportunities that exist within the Council across Social Media and other professional channels, as well as hosting local recruitment events across the Borough on an ongoing basis.
- 5.22 The Team will strengthen further the relationships with key partners such as Careers Wales, our schools, local colleges and Universities to engage and encourage prospective applicants as well as developing tailored opportunities to join the

Council. The Team will also operate a dedicated 'recruitment hotline' where prospective applicants could discuss possible employment options in the Council rather than just ring about a job that is already advertised.

- 5.23 Beyond this, the Team will further develop and modernise the Council's Recruitment web pages, streamline the application process, be proactive and outward facing in its approach to recruitment as well as mirroring the skills and disciplines typically employed by sector leading recruitment consultants.
- 5.24 With the organisation short of the capacity it needs to deliver even existing services as well as seeking to provide the platform for whole borough regeneration and transformation and the wider global challenges being faced, a dedicated internal recruitment team as referenced above, will enable the Council to seek out and attract a wide range of skilled and experienced candidates to the organisation.
- 5.25 The Council has recently piloted some of the approaches that will be central to this new team in terms of its recruitment of the Transformation Manager (Commercial and Investment) and a strong field of candidates were available for shortlist and interview with a successful appointment ultimately made. These new methods have also delivered recent gains in areas that have historically proven challenging in terms of recruitment such as IT.
- 5.26 Initially, the structure that would be required to support this concept, supplemented by existing resources within the HR team to deal with the appointment process, evaluations, etc would be as follows:

Recruitment and Selection Manager x 1	Grade 12
Principal Officer (Recruitment and Selection) x 2	Grade 10
HR Officer (Recruitment and Selection) x 2	Grade 8
HR Assistant (Recruitment and Selection) x 2	Grade 6

- 5.27 The total costs estimated in accordance with existing HR grades and oncosts would circabe £320k to secure this new team. In order to enable the Team to take advantage of commercial recruitment tools, the Team would also require additional budget for LinkedIn Premium, as well as a range of additional options around advertising, recruitment material, events, etc. That would mean a total investment of an additional £358k per annum to establish the Team and also provide the necessary supporting tools.

Statutory Capacity

- 5.28 The Council has three main statutory roles: the Chief Executive, as well as the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer. Of these three statutory roles, only the Monitoring Officer has an appointed Deputy.
- 5.29 At differing points over the last twelve months, the Council has found itself without two of its Statutory Officers at critical times, and over what proved to be extended periods.
- 5.30 The absence of designated deputy positions for those two key statutory roles have emerged as risks that have been brought into sharp focus during these periods with the officers that would ordinarily act up not having the constituted statutory authority to do so in the absence of the post holders.

Deputy Chief Executive

- 5.31 Under Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, it is the role of the Chief Executive, formerly known as the Head of Paid Service, to ensure that all the authority's functions are properly co-ordinated as well as organising staff and appointing appropriate management.
- 5.32 The Chief Executive has the following functions and areas of responsibility, although this list is not exhaustive:
- Overall corporate management and operational responsibility (including overall management responsibility for all officers);
 - Provision of professional advice to all parties in the decision making process;
 - Responsibility for a system of record keeping for all the Council's decisions;
 - Responsibility for promoting and maintaining probity in all of the Council's activities;
 - Representing the Council on partnerships and external bodies as required by Council or by statute;
 - Acting as co-ordinator in Emergencies;
 - Be the Electoral Registration Officer and the Local Government Returning Officer and to be empowered in relation to all electoral matters;
 - Be the proper officer for all statutory purposes unless otherwise determined by this constitution;
 - Be able to exercise all the powers delegated to the Corporate Directors unless there is a legal or professional impediment;
 - Take urgent decisions in respect of either an executive or non- executive function which is considered necessary to protect the interests of or for advancing the business of the Council. In those circumstances, the Chief Executive is authorised to take urgent decisions following consultation with the Leader of the Council and the relevant portfolio holder in respect of executive matters and the Chairman (or Vice Chairman) of Council or the relevant committee in respect of non-executive functions. All urgent decisions will be reported to the next appropriate meeting of Council, Cabinet or the relevant committee;

Proposal to Create an Additional Post and designate as a Deputy Chief Executive

- 5.33 The Council is seeking to appoint a permanent Deputy Chief Executive Officer as an additional post on the establishment. This will enable the Council to address the risk of not being able to meet certain statutory requirements should the appointed statutory officer be unavailable. It will also provide a much needed and dedicated resource that can lead the significant, cross cutting challenges facing the organisation and its surrounding communities at present, such as the cost of living crisis, and climate change.
- 5.34 The total cost of the appointment inclusive of on costs would be subject to agreeing an appropriate set of duties and responsibilities and would need to be agreed by Members. Based on the existing range, it is anticipated that the costs would be circa £189k including on costs.

Deputy Section 151 Officer

- 5.35 Under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 (c.11), the Council has a duty to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs. The Council does this by appointing a Section 151 Officer. The Section 151 officer must be a qualified accountant belonging to one of the recognised chartered accountancy bodies.
- 5.36 The Section 151 Officer is a statutory role and has overall responsibility, subject to any instructions given by the Council, for determining the system of accounting control and the form of the published accounts.
- 5.37 The Section 151 Officer has a number of statutory duties, including the duty to report any unlawful financial activity involving the authority (past, present or proposed) or failure to set or keep to a balanced budget.
- 5.38 The Officer appointed under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 also has overall responsibility for providing financial advice on all budgetary and accounting matters affecting the Council's corporate financial affairs. In the case of Caerphilly this officer is also the Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer.
- 5.39 The role and responsibilities of the S151 Officer are extensive and integral to the strategic management of the organisation as a whole. Some of the responsibilities of the S151 Officer cannot be delegated and without an appointed deputy the Council's abilities to meet its statutory requirements can be impacted.

Proposal to Create an Additional Post & designate as Deputy Section 151 Officer

- 5.40 The Council is seeking to appoint a Deputy Head of Financial Services & Deputy Section 151 Officer as an additional post to address the risk of not being able to meet certain statutory requirements should the Section 151 Officer be unavailable for any reason. This will provide much needed additional capacity to the Financial Services functions and will also support the delivery of the Council's key priorities through the provision of sound strategic financial advice.
- 5.41 The post will need to be evaluated but the total cost of the appointment inclusive of on costs is estimated to be circa £108k p.a.

Sickness

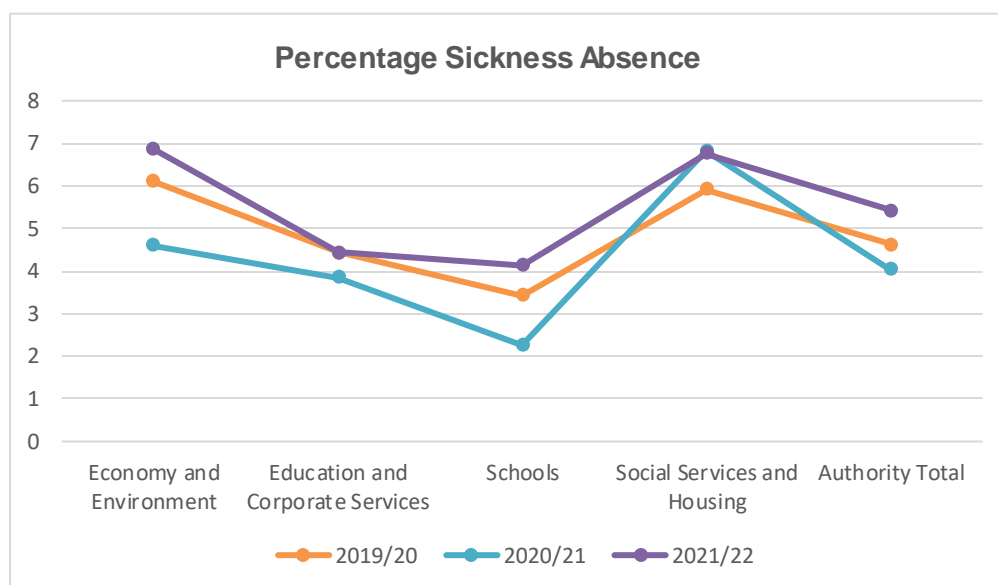
- 5.42 The Council's Managing Sickness Absence Procedure provides a structured framework to allow Managers to effectively manage sickness absence. The Procedure has also been adopted by all Schools. The purpose of the Procedure is to:
- Maximise employee attendance at work.
 - Support employees in returning to work in a timely manner.
 - Have a clear and agreed process for managing the sickness absence of all the Council's employees, which is applicable to all.
- 5.43 The following paragraphs provide an overview of levels of absence within the Council for the previous 3 financial years.

5.44 In 2021 / 22 the Council reported 14.12 days lost per full-time equivalent (FTE) Local Authority employee due to sickness absence including schools. The FTE days lost in 2020 / 21 were 10.0 and in 2019 / 20 were 11.98. Reporting Councils across Wales are reporting higher FTEs absence levels this year.

5.45 The table below provides the total percentage absence per Directorate for three financial years. Schools are reported separately for ease of reference for Members.

Directorate	% Sickness Absence		
	2019 / 20	2020 / 21	2021 / 22
Economy and Environment	6.10	4.61	6.86
Education and Corporate Services	4.43	3.85	4.43
Schools	3.42	2.26	4.13
Social Services and Housing	5.91	6.82	6.76
Authority Total	4.63	4.03	5.43

This information is also provided in graph format below for Members.



5.46 The table below provides the top 10 stated reasons for absence across the Council for the previous three financial years.

Top 10 Reasons of Absence for the Authority **Top 10 Ranking**

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Personal Stress; depression; anxiety; neurasthenia; mental health; fatigue	1	1	1
Other musculo-skeletal problems	2	2	3

Stomach; liver; kidney and digestion inc. gastroenteritis	3	4	4
Infections inc. colds & flu	4	8	5
Injury	5	5	9
Back and neck problems	6	6	6
Chest and respiratory inc. chest infections	7	9	7
Work related stress	8	7	10
Neurological including headaches & migraines	9	N/A	8
Eye; ear; nose & mouth/dental to inc. sinusitis	10	N/A	N/A
Covid	N/A	3	2
Heart, blood pressure and circulation	N/A	10	N/A

- 5.47 Members will note that apart from the introduction of Covid as a reason for absence, the rank order of reasons has remained fairly consistent across the 3 years.
- 5.48 Within People Services, the HR team provides advice and guidance to Managers in relation to all aspects of people management. Listed below are some of the other areas of support that are currently in place:
- 5.48.1 **A dedicated Managing Attendance Team** to support Managers to manage absence effectively and consistently across the Authority.
- 5.48.2 **An Occupational Health Unit**, with Occupational Health Physician, Physiotherapist and Nurse expertise provided to support the management of sickness absence.
- 5.48.3 **A confidential counselling service** offered via Care First that can be accessed by all employees.
- 5.48.4 **An Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021 – 24** is now in place which supports us to work with our employees to promote and facilitate good health and wellbeing, and to provide excellent services to those who need our support.
- 5.48.5 **A digital ‘Health Wall’** has been established featuring some of the links to organisations that provide expert information and advice for a number of health-related issues.
- 5.48.6 **Directorate Performance Assessments** also include sickness information broken down by Directorate and classified as either short term or long term which are kept under review by Senior Management on a cyclical basis.
- 5.49 Managing employee wellbeing remains a priority for Managers, but Members should be aware of the matters below that have resulted from the pandemic:
- Introduction of a new absence reason i.e. Covid and the many variants
 - Vaccinations and staff falling ill afterwards
 - Staff waiting much longer for NHS treatments

- The fit note process changed for a while where it was 28 days before they were required
- A Long Covid Protocol was introduced
- Managers may have had less time to attach to managing absences due to staff shortages and services needing to be provided to residents.

5.50 The Council's Managing Sickness Absence Procedure is currently being reviewed and will take account of any learning from the pandemic. Furthermore, officers are exploring an opportunity to bring in some further external assistance, seeking learning and potentially support from neighbouring local authorities where sickness levels are lower than in Caerphilly.

Cost of Living

5.51 Members will be aware that the UK has been experiencing a cost of living crisis since late 2021, caused predominantly by high inflation outstripping wage and benefit increases, which has been further exacerbated by recent tax increases, resulting in the fall in disposable incomes. This crisis is acutely affecting our communities and the need for targeted additional Council support is paramount. A separate report was presented to Cabinet on 26th September which set out our current position and presented a proposed package of additional support in order to guide and help our communities through these difficult financial conditions. The report also highlights that the corporate Cost of Living package of support, will be led by a recently appointed Cost of Living Co-ordinator.

5.52 The cost of living crisis is also affecting all of our employees financially in one way or another, leading to some making choices to stop working or to reduce their hours, which is impacting on recruitment and retention, which is already proving to be a significant challenge. The Council is naturally being asked by the Trade Unions to offer support to employees.

5.53 Since this report was first considered by Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in September, Cabinet have agreed to support the introduction of the Foundation Living Wage with effect from September 22nd 2022, some six months earlier than required. Cabinet have also agreed to introduce the 'Joint Protocol Mileage Rates in Local Authorities in Wales' with effect from 25th September 2022, to provide a temporary increase in mileage reimbursements costs in the short term to address current market volatility in fuel rates. The 2022/23 pay award will also now be introduced in time for the November and December payrolls where agreed by the national bodies.

5.54 The Corporate Director Social Services and Housing is leading on the cost of living crisis for residents and employees and together with the Head of People Services is consulting with the Trade Unions with regard to the latter.

Conclusion

5.55 There are many factors affecting the workforce which may impact on the Council's ability to deliver services. Whilst the Council will do what it can to respond to some of these local challenges, it will clearly be unable to influence many of the national and global factors which have increased the complexity and scale of the challenges being faced by local government and the public sector as a whole.

5.56 If the Council is to remain resilient and responsive to these challenges, the acquisition of the additional capacity proposed within this report is required. This will go some way to addressing some of the workforce challenges being faced and provide extra resource to focus on the things that matter most to our communities and our organisation.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 It is assumed that the additional investment being sought will provide the capacity that enables the organisation to meet the expectations currently placed upon it but each intervention will also be monitored to assess impact and where necessary refine the approach.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has not been completed as this report provides Members with an update on matters impacting on the workforce.

7.2 The Council has in place policies to support matters such as recruitment, sickness absence, pay and grading and terms and conditions, etc. which would have been assessed at the time of agreement and take Equalities related issues into account.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The total costs of progressing the proposals set out in paragraphs 5.18 to 5.40 are as follows:

Internal Recruitment Team	£358k
Deputy Chief Executive	£189k
Deputy Section 151 Officer	£108k
Total: -	£655k

8.2 There are currently 3 vacant Head of Service posts within the approved staffing structure as follows: -

Head of Business Improvement Services	£135k
Head of Education Planning & Strategy	£106k
Head of Prosperity	£135k
Total: -	£376k

8.3 It is proposed that the budgets for the above three vacant posts are redirected to part fund the proposals set out in this report. This will leave a balance of £279k to be funded and it is proposed that this is met through a permanent virement from the existing Miscellaneous Finance Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay Budget.

8.4 It should be noted that the proposals in the report will not result in any additional resources being required as they will be fully funded through the virement of existing budgets.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The personnel implications are included in the report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report was presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 27th September 2022 and the comments from the Committee are detailed within paragraphs 10.2 – 10.13.
- 10.2 Following an introduction from the Chief Executive which provided further details on the options listed in the report's recommendations, the UNISON Branch Secretary offered her comments for Committee consideration. The union representative highlighted the reduction in staff numbers at Caerphilly County Borough Council over the 17 years that she had worked for the council. Members heard about the pressures faced by a significant number of employees as some vacancies were not filled due to austerity and vacancy management. It was outlined how an internal recruitment team was fully supported as it was necessary to attract the best candidates for new roles and the union requested regular progress reports on this matter. The Branch Secretary also welcomed how the proposals in the report were to be funded through the virement of existing budgets.
- 10.3 One Member requested a breakdown of the leavers table contained in 5.13 of the report. The Member also asked about the emerging themes of the exit survey process and for details on the current structure of the Council's recruitment team. The Head of People Services advised Members that a breakdown of leavers would be circulated to the Committee outside of the meeting, analysis of the exit survey would need to be collated and then provided when the process had been in place for 3-6 months and that currently there was no specific dedicated recruitment team within Human Resources.
- 10.4 One Member queried the creation of new posts at the higher end of the salary scale whilst cutting front-line services. The Member also questioned the wisdom of not filling the 3 vacant Head of Service posts. The Chief Executive recognised the sensitivities outlined and advised Members that the priorities and pace for implementation set by Councillors and communities demanded greater capacity within the leadership structure. It was also highlighted that within the Council there were three statutory officers and that currently there was only a deputy for one of those positions.
- 10.5 One Member questioned the need to create two new posts to deputise for statutory officers. The Member also sought more information on the specific responsibilities associated with the new positions. The Chief Executive advised that there was not sufficient capacity within the Financial Services Team to designate Deputy Section 151 Officer responsibilities to. It was also outlined that if one of the three Corporate Directors were designated with Deputy Chief Executive duties, there would not be enough capacity at a leadership level to deliver the priorities at the pace demanded. Members were also given comparative details on the Corporate Management structure of other Local Authorities which were higher than the current leadership team at Caerphilly County Borough Council. The Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer advised Members that the role and responsibilities of the Section 151 Officer were set out in sections 5.35 – 5.39 of the report and that the proposed Deputy would provide resilience particularly during periods of absence. Furthermore, Members heard

how the Section 151 Officer needed additional support to deliver the Council's agenda at a time of significant financial challenges, and to ensure that sufficient strategic financial capacity was available to support the delivery of the Council's ambitious investment programme.

- 10.6 One Member asked if figures were available so that a comparison could be made between the model of using an external recruitment agency and having an internal team. The Head of People Services outlined how a recruitment agency had been used to fill one post and that the associated costs of using them would be circulated to Members. Members heard how suitable candidates for other posts within the Council would be missed if a recruitment agency was used on a post-by-post basis. The Member queried the use of only one recruitment agency. The Head of People Services outlined how a procurement process had been undertaken before engaging a recruitment agency and that the procedure had been costly and still required resources from Council staff, which then prompted the plans to develop an internal recruitment team.
- 10.7 One Member asked about the links to local colleges as part of the Workforce Development Strategy. The Head of People Services outlined how there were current links with external providers and that this had proved very beneficial when undertaking the recent recruitment for apprentices. Members heard how the proposed recruitment team would build on these existing links. The Member then asked about offering students work placements. The Head of People Services outlined how this was already happening and would be developed further in the future.
- 10.8 One Member queried why an honorarium could not be paid to officers to act-up and meet the statutory requirements of Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer on a temporary basis as required. The Member claimed that the Council had a shortage of staff at lower salary levels, and he could not support the proposed creation of the two new senior posts. The Chief Executive outlined how it was her professional opinion that additional capacity at a senior level was needed in order to deliver priorities such as positive intervention on the cost of living challenges and climate change at the pace demanded by Members. It was outlined how the organisation had not progressed during the recent leadership of an Acting Chief Executive as the Corporate Director given the temporary responsibility also had responsibility for a large Directorate. The Chief Executive advised that this was a choice for Members but outlined how it was her professional opinion that the Council was at risk of not meeting statutory requirements if this additional capacity was not put in place.
- 10.9 One Member thought that the report lacked a reshaped management model so that Committee Members could make a more informed opinion and queried how the associated services would be run in the future if the three vacant Head of Service posts were not filled as their budget had been redirected to fund the proposals under consideration. The Chief Executive gave Members an overview of the current responsibilities of the Corporate Management Team and outlined how priorities would be redistributed in the future if Members were minded to approve the proposed changes.
- 10.10 One Member advised that he could not recall the vacant Heads of Service posts being expressed as savings in previous budget reports but welcomed the virement of associated funding to the creation of the proposed new positions.

- 10.11 One Member raised questions on the part of the report relating to sickness absence. The Member requested a fuller breakdown including comparisons with other Local Authorities and also claimed that the data contained in the sickness/absence chart did not add-up. The Member also requested a breakdown of the oncosts highlighted in the salary range in section 5.34. The Head of Financial Services & Section 151 Officer advised that oncosts of 36% were paid on salary. Members were also informed that if the post is approved, the final salary will be a matter for Full Council to determine. The Head of People Services advised that the figures in the sickness absence chart were not simply calculated in a way that allowed them to add-up to the totals given and that more information would be provided on these calculations outside of the meeting.
- 10.12 One Member sought further information on the proposed recruitment team in regard to how the total number of 7 posts was reached and also the grading structure for these new positions. The Head of People Services advised that the number of team members was based on the potential workload of the Recruitment Team and that the grading structure reflected the duties and responsibilities for each post which would be set out in the specific job descriptions.
- 10.13 One Member commented on the impact of managing sickness better on delivering services and also queried the potential role of a Deputy Chief Executive. The Chief Executive outlined how additional capacity was needed to lead on the cost of living crisis, the climate change agenda, the Corporate Plan priorities and also helping to oversee the Place Shaping programme, for example. Members also heard how Audit Wales had played a monitoring role and had recognised the risks currently carried and believed that for an organisation the size of Caerphilly County Borough Council deputy statutory officers would be expected.
- 10.14 Having noted the content of the report, it was moved and seconded that recommendation 3.1 (iii) be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 6 for, 3 against and 2 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 1972

Author: Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
 Consultees: Dave Street, Corporate Director Social Services and Housing
 Richard (Ed) Edmunds, Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services
 Mark S Williams, Corporate Director Economy and Environment
 Cllr Sean Morgan, Leader of Council
 Cllr Nigel George, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Property Services
 Cllr Lindsay Whittle, Leader of Plaid Group
 Cllr Kevin Etheridge, Leader of Independent Group
 Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
 Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
 Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
 Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Members
 Unison, GMB and Unite Trade Unions



COUNCIL – 24TH NOVEMBER 2022

SUBJECT: PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES – ANNUAL LETTER 2021/22

REPORT BY: HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER



1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Council of the publication of the Annual Letter for 2021/2022 in respect of Caerphilly Council by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 To advise Council of the publication of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter for 2021/2022.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Council considers and notes the content of the Annual Letter.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To satisfy the Council's statutory duties under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) issues an Annual Letter to each Local Authority in Wales which sets out a summary of all complaints received and investigated by her office during 2021/2022 relating to that Authority. The Annual Letter issued in respect of Caerphilly is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 5.2 Members will note that last year the number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman about local authorities in general increased by 47% (compared to 20/21 figures) and are now well above pre pandemic levels. The letter notes it is likely that complaints to Ombudsman's office, and public services in general, were suppressed

during the pandemic, and that the expected 'rebound' effect is being seen. During this period, the Ombudsman intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) a similar proportion of complaints about public bodies, 18%, when compared with recent years. Intervention rates (where they have investigated complaints) for Local Authorities also remained at a similar level – 14% compared to 13% in recent years

- 5.3 The Ombudsman also received a high number of complaints relating to the Code of Conduct for Councillors last year, relating to both Principal Councils and Town and Community Councils with 20 referred to either the Adjudication Panel for Wales or local standards committees, due to evidence of a breach of the Code
- 5.4 In terms of the use of the proactive powers in the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019, this has resulted in the publication of the first Own Initiative Investigation report entitled Homelessness Reviewed. The report published in October last year made specific recommendations to the three investigated authorities, as well as suggestions to all other Local Authorities in Wales and Welsh Government. Some of these recommendations will bring about immediate change – updating factsheets and letter and assessment templates to ensure that key equality and human rights considerations are routinely embedded into processes for example – all the recommendations were designed to bring about tangible change to people using homelessness services in Wales.
- 5.5 The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) has also continued its work with public bodies in Wales last year with the adoption of the model complaints policy being extended to an initial tranche of Housing Associations and Natural Resources Wales; the aim being to implement this work across the Welsh public sector.
- 5.6 In addition to this, the CSA published information on complaints handled by local authorities for the first time. The data for 21/22 showed: - Over 15,000 complaints were recorded by Local Authorities - 4.88 for every 1000 residents. - Nearly half (46%) of those complaints were upheld. - About 75% were investigated within 20 working days. - About 8% of all complaints closed ended up being referred to PSOW. The CSA has also delivered 140 training sessions, completely free of charge, during the last financial year. The letter notes that the feedback has been excellent, and the training has been very popular and encourages Caerphilly County Borough Council to engage as fully as possible.
- 5.7 The letter also notes the new duties on political leaders and standards committees to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members and highlights the sharing of the learning from complaints between the Ombudsman's office, the Standards Committee and local authority officers.
- 5.8 Specifically in relation to the complaints for Caerphilly, the Ombudsman received 60 complaints compared to 46 last year broken down as follows with the previous years' figures in brackets.

Adult Social Services	6	(3)
Benefits Administration	1	(0)
Children's Social Services	8	(9)
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	1	(0)
Complaints Handling	10	(5)

Covid19	3	(0)
Education	1	(1)
Environment and Environmental Health	6	(4)
Finance and Taxation	0	(0)
Housing	8	(13)
Licensing	0	(0)
Planning and Building Control	11	(10)
Roads and Transport	3	(0)
Various Other	2	(1)
Total	60	(46)

- 5.9 The Complaint Outcomes are set out in section C with 7 referrals requiring early resolution/voluntary settlement. The comparison figures with other authorities in Wales is set out in section D.
- 5.10 The Letter also includes a summary of the Code of Conduct complaints relating to members of the Council and Town and Community Councils. In relation to Code of Conduct complaints for Caerphilly council there was no evidence of a breach in respect of 1 matter and 1 matter was referred to the Council's Standards Committee. There were 3 outcomes in relation to Town and Community Councils specifically Bedwas Trethomas and Machen Community Council, Blackwood Town Council and Rhymney Community Council all of which found no evidence of a breach.

Conclusion

- 5.11 Members will note that the Ombudsman has asked Councils to take the following actions
- Present the Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance & Audit Committee to assist members in their scrutiny of the Council's performance and share any feedback from the Cabinet and the Governance & Audit Committee with my office.
 - Continue to engage with the Complaints Standards work, accessing training for your staff, fully implementing the model policy, and providing complaints data.
 - Inform the Ombudsman of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters by 30 September.
- 5.12 Whilst the Ombudsman has asked that the Annual Letter be reported to Cabinet and the Governance and Audit Committee, this Council's reporting process is to the Standards Committee and full Council which provides all members with the ability to review the referrals to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
- 5.13 In relation to the work with the Complaints Standards Authority, officers from a cross section of service areas have undertaken training and further training has been sourced for April next year which is the earliest available date.

5.14 The Ombudsman will be advised of the presentation of this report to the Standards committee and Council together with the outcomes.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 No assumptions are necessary within this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 This report is for information and so there is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 This Report reflects the contents of the Annual Letter and therefore there has been no formal consultation on the content of the Report. A copy of the Report has been provided to the Consultees below.


11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019

Author: Lisa Lane Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Consultees: Christina Harrhy Chief Executive
Dave Street Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing
Richard (Ed) Edmunds Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Robert Tranter Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Stephen Harris Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Councillor Sean Morgan Leader
Councillor Lindsay Whittle Leader of Plaid Cymru
Councillor Kevin Etheridge Leader of the Independent Group
Councillor Nigel George Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Property

Appendix 1 Annual Letter 2021/2022

Ask for: Communications

 01656 641150

Date: August 2022

 communications@ombudsman.wales

Cllr. Sean Morgan
Caerphilly County Borough Council
By Email only: seanmorgan@caerphilly.gov.uk

Annual Letter 2021/22

Dear Councillor Morgan

I am pleased to provide you with the Annual letter (2021/22) for Caerphilly County Borough Council which deals with complaints relating to maladministration and service failure, complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for Councillors and the actions being taken to improve public services

This is my first annual letter since taking up the role of Public Services Ombudsman in April 2022, and I appreciate that the effects of the pandemic are still being felt by all public bodies in Wales. Our office has not been immune from this, with records numbers of cases being referred to us over the last two years. The strong working relationships between my Office and local authorities continues to deliver improvements in how we are dealing with complaints and ensuring that, when things go wrong, we are learning from that and building stronger public services.

Complaints relating to Maladministration & Service Failure

Last year the number of complaints referred to us regarding Local Authorities increased by 47% (compared to 20/21 figures) and are now well above pre-pandemic levels. It is likely that complaints to my office, and public services in general, were suppressed during the pandemic, and we are now starting to see the expected 'rebound' effect.

During this period, we intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) a similar proportion of complaints about public bodies, 18%, when compared with recent years. Intervention rates (where we have investigated complaints) for Local Authorities also remained at a similar level – 14% compared to 13% in recent years.

Complaints relating to the Code of Conduct for Councillors

We also received a high number of Code of Conduct complaints last year, relating to both Principal Councils and Town and Community Councils. A record number (20) were referred to either the Adjudication Panel for Wales or local standards committees, due to evidence of a breach of the Code.

Supporting improvement of public services

In addition to managing record levels of complaints, we also continued our work using our proactive powers in the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019. Specifically undertaking our first Own Initiative Investigation and continuing our work on the Complaints Standards Authority.

October 2021 saw the publication of the first own initiative investigation in Wales: [Homelessness Reviewed](#). The investigation featured three Local Authorities and sought to scrutinise the way Homelessness assessments were conducted. The report made specific recommendations to the investigated authorities, as well as suggestions to all other Local Authorities in Wales and Welsh Government. Some of these recommendations will bring about immediate change – updating factsheets and letter and assessment templates to ensure that key equality and human rights considerations are routinely embedded into processes for example – all the recommendations were designed to bring about tangible change to people using homelessness services in Wales.

The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) continued its work with public bodies in Wales last year. The model complaints policy has already been adopted by local authorities and health boards in Wales, we have now extended this to an initial tranche of Housing Associations and Natural Resources Wales. The aim being to implement this work across the Welsh public sector.

In addition to this, the CSA published information on complaints handled by local authorities for the [first time](#) – a key achievement for this work. The data for 21/22 showed:

- Over 15,000 complaints were recorded by Local Authorities
- 4.88 for every 1000 residents.
- Nearly half (46%) of those complaints were upheld.
- About 75% were investigated within 20 working days.
- About 8% of all complaints closed ended up being referred to PSOW.

The CSA has now implemented a model complaints policy with nearly 50 public bodies, and delivered 140 training sessions, completely free of charge, during the last financial year. The feedback has been excellent, and the training has been very popular - so I would encourage Caerphilly County Borough Council to engage as fully as possible.

Complaints made to the Ombudsman

A summary of the complaints of maladministration/service failure received relating to your Council is attached, along with a summary of the Code of Conduct complaints relating to members of the Council and the Town & Community Councils in your area.

In light of the new duties on political leaders and standards committees to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members, we look forward to working with you, your Monitoring Officer and standards committees to share any learning from the complaints we receive and to support your authority's work.

I would also welcome feedback on your Governance & Audit Committee's review of your authority's ability to handle complaints effectively so that we can take this into account in our work and support its work on the handling of complaints.

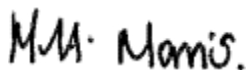
Finally, can I thank you and your officials for the positive way that local authorities have engaged with my Office to enable us to deliver these achievements during what has been a challenging year for everyone. I very much look forward to continuing this work and collaboration to ensure we further improve public services across Wales.

Further to this letter can I ask that your Council takes the following actions:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance & Audit Committee to assist members in their scrutiny of the Council's performance and share any feedback from the Cabinet and the Governance & Audit Committee with my office.
- Continue to engage with our Complaints Standards work, accessing training for your staff, fully implementing the model policy, and providing complaints data.
- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters by 30 September.

This correspondence is copied to the Chief Executive of your Council and to your Contact Officer. Finally, a copy of all Annual Letters will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Morris

Public Services Ombudsman

cc. Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive, Caerphilly County Borough Council.

By Email only: harrhc@caerphilly.gov.uk

Factsheet

Appendix A - Complaints Received

Local Authority	Complaints Received	Received per 1000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	14	0.20
Bridgend County Borough Council	55	0.37
Caerphilly County Borough Council	60	0.33
Cardiff Council*	182	0.50
Carmarthenshire County Council	54	0.29
Ceredigion County Council	52	0.72
Conwy County Borough Council	27	0.23
Denbighshire County Council	34	0.36
Flintshire County Council	99	0.63
Gwynedd Council	39	0.31
Isle of Anglesey County Council	29	0.41
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	27	0.45
Monmouthshire County Council	20	0.21
Neath Port Talbot Council	45	0.31
Newport City Council	40	0.26
Pembrokeshire County Council	39	0.31
Powys County Council	55	0.42
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	51	0.21
Swansea Council	71	0.29
Torfaen County Borough Council	18	0.19
Vale of Glamorgan Council	61	0.46
Wrexham County Borough Council	71	0.52
Total	1143	0.36

* inc 17 Rent Smart Wales

Appendix B - Received by Subject

Caerphilly County Borough Council	Complaints Received	% Share
Adult Social Services	6	10%
Benefits Administration	1	2%
Children's Social Services	8	13%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	1	2%
Complaints Handling	10	17%
Covid19	3	5%
Education	1	2%
Environment and Environmental Health	6	10%
Finance and Taxation	0	0%
Housing	8	13%
Licensing	0	0%
Planning and Building Control	11	18%
Roads and Transport	3	5%
Various Other	2	3%
Total	60	

Appendix C - Complaint Outcomes (* denotes intervention)

County/County Borough Councils	Out of Jurisdiction	Premature	Other cases closed after initial consideration	Early Resolution/ voluntary settlement*	Discontinued	Other Reports- Not Upheld	Other Reports Upheld*	Public Interest Report*	Total
Caerphilly County Borough Council	9	16	26	7	0	0	0	0	58
% Share	16%	28%	45%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%	

Appendix D - Cases with PSOW Intervention

	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	13	0%
Bridgend County Borough Council	7	54	13%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	7	58	12%
Cardiff Council	45	159	28%
Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales	1	16	6%
Carmarthenshire County Council	7	49	14%
Ceredigion County Council	13	46	28%
Conwy County Borough Council	2	24	8%
Denbighshire County Council	4	33	12%
Flintshire County Council	15	94	16%
Gwynedd Council	6	41	15%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	3	28	11%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	2	26	8%
Monmouthshire County Council	2	21	10%
Neath Port Talbot Council	5	45	11%
Newport City Council	4	36	11%
Pembrokeshire County Council	2	40	5%
Powys County Council	7	55	13%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	3	45	7%
Swansea Council	10	76	13%
Torfaen County Borough Council	2	20	10%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	9	62	15%
Wrexham County Borough Council	4	67	6%
Total	160	1108	14%

Appendix E - Code of Conduct Complaints

County/County Borough Councils	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Refer to Standards Committee	Withdrawn	Total
Caerphilly County Borough Council	0	1	0	0	1	0	2

Appendix F - Town/Community Council Code of Complaints

Town/Community Council	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Refer to Standards Committee	Withdrawn	Total
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen Community Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Blackwood Town Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Rhymney Community Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2021/2022. These complaints are contextualised by the number of people each health board reportedly serves.

Appendix B shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix C shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2021/2022. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix D shows Intervention Rates for all Local Authorities in 2021/2022. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

Appendix E shows the outcomes of Code Of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2021/2022. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix F shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.

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COUNCIL – 24TH NOVEMBER 2022

SUBJECT: REGIONAL MARKET STABILITY REPORT 2022 - 2025

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Each Regional Partnership Board (RPB) in Wales is required under Section 9 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 to publish a regional overview of the stability of the commissioned services in that area.
- 1.2 This report takes an overview of the current position of the registered services in Gwent with a specific focus on the relative 'stability' of the services commissioned. This is known as a 'Market Stability Report' (MSR).
- 1.3 This report seeks the views of Council to:
 - a. As required under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) accept and agree the Market Stability Report for the local authority area.
 - b. The Local Authority continue to engage with Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and support the development of the regional Area Plan, where actions will be identified setting out how priorities will be addressed.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The MSR is a statutory document which each statutory partner is required by Welsh Government to produce on a three yearly cyclical basis. A regional overview report must also be published on the same timescale.
- 2.2 Local Authorities are required under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 to work in partnership with health boards to produce a regional MSR.
- 2.3 The MSR sets out the extent to which the commissioned services are stable within the regional and local footprints to support people in need of care and support.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 For Council to endorse:

3.1.1 As required under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 accept and agree the MSR for the local authority area.

3.1.2 The Authority continues to engage with RPB to support the development of the Regional Area Plan which will set out actions that address how priorities will be met.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The MSR has been completed by the RPB and in close consultation with the statutory partners including the 5 local authorities, the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB), third sector organisations and local citizens and service providers.

4.2 To ensure Caerphilly County Borough Council fulfils its duty under the SSWB Act.

5. THE REPORT

Care Homes

The 6 commissioning organisations in Gwent currently commission 106 care homes and 109 domiciliary care providers for older adults across the region. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were few concerns with regards to care home vacancies and the financial viability of providers. Most providers require at least 90% occupancy to remain financially viable. Care home bed vacancies are monitored on a weekly basis at local and regional levels. However, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the provision of care and support in Gwent.

The residential care home market is, however, generally stable, although Gwent currently has elevated vacancies. However, there are growing signs of vacancies beginning to return to levels previously common prior to the pandemic. A significant increase in vacancies occurred due to the effect of COVID-19, prolonged periods of fewer admissions, suspension of admissions due to infection and prevention control measures and some resulting from the advent of escalating concerns/provider performance issues. There was also some anecdotal evidence of a possible change in attitude towards choosing to live in a care home and this may also have been an additional factor. Staff isolation requirements meant that homes also experienced significant staff shortages thus impacting on providers' ability to accept admissions.

Domiciliary Care

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing shortages, domiciliary care services are currently at critical levels and are at times unable to fully meet demand. Staff continue to leave the sector due to poor pay, terms and conditions and costs of employment (such as driving and registration). In recent months this situation has been further exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis and particular the rising cost of fuel. Staff shortages have increased delayed transfers of care from local hospitals, creating a bottleneck across the wider system. There is currently a marked increase of individuals requiring care at home and it is unsure as to whether this will continue following the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also concern about the number of packages of care that are returned to commissioners, - over 70 providers returning more than 950 weekly

hours per week. This causes commissioners to prioritise the most vulnerable citizens with complex needs.

Partnership approach with care homes and domiciliary care agencies

Throughout the pandemic regular, often weekly, webinars were held separately with care homes and domiciliary care agencies. This helped to build a positive working relationship with these key organisations to understand and to support them to continue to deliver good quality, responsive services during the pandemic. It also provided a useful platform to engage providers in critical messages about infection and prevention control and to consider business continuity issues. The seminars continue to be held monthly and are much valued by LA's, ABUHB and service providers alike.

This regional approach adopted in Gwent has resulted in developmental work primarily in relation to market stability, and specifically to support workforce recruitment and retention across the social care sector. Commissioners in Gwent currently pay some of the highest rates to providers in Wales. The removal of subsidies from Welsh Government has been a challenge, alongside the rising costs of service provision.

Emotional well-being of the health and social care workforce

Gwent MSR has identified that there is a need to further support the emotional wellbeing of its vulnerable population. The emphasis is now placed on 'what matters' to an individual and commissioning practices will need to change to reflect this. The further development of preventative services is also key to maintaining the independence of individuals.

Mental health and learning disability services

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health support for adults and children, with waiting times for the Child & Adolescent Mental Health service (CAMHS) increasing. Early intervention has been identified as an area for improvement, as has supporting people with learning disabilities to live independently in their community alongside earlier diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In addition, ABUHB are finding it difficult to place complex people with learning disabilities closer to home and therefore this is a growing commissioning issue. Gwent's Shared Lives service is set to expand further with a focus on mental health and learning disability services. Gwent Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Partnership aims to establish what actions are needed to improve the lives of people in Gwent. Finally, a robust action plan has been agreed between all commissioners and the Regional Partnership Team that will pick up commissioning related issues across the piece.

Children's Services

The regional strategic priorities for children and families in Gwent are:

- To improve outcomes for children and young people with complex needs through earlier intervention, community-based support, and placement closer to home.
- There is a need to strengthen services and partnerships around a single front door approach to reduce onward referrals between organisations and establish the right intervention at the right time.

- The RPB will continue to implement the principles of NEST/NYTH across all services. Co-production, integration and seamless transitions to adult services remain a key objective.

Children’s services are currently insufficient to meet the needs of the region in terms of residential services and foster placements. Demand for foster services currently outstrips supply and it is often difficult to source the right type of placement. The lack of appropriate residential services results in children being placed out of County and Gwent LA’s are now focussing on increasing capacity through in-house and external developments and investing in preventative services.

All 5 LA’s work in partnership with providers to develop individualised packages of care for local children, supporting independence and resilience. Excessive profits for some independent providers are considerably higher than expected due to a lack of competition and viable alternatives. However, Welsh Government’s policy commitment to ‘eliminating profit’ in children’s residential and foster care could inadvertently act as a deterrent to future investment. The successful transition to a ‘not for profit’ model will need to be managed appropriately to avoid further pressure on local authority children’s services. A robust bid for Integrated Care Funding has been developed and submitted. This focuses on building capacity to develop alternatives to independently provided and commissioned services in line with Welsh Government policy.

5.1 Conclusion

In Gwent, individuals have a choice of the services available to meet their needs. However, the stability of the market in adult services is likely to be put to the test during financial year 2022/2023 as increasing cost pressures mount, allied to long running and entrenched recruitment and retention difficulties; and this will further expose the sector to increased levels of risk, this is especially so in the adult domiciliary and residential care markets.

In mental health and learning disability services there is a renewed opportunity for the regional team and commissioning organisations to work closely to develop a framework for action and to take on several key commissioning related activities to further support people at local and regional levels.

In children’s services a careful balance will need to be struck between ensuring that the right level of services for looked after children are commissioned close to home and to reduce reliance on high profit organisations often far away from people’s homes.

Each of the areas summarised above will be picked up and considered as part of the area planning process and where at all possible mitigating measures will be taken to minimise any associate risks.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 None made.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 None anticipated.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications linked to the recommendations of this report. However, future decision-making may have financial implications for statutory organisations within the RPB.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 This report came before the Social Services Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 11th October 2022. The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Social Care.
- 10.2 Following a comprehensive discussion members supported the recommendations unanimously with no amendments requested.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

Author: Phil Diamond, Head Regional Partnership
phil.diamond@tofaen.gov.uk

Consultees: David Street, Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing
Cllr Sean Morgan, The Leader
Cllr James Pritchard, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Shayne Cook, Cabinet Member for Housing
Councillor Elaine Forehead, Cabinet Member for Social Care
Councillor Nigel George, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Property
Councillor Chris Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces
Councillor Julian Simmonds, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation
Councillor Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member Finance and Performance
Cllr Phillipa Leonard, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection
Cllr Donna Cushing, Chair Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Marina Chacon-Dawson, Vice Chair Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director Economy and Environment
Jo Williams, Head of Adult Services
Gareth Jenkins, Head of Children's Services
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Market Stability Report

Other background papers: Gwent Population Needs Assessment

Gwent Regional Partnership Board
Market Stability Report
March 2022



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FOREWORD

MELANIE MINTY, PROVIDER REPRESENTATIVE GWENT REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD

I am delighted to introduce the Gwent Regional Market Position Statement for the period June 2022 to April 2025. This is the first time that commissioning bodies and Regional Partnership Boards in Wales have been required to produce and publish such a wide-ranging market oversight report.

Firstly, I must commend Gwent for their partnership approach with commissioned services which I know is much appreciated by care homes, domiciliary care agencies and 3rd sector bodies alike. Prior to the COVID pandemic partnership working was well developed in the region and this provided a head start when it came to working through the many and varied issues brought about during the 2020 to 2022 period. The weekly webinars were particularly valued.

This report paints a mixed picture of the opportunities and threats to a healthy and vibrant mixed economy of services in the region. Following COVID the twin threat faced by providers is the cost-of-living crisis and the chronic lack of staff wishing to work in social care and health. Both issues are hitting the domiciliary and adult care home care markets particularly hard. Again, the sector is grateful for the partnership approach adopted in Gwent, as well as the willingness of commissioners to find solutions to difficult issues and to make arrangements quickly and effectively to pass on any additional funding that is made available either via annual uplifts or by special grants provided by Welsh Government.

There is no doubt that this is a difficult period for social care and health services in the UK and Gwent is no different in experiencing renewed and continuing challenge. However, the strength and quality of the partnerships in this region can do nothing but help the situation. I am sure that the coming months will be testing times, but solutions will be found, and the sector will return to being the responsive, sustainable and viable sector that we all need.

I hope that anyone reading this report will find it of interest and value and that this will deepen understanding across the population of the social care and healthcare systems.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 provides the legal framework for improving the wellbeing of people, including unpaid carers who need care and support, and for transformation of social services in Wales. Section 144B of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to prepare and publish market stability reports and makes provision for regulations setting out the form these must take, matters to be included, and the prescribed period for carrying out market stability assessments. These matters are set out in the Partnership Arrangements (Amendment) and Regulated Services (Market Stability Reports) (Wales) Regulations 2021.

The Act also requires Regional Partnership Boards to complete a market stability report (MSR) on a regional footprint to help local authorities and ABUHB understand the dynamics of the market for regulated services in our area. This MSR is structured in accordance with Welsh Government's '*Code of Practice and guidance on the exercise of social services functions and partnership arrangements in relation to market stability reports*'. The Code of Practice states that: "*Market stability reports are designed to give a high-level overview and assessment of the overall sufficiency of care and support, and of the stability of the market for regulated services.*" The Code of Practice recognises that there will continue to be a need for more detailed Market Position Statements and commissioning strategies for specific services and segments of the market.

This MSR highlights the current provision and will help assess issues such as the sufficiency, quality, and sustainability of regulated services within Gwent. A regulated service is those listed in the Schedule to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Currently these are:

- Care home services (adult and children's)
- Secure accommodation service (for children)
- Residential family centre services
- Adoption services
- Fostering services
- Adult placement ('Shared Lives') service
- Advocacy services
- Domiciliary support services

1.1 Population Needs Assessment

This Market Stability Report (MSR) links with the findings of the Population Needs Assessment (PNA) which sets out current and projected need and demand for care in local communities and the range and type of services that will be required to meet that demand. This MSR has been produced in partnership with each of the 6 commissioning organisations that make up the Gwent Regional Partnership Board: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Newport City Council, Torfaen County Borough

Council, and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board; and covers regulated services as well as independent, private and third sector provision. The MSR and PNA documents complement each other and provide a comprehensive picture of current and projected demand and supply, but will not duplicate information, and the MSR should be read alongside the PNA. The MSR will also be a useful tool for providers and potential providers of regulated services to enable a better understanding of the region and help to inform their own strategic thinking about future investment. It will also be of interest to local communities, as it provides transparency about the use of resources and how decisions about service provision are made.

The Gwent Population Needs Assessment can be found on the Gwent RPB website www.gwentrpb.wales

1.2 Context

It is important to recognise that this report was developed and written in the immediate aftermath of the global COVID 19 pandemic. The pandemic has had a significant impact on people who need care and support, unpaid carers, and the wider workforce. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on the stability of providers and increasing the long standing, historical pressures faced by the sector. Reduced funding for local authorities, health board budget pressures, increased demand for services, payments for providers that have not kept pace with rising costs and workforce recruitment and retention have all been magnified by the pandemic.

It should also be noted that the market has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether these changes are long or short-term remains to be seen, but time is required to allow the market to settle and to determine what will become the 'normal profile of services in future.

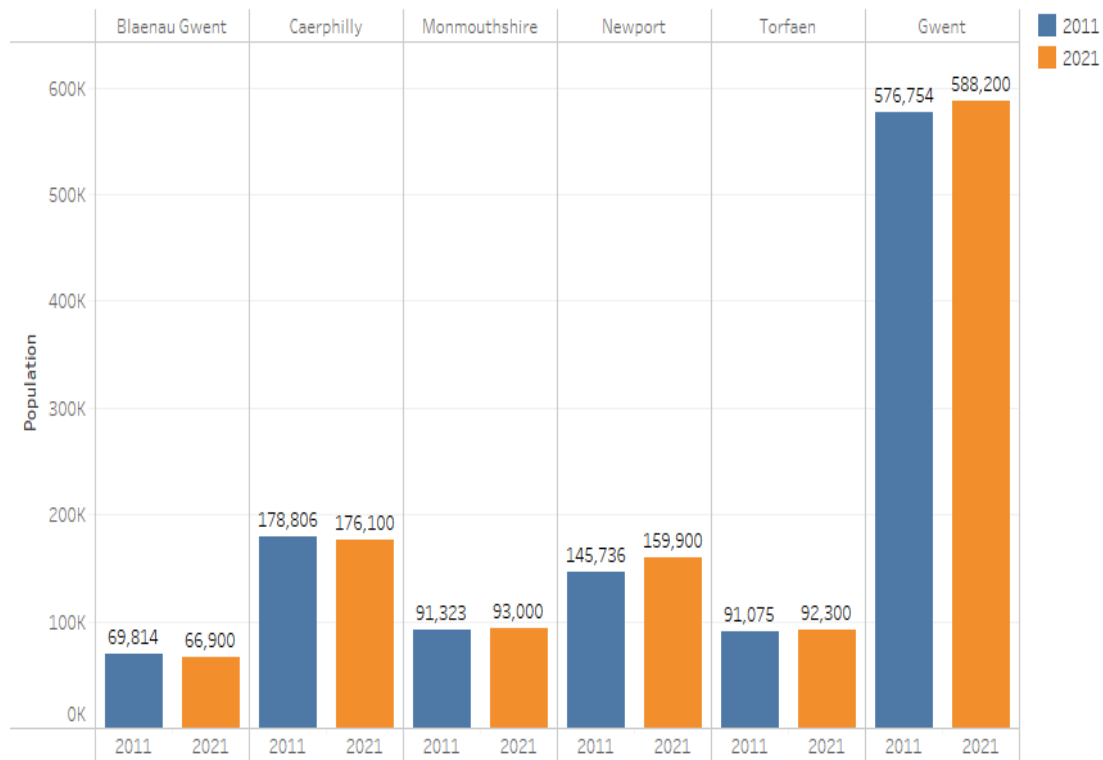
The wider national policy context identifies a long-term drive to help people to live independently in the community and to reduce reliance on residential care. This is described in the Welsh Government's policy paper "*A Healthier Wales*". We have an ageing population across Wales, and this is changing the structure of our population and will bring both opportunities and challenges for the economy, services, and society at both a local and national level. Social care services will not be sustainable without better prevention and community support. Prevention and early intervention are key factors for improving wellbeing, as set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and more recently in the Welsh Government's '*A Healthier Wales plan*' which was updated in 2021.

The effect of the pandemic, subsequent 'lock-downs' with infection, prevention and control measures put in place for the public's protection, has impacted upon the opportunity to involve citizens in a systematic way in the development of this MSR. However, the MSR draws upon the considerable engagement undertaken by the regional Public Service Board and Regional Partnership Board in developing the Wellbeing Assessment and PNA; and the Gwent Citizens' Panel has also been consulted and kept up to date with the current issues facing the sector, including the stability, of social care markets across Gwent.

This report has been developed in consultation with the active participation of the 6 commissioning organisations and service providers via regular regional weekly webinars and local engagement initiatives.

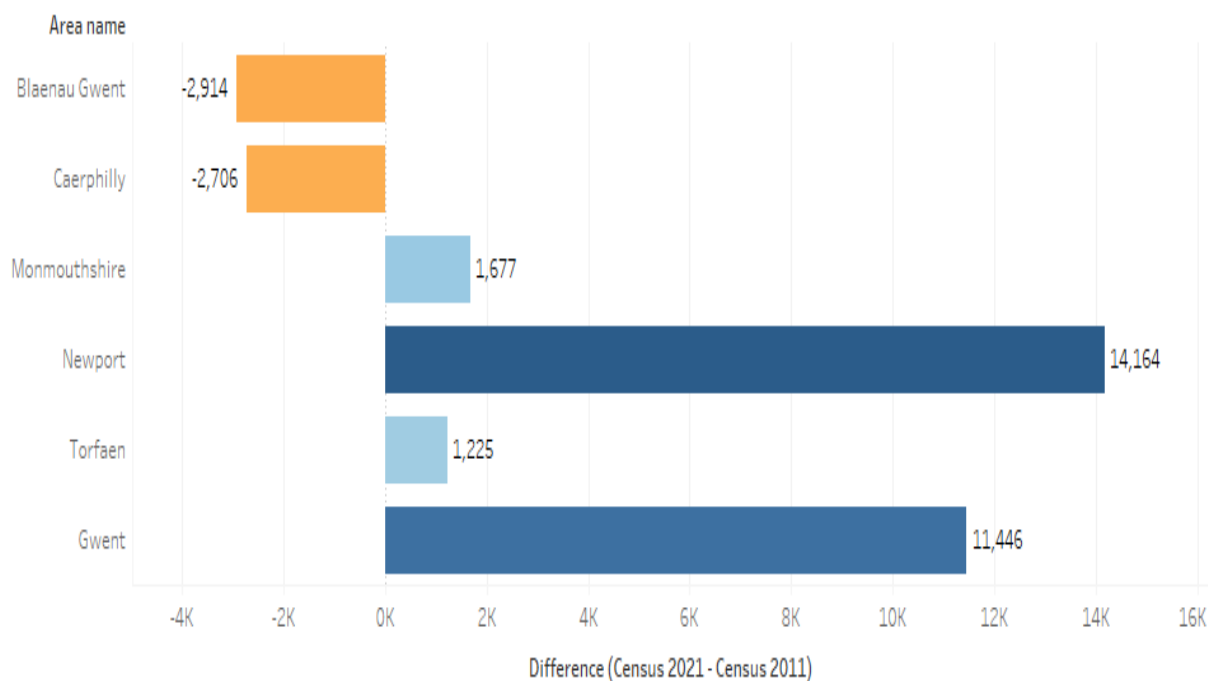
Census 2021 vs 2011 population estimates

Census 2021 vs 2011 population estimates



Difference between Census 2021 and 2011 population estimates

Difference between Census 2021 and 2011 population estimates



2. ADULT SERVICES

2.1 Sufficiency Assessment: Population Needs Assessment (PNA)

This section highlights the gaps and emerging themes in terms of sufficiency of care from the Population Needs Assessment (PNA)

Population Group	Older Adults
Gaps and Emerging Themes	<p>Recruitment and retention of staff is a key challenge across social care and health and is severely impacting both domiciliary and residential care and in relation to persons changing needs and complexities within the community.</p> <p>There is an increasing need to further support the emotional wellbeing for older people, through reducing loneliness and isolation issues and providing multi-agency early intervention and community support to boost wellbeing.</p> <p>An ageing population means that there will be an increasing demand for care and support services including a diverse range of housing options.</p>

It is important to continue to strengthen partnerships, services, and co-production models, to improve the outcomes for people with care and support needs.

A multi-agency partnership approach is needed to ensure appropriate housing and accommodation for older people.

The RPB will need to strengthen partnerships and practices across health, social care, and independent/third sector to ensure we are supporting people to remain well at home for as long as possible, and people are able to return home from hospital, through an enhanced reablement approach.

The complexity of people's needs will continue to grow as the number of people living with dementia and multiple co-morbidities increases. The Gwent PNA suggests predictions indicating that localities can expect increases in people over 65 diagnosed with dementia, ranging from 62.1% increase in Blaenau Gwent to 97.1% increase predicted in Monmouthshire, over the period 2013 to 2035.

2.2 Regional Commissioning Group

The Gwent Regional Commissioning Group comprise the commissioning leads from each of the 6 commissioning organisations in Gwent. It is co-chaired by a Director of Social Services and an Executive Director of ABUHB. The Group is responsible to the Gwent RPB and reports to the Board regularly.

The RCG has met since 2016 and has been responsible for the delivery of several aspects of the Part 9 requirements under the SSWBA:

- Section 33 Framework Agreement Care Home Accommodation for Older People in Gwent
- Regional Framework Agreement for the provision of Care Home Accommodation for Older People in Gwent
- Regional Framework methodology for care home fees in Gwent
- Review of Day Services in Gwent
- Review of Direct Payments in Gwent
- Development and implementation of Gwent-wide medication policy
- Market Stability Report 2022-25

The RCG has recently reset its focus following the pandemic and is due to report back into RPB in the early autumn. The areas of focus will include:

- 1000 beds initiative
- Implementation of findings of the MSR and PNA

- Review of fees methodology
- Review of contract management methodologies
- Third Sector strategic engagement and increased emphasis on 'social value' and 'rebalancing'
- Workforce initiatives such as Gwent Consortium and Micro Carers
- Childrens Services – reducing profit
- Mental Health and Learning Disabilities – new joint commissioning programme
- Further opportunities for pooled fund arrangements
- Increased regional co-ordination of some commissioning functions

2.3 Provider engagement

All 6 organisations in Gwent host regular provider forums for domiciliary care and residential providers. The frequency of these forums increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and additional regional provider fora were held weekly at a local level. Commissioners and monitoring officers maintain regular communication with providers and both report that engagement has been productive in identifying issues and encouraging resolutions. Locality based fora have concentrated on maintaining business continuity, infection prevention and control measures and supporting providers with PPE, as well as the administration of the hardship fund and other specific hypothecated grants, made to social care organisations by Welsh Government.

The regional approach to collaboration has resulted in several strands of developmental work primarily in the area of market stability and particularly to support workforce recruitment and retention. This work has also made an important contribution to the regional civil contingencies response to the pandemic and the unprecedented situations that have arisen as a result.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, regular multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meetings have also been instituted. MDT meetings are led by Public Health Wales with vital input from local authority environmental health teams, commissioning teams, ABUHB colleagues and GPs to discuss ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks with providers. This frequent, open communication has ensured providers have been supported in a consistent and positive manner.

Engagement with service provider groups continues to be encouraged in each locality and regionally. The region believes strongly in taking a co-productive approach to service design and delivery. Examples of a regional co-productive approach include

- design and implementation of a Regional Fee Methodology template.
- Regional contract monitoring
- Workforce based initiatives to reduce the impact of staff shortages in Domiciliary care
- Development of a regional adult advocacy commissioning strategy

Regular communication with providers has enhanced and strengthened relationships and led to a number of emerging key issues being identified by providers:

- A marked reduction in the number of admissions to care homes. It is unknown yet whether this will continue after the pandemic and to what extent.
- Recruitment and retention of staff has been further exacerbated by the pandemic, and general workforce challenges. This is particularly acute in the domiciliary care sector.
- Providers are not able to recruit new staff, so growth and responding to increases in demand has been difficult; however, there were some early signs that the situation appeared to have stabilised; but unfortunately, the cost of living crises and the exponential rise in the cost of petrol and diesel has further exacerbated the number of staff being forced to leave the sector.

Local authorities have continued to liaise with citizens in receipt of care services and relevant stakeholder groups (including third sector organisations) when undertaking any proposed new or changes to service provision. Examples of this include day services reviews and regional advocacy provision for adults and children.

The region also has a Citizen Panel linked to the RPB and this remains actively involved in commenting on and influencing planning and development within the region. There was considerable engagement with citizens when developing the PNA but given the Covid-19 pandemic, was through more virtual means. As the situation improves and restrictions ease, local authorities will continue to look to engage with service users in a cohesive and meaningful way.

2.4 Market Sufficiency

a. Care Homes for Older Adults

Gwent has a range of care homes for older people, ranging from large purpose-built homes to smaller services in converted accommodation. [Local authorities and ABUHB in Gwent currently commission 106 homes across the region.](#)

The 'categories' of care have shifted over the years to meet the changing needs of the population i.e., move from general residential to specialist nursing dementia care (EMI) residential and nursing. Also, there is evidence of increasing acuity of need as well as increased requirement for dementia care. Eligibility criteria is generally greater, as evidenced by the numbers of new requests for packages of care in the community aligned with requests for additional hours to existing packages of care. Citizens now have several alternatives to moving into a residential care home. An emphasis on 'what matters' conversations, has led to individuals often choosing to remain at home for as long as possible. The voice of the citizen has gained increased imperative, and this will be enhanced over time. Therefore, it is likely that commissioning practice will need to reflect the expressed needs of the population more so than has hitherto been possible.

In most areas the health and social care residential market is currently stable, with a sufficiency of supply in residential beds. However, despite record vacancies across the sector there is still some evidence from provider that in some areas a lack of supply of dementia nursing beds may arise. As evidenced in the Gwent Public Needs

Assessment, the diagnosis rates of dementia are likely to increase due predicted population longevity.

Fig 1: Gwent Care Home Bed Vacancies

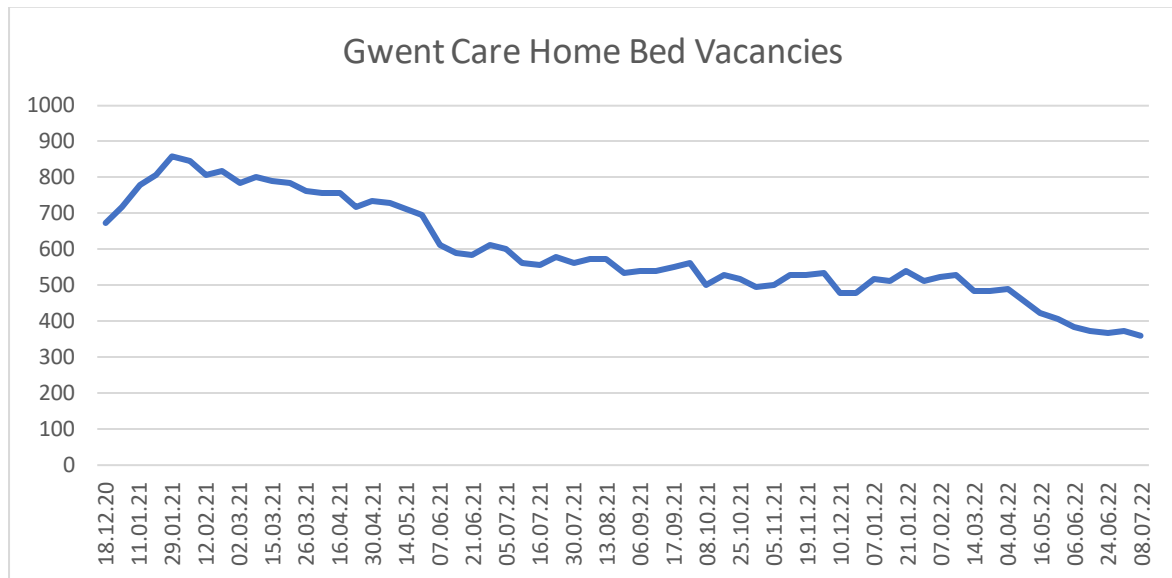


Fig 1 represents the number of care home bed vacancies across Gwent from December 2020 until July 2022. The number of vacancies has reduced since the start of the pandemic, but experienced small fluctuations due to COVID outbreaks.

Fig 2: Bed Vacancies per category

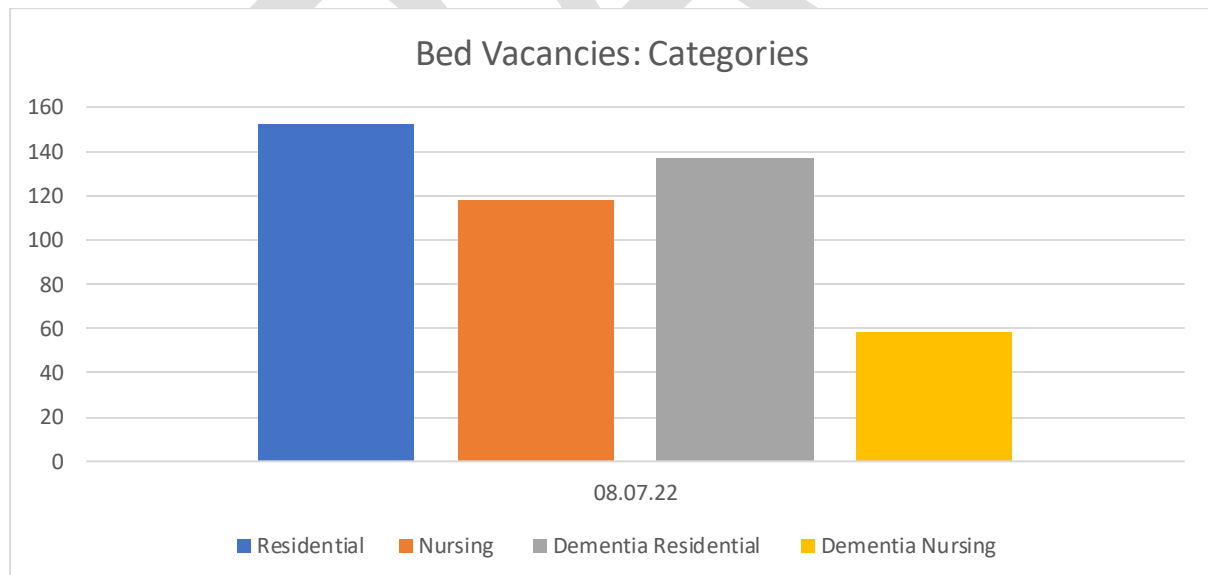


Fig 2 refers to the number of bed vacancies per category, as of 8th July 2022. As illustrated, the number of available dementia nursing beds remain lower than other categories. As the number of people living with dementia increase as predicted by the PNA, the demand for such beds is also likely to increase. These figures are an estimation of the available beds in each category, as each care home is able to amend the category of the bed depending on the needs of the individual, and the COVID

status of the home. Amendments are also made to accommodate individuals who require isolation following a positive COVID result.

Prior to the pandemic, the average occupancy level across care homes was 90% plus, but this has reduced significantly. Monmouthshire fell to around 81% in February 2022. A reduction in capacity has affected homes, and some remain at around 40% occupancy.

Fig 3: Care Home Occupancy Rates: Financial Risk Analysis July 2022

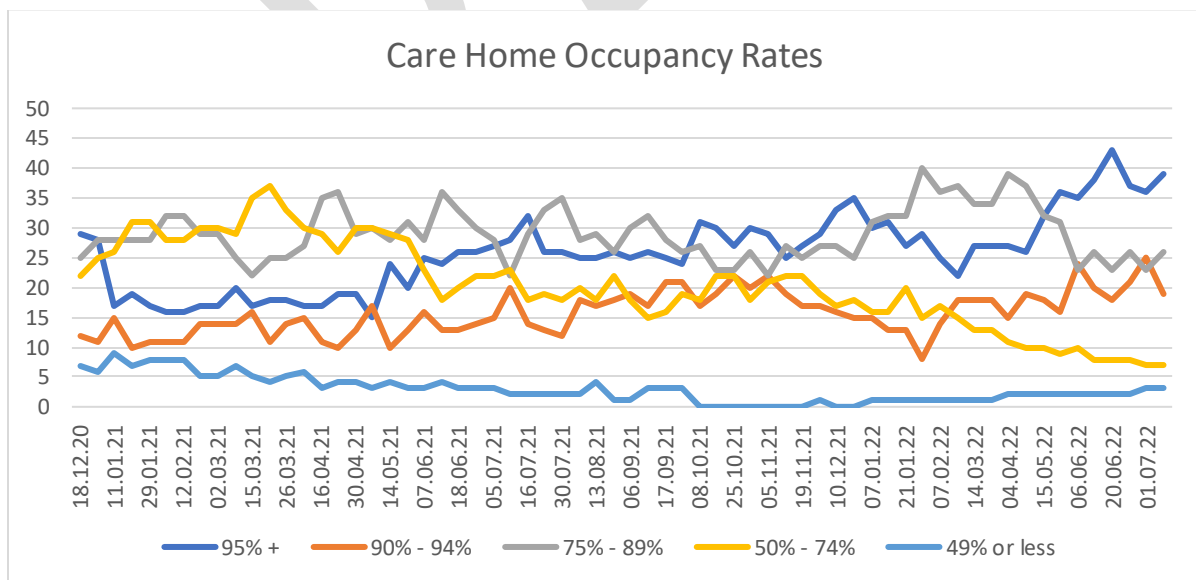


Fig 3 represents the identified financial risks to Care Homes in Gwent, based on occupancy levels on 8th July 2022. During engagement at provider forums, care homes have reported experiencing financial difficulty should they continually operate below 90% capacity which has implications for the financial sustainability of the home. Following the end of the Welsh Government Hardship Fund payment, Care Home

providers have expressed concern at the financial viability of their homes should the occupancy rates remain low. However, overall, this is generally an improving picture.

Fig 4: LA Bed Vacancies

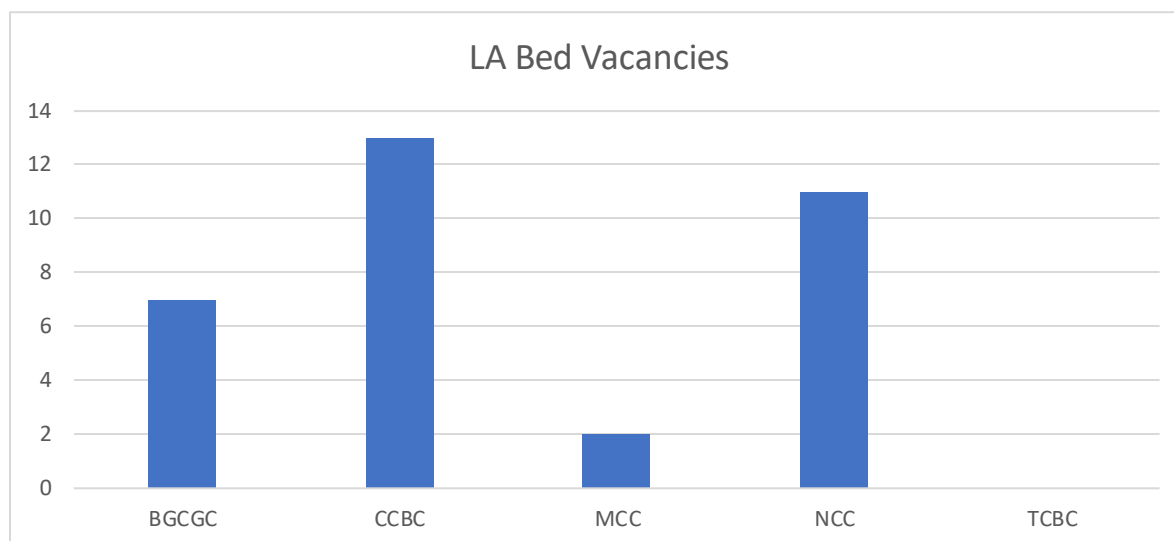


Fig 4 represents the number of vacant care home beds by each Local Authority. Vacancies shown are correct at time of reporting on 8th July 2022. Torfaen Council do not operate any directly provided care homes. Caerphilly County Borough Council hold the highest number of directly provided care homes for older adults, operating 6 homes across the Borough. Newport City Council currently have 3 care homes, Monmouthshire have 2 care homes and Blaenau Gwent have 1.

These vacancies are due to several factors identified by providers:

- Vacancies caused by repeated and protracted periods of non-admissions due to outbreaks of COVID.
- Suspension of admissions due to Escalated Concerns process in a small number of care homes (highlighted by commissioners)
- A possible change in attitude of people wishing to live in a care home, especially notable during the pandemic.

Of the 97 Older Person’s care homes used by Local Authorities in Gwent, 12 are owned by Local Authorities.

Some local authorities and the health board have seen a reduction in the number of people it now supports within care homes for older people since March 2020. [The changes seen over the last 2 years in terms of reduced demand for care home placements as reported by Local Authority commissioners will need to be closely observed to understand whether they are short term reactions or trend changes](#) but regardless, the macro-economic issues need to be addressed at local, regional, and national levels if the system is to be fixed.

b. Domiciliary Care

There are currently **109** commissioned providers of domiciliary care services in Gwent. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council and Torfaen County Borough Council also have in-house domiciliary care and reablement services and Newport City Council operates a Reablement service, providing care to individuals for an initial 6 weeks.

The supply of domiciliary care services is currently insufficient to meet the demands of the region. This has become particularly acute over the past 2 years. As a result, a review of previous commissioning arrangements relating to domiciliary care is to be undertaken across the Region.

The domiciliary care market is in crisis, with the main issue being insufficient staffing levels to meet demand due to poor staff recruitment and retention. Work undertaken on a regional basis with health and social care providers has found that health and social care staff are leaving the sector at an unprecedented rate due to poor pay, terms and conditions, and cost of employment (such as driving and registration.) This has led to significant numbers of unallocated care packages across the region. As of data collected on 4th July 2022, Local Authorities in Gwent reported 3643.40 hours of domiciliary care remain unallocated, with 360 people awaiting packages of care. These unallocated hours may contribute to delayed transfers of care from local hospitals creating ‘bottlenecks’ across the wider health and social care system. However, in many cases individuals will be receiving care, albeit for example, extra care at home or intake/assessment services.

A number of providers have returned packages of care they are no longer able to deliver, often in relation to people with complex needs and requiring more than one carer to visit at multiple times during a day. From September 2021 to July 2022, 83 packages of care, totaling 1192.5 weekly hours had been returned to local authority commissioners.

Fig 5: Domiciliary Care Outstanding package weekly unallocated hours

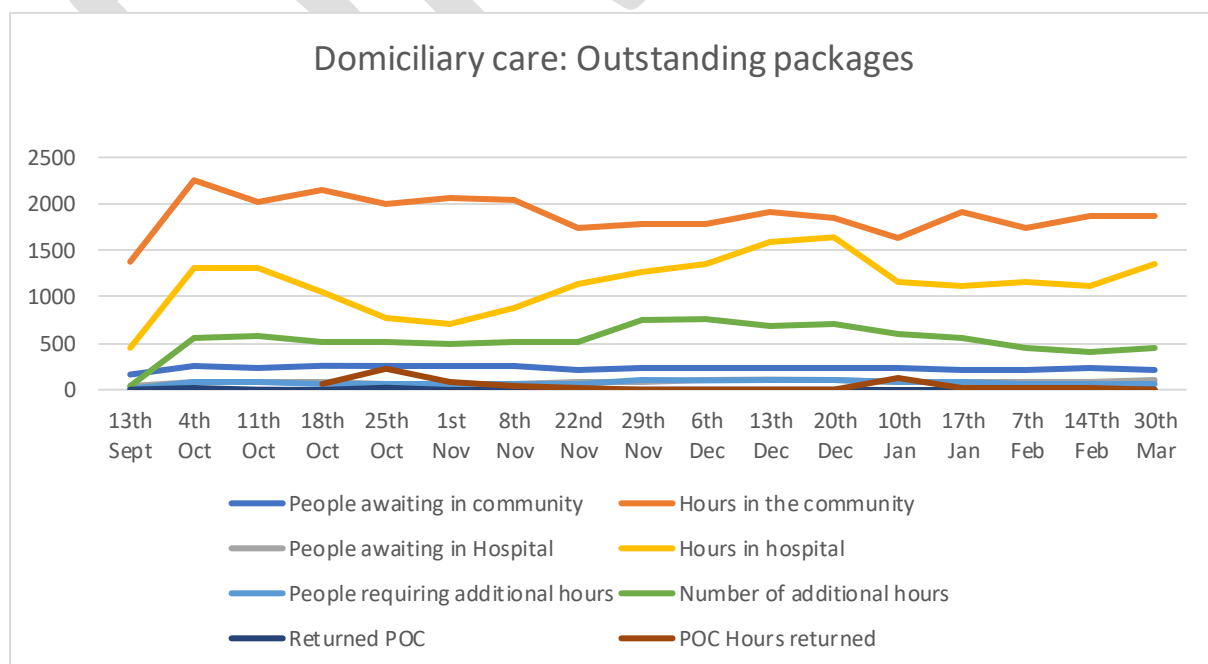


Fig 5 data shows the fluctuations in outstanding requests and hours for domiciliary care in Gwent, from October 2021 to March 2022.

Fig 6: Outstanding packaged of care per Local Authority

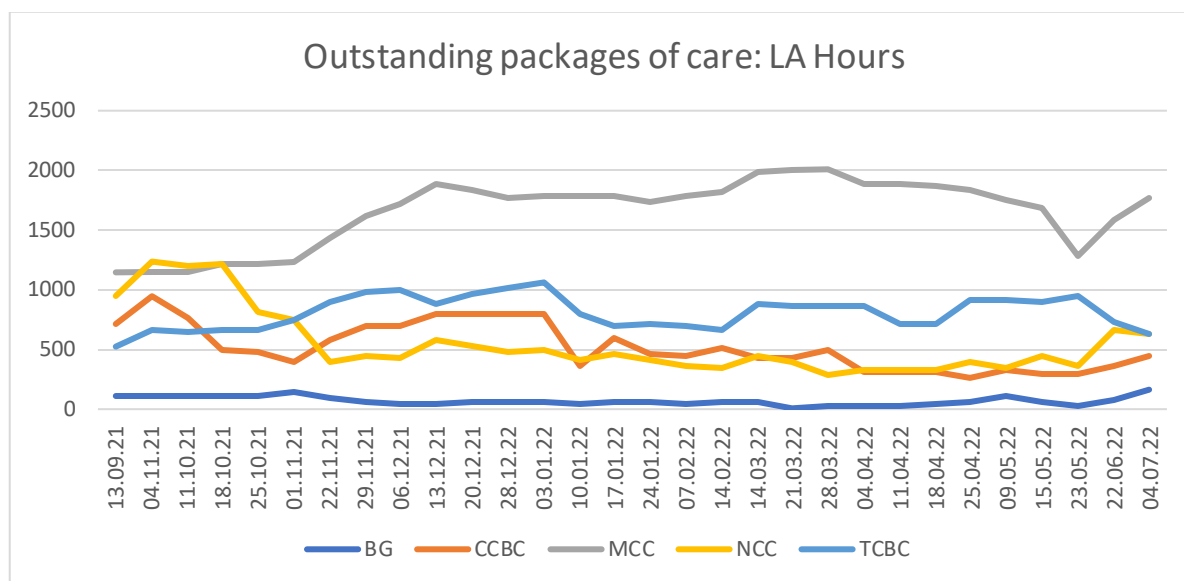


Fig 6 represents the packages of domiciliary care outstanding, by each Local Authority. Feedback obtained at Regional Provider Forums and from Local Authority commissioners has suggested that hours outstanding continue to remain high due to a number of factors; recruitment and the increased cost of living being the two largest contributors. Recently commissioners and providers reported that current staff are unable to maintain services due to the increasing cost of fuel.

Fig 7: Number of hours returned per Local Authority,

BG	CCBC	MCC	NCC	TCBC
80	18.25	136.75	705.75	0

Fig 7 indicates the total number of hours returned to the Local Authority from September 2021 to July 2022. Commissioners reported the main reasons for returned packages of care were increased levels of need for individuals and the current recruitment issues across the domiciliary care sector resulting in insufficient staff to provide care.

2.5 Market Stability

Gwent currently has a diverse provider base throughout the region. Emphasis is placed on ensuring single providers do not have a market share which could threaten stability of the overall market in the event of provider failure.

The health and social care residential care market is currently stable, although the removal of subsidies from Welsh Government is a challenge for the sector which could, in the medium term, precipitate some business failures in the region. However, most local authorities have now settled their fee levels with care homes and domiciliary care agencies and significant increases in rates have been made.

High levels of voids in residential and nursing care remain a concern as does the potential lack of supply of EMI care in some areas. [Providers have been supported through a transparent fee setting process, with some LAs in Gwent paying the highest fees in Wales to providers.](#)

A number of issues continue to affect the adult health and social care sector. [Rising costs of wages, recruitment and retention of care staff is challenging for the care sector as a whole.](#) Residential and nursing care homes also face infrastructure issues, with older buildings requiring repair and modernisation along with the significant impact of rising utility costs and maintaining compliance with the regulatory framework. The rapidly rising cost of living, in particular energy costs as well as food and insurance are all having an impact on operating costs whether independently operated or directly provided.

The domiciliary care sector has reached critical levels at times due to insufficient staffing. Labour shortages and cost pressures to meet the demands of increased wages are causing issues for providers. [Since April/May 2020 there has been a consistent increase in the level of demand for domiciliary care services which exceeds pre-pandemic levels.](#) The market has strived to meet this rise in demand but faces considerable challenges with recruiting and retaining sufficient staff to meet existing packages of care. These issues are not particular to Gwent and replicated across Wales and the UK as a whole.

The national minimum wage and real living wage increase impose further pressures to the domiciliary care sector in particular. While an increase in pay to those delivering direct care and support is welcomed and needed in order to keep pace with wages in other employment sectors, it will have implications. The introduction of the real living wage will inevitably impact the pay bill of providers which, in turn will impact on the costs to local authorities, who are the main purchasers of social care provision. In turn the real living wage could squeeze the pay of staff in more senior roles, impacting career development and potentially increasing staff turnover. This may also lead to differential pay disputes for provider organisation.

The adult social care market is a 'mixed picture' currently in terms of stability. [There has been very little change in terms of care home providers operating in the county over the last 5 years.](#) There has been one new entrant and two homes have ceased to operate.

However, the onset of the pandemic and resultant impact upon care homes does bring questions of financial sustainability for certain homes and therefore potential negative effects upon stability. [A risk register based upon occupancy has been put in place for the region since June 2020.](#) Across Gwent, a sustained reduction in the number of admissions to care homes has been evident which, although increased since waves 1 and 2, has remained stable for 6 months at levels much lower than before March 2020. Overall, longer term, there may be a surfeit of places in care homes across Gwent, but this is difficult to assess at the moment as the full recovery since the pandemic is incomplete. The commissioning challenge in that scenario is to manage a process of reduction while ensuring that where provision is needed it is maintained

and/or increased. This critical issue will be addressed in the Area Plan as the true picture begins to emerge during 2022/23.

A small number of homes in the region remain at below 50% occupancy which is unsustainable without significant external or additional funding. This is a cause for concern and how this will develop is still unclear as already stated. This situation will require close monitoring to understand what, if any action can be taken to support providers who find themselves in this position. Commissioning teams in Gwent have very good relationships with all providers in the region and continue to keep in close contact with those homes who are experiencing particular challenges.

Recruitment into health and social care continues to struggle against other sectors despite many local and national initiatives to raise its profile. The current issues experienced by in-house domiciliary care services who offer better terms than commissioned, private sector businesses exemplify this. Recruitment and retention have been a significant contributory factor to the return of packages of care.

Fig 8: Returned package of care from Domiciliary Care Providers

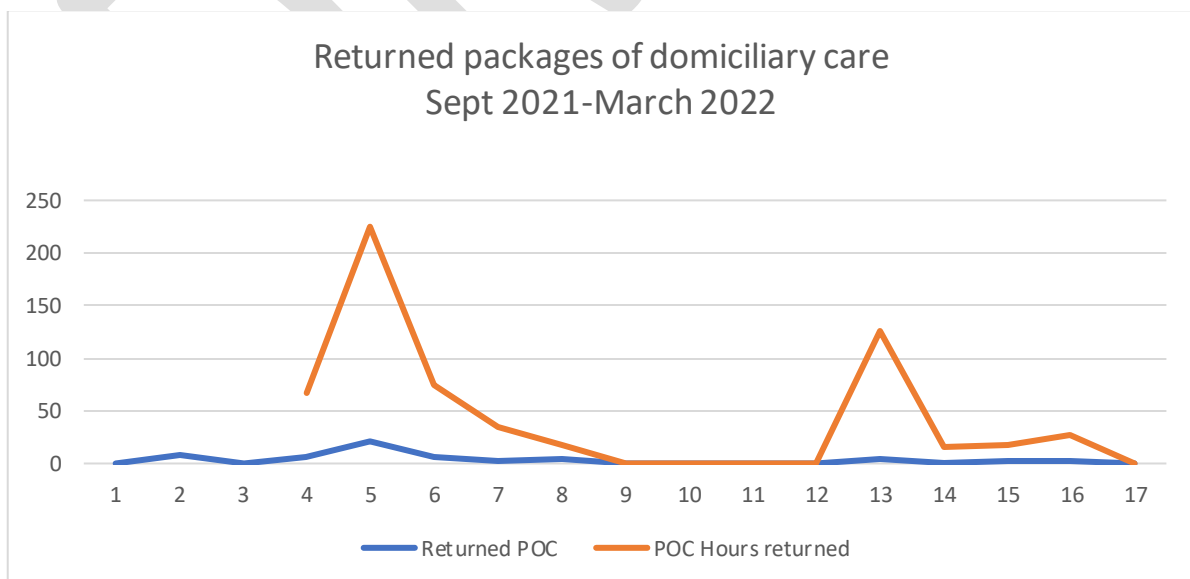


Fig 8 represents the packages of care returned and the number of hours outstanding between September 2021 until March 2022.

2.6 Provider Failure

A regional closure protocol is in place reflecting current guidance 'Escalating Concerns and Home Closers in Wales' and to guide appropriate actions when a provider fails. Good partnership working between agencies, ABUHB and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) are evident in Gwent which supports providers who are in difficulty. In instances of home closures, providers and residents have been supported to close and move to alternative suitable care provision. In TCBC for example, 2 homes have closed since 2017.

In both cases, the home closure protocol was enacted to support the residents and home to close with minimum disruption.

Within domiciliary care, the risk is managed by ensuring that no single provider could be regarded as having a monopoly or a market share that could not be covered in the event of provider failure. Packages of care have been reallocated and TUPE of staff managed when appropriate. However, staff shortages remain acute so any failure would have serious implications for the stability of the market and ability of local commissioners to provide a service to the quality expected.

The introduction of 'Provider Performance, Escalating Concerns or Enhanced Monitoring' for providers who are either failing or could potentially fail without remedial action have also proved to be beneficial.

2.7 Market Quality

Market quality has been managed in various ways:

- Provider concerns forms via Care Workers
- Annual desktop audits
- Concerns received via external sources (Family members etc.)
- Visits (announced and unannounced) undertaken as part of the audit process or acting on concerns received.
- Safeguarding concerns raised.

Care management feedback systems have also been implemented, which assess quality on an individual service user basis as judged by the care manager and the service user.

Agencies have been required to amend how they deliver their services in-line with infection prevention and control (IP&C) protocols and availability of staff. All providers quickly implemented contingency plans to ensure care services continued to be delivered in light of the pandemic. They also supported each other to share resources, information, and staff, for example day services staff were re-deployed across the region into support services such as community meals and domiciliary care services. The remaining staff then provided wellbeing calls to individuals and support was delivered virtually where possible and safe to do so. Some facility-based services remained open to provide services to those who were assessed as being in critical need. Individual outcomes continued to be met through these services.

There has been a marked increase in the number of people being supported to live at home with 24-hour live-in care across the region, many using their own or a combination of their own and LA resources. It will be interesting to observe whether this is indicative of a trend where people prefer to stay in their own home with more intensive support than consider residential care.

As previously stated, the market has been in a state of flux during the pandemic, it is not possible to assess at this stage whether the changes are short term reactionary changes or likely to be symptoms of longer-term change.

2.8 Current and Projected Trends

Across Gwent, market trends and population assessments are considered along with a variety of other information and intelligence gained from various sources available:

- Aging population with more complex needs
- Increase in nursing and dementia needs
- Increase in preventative services for example, Carer's support services and step up - step down facilities
- The opening of new state of the art facilities (e.g. Ty Glas Y Dorlan, a new purpose-built short stay housing with graduated care facility) to prevent hospital admission and encourage and facilitate discharge with a reable/enable focus and the ability to flex up and down . A community hub providing respite for carers and information ,advice and assistance, welcoming the community in.
- Two additional extra care schemes developed in Torfaen to provide flexible independent care needs.
- Introduction of assistive technology and online services
- Information Advice and Assistance to inform and educate people on what services are available.
- Links with private and third sector organisations to promote choice.

Across the Region, it is anticipated that some residential and nursing care providers may exit the market. The withdrawal of subsidies provided by the Welsh Government hardship fund is likely to impact on some of those providers with current very high levels of voids as businesses may become financially unsustainable.

There is likely to be an increased demand for domiciliary care, as people are expressing a preference to continue to live in their own homes rather than consider a move to residential care. However, recruitment remains an issue. There is a growing impetus among domiciliary care providers to identify a career pathway for workers that acknowledges their experience and skill set and to make it a more attractive career option for people. These initiatives are supported by the Regional Partnership Team.

Future commissioning arrangements will need to build in contingency plans for similar viral outbreaks in the future.

2.9 Impact of commissioning practices on the market

There are many examples of collaboration between the Gwent LAs, ABUHB and third sector organisations. These collaborate schemes often involve shared or pooled

funding streams. Collaborative bids are also common, previously through the Integrated Care Fund (ICF), recently replaced by Regional Integration Fund.

Funding for services needs to be adequate in the long term. The availability of grants and hardship funding has supported providers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and this has been critical for service delivery.

The settlements provided to local authorities for 2022/2023 exceed previous levels, but this needs to be reviewed for the future. However, this needs to be seen in the context of many years of austerity and real term cuts to Local Authorities. It remains to be seen whether this increased level of funding will alleviate some of the pressures faced by care providers, particularly the recruitment and retention of staff.

Newport City Council has commissioned a trial of block runs in domiciliary care, which has been ongoing for 3 months. This has helped to meet demand and increase the capacity to meet needs. More work is required to review the outcomes from this trial and to assess whether this approach can be sustainable in the future.

Monmouthshire Council, with the support of the Regional Partnership Team is currently exploring the [development of a micro carers pilot to support local care capacity and delivery](#), providing an alternative to traditional domiciliary care provision. Three key areas have been identified where micro carers can potentially support local care capacity:

- They can provide care to those able to self-fund their care and support.
- They can provide care to those in receipt of direct payments.
- They can be directly commissioned by LAs to deliver care where there may be gaps in provision.

Micro-care pilots have been introduced in other regions as a response to the national shortage of carers and to meet the growing demand for care, particularly in rural areas where recruitment is difficult. Some of these have been regarded as successful and in particular Somerset where the Micro Carers system has been expanded considerably. If successful, then the pilot in Monmouthshire could be scaled up and learning shared with the other Gwent authorities. This pilot runs for 12 months from April 2022 to April 2023.

2.10 Sustainability of provision

There is a mix of provision across Gwent including independent and public sector services, both care at home and care homes. The voluntary sector is strong in the provision of support services i.e., hospital discharge, befriending and other preventative and complimentary services. The third sector has a significant role to play in promoting a diverse range of services, but funding challenges are also acute for them.

The provision of care home and care at home services has remained relatively stable during recent years in terms of numbers of providers in operation. In Monmouthshire there was one new entrant into the care home market in 2018 when a new build 70 bedded care home opened in Abergavenny. Another long-standing provider in Torfaen

recently purchased an office building with plans to convert into a 21-bed residential facility. One long established and small family run domiciliary care provider decided to cease operation in 2022 with the continuing challenges of recruiting and retaining staff cited as the reason they decided to cease trading.

As previously stated, the withdrawal of subsidies via the hardship fund is likely to impact on the market, with some providers across the sector exiting the market due to a lack of sustainability. In addition, the crisis in the cost of living is exacerbating and already difficult recruitment and retention landscape in Gwent. Some recent evidence points to domiciliary carers leaving to join care homes to avoid having to use their cars for work. This latter point is being taken up with Welsh Government at the time of writing as some funding has been made available for electric vehicles etc.

2.11 Risks to market stability

As previously indicated, the following are the key risks to market stability highlighted by providers and commissioners:

- High voids in residential and nursing care are a concern as is the possible advent of a lack of supply of specialist EMI nursing care in some areas, particularly highlighted by Commissioners in Torfaen. Also, as highlighted in the Gwent PNA, population projections suggest individuals will live longer, meaning dementia diagnosis rates are predicted to increase.
- Rising costs of staff, recruitment and retention are challenging for the care sector as a whole
- Residential care and nursing care homes face infrastructure issues. Older buildings may require repair and modernisation, along with significant impact of rising utility costs.
- The cost-of-living crisis across the whole economy and particular the rising cost of fuel for cars.
- Funding challenges in both the short and long term.
- The onset of COVID and its effects over a 2-year period has raised questions about longer term market stability.
- Occupancy levels remain well below pre-COVID levels circa 80% average. This position is very mixed with only a few operators being at very low levels i.e. < 40%/50%. It is difficult to see how providers will be able to continue to operate at such low levels if no sustained increase in admissions is forthcoming.
- These systemic challenges may have an impact upon the longer-term stability of the market, but at this stage it is difficult to foresee what that might be.
- Risk assessments are undertaken when procuring regulated services. Open and transparent processes are in place to ensure service provision is the best possible.
- The domiciliary care recruitment crisis is having an acute effect on sustainability of care at home in some areas.
- Insurance for care homes is becoming increasingly challenging in terms of availability and cost

2.12 Non-Regulated provision

Measures have been introduced to promote preventative services:

- Support and assistance given to carers including respite breaks
- New facility, Ty Glas Y Dorlan opened in Torfaen to prevent residential and hospital admissions and facilitates timely hospital discharge enabling people to recover and then reable/enable before returning to their own homes.

Monmouthshire operates a number of preventative services and has invested in a reablement approach which looks to support people to become as independent as possible, preventing a reliance on traditional social care services.

Preventative services have been impacted by the pandemic, with increased social pressures, deprivation, and rising costs of living all impacting on this area. Newport City Council is currently working with Registered Social Landlords and third sector providers to develop accommodation and support services for care leavers, through ICF funding and the housing support grant.

Third sector organisations continue to act as key partners working with Local Authorities to promote social value and to enable the voice of user groups. Further work is required to develop this strand of work, particularly as we move away from the crisis management approach required over the course of the pandemic.

2.13 Resources

In meeting the needs of adults who are eligible for social care, local authorities continue to monitor the availability of resources. It is important to acknowledge that local authorities work alongside care and support providers, service user groups, third sector organisations, and other statutory agencies to consider the sufficiency of available resources. Partnership working with regional colleagues is particularly important to identify common issues and to develop shared approaches.

As with most regions, Gwent is faced with the challenge of increasing demand and limited financial resources. The region recognises that doing things differently in partnership with providers is the best way to work through these challenges. Commissioners strive to maintain good relationships with partners and maximise ability to purchase beds at a fair and reasonable price. The fee rate is reviewed every year to ensure that we are taking account of all relevant material factors.

Over the last 6 years, Gwent RPB received Integrated Care Funding (ICF) and Transformational Funding to support with the wellbeing agenda of citizens in Gwent. In April 2022, this changed to the Regional Integrational Fund (RIF) and is a 5-year fund for Regional Partnership Boards in Wales to deliver a programme of change from April 2022 to March 2027. The RIF puts into practice the ways of working stated in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, and places a focus on long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement to help public bodies better plan for the wellbeing of the population.

All local authorities in Gwent and ABUHB have engaged with providers to produce a regional approach to Fee Methodology, with a regionally agreed template in operation across Gwent. The template was due to be tested in early 2020 but full implementation

postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has now been re-established for testing in 2022-2023, with engagement from Local Authorities, ABUHB and care home providers.

The template has been produced in collaboration with a number of Care Home providers in Gwent and requires providers to detail costings involved in delivering care in their area. This forms a solid basis for constructive negotiations with commissioners on fee rates for the coming year. This is then reflected in a Fees and Charges Report to Council who set the fees.

Providers are currently facing significant changes to the financial aspects of their business. The cost-of-living crisis has meant that operating costs such as utilities, building maintenance and food have increased significantly. A number of providers have reported large increases of insurance premiums as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and due to a recruitment crisis across all health and social care services, staff salaries have also been increased.

The template aims to account for these changes. Due to the differences in budgets available to local authorities and health boards and the individual requirements of each home, it is not possible to provide a single fee across Gwent, but the template aims to simplify the negotiation process for both commissioners and providers.

Fee negotiations are ordinarily conducted annually, but providers have reported that due to the rapidly rising costs of care delivery, the figures provided to commissioners are very quickly out of date.

The introduction of the real living wage as a minimum pay rate for carers in Wales will have implications for resources which are currently under consideration.

Clear and transparent methods are always employed when resourcing and investment are undertaken. Best value for money without reducing quality service delivery is always the main goal. Local Authorities adhere to all contract and procurement regulations to promote fair and equitable sourcing of services.

2.14 Self-Funders

The impact of self-funders on the social care market is difficult to assess, due to the limited information available and gathering intelligence on self-funders remains a challenge.

Due to the fact that most self-funders have private agreements that deal directly with care providers, little information is often held on these individuals. Local authorities are supportive in providing advice to self-funders and some include them in their contracts and financial systems.

2.15 Workforce

As previously outlined, the following shortfalls in the workforce represent a significant challenge to the social care market:

- Shortage of nursing staff in care homes
- Increased cost of agency staff

- Poor recruitment and retention of domiciliary care workers is now critical

Staffing continues to remain a significant issue, exacerbated by COVID-19. In the domiciliary care sector especially, worrying numbers of staff were seen to be leaving the sector. Some reasons are highlighted by providers:

- Poor pay
- Poor working conditions
- Lack of perceived career progression
- Lack of job satisfaction
- Increased regulations, including registration.
- Better pay and conditions in other sectors i.e., hospitality and retail
- Lack of younger people entering the sector or seeing social care as a career choice, coupled with an ageing workforce and people taking retirement.

This is coupled with high levels of employment across the region and the current demand for workers in other sectors (transport/hospitality) driving up wages.

As reported at Regional Provider Forums, the COVID-19 pandemic has also placed significant pressure on the mental health of the workforce. Care staff were required to adapt to new ways of working very quickly. Due to legislative requirements, the social aspect of the role was reduced, particularly in care homes, as residents were isolated to their bedrooms and large scale social activities were discouraged during periods of outbreaks. For this reason, more measures are needed to support the wellbeing of the workforce.

Gwent employability projects and Working Wales continue to report that very few of their clients register an interest in working in the social care sector, particularly domiciliary care for the reasons recorded above.

Wales' unemployment rate stands at 3.1%, compared with the UK rate of 4.1% as of February 2021 and employment figures in Gwent remain high. Historically social care does not attract workers from other sectors and is left to either recruit those furthest from the job market or those already working in the sector, contributing to high levels of workforce churn and little increase in capacity across the piece. This is despite several regional and local initiatives aligned with the national 'We Care' recruitment campaign to attract new workers to the sector.

3. DEMENTIA

Population Group	Dementia
Gaps and Emerging Themes	<p>Early diagnosis and timely intervention and support are key factors.</p> <p>Reduced provision of medication prompting services.</p> <p>There may be pressure on EMI nursing care beds across the Region as stated above.</p>

	<p>Could see an increased need for appropriate housing for people living with dementia.</p> <p>People living with dementia, their family and carers have said that access to information and support, are fundamental at an early stage in diagnosis.</p>
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There are an estimated 7768 people living with dementia in the ABUHB area in 2017, with this number predicted to rise to 12833 by 2035 (Daffodil Cymru: 2014). Over the period of 2013 to 2035, the increases range from a predicted 62.1% in Blaenau Gwent, to 97.1% in Monmouthshire. Dementia affects a person's **executive functioning**, making it challenging for them to complete simple tasks, and the steps that go into them, such as having a shower or getting dressed. All of these day-to-day tasks have a sequence of steps, which can be difficult if someone has dementia. All local authorities in Gwent are predicting a significant increase in the number of people who require support with at least one domestic task. This suggests that as the number of people living with dementia increases, demands for support services will continue to rise, placing a demanding strain on already sparse resources.

Current research suggests that people with dementia were affected by the pandemic. Community support services were halted, and care homes reported an increase in the needs of their residents, requiring higher staffing provision as transfers to more suitable placements were halted during period of outbreaks and Government lockdowns. The Office of National Statistics (2020) states that 49% of deaths in care homes and 25.6% of all COVID-19 deaths were people with dementia.

As previously stated, commissioners in Gwent have reported that a shortage of EMI dementia beds in care homes in some areas may arise. The availability of respite beds is currently low, with resources unable to meet the demand. This puts further strain on informal carers. Several factors contribute to this, but the COVID-19 pandemic has forced at least one domiciliary care agencies in the area to cease trading and forced providers to reduce their respite beds provision due to the higher costs associated with such placements.

Therefore, the region has identified a need for additional dementia care services, both in the community and a potential requirement for additional EMI dementia beds.

With the emphasis being on preventative services and the focus being on community-based care, the region has developed the National Bevan Exemplar project, 'Get There Together'. Working in collaboration with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, the Gwent region has developed video and leaflet resources for people living with dementia, and their carers to support social and functional activity recovery. Working with a number of large high-street retailers and transport providers, videos have been produced to help people to familiarise themselves with the changes to services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This project continues and has now developed a technology app with StarFish Labs, which is being piloted by groups across Wales. The app allows more bespoke materials to be made to suit individual

needs, via videos and audio clips made by the person living with dementia, their family and carers, and added to a daily planner.

We are also supporting the pilot of a multi-agency project led by Gwent Police who are the first police force in Wales to trial the technology. The project provides people who have a dementia diagnosis, with an extra safeguarding measure – wristband – alongside the Herbert Protocol. The wristband holds next of kin details using NCC technology which can be accessed through a mobile phone app by any member of the public to ensure a person needing assistance in the community is able to get home if they get lost or need help. The project will be evaluated in November/December 2022 and feedback sent to the Gwent Regional Partnership Board and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018-2022 sets out a vision: Wales to be a dementia friendly nation that recognises the rights of people with dementia to feel valued and to live as independently as possible in their communities.

In Gwent we continue to promote Dementia Friendly Communities across the region, and support individuals to become dementia friends. Throughout the pandemic most of our sessions were online to support connections in our community, including dementia awareness workshops and sessions. As restrictions were lifted, we offered face-to-face sessions with Sporting Memory groups and Parkinson’s Support groups, to raise awareness and highlight support available in the area people living with dementia, their families, and carers.

4. MENTAL HEALTH AND LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES

Fig 9: Placements in Mental Health Services

Placements in Mental Health Services	ABUHB	CCBC	MCC	TCBC	NCC	BGCBC
Supported Living	82	39	N/A	6	N/A	3
Residential	14	11	N/A	138	N/A	0
Nursing	57	9	N/A	44	N/A	6
Secure Services	49	0	N/A	0	N/A	0

Fig 9 indicates the number of placements into mental health services across the Region. This information relates to placements both jointly funded by ABUHB and the LA, but also directly commissioned placements.

4.1 Sufficiency Assessment: Population Needs Assessment (PNA)

This section highlights the gaps and emerging themes in terms of sufficiency of care from the Population Needs Assessment (PNA).

Population Group	Mental Health
Gaps and Emerging Themes	<p>Studies referenced in the PNA highlight that the pandemic is likely to have had a severe impact on mental wellbeing. The long-term impact is difficult to predict, however, there is a significant risk that this will have an impact on services needed to support our population.</p> <p>We need to improve emotional well-being and mental health for adults and children through early intervention and community support.</p> <p>We need to promote the mental wellbeing of people in Gwent and ensure that the workforce is supported to be able to provide people with the support they need at the right time.</p>

Working in mental health facilities can often be a challenging place to work, and as a result, facilities continue to experience significant staff shortages, evident across the health and social care sector. This has led to continuous employment of agency staff, and patients reported a lack of continuity of care. The National Review 'Making Days Count' highlighted a number of further considerations in relation to the provision of mental health services.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health services in Gwent were required to amend how they delivered their services. Staff across the region were supported by Local Authorities to move to a community-based service, initially provided virtually and later moving to face to face often one to one services when restrictions allowed. A number of services continue to deliver via both platforms, ensuring that individuals in the community continued to receive support. The National Review supports a move to a community first approach for mental health support, and patients should only move to hospital admissions when necessary. The impacts of the National Review of secure services need further consideration.

Mental health services receiving RIF funding reported an increase in referrals in the past 3 years, with some reporting that referrals to their services had doubled, particularly in the case of Community Connector services in Torfaen and Newport. Mental health services moved to a virtual delivery platform during the COVID-19 pandemic, and have reported that they aim to continue with virtual delivery or a hybrid model of virtual and face to face support as they continue to re-open services following the COVID-19 pandemic. Feedback from individuals accessing such services has stated that virtual delivery is preferred due to accessibility, and services such as SPACE panel have reported that they are delivering an improved service on a virtual basis.

4.2 Learning Disabilities

Fig 10: Placements in Learning Disability Services

	ABUHB	CCBC	MCC	TCBC	NCC	BGCBC
Supported Living	72	187	37	81	170	78
Residential	27	46	51	87	273	23
Nursing	3	8	3	3	231	0
Secure Services	7	0	0	0	0	0

***Figures provided by Newport City Council are totals of both MH and LD placements.**

Fig 10 indicated the number of placements into Learning Disability Support services across the Region. This data is indicative of placements both jointly funded by ABUHB and LA's but also of placements directly commissioned or provided by the LA.

4.2 Sufficiency Assessment: Population Needs Assessment

Population Group	Learning Disability
Gaps and Emerging Themes	<p>To support people with learning disabilities to live independently with access to early intervention services in the community; and greater public awareness and understanding of people with learning disabilities needs.</p> <p>Services and activities need to adapt to suit changes in people's needs.</p> <p>A multi-agency partnership approach to ensure appropriate housing and accommodation for vulnerable citizens</p> <p>Improvements needed to help people find supported training and employment.</p> <p>The demand for residential placements is increasing. There is evidence of a lack of residential beds for individuals with challenging behaviours.</p> <p>Individuals currently experience delays in hospital discharges due to the lack of available community support services or residential placements.</p> <p>Commissioning for Mental Health and Learning Disability Provisions have steadily increased over the last two years.</p>

In Gwent, Local Authorities provide, and externally commission a number of community-based support services for individuals with learning disabilities. My Mates was established by Monmouthshire CBC as a pilot scheme to support individuals with learning disabilities and mental health needs in the community, through a combination of one to one and peer support. Funded through the Integrative Care Fund, the pilot supported individuals in the Borough with independence and establishing peer support groups in their community. Due to the success of the pilot, the scheme became Gwent-wide, with 4 staff members supporting over 200 individuals across the Region. Support during the COVID-19 pandemic was amended in line with legislative requirements and staff maintained over 8000 contacts to individuals, via virtual platforms. Staff held 500 video call chats to maintain wellbeing, held 140 live event virtual parties and completed 20 mail outs to individuals, sharing information and providing gifts.

4.4. Autism

Population Group	Autism
Gaps and Emerging Themes	<p>Provide more timely diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder and access to support services and information and advice.</p> <p>There is a need for improved signposting across Gwent particularly for supporting young people transitioning to adult social care services</p> <p>Improved access to suitable health provision for effective future support</p> <p>Improvements needed to help people find supported training and employment.</p> <p>The COVID 19 pandemic has led to increased levels of mental health problems and further isolation for people with autism.</p> <p>A multi-agency partnership approach to ensure appropriate housing and accommodation for vulnerable citizens</p> <p>Increase training, for an autism informed and accepting workforce.</p>

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4.5 Engagement

The Gwent region engages with learning disability and mental health providers on a regular basis, receiving reports and monitoring progress, to establish any issues that they may be experiencing, or to discuss any proposed service provision changes. Provider feedback helps to shape service provision with recent engagement focusing on reviewing day activities and the regional advocacy helpdesk and service provision.

The following multi-agency partnerships in Gwent support engagement with ABUHB, Local Authorities, Independent/Third Sector, and citizens:

- Whole person, whole system MHCrisis and Acute care Model has been co-produced and developed over the past 6 years providing alternatives to hospital admission in a MH Crisis, Sanctuary provision both in the community and ED. Shared Lives are supported by Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment teams and development of a single point of contact and 111 for Mental health pilot and conveyance pilot, Reporting to the Crisis Board
- Mental Health Implementation Group – this group is attended by representatives from all local authorities in Gwent, as well as ABUHB and Gwent Police.
- Delivery group – attended by the Gwent local authorities and ABUHB focussed on Mental Health and Learning Disabilities.
- Regional Partnership Board – representation at Director level from Gwent local authorities and attended by ABUHB
- Caerphilly also has local engagement arrangements with providers and individuals through local meetings involving the Supporting People Team e.g., Platform panel, Accommodation panel, Drug and Alcohol panel.
- Complex Care Team/Quality Assurance panel to discuss services for people with complex needs
- Shared Lives Regional Partnership Board
- Engagement/due diligence undertaken with English providers when placements are made over the border
- Gwent Connect 5 network – Staff trained within the Regional Partnership Team to provide Gwent Connect 5 training; a mental health and wellbeing training course open to all organisations and communities within Gwent. To date, training has been delivered to a number of care providers in the Region in addition to local authority frontline care delivery services.

4.6 Market Sufficiency

There is a well-documented national crisis in recruitment and retention within the care industry and this has led to difficulties in providing timely care across the sector. Currently, providers can find it difficult to provide services to people with mental health conditions, so where possible, more specialist providers are used who have a greater understanding of mental health. Using this approach has been beneficial and provided positive outcomes. Given the population predictions outlined in the PNA, this is an area where a greater level of need is anticipated in the future. Research completed by Cardiff University confirms this and states '*The COVID-19 pandemic and the social*

distancing restrictions resulting from it have taken a huge toll on people's mental wellbeing and mental health. We can expect significant pressures and demand for mental health services in Wales over the coming years'. (Prof Wyn Jones et al, 2021).

Gwent also has a lack of nursing homes which can respond to people with complex mental health needs and people with learning disabilities, and some placements have broken down due to behaviour management issues.

Case study: Commissioners in Gwent have reported that there continues to be a lack of provision for individuals with complex needs. In one example provided by commissioners, 4 individuals stepping down from low secure and locked rehabilitation units have been allocated placements in another region of Wales. However, due to the ongoing recruitment issues, the commissioning authority are required to continue to provide staffing support to those individuals. Commissioners have now recognised this as a priority, and the Regional Commissioning Group have started conversations around how providers can be encouraged to establish complex placements within Gwent, supported by the commissioning authorities.

There is a lack of appropriate accommodation with the right levels of support at the right time, rather than 24/7 supported living arrangements. There is a continued need to work with partners, to further develop step down facilities from hospital to independent living. Further development of relationships between Forensic Services, Social Services and Housing is also being addressed as a key priority for Gwent RPB. These links are being improved through the strategic partnerships that are active in the Gwent Region. Gwent RPB are also the only RPB in Wales to be members of the Housing Learning Improvement Network (LIN), meeting quarterly with other health and social care colleagues to discuss issues.

The region's Shared Lives Scheme is continuing to produce positive outcomes, and there is an expectation that this will expand further within mental health and learning disability service provision.

There is a static market in Torfaen, for example, where essentially supply meets demand. Placements are either long term residential in smaller care homes or long-term placements in supported living schemes. Historically, there has been a drive to bring all out of county placements back within the localities. In terms of current and future policy and practice, the local authority, wherever possible, will look to place individuals into their own fully independent accommodation rather than a supported living model, and this has been facilitated by new build supported housing developments in the Borough.

There are 14 care homes for adults with a learning disability or mental health needs in Monmouthshire providing support for people with a range of needs. In the main these are small homes and are well established in the county with very little movement in the market for several years. There is sufficient supply within the county to meet the needs of most people with learning disabilities, however, lower-level support for people with mental health needs remains a challenge, and work is on-going with partners to look at the development of better solutions.

As an example, placement levels remain constant and have remained relatively unaffected by the pandemic across Monmouthshire.

Fig 11: Monmouthshire County Council Adult Placements

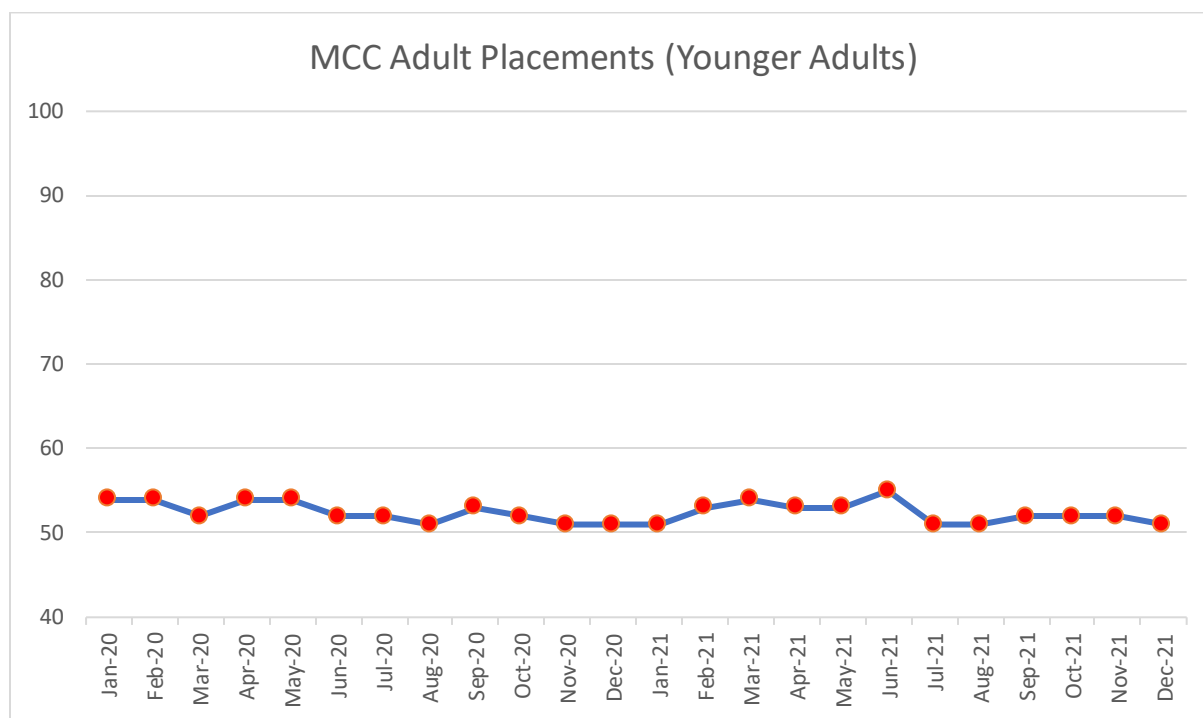


Fig 11 represents the numbers of younger adult mental health placements in Monmouthshire between January 2020 until December 2021

4.7 Market Stability

The provision of care home and supported living services has remained relatively stable during recent years, in terms of numbers of providers in operation, with no care homes exiting the market in the last 6 or 7 years.

There is a mix of provision across Gwent including independent and public sector services with the voluntary sector playing a strong role in the support services arena i.e., daytime support, self-advocacy, and family aid. However, Gwent does have a shortage of providers who can cater for citizens with mental health issues and autism.

As with other areas, the region has seen some smaller organisations acquired by larger organisations over recent years which impacts on the diversity of provision for mental health and learning disabilities. These mergers and acquisitions cause an immediate impact on services delivered. Changes to service can be difficult when staff leave, and new management take over or when a smaller enterprise loses its identity and becomes subsumed by a corporate business entity. An experienced workforce may then be lost which could have a significant impact to the people using the service. Fortunately, this has led to no real deterioration in the quality of care and support to people receiving support. For many years the region has developed good working

relationships with provider partners, and these relationships have been further enhanced during the pandemic.

Local authorities have not needed to take any action in the Gwent area during this specified period, in pursuance of our duty under section 189(2) of the 2014 Act, to meet the care and support needs of relevant individuals. If there were any issues, we would introduce provider performance, or escalating concerns, or enhanced monitoring for providers who are either failing or could potentially fail without remedial action.

While the mental health sector has experienced some challenges during the pandemic in terms of reduction in occupancy and staff issues, it has not been as adversely affected as the older person's sector. Providers have reported that recruitment has been more problematic than usual, but they are still able to recruit and retain staff.

[With the removal of the Welsh Government Hardship funding in March 2022, we will be closely observing the sector to see what impact this has on its sustainability and whether it will be able to return to pre pandemic occupancy levels.](#)

There are improvements to be made with mental health services provision such as:

- The need for more providers who can respond to complex mental health needs as part of accommodation with support, including autism.
- More nursing homes that can respond to complex mental health needs such as learning disability, as most are focussed on dementia support. Some placements have broken down due to behaviour management issues.
- The need for more appropriate accommodation with the right levels of support at the right time, rather than 24/7 supported living arrangements, as well as the need for more single person accommodation with targeted support.

[In recent years Gwent has introduced a standardised fee model, as historically individual fees varied considerably across providers.](#) The aim is to keep a level of sustainability to allow the sector to continue to operate and be a profitable venture whilst still ensuring high quality care.

4.8 Quality of Care and Choice

The quality and availability of services provided were potentially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as stated in 2.6 above, providers quickly implemented contingency plans to ensure care services were delivered. Agencies also supported each other to share resources, information, and staff. Day services staff were re-deployed across the region into support services, such as community meals and domiciliary care services. Remaining staff then provided wellbeing calls to individuals and support was delivered virtually where possible. Some facility-based services remained, to provide services to those who were assessed as being in critical need. Individual outcomes continued to be met through these services. However, continued lack of staff in the health and social care sector shows little signs of improvement even in the long term. This may lead to a reduction in services and the quality of those services may be affected. This may have an impact on the sufficiency and the stability of the market across many services. Also, financial difficulties and vacancy levels in

health and social care residential care homes may lead to some providers finding it necessary to leave the market and close services.

In Gwent the aim is to provide choice and control to people through better services and early intervention. An example of this that has worked well is the work to continue to provide support through Community Connector teams in some areas, these in turn work in partnership with local care teams.

Torfaen Council has commissioned a bespoke facility: Ty Glass Y Dorlan, and part of their remit is to offer information, advice and assistance to the community so they can self-solve and use their own networks of support .

Day activities were used prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, many services were temporarily closed in line with the UK and Welsh Government's guidance and restrictions to protect citizens. During this time services were adapted to provide virtual sessions across the region to support people, and individuals did seek additional mental health online support due to a decline in their wellbeing because of the suspension of service provision.

Overall, the quality of care and support available to people is of a high standard. However, the onset of the pandemic has affected the type and level of quality assurance monitoring which local authorities and other partner agencies have been able to undertake i.e., Care Inspectorate Wales and the local health board.

Visits by other professionals such as social workers and families has also significantly reduced during the last 24 months, but these have now been reinstated with the lifting of restrictions by Welsh Government. Feedback from these visits has highlighted that the care and support provided is of a high standard with services going above and beyond in their duties to support people during these challenging times. Providers have gone to great lengths to provide person-centred and high-quality support despite the challenges of regularly changing guidance and restricted visiting. Providers' contingency plans have proved robust and have allowed services to continue through the pandemic.

The current complexity of care needs within the community, supported living and care homes now are set to continue which requires a skilled workforce to support nursing and care needs of individuals.

4.9 Current and Projected Trends

There is a vibrant and varied mix of provision across Gwent. In some areas such as Monmouthshire, many younger people are choosing supported living as their preferred option and we have several providers in the county who support people in this way. Providers are very responsive to developing the right type of support for individuals and engage with their families, and others to design person-centred models of support. An example of this is the collaborative working with three people to design bespoke supported living service, which will enable them to live meaningful and engaged lives.

Working with young people and their families through transition is a key steppingstone to identifying bespoke solutions for adult life. People and families often require considerable support as young people move into adulthood and out of the more

prescriptive and routine environments of school and college. Expectations and the re-opening to opportunities remain a challenge for some.

Learning disability residential services remain stable and individuals often move into the service and remain there for significant periods of time, so length of stay and quality of care needs to be continually assessed. However, it can sometimes be difficult to source compatible placements with current tenants.

Local authorities continue to work closely with providers to agree fair and reasonable costs of care and people have a range of support options to choose from, however these options are dictated by geographic and other preferences.

In Gwent it was anticipated that some people with a learning disability approaching middle age would need to move into supported living as their carers aged, but this hasn't materialised. People have stayed at home and kept themselves safe during the pandemic, so future needs are not clear at present.

4.10 Impact of Commissioning

There has been little reduction in the number of people placed in residential and supported living services, since the onset of the pandemic. Funding decisions continue to be made based on individual need and in negotiation with the provider. Where some providers are experiencing financial challenges, local authorities will work with them to seek to understand the issues and ensure that funding is appropriate and reasonable.

[Gwent also uses longer-term contracts to give providers the opportunity to invest in the workforce and better support banking arrangements.](#)

The region has attempted to standardise costings across the services and supported providers to access independent models of support. Supported housing schemes encompassing learning disability provision has also been added to the market.

[The volume of referrals to supported living and residential providers has decreased, so providers would be experiencing the effects of this as they are approximately around 20% of normal volume.](#)

There are many examples of collaboration between Gwent Local Authorities, ABUHB and Independent/Third sector organisations. These collaborative schemes often involve shared or pooled funding streams and/or Continuing Health Care funding.

4.11 Sustainability of Provision

While the learning disability sector has experienced some challenges during the pandemic in terms of reduction in occupancy and staff issues, it has not been as adversely affected as the older person's sector. Reports from providers are that recruitment has been more problematic than usual, but they are still able to recruit and retain staff.

There are concerns from some care providers that provide domiciliary care (sometimes alongside a range of other services), that they may be forced to close this service area in order to maintain the quality and sustainability of their other services

due to a lack of staff capacity to deliver care at home. One provider in Gwent has ceased the operation of their domiciliary care service to enable them to prioritise their residential care facility.

The removal of the hardship funding in March 2022 is being closely monitored to understand what impact this will have on sustainability of services and whether it will be able to return to pre-pandemic occupancy levels. In common with other market segments many providers have experienced increased operating costs relating to fuel, gas, electric, increased National Insurance and pension costs, National Living Wage, Real Living Wage all of which are all having an impact on service provision.

Resource can be an issue causing difficulties when funding placements for people. Continuing Health Care can cause challenges, as the criteria can be difficult for local authorities and health boards to navigate.

4.12 Non-Regulated Provision/ Prevention

In Gwent there are no secure placements commissioned by local authorities. In Monmouthshire, support to adults with a learning disability has, for a number of years, been provided under the auspices of 'My Day, My Life'. Through this change programme and prior to the pandemic, the Council had moved away from venue-based services and were working with people in a more bespoke way based around the place they live, their families and wider networks. Fixed bases tending to be used as a springboard for more community-based activity.

The pandemic enabled Monmouthshire to move further ahead with this. Since March 2020 'My Day My Life' continued to operate in a very flexible, people focused way, offering people support to engage in opportunities that they choose in the areas where they live. Monmouthshire has scaled up the offer as restrictions have lifted. In general, feedback has been positive and there has been little demand from citizens to return to a venue-based model.

The Housing Support Grant Programme provides preventative support for regulated service provision and has a grant funded programme that provides housing related support for a wide range of people in the community, including those who do not access statutory services.

A National Care Review was completed into the care and treatment of people who are inpatients in learning disability hospitals, either commissioned or provided by NHS Wales as part of a cross government programme 'Learning Disability – Improving Lives'. Through this report 70 recommendations were highlighted where improvements are needed, and the Gwent region has been reviewing services to identify what improvements are required as a priority. The Mental Health and Learning Disability Strategic Partnership with support from the Regional Partnership Team, has been facilitating workshops to gain a collaborative response to the national review to establish what actions are needed to improve the lives of people in Gwent. This work is ongoing, and feedback is being sent to the National Assurance Group.

4.13 Direct Payments

A high percentage of Direct Payments is made up from learning disability service users. There is potential to expand the services and it is starting to grow in some localities. Direct payments are always offered as an option for care delivery where suitable, however this is not always the best option for some individuals. Where it has been used it has been successful with many people, giving them choice and flexibility to tailor their care needs around their own circumstances. See section 8 for more details.

4.14 Social Value

Partners across the region encourage and are supportive to social enterprise ventures. However, they have sometimes found them to be restricted by legal requirements that are prohibitive; for example, with Services for Independent Living (SIL) who were engaged to provide additional services to Direct Payments service users, however this service has now closed.

The development of social enterprises is not something that can be 'designed in' by planners or commissioned in a mechanistic way. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the most successful co-operative ventures have been developed from a 'grass-roots' up approach where organisations and individuals providing services together on a collaborative basis based on mutual trust and the need to share resource more effectively.

Recent day services reviews have indicated that there might be some value in encouraging directly provided and/or commissioned day services to collaborate more formally to create support networks that may operate across geographical boundaries. This shares some commonalities with a 'community work' based approach founded upon voluntary action in its purist sense. This is very much an explorative venture at present post pandemic.

The RPB supports a vibrant provider forum which also acts as a social value forum. This forum is comprised mainly, but not exclusively of 3rd sector provider organisations.

Able Radio in Torfaen is a good example of a successful social enterprise. Initiated by volunteers, the service was supported by TCBC and hosted in a TCBC day services facility until the service expanded. The service provides day activities and training opportunities to individuals with learning disabilities and mental health issues.

Case study: Cartrefi Cymru is also an example of a long-standing social enterprise, established by parents and volunteers of people with learning disabilities. Supported by local authorities in Gwent, the service now provides support to individuals across the Region through supported living facilities, domiciliary care, floating sessional support and respite care. Cartrefi Cymru now operates as a co-operative and the region has been very supportive of the co-operative movement in social care in recent years.

In future the 5 local authorities would also like to develop the presence of the third sector in the fostering market to help deliver social value across Gwent communities as well as supporting the development of local IFAs across the region.

5 CHILDREN'S SERVICES

5.1 Sufficiency Assessment: Population Needs Assessment (PNA)

This section highlights the gaps and emerging themes in terms of sufficiency of care from the Population Needs Assessment (PNA).

Population Group	Children and Young People
<p>Gaps and emerging themes</p>	<p>To improve outcomes for children and young people with complex needs through earlier intervention, community-based support, and placements closer to home.</p> <p>To ensure good mental health and emotional well-being for children and young people through effective partnership working especially mitigating long term impact of Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>There is a need to continue strengthening services and partnerships around a single front door approach to reduce hand offs between organisations and establish a sequenced approach to multiple intervention needs.</p> <p>The RPB will continue to implement principles of NEST/NYTH and across all services to remain focused on what matters to children, young people, and families as we move to a whole system approach.</p> <p>Given the new programme of government priority to 'eliminate' profit in residential care for children looked after, the RPB will support this agenda and also the early intervention and preventative services that help reduce children becoming looked after.</p> <p>The young person's voice, co-production, and integration, including more seamless transitions to adult services, remain key areas for development.</p>

5.2 Provider Engagement

The 5 local authorities work in partnership with the health board, third and independent sectors, carers, and others to ensure that the care provided to children is of the highest

quality and value for money; and most importantly provides the best outcomes for children who are looked after within the region.

My Support Team (MyST) is a multi-agency partnership, working to help children who are looked after to remain in their local communities across Gwent. It works seamlessly across statutory agencies to provide an effective alternative to residential care for children who are looked after with highly complex needs.

The Children and Families Strategic Partnership Board (CFB) provides overarching multi-agency strategic oversight and leadership for the delivery of the Gwent Regional Partnership Board's vision for the development and delivery of children's services across the region. Under the CFB an independent and voluntary sector network was established to engage directly with providers and for example, to highlight funding opportunities through Welsh Government's Integrated Care Funding.

Most recently, the CFB has been working with the regional Youth Forum in developing the regional PNA, and a regular dialogue has been established. Each local authority also has its own partnership and engagement arrangements which include but are not limited to:

- Corporate parenting forums
- Young people's forums
- Young Commissioner Programme (facilitated by the 4C's)

5.3 Key Market Sufficiency Factors

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the housing and care provision available to children and young people. COVID-19 has halted developments in many areas which has prevented children and young people 'moving on' and accessing the right care and support at the right time.

Fig 12 Total number of Children Looked After within each Gwent LA

	BGCBC	CCBC	MCC	NCC	TCBC
Total number of Children Looked After within each Gwent LA	200	456	213	378	446

*Fig 12 shows the total number of children looked after in Gwent per LA as of March 31st 2022. *Includes children in residential homes and those that are fostered.*

a. Foster Care

- Demand for foster placements currently outstrips supply, particularly for children who require a complex multi-agency care package or have challenging risk management plans

- Can often be difficult to source the right type of placement
- Children may go into residential placement in the first instance due to a lack of foster care
- COVID-19 and long periods of isolation have impacted on the resilience of families leading to an increase in demand across children's services.

b. Children's Residential

- External market has become saturated
- Market is insufficient to meet needs
- Majority of Gwent local authorities have focussed on investment of in-house residential services and development of preventative services
- Increase in privately run children's homes across the region
- Sufficiency is at a critical point as demand continues to grow at the highest end of the continuum of need.
- Some children are being placed in settings that are outside of the 'home' local authority

Monmouthshire and Torfaen are the exception; they have no in-house residential provision for children at the moment but remain committed to working with private and 3rd sector providers.

5.4 Market Sufficiency

The Gwent region wishes to increase regional capacity through a combination of in-house and external developments. It is the ambition of the region to care for the majority of children who have a long-term care plans through local residential care or step down to a foster family in a supported way, with support from MyST services, via in house regional provision. Integrated Care Funding has also been accessed to strengthen regional arrangements.

All 5 local authorities seek to work in partnership with local providers to develop bespoke packages of care for local children, who will support them to develop their independence skills and resilience for the future.

a. Foster Care

During the period of 31st March 2016 to the 31st March 2020, the number of local authority registered foster carers within the Gwent increased by 2%. However, the region also experienced a 17% increase in the number of children living in independent foster placements during the same period. This illustrates that the current level of demand is outstripping in-house provision and overall supply of foster homes. The Covid-19 pandemic has compounded this issue and it continues to prove difficult to source foster care placements, particularly for sibling groups and teenagers. As a result, some children are entering residential care following family breakdown in the first instance.

Multiple Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) operate within Gwent with a mix of charitable and commercial providers. All these providers are party to the All-Wales Framework for Foster Care Services. All fostering agencies irrelevant of status are

currently facing a recruitment shortfall. Gwent local authorities continue to recruit and grow their in-house fostering provision, but recognise that there is continued demand, as well as competition for independent provision due to lack of in-house supply.

This shortage in foster carers directly impacts upon the choice of placement and permanence planning for children looked after. It is therefore essential, that foster carers are provided with a comprehensive range of support services to enable them to cope and effectively manage the challenging behaviour(s) they will encounter through the fostering process.

Fig 13 Number of children looked after by internal LA foster carers

	BGCBC	CCBC	MCC	NCC	TCBC
Number of children looked after by internal LA foster carers	71	162	40	160	134
Total number of children in external IFA placements (Includes external residential placements)	33	78	66	81	50

Fig 13 shows the total number of children looked after with LA foster carers and the number of children looked after by IFA's in Gwent as of March 31st 2022

b. Residential Care

The total number of children living in a residential provision increased by 58% in Gwent during the period 31st March 2016 to 31st March 2020

Demand for residential care has increased across Gwent, despite the development of the MyST teams and a regional drive to attract and recruit more foster carers. Newport and Caerphilly local authorities are expanding in-house residential home provision with a view to building Gwent wide capacity. Caerphilly has 3 LA residential homes for children and is currently developing a fourth. Newport is currently developing a new residential home that will provide a step-down service from secure provision. The availability of an annex to support short term stays will also help facilitate emergency placements. It is anticipated that these new homes will have capacity to offer places to other local authorities in Gwent. Torfaen is also planning to develop a residential provision for children in partnership with a locally based Registered Social Landlord (RSL) and an external provider, commissioned to deliver care. Monmouthshire have a similar provision in place with a Registered Social Landlord and are currently in the

process of purchasing a facility with a view of having a similar partnership with a third sector provider.

Fig 14 Total number of children looked after out of county.

	BGCBC	CCBC	MCC	NCC	TCBC
Total number of children looked after out of county. *Includes IFA placements.	78	151	102	130	120

Fig 14 shows the total number of children looked after out of county in Gwent as of March 31st 2022

5.5 Market Stability

The Residential Care market in Gwent is currently failing to provide a sufficient supply of quality care providers to ensure that local authorities can consistently place children in appropriate placements that are close to home and meet their needs. Profits for large children’s social care providers are higher than one would expect in a well-functioning market, and the lack of placements leaves all 5 local authorities in a weak position when attempting to negotiate the price of a placement. This financial instability mirrors the national picture.

The Competition and Markets Authority’s (CMA) market study into children’s social care in March 2021 reports that the UK has created “a dysfunctional market for children’s social care with local authorities forced to pay excessive fees for privately run services.” Source: [Action needed on “dysfunctional” children’s social care market - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97227/action_needed_on_dysfunctional_childrens_social_care_market.pdf)

There has been a steady increase of privately run children’s homes across the region. A lack of competition aligned with increasing demand for places is driving up costs. Mergers and acquisitions in the private sector have impacted on the quality of services delivered with changes of owner often resulting in the exodus of experienced and established staff. There is also some anecdotal evidence of small, local providers developing services for short term profit rather than sustainable growth. In recent years the sector has seen an increase in capital investment companies with a focus on profits for little demonstrable investment.

In March 2017, the Gwent Children & Families Partnership Board identified and recognised that the decision-making process for children with complex needs was inconsistent, overly complex, and not fit for purpose. A regional joint decision-making panel made up of senior leaders from the three key stakeholders (health, social care, and education) was created to discuss and resolve contentious complex cases that

required financial and care package agreement that could not be agreed at a local level. However, several issues remain which include but are not limited to:

- The financial responsibility split between the LA's and health remains unresolved and there continues to be a lack on national guidance on this issue.
- The introduction of new continuing care guidance for health boards has not facilitated further agreement on legal and financial responsibilities of all stakeholders.
- There continues to be a difference in the interpretation of the new continuing care guidance for children with complex needs.

Individual market position statements on children's services have been developed for Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, and Torfaen, which can be obtained by contacting the Children's Commissioning Consortium (4C's.) These cover independent fostering agencies and children's residential care providers who are: delivering, able to deliver, or are planning to deliver' services within each local authority. The market positions statements help to structure engagement between the local authorities, Children and Family Services, local providers, looked after children, their family, and carers regarding the future vision of services. They also support the local authorities to co-produce outcomes focussed services acknowledging that there are a range of different methods for strategic commissioning with multiple partners.

5.6 Provider Failure

a. Torfaen

In 2020/21 a residential care provider was identified as operating below expected standards. Torfaen CFS were holding weekly Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings, with NHS, the care provider and Torfaen commissioning representatives. Through these meetings it became apparent that level of care and support expected was falling below expectation and that the provider was failing in its obligation to keep the young person safe.

Torfaen Council supported the provider to introduce new processes and attempted to make the placement both safe and successful. However, the provider was unable to operate safely, so work was undertaken to place the young person with a different provider. The MDT was supported by health but time scales for actions proved problematic due to ongoing capacity issues.

b. Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire County Council supported a new entrant into the residential care market last year however, the provider eventually went into liquidation. It was generally felt that this provider had grown too quickly and overextended itself. The provider saw a gap in the market for single bespoke care provision and was in the process of setting up several residential homes across Gwent and beyond responding to that gap in the market. However, there were several concerns brought from practitioners and partners that the provider was not following care plans, had poor communication with commissioners and a high turnover of managers. The Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

were informed and became involved. Shortly after this the provider went into liquidation.

5.7 Market Quality

All LA's in Gwent have individual quality assurance frameworks for children's services that feed into the wider collective processes co-ordinated by The Children's Commissioning Consortium (The 4C's) to assess the overall quality of care and support provision being provided by regulated providers. The 4Cs has in place an 'issues, concerns and compliments' process which supports the LA's to consider the extent to which regulated services meet the requirements of quality care and support, and whether the state of the market poses any risks to the future quality of care provision.

The insufficiency of supply regarding suitable foster placements aligned with the stagnation of the children's residential market is impacting on the quality of placements available to children and young people. Placing children outside of their local authority makes maintaining family relationships and the continuity of care and support more difficult. Ultimately this will impact on a young person's outcomes and future.

5.8 Current trends

a. Foster Care

The region would like to support the development of foster carers who can provide short notice, emergency placements alongside placements for young people with more complex needs and teenagers. The provision of general foster placements is typically met by local authority services. The Gwent region would like to see IFAs target their recruitment and training at areas where there are current shortfalls in provision.

The region is keen to work with IFAs who have an established local footprint of capacity and those who will invest in service development locally for local children. The ambition is to offer and deliver strong collaborative services for children and young people in Gwent to help them remain closer to home.

The 5 local authorities would also like to develop the presence of the third sector in the fostering market to help deliver social value across Gwent communities.

b. Residential Care

The 5 local authorities in Gwent are committed to developing sufficiency of accommodation in their local area. Where sufficiency cannot be achieved there is a joint commitment to prioritise sufficiency across regional footprints that mirror the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and Local Health Board (LHB) footprint. The basis for this commitment is evidence based, intended to support improved outcomes for looked after children and to maximise use of local resources for local children.

All 5 local authorities are experiencing an increase in children entering care with complex behaviours that foster carers are either not prepared to or not sufficiently skilled to support. This has led to an increase in the number of young people being referred to residential services. In response the region plans to increase residential capacity due to the cost and lack of specialist providers, and bring those young people

placed outside of the region back to Gwent. This approach supports the regional strategic priorities for children and families. To improve outcomes for children and young people with complex needs through earlier intervention, community-based support, and placement closer to home.

There is also a commitment to work in collaboration with public sector partners across the regional footprint where this offers identifiable benefits. This is evidenced through the co-produced projects being developed in Torfaen and Monmouthshire with an existing RSL, and Newport who have developed links with specialist providers of adult care to enter the children's care market and support the development of two new children's residential homes.

5.9 Impact on commissioning practices

Welsh Government's commitment to the phasing out of profit in children's care may significantly impact the market and act as a deterrent to future investment. Any sudden loss of private providers will increase pressure on local authority services and negatively impact the wellbeing and outcomes of children and young people. It is therefore vitally important that the transition period is well managed. It is likely that removing the profit from children's social care will lead to an increase in third sector providers being commissioned to fill gaps in capacity and meet demand. However, there is no guarantee that moving to third sector providers will yield significant savings.

The readily availability of grants and hardship funding, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic has supported local providers, but the withdrawal of this funding will potentially affect the financial viability of some providers. However, the scale of impact remains difficult to predict.

The 'National Transfer Scheme' for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) aligned with the war in Ukraine means that the number of children is predicted to rise putting further pressure on local authorities in terms of capacity.

5.10 Sustainability of provision

As previously reported:

- There is a lack diversity within the residential children's homes market.
- New and existing providers have the market power to demand higher care prices.
- The withdrawal of subsidies such as Welsh Government's Hardship Fund may impact on the sustainability of some providers.
- WG's commitment to removing the profit from children's care may reduce diversity and increase instability further.

As a result, there arises a classic 'make or buy' scenario. Clearly with prices so high to externally purchase placements it is more cost effective for local authorities to provide their own. However, evidence within the recent Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Children Social Care study report (October 2011) contends that there is no material difference between the costs of internally provided care homes and externally provided care homes (however, this does not consider the individual needs of the child). However, it remains to be seen if this is sustainable in the longer term or

if indeed, sufficient provision can be provided directly to make a material difference to the overall situation.

5.11 Risks to market stability

As previously reported: Welsh Government's commitment to the elimination of phasing out profit in children's care may significantly impact the market and act as a deterrent to future investment. Any sudden loss of private providers will increase pressure on local authority services and negatively impact the wellbeing and outcomes of children and young people. It is likely that removing the profit from children's social care will lead to an increase in third sector providers being commissioned to fill gaps in capacity and meet demand. However, it is far from clear if there are enough third sector providers and if these are offering or able to offer placements at more affordable prices. Historically third sector providers of IFAs and/or residential care have not offered significant savings compared to their independent sector counter-parts.

The 4Cs, as the residential care framework commissioning body, regularly advise caution to leaders on messaging that can create a more hostile market environment, which can have a disproportionate impact on effective smaller enterprises who add social value to local communities, thereby perversely leading to increased strength of large UK commercial providers and reducing healthy competition in the market.

5.12 Non-regulated provision

There is a mismatch between the needs of the children and young people requiring homes and the models of service or care offered by the market, leading to vacant beds and some young people having no regulated placement available to them. Due to lack of suitable residential placements Gwent like other regions in Wales must occasionally rely on unregulated residential providers, especially those that target the lack of sufficiency in secure estate, which is a major concern for local authorities in relation to both quality and price. In emergency situations local authorities find themselves occasionally having to place young people with these unregulated providers, supplemented with additional safeguards, due diligence, and ongoing discussions with CIW.

6 DAY SERVICES

Day services in Gwent have been in operation for several years, and traditionally are facility-based services based across the region. Individuals could access the services through social worker referrals, and would engage in meaningful activities within the service, supported by staff. Services were typically offered on a full day basis, providing a longer period of respite for carers.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were 16 in-house, facility based day services in operation across Gwent, alongside 13 community-based services. These services were temporarily closed in March 2020 as a result of the Nationwide lockdowns. Staff in the services were redeployed to alternative support services: domiciliary care, care homes, local specialist schools and community meals provisions. Remaining staff provided one to one support for individuals in the community, via face to face or on a virtual basis. Facility based services continued to be offered on a reduced capacity in

line with social distancing guidelines for individuals with significant care needs or individuals who had an identified safeguarding risk.

Referrals to the services increased and all Local Authorities in Gwent responded with increased community support provisions. As these services progressed, individuals accessing the services reported that they preferred a community-based service, allowing them to access their surrounding community, engage in meaningful activities, meet with friends, and learn essential life skills.

Local authorities in Gwent are currently reviewing their day services provisions to include increased community support services alongside a reduced facility-based service. Facility based services will now operate on a sessional basis (mornings, afternoons, or full days) and the community-based services have been expanded to include face to face on an individual and group basis, and virtual support. Referral pathways have been amended to ensure an individual is offered the appropriate support for them.

7 Social value in Children's services

The RPB were one of the first boards to develop a Social Value Forum (Provider Forum). A key area of work progressed by the provider forum was a regional approach to an advocacy strategy for adults. In many respects advocacy work and the advocacy organisations are in the truest sense social value organisations. There was a deliberate agreement to take a co-production approach and further details are set out in section 10 below.

The RPB continues to engage with WCVA and the Wales Cooperative centre in adopting a Social Value Forum Toolkit and will look to support the development of social enterprises across the regions working with our third sector umbrella organisations.

Also, the Regional Commissioning Group and the new opportunities linked to RIF funding will provide a renewed focus to further develop the role of 3rd sector social value based services in the region. This may be linked to day services or to supporting hospital discharge, admission avoidance and maintaining low level support in the community.

Third sector organisations continue to act as key partners in delivering children's services across Gwent. Further work is required to develop this strand of work and all 5 LAs would like to see more charitable, co-operative and SME provision available within their area.

There are active discussions with children's residential / foster care providers regarding this, as detailed above. However, it remains to be seen if this will be successful even in the medium term. For now, the market remains very much a 'sellers' market with LAs having to pay high prices for residential placements.

Some commissioning teams have attempted to work with and be supportive of social enterprise ventures and Torfaen engages with services for Independent Living, to provide additional services to individuals who utilise direct payments.

A similar approach has been taken with the Social Value (Provider) Forum. This forum is led from a regional perspective and has the benefit of a mixed set of attendees, third sector as well as private sector. Attendees on the provider forum are providers from all sectors within social care: domiciliary care, care homes and mental health services.

8 DIRECT PAYMENTS

Fig 15: Direct payments data per LA: Adults

Adult services	CCBC	BGCBC	NCC	TCBC	MCC
Number of adults receiving Direct Payments	129	111	87	80	145
Number of adults with a care and support plan	*Information unavailable	1067	1990	1138	147
% with care plan in receipt of DP	*Information unavailable	10.40%	4.40%	7.03%	7%
Number of PA's	163	160		90	225

Fig 15 shows the number of adults in receipt of Direct Payments in Gwent. Figures provided are accurate at the time of reporting in December 2021.

Fig 16: Direct payments data per LA: Children

Children's services	CCBC	BGCBC	NCC	TCBC	MCC
Number of children receiving Direct Payments	44	35	51	28	55
Number of children with a care and support plan	*Information unavailable	324	493	149	51
% with care plan in receipt of DP	*Information unavailable	10.80%	10.00%	18.80%	28%
Number of PA's	51	44	73		60

Fig 16 shows the number of children in receipt of Direct Payments in Gwent. Figures provided are accurate at the time of reporting in December 2021.

Direct payments (DP) continue to be used by local authorities to enhance the range of support options available to people with eligible support needs. The role that it plays in the care market for regulated services is recognised and it will continue to feature

as an integral element of the region's future commissioning plans. Across Gwent, each local authority has dedicated direct payment teams to initiate and provide ongoing support to those using the direct payments schemes.

The number of children/families in Gwent who receive a direct payment has remained static over recent years and the arrangements in place to support people, who wish to take up this option, are fragmented and inconsistent. Recruitment of personal assistants remains a critical issue and severely limits DPs as a viable alternative to other care provision.

A regional DP steering group was established and a review of direct payments in Gwent was undertaken in March 2022 with the following recommendations currently being considered by Heads of Adult Services:

- Establish a regional direct payment hub
- Commission a Gwent wide list of approved payroll providers
- Adopt Gwent wide policy and practice guidelines
- Establish one regional direct payment rate across Gwent

This work will progress through 2022.

Fig 17: Direct payment data per LA: Adults

Adult services	CCBC	BGCBC	NCC	TCBC	MCC
Number of adults receiving Direct Payments	129	111	87	80	145
Number of adults with a care and support plan	*Information unavailable	1067	1990	1138	147
% with care plan in receipt of DP	*Information unavailable	10.40%	4.40%	7.03%	7%
Number of PA's	163	160		90	225

Fig 17 shows the number of adults in receipt of Direct Payments in Gwent. Figures provided are accurate at time of reporting in December 2021.

Fig 18: Direct Payments data per LA: Children

Children's services	CCBC	BGCBC	NCC	TCBC	MC C
Number of children receiving Direct Payments	44	35	51	28	55
Number of children with a care and support plan	*Information unavailable	324	493	149	51

% with care plan in receipt of DP	*Information unavailable	10.80%	10.00 %	18.80 %	28%
Number of PA's	51	44	73		60

Fig 18 shows the number of children in receipt of Direct Payments in Gwent. Figures provided are accurate at the time of reporting in December 2021.

The current workforce capacity dedicated to Direct Payments in Gwent varies across the 5 Local Authorities, with 13.5 FTE posts across Gwent whose main function is to provide Direct Payment advice and support. A number of additional posts have involvement with Direct Payment work, in a management, training or financial function.

Payroll services are provided by a commissioned list of providers, ensuring that payroll providers deliver a service that meets people's needs, including those who do not have the mental capacity to administer their own Direct Payment, or is a child under 16 and has a Suitable Person to act on their behalf and also fulfils their audit requirements.

9 CARERS

This section highlights the gaps and emerging themes in terms of sufficiency of care from the Population Needs Assessment (PNA).

Population Group	Carers
Gaps and Emerging Themes	<p>The level of care and support for unpaid carers is projected to increase significantly over the next 10 years as our population grows older, with many carers themselves over the age of 65.</p> <p>There is a need to improve access to services and support for unpaid carers.</p> <p>Young carers need more emotional and mental health support. The pandemic has had a significant negative impact upon young people and young carers.</p> <p>There is still a need to increase awareness of the needs of carers and for frontline staff to be able to recognise when people take on caring responsibilities so they can signpost to support.</p> <p>Peer to peer support and respite provision are continually highlighted as being a priority need for carers. There is a need to increase support through third sector and community partners to increase befriending opportunities and community groups.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted on the availability of respite provisions.</p>

There are an estimated 71,497 unpaid carers in Gwent (Daffodil Cymru). This does not include those who provide care but do not recognise themselves as carers. In the

State of Caring Report 2021, carers were referred to as the third pillar of health and social care. In 2021/2022, Welsh Government awarded the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) a per capita sum of £191,000, which was used alongside the Integrated Care Fund to further support unpaid carers.

The demand for care provision by carers is projected to increase with growing life expectancy, resulting in more people living longer and requiring care. Given these projected increases, it is likely that there will be an increased need for support services for carers, to ensure that they are not at risk of social isolation.

The carers voice is paramount in identifying and delivering the priorities of the Gwent RPB and are represented on the Gwent Carers Strategic Partnership Board, Citizens Panel and RPB. The Carers Expert Panel at Carers Trust SE Wales is also a mechanism used to ensure that carers can influence, change and shape the services that affect them in Gwent. Primary care services are often the first point of contact for carers and influential in identification of unpaid carers. Carers champions have been supported in GP services in Gwent, supporting carers at first contact.

Support services in Gwent faced a number of pressures during the COVID-19 pandemic. GP services changed to virtual consultations and legislative requirements required services to temporarily close, then begin support on an amended delivery programme. Face to face support was initially halted, and in some services, staff were redeployed into frontline care delivery services. This initial reduction in support placed strain on some carers.

Respite is a key provision for carers, providing a much-needed break from the care role. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that availability of respite services reduced, further exacerbated with travel restrictions and the closures of hospitality, tourism and leisure in line with legislation. In June 2021, Welsh Government launched a £3m respite fund to both meet an anticipated surge in demand for respite services and to fund a new Wales-wide short breaks fund. In Gwent this was used in a variety of ways:

- In Caerphilly, leisure memberships were purchased for carers to contribute to health and wellbeing.
- In Blaenau Gwent, the fund was used for day care, funding a combination of overnight stays, sessional support and short break respite.
- In Newport carers were provided with vouchers for lunch at carers café events, farm sessions for families and a range of day activities and resources.
- In Monmouthshire, young carers attended various activities at local theatres, and adult carers accessed short term respite support.

The pandemic has significantly affected the mental health and wellbeing of carers, with 40% of carers in Wales reporting that they felt unable to continue their caring role (State of Caring Survey, Carers Wales). The recommendations for carer support in Gwent include:

- Providing respite opportunities.
- Working with dementia and mental health divisions to help develop the Good Work Learning and Development Framework

- Continuing engagement with carer groups and continuing to support unpaid carers in the region.
- Continue to support unpaid carers in education and the workplace.

A regional Carers Board support the RPB to deliver the national carers agenda and Welsh Government's '*Strategy for unpaid carers: delivery plan 2021*'. Further details on the needs of carers and a market position statement are included in the Population Needs Assessment with actions to address priorities to be set out in the developing Area Plan.

10 EQUITY, SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Preventative services have been impacted by the pandemic, with increased levels of social pressures, deprivation, and rising costs of living all impacting on this area. All local authorities in Gwent are committed to the principles of social equality and comply with the requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the Well-being of future generations Act 2015.

All LA services in Gwent are designed with due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the Socio-economic Duty which specifies that local authorities must:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Services are also designed with due regard to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act which requires LAs to demonstrate that they are improving social, economic, and environmental wellbeing, alongside sustainable development. Engagement with third sector and private providers has increased, to offer individuals holistic means of support.

11 ADVOCACY

The Gwent Regional Partnership Board, with support from Age Cymru's Golden Thread Advocacy Programme (GTAP), has developed a co-productive approach to developing a regional adult advocacy strategy. '*Our Vision and Intentions for Adult Advocacy 2019-2024*' was officially launched on the 25th of October 2019. Its purpose: to guide the future procurement of adult advocacy services across the Gwent region. Local authority commissioners, advocacy organisations and local citizens worked together to shape the strategy and a unique infrastructure to support co-productive commissioning was developed to support the development of the strategy as well as the development of future advocacy services in Gwent.

Fig 19

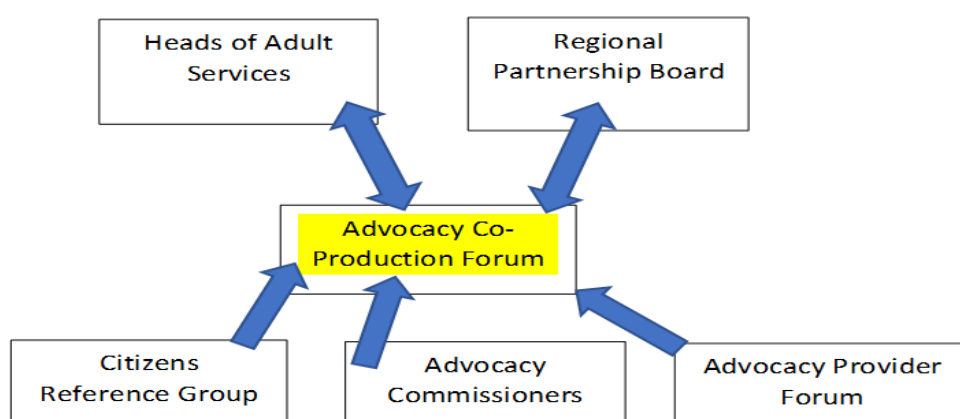


Fig 19 illustrates the unique governance structure for advocacy commissioning within the Gwent region.

The development of the regional, co-produced strategy was showcased at the launch of the ‘*National Framework and Toolkit for Commissioning Advocacy*’ in October 2019 as an exemplar. The national framework and accompanying toolkit developed by Golden Thread Advocacy Programme (GTAP) outline the commissioning approach that we have adopted in Gwent.

Prior to the development of the commissioning strategy two multi-stakeholder workshops were held alongside a workshop for people with learning disabilities, these were co-facilitated by the Golden Thread Advocacy Programme (GTAP) and the Co-production Network for Wales.

A single point of access, independent of social services and advocacy providers was recommended following the consultation process and a successful ICF bid led to the development of the Gwent Access to Advocacy Helpline (GATA.) pilot. Launched in October 2019 the GATA helpline has three main components:

- To create an independent single point of access (i.e., a referral helpline) for advocacy services across the partner authorities.
- Raise awareness of advocacy for the public and professionals, across health and social care.
- To provide for increasing demand for statutory Independent Professional Advocacy and wider forms of advocacy.
- To collect information that will enable commissioners and their co-production partners to build a clearer picture of the need and demand for advocacy, and of the gaps and trends.

It was anticipated that a regional advocacy awareness raising campaign would lead to greater demand of advocacy services across the region and drive referrals through the GATA helpline. However, the Covid-19 pandemic halted progress and made it difficult to establish a true picture of the need and demand for advocacy across Gwent as well as the impact of the GATA helpline over the past 18 months. An extension to funding for the GATA helpline has been secured until April 2023 and it is anticipated

that this will support consistent data collection across the region and help identify gaps in provision, while mapping demand more accurately.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic direct advocacy referrals were also permitted to providers from practitioners to prevent bottlenecks and support timely hospital discharge. However, the option to self-refer, through a single point of access remains important for Gwent citizens. Advocacy providers and the GATA helpline have highlighted that referrals are now returning to pre-COVID levels with a marked increase in parent advocacy relating to child protection and mental health cases. An overall picture of advocacy provision within Gwent is now being developed. This will help to measure the success of the GATA pilot and inform an options paper for future advocacy commissioning.

From April 2023, the Citizen Voice Body (CVB) will replace Community Health Councils (CHC) and listen and represent the voices and opinions of the people of Wales in respect of health and social care services. It is not clear what impact the CVB will have on advocacy services already commissioned in Gwent. However, links have already been established in Gwent with the existing CHC. This should provide the opportunity to co-ordinate the provision of advocacy support across the health board in order to strengthen the citizen's voice in relation to health and social care as the CVC develops.

The Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019 will result in the transition from the existing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) arrangements to the revised Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS). Those deprived of their liberty will have rights that will include access to appropriate advocacy support. It is likely that this will increase the demand for advocacy support across Wales, including Gwent.

In relation to Children's Services, the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) has been commissioned across the region to provide advocacy services to children and young people. NYAS support children looked after through an Independent Visiting service and are able to ensure the voice of the child is heard at child protection conferences and assessment reviews.

12. WELSH LANGUAGE

In Gwent, the PNA has considered the delivery of the Welsh language within the context of three key themes. These are:

- Increasing the number of Welsh speakers
- Increasing the use of the Welsh language
- Creating favourable conditions (infrastructure and context)

These key themes will be delivered through wider Local Authority and Health Board corporate Welsh language policies. The Gwent RPB has sought to identify the actions required to deliver the range and level of services identified as necessary through the medium of Welsh. The Welsh language strategic framework 'More than just words' aims to improve frontline health and social services provision for Welsh speakers, and family and carers. In keeping with the principles in the framework we have included

the linguistic profiles of local authority areas to help identify where to focus provision and service delivery.

Accessing service provisions in Welsh is an important element of care and support across all patient groups. The Local Authorities in Gwent will:

- Ensure the 'active offer' is provided, whether through social workers or nurses.
- Ensure older people, including Dementia services, are able to provide Welsh language support as part of the Dementia Friendly Community Agenda.
- Ensure individuals accessing mental health services and learning disability services will be supported to use the Welsh language, and Local Authorities will promote the use of Welsh language through contracts with third sector partners.
- Ensure all RPB partners will have individual Welsh language policies in place.

Care and language go hand in hand, as quality of care can be compromised if people are unable to communicate in their preferred way. Although there is not a significant demand for services in the Welsh language in Gwent, providers are asked as part of monitoring activity how many Welsh speaking staff they have as well as how many people they support who, given the choice, would use the medium of Welsh.

The 2011 census recorded that 19% of people living in Wales can speak Welsh and shows that for the percentage of people aged 3+ who can speak Welsh that all areas across Gwent are below the Wales average (19.01%) ranging from 11.19% in Caerphilly to 7.85% in Blaenau Gwent. The table below shows the percent of people aged 3+ who can speak Welsh across the Gwent region. All areas fall below the Welsh average.

Fig 20: Percentage of people aged 3+ who can speak Welsh

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Blaenau Gwent	18.0	17.8	17.8	17.5	19.7	17.1	16.1
Caerphilly	23.4	24.8	21.8	22.0	23.7	23.6	24.6
Torfaen	15.5	16.0	18.3	19.0	17.7	18.0	18.5
Monmouthshire	17.1	16.7	16.8	16.7	17.6	17.5	16.5
Newport	23.3	19.6	19.8	20.6	20.9	17.8	20.5
Wales	27.8	27.3	28.8	29.0	29.8	28.4	29.1

Throughout Gwent Welsh Language training is available to the workforce and also through Welsh Language units. Gwent adheres to the Welsh Language Policy to promote the use of Welsh and provide bilingual material when required or requested and 'The More Than Just Words' active offer is always considered as part of monitoring visits. Additional information on Welsh Language use can be found in both the Population Needs Assessment and Gwent Well-being Assessment www.gwentrpb.wales required under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and through weblinks included.

As more people across Gwent start to use Welsh on a daily basis, public services need to be able to provide services in Welsh. Public services (Local Authorities, Gwent Police & Aneurin Bevan University Health Board) across Gwent report the Welsh language skills for staff in different ways so it is difficult to provide a cumulative figure. A detailed breakdown is included in the regional Wellbeing Assessment and the RPB will utilise this information when planning services. [CULTURAL-FINAL-VERSION.pdf \(gwentpsb.org\)](#)

13 SUMMARY

Adult Services

- Care home market is currently stable, given the additional funding throughout the pandemic, however serious risks are present which threaten sustainability and stability due to fewer placements being made during the pandemic leading to an overprovision of places in some areas. Despite this the cost-of-living crises now threatens to bring further instability linked to funding.
- Workforce crisis threatens social care and domiciliary care in particular – recruitment and retention losses appear to be levelling off leaving some areas unable to cover all packages
- Growing recognition that the mental health of the workforce has been seriously affected by the pandemic and measures are needed to support the workforce.

Mental Health and Learning Disabilities

- Pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health support for adults and children particularly in the general population leading to increased waiting times for CAMHs
- Early intervention needs to be improved across all emotional wellbeing and mental health services
- A more diverse and responsive market for complex learning disabilities placements is needed in the region
- A focus on support for people with learning disabilities:
 - to live independently in their communities
 - earlier diagnosis of ASD required.

Children's Services

- Residential and foster care placements are currently unstable due to demand outstripping supply.
- Cost and outcomes of arranging residential placements and independent foster care placements are unsustainable and need to be improved leading to 'make or buy' decisions for future services
- Welsh Government's policy of 'removing the profit' from Children's Services will need careful management if the market is not to become further restricted/destabilised.

In Gwent, individuals have a choice as to the services available to meet their needs. However, the stability of the market is likely to be put to the test during financial year

2022/2023 as increasing cost pressures, allied to recruitment and retention difficulties will further expose the sector to increased levels of risk, this is especially so in the adult domiciliary and residential care markets.

Care Homes are currently able to meet the demand for the services, although a shortage of dementia care beds is of concern in some localities in the region. Domiciliary care services have reached critical levels due to staffing availability and providers continue to have issues with recruitment and retention. Currently the demands for domiciliary care services are significant, with individuals choosing to remain at home if possible, and these demands are likely to exacerbate already strained resources. As community-based services continue to reopen following the COVID-19 pandemic, it is hoped that pressure on domiciliary care will alleviate somewhat.

In children's services, the external provider market is subject to instability caused by acquisitions and mergers. There is also currently a lack of competition and choice in the market and the costs and profits are significantly higher than they would be in a healthy, competitive marketplace.

Working throughout the pandemic in conjunction with partnership agencies, alongside independent providers within the care home and domiciliary care sector has required and allowed us to work differently and apply some creative commissioning in the best interest of our citizens. This has further strengthened the positive working relationships between health and social care and provider partners in the region.

The issues raised in this MSR will be picked up in the Area Plan and measures to mitigate threats to market stability will be outlined.



COUNCIL – 24TH NOVEMBER 2022

SUBJECT: REGIONAL INTEGRATION FUND

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is provided to Council to consider the financial liabilities and implications of the new Regional Integration Fund (RIF) and its tapered funding model.
- 1.2 Council are asked to comment on the intended use of the RIF, its associated rules and financial liabilities.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Part 9 of the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 required local authorities and Health Boards to establish Regional Partnership Boards. RPB's were established on Health Board footprints with consequently seven Boards being established. The RPB for this area is titled the Gwent Regional Partnership Board.
- 2.2 Previously the RPB has been supported by grants via the integrated Care Fund (ICF).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the report together with the rules and use of the RIF.
- 3.2 Members comments are sought on the tapering arrangement in place between 2023 and 2027.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Welsh Government are clear on their intentions on the intended use of the RIF together with the associated tapering arrangements around the grant funding over a 5 year period. This tapering requirement will result in financial pressures on the authority as the tapering funding can only be replaced by taking funding from other budget areas or in budgetary growth.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 RIF Definition

5.1.1 The Regional Integration Fund (RIF) is described by Welsh Government as a key lever to drive change and transformation within the health and social care system, with Regional Partnership Boards tasked to consider how they deploy their collective resources, including both partnership funding and wider core resources to meet their objectives. The RIF, brings together previous funding streams provided to RPBs into one source of strategic revenue funds, providing £26.8m for Gwent annually, from April 2022 to March 2027.

5.1.2 The key features and values of the Regional Integration Fund are identified as:

- A strong focus on prevention and early intervention
- Developing and embedding national models of integrated care (also referred to as models of care within the guidance)
- Actively sharing learning across Wales through communities of practice
- Sustainable long term resourcing to embed and mainstream new models of care
- Creation of long term pooled fund arrangements
- Consistent investment in regional planning and partnership infrastructure

5.1.3 Regional Partnership Boards are required to utilise funding to deliver a programme of change over the next 5 years. There is emphasis on the learning from both the Integrated Care Fund and the Transformation Fund, and the desire to create sustainable system change through the integration of health and social care services.

5.1.4 The RIF aims to have established and mainstreamed at least six new national models of integrated care at the end of the five year period so that citizens of Wales, where ever they live, can be assured of an effective and seamless service experience in relation to. There are 6 models of care prescribed by Welsh Government:

1. Community based care – prevention and community coordination
2. Community based care – complex care closer to home
3. Promoting good emotional health and wellbeing
4. Supporting families to stay together safely, and therapeutic support for care experienced children
5. Home from hospital
6. Accommodation based solutions

5.1.5 The RIF will support the further progress and mainstreaming of these models of care by:

- Helping regions to share learning through Communities of Practice
- Designing 'blueprints' for these national models of care
- Measuring impacts against a nationally agreed outcomes framework and using data to shape and improve delivery 16
- Securing mainstream 'match funds' alongside a tapering of WG funds to ensure mainstreaming of these integrated models of care
- Leave a longer term 'pooled fund' legacy to continue sustainable delivery of these models of care

5.2 Ministerial Expectations

5.2.1 Ministers have explicitly set their expectations within the RIF guidance, and also in subsequent dialogue during RPB quarterly meetings, these are summarised below:

- Efforts should be focussed on accelerating the progress of A Healthier Wales (Appendix 1) to secure the best care, support and outcomes for the people of Wales.
- The Regional Integration Fund is provided to embed models of care developed through the Integrated Care Fund and Transformation Fund, whilst maintaining some scope for the continued development of new ones.
- Expectations are set for Regional Partnership Boards to continue to provide strategic support within their region to deliver seamless services that support ongoing response to system pressures, including the covid-19 pandemic.
- Ministers are clear that the new funding architecture hardwires in the sustainability planning and investment for the new models of care relying on partners to bring forward match funds and a firm commitment to long-term mainstreaming of effective new models of care. Whilst recognition is made to the challenge of providing match funding, unless investment is made in transforming our core system we will not achieve the transformation we are seeking.

5.3 RIF Rules

5.3.1 All activity funded by the Regional Integration Fund must directly support the development and delivery of the six national models of integrated care (see para. 5.1.4).

5.3.2 Regional Partnership Boards will have some flexibility to determine which projects and services align to which model of care but essentially all RPBs will need to ensure that:

- They invest in the development and embedding of the six priority models of care
- That they are able to demonstrate that projects and services are evolving to meet the needs of the relevant population groups within each of the models of care (noting some priority groups will be more relevant than others for each model of care)
- That they are maximising the use of key enablers to ensure their models of care are innovative, integrated and transformative.
- Across all population groups every opportunity is taken to increase the 'active offer' of integrated services through the medium of Welsh. Partners are able to 'shift' core resources to invest as match funding to ensure sustainable long term delivery of new models of care.

5.3.3 RPBs must consider how they will meet the specific needs of the priority population groups identified within the RIF guidance (informed by the Social Services & Wellbeing Act):

- Older people including people with dementia
- Children and young people with complex needs
- People with learning disabilities and neurodevelopmental conditions
- Unpaid carers
- People with emotional and mental health wellbeing needs

- 5.3.4 Delivery of the national models of integrated care must be underpinned by the four fundamental principles within the Social Services and Wellbeing Act; voice and control, prevention and early intervention, wellbeing, and coproduction.
- 5.3.5 To effectively deliver the national models of care that will be developed by the RIF, RPBs must consider and make good of key enabling tools; integrated planning and commissioning, technology and digital solutions, promoting the social value sector, integrated community hubs, workforce development and integration. By maximising effective use of the identified key enablers, RPBs can ensure they strategically align resources and capabilities in order to create integrated systems and services that will support better outcomes for priority population groups.
- 5.3.6 RPBs will be expected to invest a minimum of 5% of the RIF into direct support for unpaid carers, a minimum 14% for children and young people with complex needs, and a minimum 20% in the social value sector.
- 5.3.7 RPBs must adhere to the RIF tapered funding model as described below:

1. Fully Funded National Priorities Fund (100% WG funded - £2.825m)

Ring fenced funding provided to Regional Partnership Boards at 100%, no tapering or resource match required for initiatives within this category. This includes Dementia ringfenced funding, and the Integrated Autism Service.

2. Acceleration Change Fund (90% funded via RIF, 10% tapering)

Funding to test and develop new models of care, for a maximum period of 2 years. Following robust evaluation these models can be considered to move into the embedding fund.

3. National Delivery Model Embedding Fund (70% funded via RIF, 30% tapering)

Projects successfully tested can move into the embedding fund with a clear business case for sustainability. Embedding funding can be received for a maximum of 3 years. If appropriate, projects can move into the mainstreaming fund at the end of this period.

4. 50/50 Integrated Mainstreaming Fund (50% funded via RIF, 50% tapering)

After a project has concluded its three years funding under the Embedding Fund it should now be ready to be mainstreamed. Partners must agree and commit resources to ensure that the project or model of care will be sustained long term. This fund will take the shape of a recurrent pooled fund with partners contributing 50% and Welsh Government contributing the remaining 50%

- 5.3.8 The tapering element of the RIF will only be applied to projects run by LHBs and LAs. For third sector led projects, statutory partners should work in collaboration with those providers to develop longer term sustainability and mainstreaming plans.
- 5.3.9 All RIF funding decisions must be determined collaboratively by the Regional Partnership Board. RPBs are expected to put in place a memorandum of understanding that sets out the agreed governance, accountability and decision-making processes including appropriate arrangements to enable scrutiny of investment decisions by relevant sovereign bodies.

Regional Partnership Boards must put in place mechanisms to ensure effective management of funding allocated, including to third sector partners and other alternative delivery models, to ensure that schemes successfully achieve identified outcomes on time and on budget, including assurances of match funding and resources where necessary.

5.4 Development Process

- 5.4.1 Recognising the level and range of services enabled by partnership funding, thorough assessments were undertaken to demonstrate the learning and potential risk within the system should services need to cease due to funding availability. The evaluation and assessment approaches focussed on supporting sustainability planning, to identify areas of good practice and learning able to be shared to introduce or strengthen regional models of delivery. The outcomes and impact of the projects, along with weighted prioritisation scoring and workforce implications were all included within detailed consideration packs for each strategic partnership to aid this process.
- 5.4.2 Gwent Regional Partnership Board reviewed the Strategic Portfolio Assessment at the meeting of 16th November 2021.
- 5.4.3 RPB approved the approach to develop strategic programmes, to bring together activity from different funding streams into single related strategic programmes.

5.5 Consequences of Tapering

- 5.5.1 As the RIF funding model prescribes a tapering arrangement during the course of the 5 year programme, budgetary match liabilities have been identified as a reflection of the status of individual projects, i.e. projects identified as accelerate, or embed agreed at strategic partnership development sessions.
- 5.5.2 The liabilities associated with the Regional Integration Fund are identified against the relevant delivery organisation, reflected within the table below.

Caerphilly CBC Specific schemes (See Appendix 2 for full breakdown)

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Funding Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Welsh Government grant funding	£2,252,360	£1,770,069	£1,645,371	£1,365,412	£1,365,412	£1,240,714
Additional funding required from Caerphilly CBC	£0	£482,291	£124,698	£279,959	£0	£124,698
Cumulative funding required from Caerphilly CBC	£0	£482,291	£606,989	£886,948	£886,948	£1,011,646

- 5.5.3 The above liabilities are reflected within RIF Executive reports that have been drafted for Directors across all health and social care to aid organisational consideration of liabilities within necessary governance mechanisms. A timeline of consideration has been developed, which identifies late October to mid-November for completion of considerations.

- 5.5.4 Consideration will be needed on schemes developed in partnership via the Regional Partnership Board to agree shared liabilities. The schemes to which this relates are included in the table below:
Regional Integration Fund – Regional Schemes

Funding Source	Project Name	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Welsh Govt grant funding	Various	£2,337,308	£2,012,207	£1,636,116	£1,544,746	£1,544,746	£1,168,654
Additional funding required from RPB	MYST Leadership Costs	£0	£88,767	£0	£59,178	£0	£0
	Shared Lives	£0	£8,104	£16,208	£0	£0	£16,208
	Home First	£0	£179,942	£359,883	£0	£0	£359,884
	My Mates	£0	£48,288	£0	£32,192	£0	£0
	Total	£0	£325,101	£376,091	£91,370	£0	£376,092
Cumulative funding required from RPB	Various	£0	£325,101	£701,192	£792,562	£792,562	£1,168,654

- 5.5.5 As identified within the development process, monthly updates regarding the funding model development have been provided to both Region Leadership Group and Regional Partnership Board. A special meeting of the Regional Partnership Board was arranged on 1 February to consider the draft guidance and implications of funding. It was acknowledged during this meeting that budget setting for the 2022-23 financial year had already been undertaken, therefore, no availability of budget to allow for tapering within year 1 of the programme.

5.6 Evaluation Framework

- 5.6.1 Results Based Accountability remains the methodology prescribed by Welsh Government for the evaluation of the Regional Integration Fund. As a reflection of the learning from both ICF and TF evaluations, Welsh Government have prescribed an Outcomes Framework for the evaluation of the Regional Integration Fund.
- 5.6.2 The outcomes framework, and associated technical guidance provide near 100 pages of guidance on the outcomes by model of care, associated indicators and methods for capturing data. This framework does not provide a recommended approach for measuring social value added. For preventative activity, social value added can be a useful evaluation metric. There are a wide range of methodologies available for this purpose; it may be appropriate to scope and test approaches to enable the Regional Partnership Board to agree a method for calculating social value added.
- 5.6.3 The continued programme development work in 2022-23 will focus on benefits realisation plans and evaluation strategies for each programme. A monitoring and evaluation framework has previously been developed for the RPB, aligned with the Results Based Accountability principles. There have been limitations to the data previously captured, lessons from this recognises for any evaluation framework to be

successful, regular and consistent data reporting from partnership organisations is vital.

5.7 Conclusion

- 5.7.1 The regional Integration fund is clearly the mechanism via which Welsh Government intend to fund Regional Partnership Boards in future. The new concept of tapered funding presents a financial challenge/pressure to the local authority which could ultimately require the authority to allocate further growth to Social Services or for the Directorate to cease or reduce some of its activity.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 None made.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 None anticipated.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The financial consequences of the tapering arrangements are set out in paragraphs 5.5.2 and 5.5.4.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 This report came before the Social Services Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 11th October 2022.
- 10.2 The committee expressed significant concerns with regard to the tapering arrangements and in particular the consequences outlined in Table 5.5.2 of the report. Following a full discussion Members agreed they did not support the proposed tapering arrangements. Concerns were expressed re impacts on the Council's budgets going forward.
- 10.3 The Chair suggested that a letter outlining these concerns should be sent to the Welsh Government. The Cabinet Member for Social Care advised that she planned to write a letter to the Minister highlighting her concerns over the Fund's tapered funding model and this would reflect the views of the Scrutiny Committee.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

Author: David Street, Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing

Consultees: Cllr Sean Morgan, The Leader
Cllr James Pritchard, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Shayne Cook, Cabinet Member for Housing
Councillor Elaine Forehead, Cabinet Member for Social Care
Councillor Nigel George, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Property
Councillor Chris Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces
Councillor Julian Simmonds, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation
Councillor Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member Finance and Performance
Cllr Phillipa Leonard, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection
Cllr Donna Cushing, Chair Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Marina Chacon-Dawson, Vice Chair Social Services Scrutiny Committee
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Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
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Jo Williams, Head of Adult Services
Gareth Jenkins, Head of Children's Services
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Mike Jones, Financial Services Manager

Appendix 1 [Welsh Government: A Healthier Wales: Our Plan for Health and Social Care](#)

Appendix 2 [Regional Integrated Fund – Growth Requirement for 2022/23 to 2027/28](#)