



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 4TH JUNE 2024

**SUBJECT: PROGRESS IN WORKING WITH SCHOOLS TO EMBED
 APPROACHES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND
 YOUNG PEOPLE THAT IMPACT ON REDUCING
 EXCLUSIONS**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND
 CORPORATE SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report aims to provide an update for members of the progress of the Local Authority education department support teams in working with schools to embed approaches to meet the needs of children and young people that impact on reducing exclusions.
- 1.2 This report also aims to provide an update on current exclusion rates.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report aims to outline the LA approach to targeting pupil exclusions (and attendance) through: (i) effective self-evaluation and analysis of data; (ii) the EPS professional learning offer to schools – that aims to support and upskill staff to understand the factors that might underpin pupil wellbeing and behaviour and support pupil wellbeing; and the 3-year Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership (WRAP) pilot project; and (iii) support for learners through the delivery of interventions which aim to exert a positive impact on pupil (and staff) wellbeing and behaviour.
- 2.2 This approach aligns with the LA's Inclusion Compendium (IC). The IC highlights the importance of screening measures to identify vulnerable pupils (e.g., PASS survey and the Vulnerability Index – developed by the EPS) and positive and respectful relationships within the school community. It outlines the core practices that support wellbeing, promote positive relationships, and build resilience at a universal, targeted and specialist level.
- 2.3 The report summarises the number of exclusions across the LA for the period 2020-2021 to 2023-2024 which shows that there has been a significant increase in both permanent and fixed term exclusions since pupils returned to school following the Covid-19 Pandemic; this culminated in a peak during the last academic year (2022-

2023). The use of permanent exclusions by secondary schools remains a concern for the LA. However, current data suggests a levelling out of fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less in secondary and primary schools and a reduction in the number of pupils receiving exclusions, the number of days lost to exclusion and the number of exclusions issued of 5 days or more. Similarly, there has been a reduction this academic year in the number of exclusions of learners who are looked after, those eligible for free school meals and ALN learners, both in terms of exclusions up to and over 5 days, compared to the same time period last academic year (first two terms).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and
- i) consider the information contained in the report and to offer views and comments;
 - ii) endorse the approach taken by the LA to embed approaches to meet the needs of children and young people that impact on reducing exclusions

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Members are asked to endorse the approach the Local Authority (LA) has adopted in its provision of universal, targeted, and specific support to enable schools to better understand and support pupil wellbeing, thereby making exclusions less likely to occur.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Since the return to school following the Covid 19 pandemic, schools have reported a deterioration in pupil behaviour with increased levels of general and persistent disruptive behaviour, reduced engagement, increased anxiety, and reduced resilience, which schools are finding hard to regulate. This has resulted in an increase in pupil exclusions and requests to support pupil wellbeing needs, in addition to a decrease in school attendance figures.
- 5.2 Overall, pupil exclusions across the LA are too high and challenges remain around the number of permanent exclusions particularly in secondary schools (see Table 1 in Appendix 1). The tables in Appendix 1 summarise the number of exclusions across the LA for the period 2020-2021 to 2023-2024. Inspection of these tables highlight a year-on-year increase in both permanent and fixed term exclusions since pupils returned to school following the Covid-19 Pandemic; this culminated in a peak during the last academic year (2022-2023). Whilst the use of permanent exclusions by secondary schools remains a concern for the LA, current data suggests a levelling out of fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less in secondary and primary schools, which will be the first year in four years where there has not been an increase. We are also anticipating, based on current data, a reduction in the use of longer fixed term exclusions (over 5 days; see Table 2, Appendix 1) in both primary and secondary schools. Comparison of the first two terms of 2023-2024 with the same period last year (see Table 3, Appendix 1), highlights that whilst there has been a slight increase in the number of exclusions below 5 days for both primary and secondary schools, there has been a reduction in the number of pupils receiving exclusions, the number of days lost to exclusion and the number of exclusions issued of 5 days or more. Similarly, there has also been a reduction this year in the number of exclusions of learners who are looked after, those eligible for free school meals and ALN learners, both in terms of exclusions both up to and over 5 days, compared to the first two terms of last year.

- 5.3 The LA approach to targeting pupil exclusions (and attendance) is through : (i) effective self-evaluation and analysis of data; (ii) the Educational Psychology Service's (EPS) professional learning offer to schools – that aims to support and upskill staff to understand the factors that might underpin pupil wellbeing and behaviour and support pupil wellbeing, and the 3-year Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership (WRAP) pilot; and (iii) support for learners through the EPS wellbeing interventions offer linked to the Inclusion Compendium, the EPS phased model of service delivery and school surgeries and helpline undertaken by the Behaviour Officers who are part of the Advisory Team Service.
- 5.4 Effective self-evaluation activities include: school behaviour and wellbeing reviews leading to Team Around the School processes and analysis of exclusion data.
- 5.5 Exclusion data is analysed in a variety of ways: by length and number of fixed term exclusions (fte); number of days lost; and number of pupils receiving a fte or permanent exclusion (pex) – overall and for those from vulnerable groups (pupils in receipt of free school meals, pupils with additional learning needs, and pupils who are looked after).
- 5.6 Monthly meetings have been set up with key managers within the Education Directorate (Inclusion Team and Education Welfare Service - EWS) to monitor the impact of their work on exclusions and half termly meetings take place with EWS and the Inspire Team to link in with exclusions and related actions.
- 5.7 The exclusion data is shared with: the LA senior management team termly and annually; schools termly (in addition to awareness training at Governor Network sessions and briefing notes to governors); and pastoral leads (PL) termly at the PL forum, during which the context behind the exclusion is explored and discussion entails around sharing good practice between school PLs. The next step is to develop a cluster-based project aimed at reducing exclusions. This would focus on the support available from the LA to schools and explore how this can further impact on reducing exclusions.
- 5.8 The LA also provides supportive challenge to schools to investigate the circumstances underlying lengthy (above 15 days) and permanent exclusions (pex) to explore whether alternative supportive measures could have been in place, or can be put in place, such as a managed move.
- 5.9 The LA approach to exclusions aligns with the LA's Inclusion Compendium (IC) which contributes to a cohesive model for inclusion, wellbeing and relationship building across schools. The IC highlights the importance of screening measures to identify vulnerable pupils (e.g., PASS survey and the Vulnerability Index – developed by the EPS) and positive and respectful relationships within the school community.
- 5.10 The IC outlines the core practices that support wellbeing, promote positive relationships, and build resilience at a universal, targeted and specialist level. The covid-19 pandemic and continuing pressures on schools has impacted on the LA and schools' ability to work together to embed the approaches and guidance in the IC linked to wellbeing and behaviour in schools, consequently school consultations on the IC have not taken place during 2021-2023. Instead, the IC was re-launched with ALNCo's at ALNCo Forum in the summer term of 2023 and was re-shared with Head Teachers (HTs) and Pastoral Leads in April 2024.
- 5.11 The LA has developed a screening measure – the Vulnerability Index (VI) Tool to identify vulnerable pupils. The VI aims to identify a pupil's level of vulnerability through the identification of individual, school, family and community risk and protective factors.

The tool then provides recommended targeted and specific interventions to promote the protective factors identified as absent from the index. We have now piloted this tool with 2 secondary schools and 3 primary schools, who were then asked to complete a survey to enable us to evaluate their views of the VI tool.

5.12 VI Evaluation survey summary:

- 100% of respondents expressed that they found the VI helpful when identifying vulnerable learners (4 strongly agree, 1 agree).
- 80% of respondents found the Index to be a more effective tool than school measures alone (4 strongly agree, 1 disagree).
- 100% of respondents agreed that the Index is inclusive to all possible 'risk' and 'protective' factors.
- 80% of respondents noted that as a result of using the Index, more pupils have received an intervention (1 strongly agree, 3 agree, and 1 disagree).
- 60% of respondents noted that as a result of the Index alone, more pupils have been identified as vulnerable (3 agree, 1 disagree and 1 N/A).
- 80% reported that the interventions implemented were successful or showing a positive impact (4 agree and 1 N/A).
- Respondents were asked to give detail of how they were measuring this success and respondents stated the following:
 - o *School based scoring system -2,-1,0,+1,=2 and other formal assessment tools.*
 - o *Observations, check-ins.*
 - o *Attendance to school improved and reduction in class charts points/fixed term exclusions.*
 - o *PASS survey and Thrive assessments.*
- 60% of respondents found the Index easy to navigate (1 strongly agree, 2 agree, and 2 disagree).
- 80% of respondents reported having no issues with the Index, and 60% feel that the Index does not need improving.
- There were some mixed findings from the primary schools who completed the index which highlighted that primary schools may need further support from the EPS to complete the index.

5.13 The EPS has developed a suite of training (and interventions) that aim to support school staff understanding of the factors that might underpin pupil behaviour and empower school staff to respond appropriately and thereby make exclusions less likely to occur. The LA has employed and trained Assistant Educational Psychologists through Welsh Government (WG) funding (ALN Grant 20-24, Covid Recovery grant 2020-end of August 2021, ALN Learner Development and Whole School Approach (WSA) to Wellbeing grants 21-24) to deliver these to schools.

5.14 The LA has continued to further develop and extend the range of relevant wellbeing training available to schools from the EPS in response to: feedback from Head Teachers (school surveys), Pastoral Leads (termly meetings), ALNCo's (Autumn term planning and end of year review meetings, and termly ALNCo Forum); and going forward, Youth Forum (2023-2024). This information is evaluated routinely and compared with data on needs that help refine the EPS offer (e.g., EPS data on presenting needs through analysis of EP work requests (2022-2024)). In addition to this, schools have many opportunities to have bespoke training tailored to their circumstances in addition to the PL offer devised for all schools. This has led to the development of training on 'Neurodivergence and wellbeing', 'Behaviour management through emotional regulation and emotion coaching' and 'Positive Psychology'.

- 5.15 In addition to whole school twilight training and workshops, the EPS has also trained school staff to deliver the following interventions during 2021-2024 to support pupil wellbeing and in so doing target pupil behaviour:
- The 6-day ELSA (emotionally literate support assistant) training package,
 - the 2-half day YMHFA (youth mental health first aid) training, and
 - Nurture and Human Givens training packages.
- 5.16 The EPS also continues to provide ongoing half-termly supervision for ELSA and offer half-termly coaching support school staff to implement these interventions and quality assure their integrity.
- 5.17 The LA met its target (2021-2023) to provide 80% of schools one targeted wellbeing training from the EPS. Such that 92% of schools (2021-2022) and 80% (2022-2023) of schools and EOTAS settings received at least 1 targeted wellbeing training and workshop from the EPS.
- 5.18 All secondary schools now have between 1 and 5 staff who have accessed the 11-day trauma-informed school's diploma and are acting as emotionally available adults to vulnerable pupils in school and nearly all (10/12) secondary schools have received jointly developed and delivered emotion regulation training from Community Psychology (Aneurin Bevan University Health Board – ABUHB) and the EPS. In addition to this, the EPS has provided whole school trauma informed training to: 8 primary schools and 1 EOTAS setting (2021-2022); and 16 primaries, 1 EOTAS setting and 1 SRB (2022-2023).
- 5.19 The EPS has developed bitesize recorded online training for schools this academic year (2023-2024), in response to school feedback, to enable them the flexibility to access training at a time that is convenient for them, in order to address issues around staff cover.
- 5.20 Bitesize training is also provided on Lego therapy groups and Draw and Talk interventions to empower staff to set up these interventions. Schools are made aware that they can, through our coaching model, request support to deliver the first, middle and end session.
- 5.21 Since the spring term of 2024 when this bitesize training was made available to schools, 119 staff from 22 settings (17 primary, 3 secondary and 2 EOTAS settings) have accessed our online bitesize training, including:
- 11 staff have accessed Lego-Based Therapy training (4 settings have now begun the coached intervention and 1 setting has started the intervention without coaching support). These interventions began this term (summer term 2024 and are still running).
 - 5 staff have accessed the Draw and Talk training (and 1 primary school has begun the coached intervention this term – summer term 2024).
 - 27 staff accessed the Social Stories.
 - 34 staff accessed the 5-Point Scale training.
 - 3 staff accessed the PACE approach training.
 - 3 staff accessed the Reintegrating learners toolkit training.

- 1 member of staff accessed the PERMA (positive psychology) model training.
- 4 staff accessed the EBSA training.
- 29 staff accessed the Nurture training.
- 3 staff accessed the Growth Mindset training.

5.22 Evaluation of the impact of training on school staffs' confidence and delivery of pupil interventions has shown positive staff evaluations from the staff who have attended the EPS wellbeing training; 75% of staff rated the training as very/extremely effective in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding, and 76% reported that it would inform their future practice. An 8-week post-training follow-up survey highlighted that 100% of schools who responded stated that staff had used theory and strategies from the training in their practice, which had led to a positive impact on the pupils in the school/setting. In particular, schools stated that:

- *'school staff have developed and presented teaching and learning as a result of the training (on neurodivergence) which focuses on developing a consistent approach across the large school' (secondary school on two sites);*
- *'we have wellbeing areas set up in every class, displaying the 7 C's of resilience with regular reference to it';*
- *'as we now have a whole school understanding of trauma informed awareness, we are able to implement school wide strategies and approaches which is sending clearer messages to learners';*
- *'staff are more understanding of behaviours...this has helped staff to be more aware of how and when to deal with children's behaviour more appropriately';*
- *'...I use the mood and feelings cards with them (pupils) and their own self-awareness is improving which is helping some of them to understand where their anxiety comes from';*
- *'The structured program allows opportunities for discussion with pupils to help get to the root of the issues they are facing. The impact on pupils has been great, as we have been able to address and solve issues together with the school. The pupils have felt empowered to brainstorm solutions and hopeful that the situation they are facing is not forever. It has shifted the perception of pupil's behaviour from 'won't' to 'can't,' which has been more beneficial to well-being, and how the pupil is viewed.'*

5.23 Comparison of pre-and post-staff training evaluations has highlighted that over 90% of staff who attended the ELSA (Emotionally Literate Support Assistant) and/or YMHFA (Youth Mental Health First Aid) training reported their knowledge and skills had developed and it would inform their future practice.

5.24 Impact of school delivery of universal pupil interventions on pupil outcome measures: Data was returned from schools for: 353 pupils who accessed an ELSA intervention in 2021-2022, of whom all of these learners were from groups considered to be

vulnerable¹; for 391 pupils in 2022-2023 (of whom, 204 were from vulnerable groups¹); and from 272 pupils in the Autumn and Spring Term of 2023-2024 (of whom, 138 were from vulnerable groups¹).

- 5.25 Inspection of pre-and post-data following the ELSA interventions has highlighted a significant post-intervention improvement on all areas targeted, including staff measures of pupil wellbeing, anger, anxiety, emotional awareness, friendships, independence, growth mindset, self-esteem, social skills, and pupil evaluations ($p < .05$).
- 5.26 Staff use of the YMHFA ALGEE model (which trains staff to: **A**pproach, assess and assist; **L**isten and communicate non-judgementally; **G**ive support and information; **E**ncourage the person to get appropriate professional help; and **E**ncourage other support) has led to pupils being able to express their thoughts, seek help, stay in control and problem solve.
- 5.27 The LA (through the work of the EPS) has continued to develop and expand the range of wellbeing interventions available to schools in response to pupil need. Since 2021-2022 the EPS has provided the following interventions Yoga groups (these were commissioned and ran during 2022-2023), .Breathe Mindfulness (ran during 2021-2023 and following demand from schools has re-started this term – summer term), Lego based therapy and Draw and Talk (since 2021-2022), a primary aged anxiety CBT group (since 2022-2023), secondary aged CBT groups for low mood, anxiety, anxiety and perfectionism (since 2021-2024) and body image (since 2023-2024), and individual CBT sessions (since 2022-2023). 98% of schools and EOTAS settings received at least one wellbeing intervention: CBT groups, primary Lego therapy, .Breathe Mindfulness, Draw and Talk and Yoga groups between 2021-2023.
- 5.28 Pupils in years 4-13 have access to school-based counselling support (this includes access to talking therapies, Art therapy and Music therapy).
- 5.29 *Impact of LA delivered universal interventions (Yoga and .Breathe) on pupil outcomes:* 29 primary schools received the 6-week commissioned Yoga intervention during 2022-2023 with approximately 25 children per school taking part. Pre and post scores indicated an insignificant difference, suggesting that it is unclear if the intervention had any impact on the pupils who attended. However, qualitative feedback for the Yoga intervention was also collated with separate evaluation forms for foundation phase pupils. This revealed that:
- 82.1% of foundation phase and key stage 2 pupils found the sessions very enjoyable or enjoyable.
 - 80.5% of foundation phase and key stage 2 pupils found the sessions very helpful or helpful.
 - 69% of foundation phase pupils enjoyed the sessions and 78.7% of would like to have the sessions again.
- 5.30 Post evaluations were also collated from the class teachers of 18 schools which revealed that following the yoga sessions:
- 66.7% of respondents have seen improvements in class;
 - 50% of respondents have seen improvements in class attendance;
 - 61% of respondents have seen improvements in class behaviour;

¹ Vulnerable groups of learners: FSM, CLA, ALN, living in poverty, excluded or at risk, behaviour or attendance issues, young carer, mental health issues or medical needs, experienced ACEs, service family, young offender or child of offender.

- 61% of respondents have seen improvements in how peers interact with each other;
 - 94.4% of respondents selected 'yes' and are using yoga practices in class following the sessions.
- 5.31 Breathe Mindfulness – 12 classes from 10 primary schools and one secondary school received the .Breathe Mindfulness intervention in 2021-2022; and 20 class groups from 17 primary schools and 3 secondary schools received the intervention in 2022-2023. This intervention did not run during the Autumn and Spring term of 2023-2024 due to staff capacity issues, but has re-started this term due to renewed demand from school. Each group received 1 information session and 4 consecutive weekly sessions led by a facilitator. Evaluation of this intervention highlighted that for the majority of pupils', scores showed a decrease indicating a significant improvement in wellbeing and self-regulation.
- 5.32 In addition to this, positive pupil self-evaluations were received:
- 80% of pupils found the .breathe sessions very/fairly enjoyable
 - 74% of pupils found sessions very/fairly useful
 - 67% of pupils responded that they would definitely/most likely use practices from the .breathe sessions again with the most popular practice being 'plus 2 practice'
 - 74% of pupils would recommend the .breathe course to a friend.
- 5.33 A follow-up evaluation form was sent out to all staff who were present in the .breathe sessions for the 2022-2023 academic year to see if they had seen any progress with pupil behaviour and wellbeing following the intervention and if they had continued to implement the .breathe practices. 9 out of 11 schools responded:
- 88% said the majority of the class found the .breathe sessions very/somewhat useful
 - 66% said they will continue to do the mindfulness practices with the pupils
 - 66% reported a positive impact on their own health and wellbeing since participating in the .breathe sessions
 - 22% have noticed a difference in pupil behaviour since participating in the .breathe sessions.
- 5.34 *Impact of LA delivered targeted interventions:* (Lego Therapy, Draw and Talk and School-based Counselling): Lego Therapy - A total of 54 children from 18 primary schools received a 6-week Lego-based therapy group during 2021-2022; and 39 children from 13 primary schools accessed this intervention in 2022-2023. Evaluation of these groups yielded a significant improvement in post-compared to pre- social skills presented within and outside of the group.
- 5.35 Draw and Talk: 11 pupils in 11 primary schools received a Draw and Talk intervention in 2021-2022; and 7 pupils from 7 primary schools accessed this 12-week group intervention in 2022-2023. A significant improvement was recorded in prosocial behaviour and a reduction in behaviour difficulties post-compared to pre-intervention scores on the SDQ (strengths and difficulties questionnaire) in the interventions running in 2021-2022, but this was not observed in the interventions run in 2022-2023.
- 5.36 School-based Counselling support: 491 pupils in year 4-13 completed an episode of school-based counselling (SBC) in 2021-2022; 527 pupils completed an episode of SBC in 2022-2023; and 338 pupils have completed an episode of SBC in 2023-2024 (to the end of April 2024). CORE-YP scores (which are measured on a scale of 0-30,

with higher scores representing poorer wellbeing) were used to measure the impact of counselling on pupil mood and wellbeing in line with WG requirements.

5.37 The table below highlights the reduction in CORE-YP scores at the end of counselling during these academic years, demonstrating the positive impact of SBC on pupil mood and wellbeing.

| Average CORE-YP Score | 2021-2022 | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024 (to 30 th April 2024) |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|--|
| Start of episode | 17.25 | 15.05 | 14.35 |
| End of episode | 12.25 | 9.55 | 8.90 |

5.38 The Pupil Post-Counselling Evaluation questionnaire highlighted that:

- 78.9% of these pupils agreed or strongly agreed that they feel more able to cope at school since having counselling.
- Pupils agreed or strongly agreed that their relationships with friends (56.4%), teachers (43.2%) and their families (59.9%) have improved since going to counselling (with 'don't know' responses received for 34.5%, 41.4% and 29.2%, respectively for these groups).
- 59.1% of pupils agreed or strongly agreed that their behaviour had improved since accessing counselling (32.4% provided a 'don't know' response to this question).
- 63.4% of pupils agreed or strongly agreed that since they have had counselling, they are more able to concentrate on tasks in and out of school.

5.39 Impact of LA delivered specialist interventions (CBT groups): 13 primary CBT anxiety groups were run during the 2022-2023 academic year with 57 pupils. A further 9 primary CBT anxiety groups were run during the Autumn and Spring term of 2023-2024 with 48 pupils. Scores on the BAI-Y anxiety measure reduced significantly following the group interventions run in 2022-2023; however, while 30/48 of the pupils who received the intervention during 2023-2024 showed a decrease in scores on the BAI-Y anxiety measure, there was no significant decrease for the group as a whole.

5.40 Secondary CBT group interventions : 10 anxiety CBT groups were run during the 2021-2022 academic year in 5 secondary schools with 5 pupils; 19 groups were run during the 2022-2023 academic year with 58 pupils in 11 secondary schools; and a further 9 groups have been run this year during the Autumn and Spring term of 2023-2024 with 39 pupils from 7 secondary schools and 1 EOTAS provision (however, the pupils in the EOTAS provision did not finish the group due to low attendance/disengagement/or engagement with another service - CAMHS). Scores on the BAI-Y anxiety measure reduced significantly following the group interventions delivered between 2021-2024 (one group is due to complete in the summer term 2024)

5.41 Anxiety and perfectionism CBT groups: 4 groups were run with 20 pupils in 3 secondary schools during 2021-2022; 5 groups were run with 27 pupils in 5 secondary schools in 2022-2023; A further 4 groups were run with 16 pupils in 4 secondary schools during the Autumn and Spring term of 2023-2024. Whilst scores on the GAD-7 (generalised anxiety measure) and APS-R (perfectionism scale) reduced significantly following these interventions in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 highlighting a significant reduction in both anxiety and perfectionism, only a significant reduction was observed in anxiety in the groups ran in 2023-2024, with no significant change observed in perfectionism.

5.42 Low mood CBT groups: 2 groups were run with 7 pupils in 2 secondary schools during 2021-2022; 6 groups were run with 21 pupils from 5 secondary schools and one

EOTAS setting during the 2022-2023 academic year. Pre and post RCADS depression subscale scores indicated a significant reduction in low mood following these group interventions in 2022-2023, but not in 2021-2022; schools have not requested these groups in 23-24.

- 5.43 Body image CBT groups (these began in the spring term of 2023-2024): 13 pupils from 3 different secondary schools have taken part in the part 1 psychoeducation body image group. These groups are still being run. The part 2 intervention, which is for pupils with more severe symptoms will begin later in the summer term of 2024.
- 5.44 Individual CBT support: 5 pupils from 4 secondary schools and 1 EOTAS setting received between 1 and 5 individual CBT sessions at the end of the CBT groups in 2022-2023 to target their elevated levels of anxiety, anxiety and perfectionism, or low mood. This intervention led to a significant improvement in pupil anxiety (reduced from severe to moderate and moderate to mild anxiety, respectively).
- 5.45 Additional secondary aged pupils received individual CBT sessions during 2022-2023 to support them with the following emotional needs that were impacting on their school social anxiety, depression, anxiety and in turn school attendance. Improvements were observed for all 3 pupils with respect to their levels of social anxiety, anxiety, and depression, with all pupils moving down at least one categorisation on the assessed measure, post intervention, for instance from severe to moderate, moderate to mild. Benefits were also observed in their levels of engagement with education, as highlighted below;
- Pupil 1 would rarely leave the house when the therapy started, but by the end of therapy was attending college and regularly socialising with friends outside of the house.
 - Pupil 2, who had completely disengaged from any learning at the start of the sessions, started home tuition prior to therapy finishing.
 - Pupil 3's attendance didn't change, as this was linked to bullying in school, however, their anxiety reduced and they felt more confident about finishing the school year by the end of counselling.
- 5.46 3 pupils started 1:1 CBT in 2022-2023 and attended a total of 8 sessions; these sessions have continued into 2023-2024 for 2 of these pupils. 4 pupils received individual CBT sessions in 2023-2024 (Autumn and Spring Term) which will continue into next term (2 ongoing from the summer term 2023).
- 5.47 1 pupil has completed their sessions (sessions began in the last 6 weeks of the summer term 2023). Sessions targeted the pupil's elevated levels of obsessive-compulsive disorder - OCD and low emotion regulation). Analysis revealed that:
- Post-intervention, this pupil is now no longer presenting with elevated levels of OCD, and during the course of the sessions has been supported to move from part-time community tuition to a full-time EOTAS education placement.
- 5.48 Impact of interventions to support staff wellbeing: The EPS has developed and delivered two, 6-week staff wellbeing support groups to one alternative education provision (Learning Pathway Centre in 2021-2022) and a secondary school (in 2022-2023). This is in recognition of the impact that low staff wellbeing and morale can have on staff relationships with pupils, in terms of the tolerance threshold and ability to respond empathically to pupils; and in turn the impact that poor teacher-pupil relationships can have on pupil wellbeing, learning and behaviour. Positive feedback has been received from the staff who attended the two staff wellbeing

groups. Attendees particularly valued having a protected, empathic space to discuss those work-related factors that are impacting on their wellbeing, in addition to receiving advice around supportive practices that they could put in place to support their wellbeing.

- 5.49 *The 3-year Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership (WRAP) pilot.* The LA has also procured and commissioned through LA resources, WRAP (Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership) to work with 2 school clusters (with the capacity to extend the project to further clusters) with a view to impacting school exclusion and attendance figures.
- 5.50 WRAP provides a 3-year programme to support schools with bespoke training needs linked to their SDP to promote a whole-school approach to emotional wellbeing, which in turn leads to a positive impact on staff and pupil wellbeing, behaviour, and attendance. Work with Cluster 1 began in September 2022. Work with Cluster 2 began in April 2023.
- 5.51 Findings to date: Cluster 1 used WRAP to support their key stage 2-3 transition and to target their year 7 cohort.

Impact: (Data provided by School from 1st year of WRAP intervention)

| Year 7 2021/22 (pre-WRAP) | Year 7 2022/23 targeted by WRAP |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Behaviour | |
| 450 negatives | 186 negatives |
| 9360 positives | 15779 positives |
| 48 visits to internal exclusion rooms | 12 visits to internal exclusion room |
| 18 fixed term exclusions | 6 fixed term exclusions |
| 3 permanent exclusions | 0 permanent exclusions |
| Attendance | |
| 82% attendance | 87.7% attendance |
| 40% persistent absentees | 20% persistent absentees |

| Years 7-11 (Data for Cluster 1 taken from PLASC data) | | |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 2021-2022 (pre-WRAP) | 2022-2023 (WRAP started) | 2023-2024 (2 terms) |
| 4 PEXs | 5 PEXs | 3 PEXs |
| 239 FTE (0-5 days) | 178 FTE (0-5 days) | 124 FTE (0-5 days) |

- 5.52 Feeder Primary Schools: Caerphilly CBC commissioned WRAP to run a series of individual interviews with staff and pupils from the cluster (38 interviews were conducted in total). It was found that overall, everyone interviewed had noticed an improvement in relationships, behaviour, and attendance, as well as the responses to the behaviour; with the students stating they feel more listened to, and the teachers reporting an improved understanding as to why certain behaviours are being exhibited. The use of daily circle time activities has led to an improvement in peer relationships and development of pupil social skills, and the peer mediation training has led to improved pupil conflict resolution skills. Staff also reported being able to use

restorative conversations in their meetings with parents which has helped to regulate parents and facilitate improved working relationships.

Fixed-term Exclusion data for Feeder Primary Schools 0-5 days (PLASC data)

| School | 2021-2022 (pre) | 2022-2023 (WRAP started Sept 2022) | 2023-2024 (2 terms) |
|-----------|-----------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Primary 1 | 23 | 14 | 16 |
| Primary 2 | 11 | 6 | 1 |
| Primary 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Primary 4 | 3 | 6 | 5 |

In addition to the WRAP intervention received by these two school clusters, the schools also have access to differentiated levels of support from the EPS based on their levels of ALN, FSM and numbers on roll. Further support is also available to schools from the Advisory Service and its Behaviour Support Officers.

5.53 Findings from Cluster 2: The High School also targeted year 7 (they began the WRAP initiative in April 2023). Below are the findings obtained from the school that were presented at the WRAP conference on 14.11.23:

- Pupils in year 7 had a smooth transition.
- No exclusions in Year 7, fewer pupils in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 have been excluded.
- No pupils in Year 7 have accessed the Inclusion Room, fewer pupils in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 have accessed the Inclusion Room.
- Of our 'on call' SLT duty relocations not one has been for Year 7. There have been fewer relocations compared to last year whole school.
- Improved attendance in Year 7 - 94.7%
- Improved staff wellbeing.
- In a recent Year 6 transition open evening, Year 7 produced a display about what they love about their school. Positive relationships were the most popular answer that pupils gave, especially with the mention of their form tutors and form time.

Cluster 2 High School Exclusion Data from PLASC:

| | 2022 - 2023 (WRAP started in April 2023) | 2023 – 2024 (2 Terms) |
|-----|--|-----------------------|
| PEX | 1 | 2 |
| FTE | 83 (FTE of 0-5 days) | 42 (FTE of 0-5 days) |

Feeder Primary Fixed-term 0-5 days Exclusion Data from PLASC:

| | 2022-2023 (WRAP started April 2023) | 2023 – 2024 (2 Terms) |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Primary 1 | 7 | 1 |
| Primary 2 | 16 | 3 |
| Primary 3 | 21 | 5 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| Primary 4 | 1 | 7 |
| Primary 5 | 4 | 0 |
| Primary 6 | 7 | 0 |

5.54 The data above highlights the positive impact that the WRAP initiative is having on improving relationships between staff and pupils and in turn impacting on behaviour, resulting in a reduction in exclusions and an improvement in attendance in both school clusters. Consequently, WRAP has now been extended to a further 2 school clusters this term.

5.55 Work with children and young people who have received a permanent exclusion: The EPS is asked to gather information following a permanent exclusion where it is felt that there is insufficient information around the pupil's needs and wishes to enable an informed decision to be made about the most appropriate educational provision to meet the pupil's needs. This entails gathering the pupil and parental views about school and the exclusion and identifying the pupil's strengths, needs and difficulties. This information is then used to inform recommendations around education provision and strategies to support the pupil's reintegration into an education setting.

5.56 The EPS worked with 39 pupils who were permanently excluded from 38 secondary schools and one primary school in the period from September 2021 to the end of the Spring term 2024. Of these 39 pupils: 13 (33.3%) have integrated into a new mainstream provision, 8 (20.5%) pupils are currently receiving home tuition, 6 (15.4%) pupils have gone to in-school Learning Pathway Centres, 5 (12.8%) have gone to an in-county EOTAS provision, 3 (7.7%) are awaiting placement in a specialist provision and are receiving home tuition in the interim, 2 (5.1%) have gone to an independent in-county EOTAS provision, 1 (2.6%) has gone to an out-of-county mainstream high school and 1 (2.6%) engaged with other services to prepare them for full-time employment.

5.57 The LA also tracks the pupils progress to see if pupils have received additional fixed term exclusions (fte) within their new educational settings: 75.7% have not had any fte, 16.2% have received between 1 and 5 days fte, 5.4% between 5 and 10 days fte, and 2.7% have received a fte of between 10 and 20 days.

5.58 Linked to the data in Appendix 1 - Table 3: Comparison of Fixed Term Exclusions during Term 1 and 2 of 2022-2023 with Term 1 and 2 of 2023-2024, there has been a small increase in the number of fixed term exclusions issued. Encouragingly, the number of days lost to exclusion has decreased by 479.5 days and the number of pupils issued an exclusion has also decreased by 33 pupils in the current academic year. The data also shows that there has been a decrease in the number of exclusions issued to the three vulnerable groups shown in the table. Such that there has been a decrease of 66 fixed term exclusions issued to pupils eligible for FSM's, a decrease of 23 fixed term exclusions issued to children looked after and a decrease of 28 fixed term exclusions issued to pupils who have ALN.

5.59 Conclusion

5.59.1 The LA has a clear process in place to target pupil exclusions through: (i) its self-evaluation approaches; (ii) the EPS professional learning offer to schools – that aims to support schools to better understand and support pupil wellbeing; and (iii) the delivery of interventions which aim to exert a positive impact on pupil (and staff) wellbeing and behaviour, thereby making exclusions less likely to occur. In addition to this, the LA has also commissioned WRAP to work with two school clusters over a 3-

year period to support positive and respectful relationships within the school community and embed the use of a restorative approach to improve relationships between staff, pupils and families and improve pupil exclusion rates and attendance. WRAP has recently been extended to a further 2 school clusters. The LA's approach to exclusions aligns with the LA's Inclusion Compendium (IC). The IC highlights the importance of: screening measures (such as the LA's vulnerability index and PASS survey) to identify vulnerable pupils; positive and respectful relationships within the school community; and the provision of core practices that support wellbeing, promote positive relationships, and build resilience at a universal, targeted and specialist level. The LA also has measures in place to support provision planning and transition into a new setting following a permanent exclusion (pex). The LA also closely tracks the progress of pupils who have received a pex to ensure that their new education setting remains appropriate to meet their needs.

There has been a significant increase in both permanent and fixed term exclusions since pupils returned to school following the Covid-19 Pandemic; this culminated in a peak during the last academic year (2022-2023). The use of permanent exclusions by secondary schools remains a concern for the LA. However, current data suggests a levelling out of fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less in secondary and primary schools and a reduction in the number of pupils receiving exclusions, the number of days lost to exclusion and the number of exclusions issued of 5 days or more. Similarly, there has been a reduction this academic year in the number of exclusions of learners who are looked after, those eligible for free school meals and ALN learners, both in terms of exclusions up to and over 5 days, compared to the same time period last academic year (first two terms).

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The LA has a key responsibility to monitor pupil exclusion rates and put supportive measures in place to reduce the likelihood of exclusions taking place. The LA does this through consultation with schools (including through head teacher and pastoral lead forums and via the work of the education directorate support teams). The LA has clear self-evaluation processes to monitor and challenge school exclusions and inform the LA where to target resources, which it does through a multi-layered approach. This approach includes the offer of training to all schools to develop their universal and targeted provision, to a Team Around the School approach, and through access to more targeted, bespoke support to target the wellbeing and behaviour needs of the most vulnerable learners who are most at risk of school exclusion.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report provides information and therefore an integrated impact assessment has not been completed at this time.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Staff costs to deliver staff training and interventions have been funded through access to Welsh Government funding provided in the LA Education Grants since 2020. In 2023/2024 these grants totalled circa £800k.
- 8.2 Welsh Government have confirmed a 3-year cycle of support for the WSA to Wellbeing grant, of which the year 2023/24 is the third year of this cycle. Currently the LA employs

9.5 fte staff (assistant educational psychologist, school-based counsellors (SBCs), and music therapists) from the WSA and ALN grants to deliver interventions. Welsh Government have advised indicative funding for ALN of £14.1m a year across Wales. The programmes for ALN are part of the LA Education Grant. The longer-term position remains unclear at present.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The EPS would be reliant on the continuation of Welsh Government funding to continue to finance the expanded SBCS (including Music therapists) and the Assistant EPs who deliver the wellbeing training and interventions under the supervision of the EPs and cognitive behaviour therapist.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report reflects with views of the consultees.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act (Wales) 2018
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
Framework on Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing (Wales) 2021
Education Act 1996
Equality Act 2010
Social Services and wellbeing Act (2014)
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
Armed Forces Covenant (Wales)

Author: Dr Kyla Honey, Principal Educational Psychologist

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy, and Environment
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation and Education Planning and Strategy
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Appendix 1:

Table 1: Permanent Exclusions during 2020-2021 to 2023-2024

| Provision | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 | 2022/2023 | 2023/2024 – up to Term 2 |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---|
| Secondary Schools | 11 | 29 | 32 | 23 |
| Primary Schools | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| 3-18 Provision | 2 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| EOTAS Provision | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Special School | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 14 | 36 | 40 | 26 |

Table 2: Fixed Term Exclusions during 2020-2021 to 2023-2024

| | Number of FTE | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 | 2022/2023 | 2023/2024 up to Term 2 |
| Secondary Schools | 758 | 1324 | 1562 | 1052 |
| <i>5 days or less</i> | <i>701</i> | <i>1210</i> | <i>1446</i> | <i>995</i> |
| <i>Over 5 days</i> | <i>57</i> | <i>114</i> | <i>116</i> | <i>57</i> |
| Primary Schools | 151 | 294 | 302 | 198 |
| <i>5 days or less</i> | <i>147</i> | <i>286</i> | <i>286</i> | <i>191</i> |
| <i>Over 5 days</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>8</i> | <i>16</i> | <i>6</i> |
| 3-18 Provision | 104 | 266 | 203 | 145 |
| <i>5 days or less</i> | <i>102</i> | <i>262</i> | <i>192</i> | <i>140</i> |
| <i>Over 5 days</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>11</i> | <i>5</i> |
| EOTAS Provision | 5 | 30 | 76 | 32 |
| <i>5 days or less</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>25</i> | <i>71</i> | <i>26</i> |
| <i>Over 5 days</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>6</i> |
| Special School | 2 | 2 | 7 | 3 |
| <i>5 days or less</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>2</i> |
| <i>Over 5 days</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>1</i> |
| | | | | |
| Number of FTE 5 days or less | 957 | 1785 | 2000 | 1354 |
| Number of FTE over 5 days | 63 | 131 | 150 | 76 |
| TOTAL | 1020 | 1916 | 2150 | 1430 |

Table 1 and Table 2 highlight that there has been a significant increase in both permanent and fixed term exclusions since pupils returned to school following the Covid-19 Pandemic; this culminated in a peak during the last academic year (2022-2023). The use of permanent exclusions by secondary schools remains a concern for the LA (Table 1). However, current data suggests a levelling out of fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less in secondary and primary schools and a reduction in the number of pupils receiving exclusions, the number of days lost to exclusion and the number of exclusions issued of 5 days or more (Table 2).

Similarly, there has been a reduction this academic year in the number of exclusions of learners who are looked after, those eligible for free school meals and ALN learners, both in terms of exclusions up to and over 5 days, compared to the same time period last academic year – first two terms (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Comparison of Fixed Term Exclusions during Term 1 and 2 of 2022-2023 with Term 1 and 2 of 2023-2024 including vulnerable groups

| | 1 st Sept 22– 31 st March 23 | | | | | 1 st Sept 23 – 22 nd March 24 | | | | |
|--|--|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------------|---|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| | Term 1 & 2 2022/23 | | | | | Term 1 & 2 2023/24 | | | | |
| | PEX | FTE | | No. of days | No. of pupils | PEX | FTE | | No. of days | No. of pupils |
| | | 0-5 days | 5 + days | | | | 0-5 days | 5 + days | | |
| Secondary Schools (inc. 3-18 Provision) | 24 | 1099 | 89 | 3002 | 621 | 26 | 1119 | 61 | 2576.5 | 594 |
| Primary Schools (inc. 3-18 Provision) | 2 | 189 | 10 | 402.5 | 98 | 0 | 207 | 8 | 348.5 | 92 |
| TOTAL | 26 | 1288 | 99 | 3404.5 | 719 | 26 | 1326 (+38) | 69 (-30) | 2925 (-479.5) | 686 (-33) |
| FSM | 16 | 738 | 51 | 1847.5 | 390 | 16 | 672 (-66) | 36 (-15) | 1478.5 (-369) | 324 (-66) |
| CLA | 1 | 83 | 9 | 252 | 38 | 0 | 60 (-23) | 1 (-8) | 105 (-147) | 27 (-11) |
| ALN | 6 | 332 | 25 | 854.5 | 167 | 1 | 304 (-28) | 16 (-9) | 689.5 (-165) | 135 (-32) |