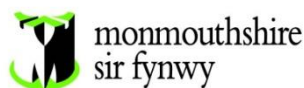


Public Document Pack



County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Monday, 14 July 2025

Notice of meeting :

People Scrutiny Committee

**Tuesday, 22nd July, 2025 at 10.00 am,
Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK and Remote Attendance**

Please note that a pre meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting for members of the committee.

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
3.	Public Open Forum	
4.	Receipt of Petitions ~ to agree a course of action	1 - 4
5.	County of Sanctuary Strategy Scrutiny of the county of sanctuary strategy, which promotes inclusion and welcome across the wider community.	5 - 8
6.	Strategic Equality Plan 24/25 AMR To scrutinise the council's progress in delivering the Strategic Equality Objectives for the year 2024-2025.	9 - 46
7.	Adult Services Inspection Report To present the finding of the Adult Services Inspection.	47 - 96
8.	People Scrutiny Forward Work Programme and Action List	97 - 104
9.	Council and Cabinet Work Planner	105 - 112
10.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.	113 - 124

11.	Date of Next Meeting: 30th September 2025	
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Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillor Jan Butler, Goetre Fawr;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Christopher Edwards, St. Kingsmark;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Simon Howarth, Llanelly Hill;, Independent Group
County Councillor Penny Jones, Raglan;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Maureen Powell, Pen Y Fal;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Sue Riley, Bulwark and Thornwell;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Maria Stevens, Severn;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Jackie Strong, Caldicot Cross;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Martyn Groucutt, Lansdown;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

A copy of this agenda and relevant reports can be made available to members of the public attending a meeting by requesting a copy from Democratic Services on 01633 644219. Please note that we must receive 24 hours notice prior to the meeting in order to provide you with a hard copy of this agenda.

Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Public Open Forum

Our Scrutiny Committee meetings are live streamed and a link to the live stream will be available on the meeting page of the Monmouthshire County Council [website](#)

If you would like to speak under the Public Open Forum at an upcoming meeting you will need to give three working days' notice in advance of the meeting by contacting Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk

The amount of time afforded to each member of the public to speak is at the Chair's discretion, but to enable us to accommodate multiple speakers we ask that contributions be no longer than 3 minutes.

Alternatively, if you would like to submit a written, audio or video representation, please contact the team via the same email address to arrange this. The deadline for submitting representations to the Council is 5pm three clear working days in advance of the meeting. If combined representations received exceed 30 minutes, a selection of these based on theme will be shared at the meeting. All representations received will be made available to councillors prior to the meeting.

If you would like to suggest future topics for scrutiny by one of our Scrutiny Committees, please do so by emailing Scrutiny@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Our purpose

To become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Objectives we are working towards

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced.
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency.
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop.
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in.
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued
- Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential.

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Monmouthshire Scrutiny Question Guide

Role of the Pre-meeting	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why is the Committee scrutinising this? (background, key issues) 2. What is the Committee's role and what outcome do Members want to achieve? 3. Is there sufficient information to achieve this? If not, who could provide this? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree the order of questioning and which Members will lead - Agree questions for officers and questions for the Cabinet Member 	
Questions for the Meeting	
<u>Scrutinising Performance</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does performance compare with previous years? Is it better/worse? Why? 2. How does performance compare with other councils/other service providers? Is it better/worse? Why? 3. How does performance compare with set targets? Is it better/worse? Why? 4. How were performance targets set? Are they challenging enough/realistic? 5. How do service users/the public/partners view the performance of the service? 6. Have there been any recent audit and inspections? What were the findings? 7. How does the service contribute to the achievement of corporate objectives? 8. Is improvement/decline in performance linked to an increase/reduction in resource? What capacity is there to improve? 	<u>Scrutinising Policy</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who does the policy affect ~ directly and indirectly? Who will benefit most/least? 2. What is the view of service users/stakeholders? What consultation has been undertaken? Did the consultation process comply with the Gunning Principles? Do stakeholders believe it will achieve the desired outcome? 3. What is the view of the community as a whole - the 'taxpayer' perspective? 4. What methods were used to consult with stakeholders? Did the process enable all those with a stake to have their say? 5. What practice and options have been considered in developing/reviewing this policy? What evidence is there to inform what works? Does the policy relate to an area where there is a lack of published research or other evidence? 6. Does the policy relate to an area where there are known inequalities? 7. Does this policy align to our corporate objectives, as defined in our corporate plan? Does it adhere to our Welsh Language Standards? 8. Have all relevant sustainable development, equalities and safeguarding implications

9. been taken into consideration? For example, what are the procedures that need to be in place to protect children?
- 10.
11. How much will this cost to implement and what funding source has been identified?
- 12.
13. How will performance of the policy be measured and the impact evaluated

General Questions:

Empowering Communities

- How are we involving local communities and empowering them to design and deliver services to suit local need?
- Do we have regular discussions with communities about service priorities and what level of service the council can afford to provide in the future?
- Is the service working with citizens to explain the role of different partners in delivering the service, and managing expectations?
- Is there a framework and proportionate process in place for collective performance assessment, including from a citizen's perspective, and do you have accountability arrangements to support this?
- Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out? If so, can the Leader and Cabinet/Senior Officers provide members with copies and a detailed explanation of the EQIA conducted in respect of these proposals?
- Can the Leader and Cabinet/Senior Officers assure members that these proposals comply with Equality and Human Rights legislation? Do the proposals comply with the Local Authority's Strategic Equality Plan?

Service Demands

- How will policy and legislative change affect how the council operates?
- Have we considered the demographics of our council and how this will impact on service delivery and funding in the future?
- Have you identified and considered the long-term trends that might affect your service area, what impact these trends could have on your service/your service could have on these trends, and what is being done in response?

Financial Planning

- Do we have robust medium and long-term financial plans in place?
- Are we linking budgets to plans and outcomes and reporting effectively on these?

Making savings and generating income

- Do we have the right structures in place to ensure that our efficiency, improvement and transformational approaches are working together to maximise savings?
- How are we maximising income?
- Have we compared other council's policies to maximise income and fully considered the implications on service users?
- Do we have a workforce plan that takes into account capacity, costs, and skills of the

actual versus desired workforce?

Questions to ask within a year of the decision:

- Were the intended outcomes of the proposal achieved or were there other results?
- Were the impacts confined to the group you initially thought would be affected i.e. older people, or were others affected e.g. people with disabilities, parents with young children?
- Is the decision still the right decision or do adjustments need to be made?

Questions for the Committee to conclude...

Do we have the necessary information to form conclusions/make recommendations to the executive, council, other partners? If not, do we need to:

- (i) Investigate the issue in more detail?
- (ii) Obtain further information from other witnesses – Executive Member, independent expert, members of the local community, service users, regulatory bodies...

Agree further actions to be undertaken within a timescale/future monitoring report...

SUBJECT: RECIEPT OF PETITONS: Mathern Community Area and St Arvan's Village Area - Home-to-school transport Policy

MEETING: People Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 22nd July 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To advise the People Scrutiny Committee that three petitions have been received as follows:
- Mathern Community Area - Home to School Transport Policy (an online petition and a separate petition)
 - St Arvan's Village Area - Home-to-school transport Policy

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the People Scrutiny Committee receives the petitions and agrees a suitable course of action, as per the options that are available to the Committee:
- a) Full Council for a debate on the matter
 - b) The relevant Cabinet Member with a request to respond in writing to the Scrutiny Committee and the Lead Petitioner within 6 weeks.
 - c) A relevant working group, committee, or joint committee with an appropriate term of reference to address the matter or incorporate the views into their work
 - d) A relevant senior officer for inclusion in an ongoing piece of work, consultation or project.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Petitions can be submitted as e-petitions or as written documents. They are received by Democratic Services who ascertain their validity in accordance with the constitution. If the petition is deemed valid, it is 'made live' and if it is deemed invalid, the petitioner is notified, with reasons given for its rejection.
- 3.2 Valid petitions with over 25 signatories are tabled to the relevant Scrutiny Committee at its next available meeting. The Councillor who is the petition sponsor (usually the Local Ward Member) will be asked to outline the request within 3 minutes. Their role is to present it to the Scrutiny Committee for them to determine a course of action.
- 3.3 The Scrutiny Committee may decide to enhance the petition in their referral, by adding recommendations. They may also decide to scrutinise the topic in the future, by including it in their forward work programme. The Scrutiny Committee may also decide to take no further action.

- 3.4 Neither the Cabinet nor Chief Officers are expected to respond to the petition at the Scrutiny Meeting at which the petition is presented ~ this would pre-empt the outcome of the Scrutiny Committee's consideration. The outcome of the committee's consideration will be formally conveyed to the Executive and Senior Officers and the Lead Petitioner following the meeting.
- 3.5 If option (b), 'Referral to the Cabinet Member' is agreed by the Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet Member is required to prepare a response for the Scrutiny Committee within 6 weeks. The Cabinet Member will be responsible for responding in writing to the Lead Petitioner on the actions, if any, they will be taking in response to the petition. The Cabinet Member will be assisted in doing the above by the relevant service area officers.
- 3.6 Mathern Community Area Petition - Home to School Transport Policy

At the point of agenda despatch for this committee meeting, the e-petition has received 39 signatories. A separate paper petition has been completed by residents and has received 183 signatories, so 222 in total. The petitions are asking the Council to:

"We the undersigned petition the Monmouthshire County Council to Retail free home to school transport to the Dell Primary School and to the Chepstow Comprehensive School for the pupils from the Mathern Community Council Area (Mathern, Mouton, Pwllmeyric & Haysgate), as the route to school is unsafe and hazardous, as evidenced by the double white lines from Parkwall roundabout to Highbeech Roundabout. There is no safe crossing point for pupils to cross the main A48. The volume and speed of traffic on the A48 are a risk. There is insufficient width to the footpaths to walk safely from Mathern to both schools.

- Expecting children from as young as 4 years old to walk up to 2 miles each way daily to The Dell Primary School and for children of 11 years old to walk up to 3 miles each way daily to The Chepstow Comprehensive School in all weathers, carrying school equipment and study material, not allowed to wear outer clothing and storing it to dry during the day at school is not safe, it is emotionally stressful, effects their mental and physical health due to effects of weather and walking in close proximity to a major traffic route, and is a major concern for the parents of said children to ensure they are safe at all times".

- 3.7 St Arvan's Village Area - Home-to-school transport Policy

At the point of agenda despatch for this committee meeting, the e-petition has received 209 signatories and reads as follows:

"We the undersigned, petition the Monmouthshire County Council to reinstate the fully funded home-school-transport for all the primary aged children who attend The Dell School in St Arvan's. The speed and volume of traffic which the children will be exposed to is a risk, the road crossing is not safe, and the footpath is hazardous.

- Children attending The Dell School from the age of 4 are expected to walk up to 2 miles each way.
- The emotional and physical stress of this walk, in all weathers, will negatively impact their mental health, physical health and ability to effectively engage with their learning when in school.
- There are major safety concerns from the children and parents around the safety of the road crossing and footpath, they are expected to walk. The crossing is not suitably lit and wide enough. The path is unlit, uneven and extremely narrow in parts with the close proximity to a high number of cars. In the case of an emergency there is a section of the footpath, which is obscured from view, from the road with no easy way to access it, if needed.
- The children and parents have safety concerns with regards to walking past the racecourse on race day and the days following”.

3.8 The Committee is requested to consider an appropriate course of action for the petitions, in line with the options available to them, as outlined in the Recommendations section of the report (paragraph 2.1).

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 There are no direct considerations for this report.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

5.1 Not applicable.

6. REASONS:

6.1 To fulfil the constitutional requirements of the Scrutiny Committee’s consideration of a route for petitions (if deemed valid).

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTEES:

None.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Petitions received:

- Mathern Community Area - Home to School Transport Policy
- St Arvan’s Village Area - Home-to-school transport Policy

10. AUTHOR:

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager

11. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644233

E-mail: hazelle@monmouthshire.gov.uk

SUBJECT: COUNCIL OF SANCTUARY formally referred to as 'COUNTY OF SANCTUARY

MEETING: PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 22nd JULY 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny with an overview of the steps required for Monmouthshire to achieve Council of Sanctuary status and the opportunity to engage early in the development of the Sanctuary Strategy.
- 1.2 To provide a proposed action plan and timeline that will steer future activity that will be required to deliver this ambition.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee review the process and actions required to meet the criteria to make a formal application to achieve Council of Sanctuary accreditation and provide initial feedback to help shape the development of this work.
- 2.2 That scrutiny members encourage and support engagement from those with lived experience in our county to inform and shape the actions to be taken by the Council, partners and other stakeholders.

3. BACKGROUND:

- 3.1 City of Sanctuary UK leads a movement across the UK to create welcoming communities for people seeking sanctuary - and for everyone. Solid collaboration creates opportunities to transform schools, Councils, Universities and entire neighbourhoods into vibrant spaces of belonging. By building genuine understanding and partnerships, City of Sanctuary create places where everyone can participate, lead, and thrive together.
- 3.2 Councils, as key public sector anchors, play an important role in promoting inclusion within their own organisations, the wider community, and with other local statutory and voluntary sector partners. The 'Council of Sanctuary' award process and minimum criteria for recognition are therefore tailored to the specific contextual challenges and opportunities within local government, and the role they play in welcoming and supporting people seeking sanctuary.

- 3.3 On the 9th of November 2022 Cabinet committed to beginning the process of formally applying to become a county of sanctuary for those fleeing persecution. This was followed by a motion at full council in September 2023 which received cross party support.
- 3.4 Full details of the procedure and criteria are available at [Councils Award Procedure and Criteria 2025](#) which should be read as an appendix to this report.
- 3.5 By applying for Council of Sanctuary status, Monmouthshire County Council aims to highlight and build upon the positive work already taking place across local communities. This process will help the Council identify and address service gaps within its control—not necessarily through new investment, but by challenging existing policies and practices to better meet the needs of sanctuary seekers.

4. NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE FOR AWARD:

- 4.1 A draft action plan will be developed, outlining both the award criteria and the necessary actions required to meet the threshold for acceptance.
- 4.2 Part of the award criteria is to produce a Council of Sanctuary strategy prior to submission.
- 4.3 The proposed timeline for submission of the formal application to made by the end of the 25/26 financial year. Noting, that prior to any formal submission the strategy must be developed and approved by Cabinet.

5. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 5.1 The proposal to become a county of sanctuary is about improving outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers by providing a welcoming environment, challenging discrimination and negative perceptions and ensuring equality of opportunity where possible within UK Immigration law. It strives to promote good relations between groups ensuring vibrant and cohesive communities.
- 5.2 Council of Sanctuary promotes the positive impact that migration has on the economy and the potential for improved outcomes for some groups who will have fled persecution in their home country because of their sexual orientation or religious beliefs. It may also highlight challenges, such as pressure on local housing which may need to be considered in Local Development Plans and Local Housing Market Assessments

6. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

N/A

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 7.1 The success of the application to become an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary network will be determined by a third party, based on the strength and evidence submitted as part of the application process.

8. REASONS:

- 8.1 To raise awareness of the activity being undertaken to become a Council of Sanctuary.
- 8.2 To align the work of the Council towards the visions and values of the City of Sanctuary movement whilst continuing to provide statutory asylum support

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 9.1 Membership of the City of Sanctuary network carries no financial cost or risk.
- 9.2 Staff resource implications would need to be managed within the service area, however there is no requirement for additional staffing to progress this work.

10. CONSULTEES:

Not applicable at this stage

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Cabinet Report:

https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/documents/s33384/A%20County%20of%20Sanctuary_Cabinet_221109.pdf

12. AUTHORS:

Sharran Lloyd: Strategic Partnerships Manager

Tel: 07814 212067

E-mail: sharranlloyd@monmouthshire.gov.uk

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 24-25

MEETING: PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 22 JULY 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide the committee with an opportunity to examine progress against the commitments made in the Strategic Equality Plan 24-28 during the period March 2024 to March 2025.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That members use the report to scrutinise delivery of the commitments made in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan.

2. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Tackling inequality is one of the Council's biggest priorities. If we are to achieve our ambition, it is important that we value and make the most of the abilities and contributions of everyone in our communities, irrespective of age, gender, race, sexual orientation or any of the other characteristics that make us who we are.
- 3.2 The Equality Act 2010 was introduced in April 2011. Within its specific duties is the requirement to publish an annual report on the council's performance against the commitments made in its Strategic Equality Plan.
- 3.3 The Council approved the Strategic Equality Plan and objectives in March 2024, covering the period April 2024 to March 2028. This is the first progress report against those objectives and covers the period from April 2024 to March 2025.
- 3.4 The objectives are:
- Objective 1: Give every child the best start in life.
 - Objective 2: Support the creation of fair employment and good work for everyone.
 - Objective 3: Work with partners and residents to build inclusive and cohesive communities.
 - Objective 4: Expand our provision of community-based services that extend people's healthy life expectancy.
 - Objective 5: Ensure our services are accessible to the public.
 - Objective 6: Ensure we have a diverse workforce and a fully inclusive workplace.
 - Objective 7: Reduce the gender pay gap

3.5 The full monitoring report is included as an appendix. Overall, good progress has been made. Some highlights are:

- We have rolled out of universal free school meals. Healthy, free meals at school help all children to learn and thrive irrespective of their background or income. Uptake of meals remains varied across schools. We are working with schools, parents and learners to understand and remove any barriers to take-up.
- We have held several events throughout the year to celebrate and increase awareness of the rich diversity that exists within Monmouthshire. These included a Windrush Day celebration at County Hall and an Outdoor Accessible Adventure Day at Gilwern Outdoor Centre. We have committed to hosting more events at our County Hall headquarters to try make it a building for the wider community, not just our staff and councillors.
- We seek input from young people to support their involvement in council and community decision-making. This year, 3,509 pupils participated in the 'Make Your Mark' survey, highlighting concerns such as the cost of living, health and well-being, climate change, and loneliness. Our youth services used this feedback to adapt their provision accordingly.
- We have commissioned an accessibility audit of attractions and visitor sites and have launched a small grants programme to support access improvements. This included the introduction of an accessible carriage on the miniature train at Old Station Tintern. We have also completed the Welcome Tintern project providing improvements to car parking, tourism signage and visitor welcome and signage.
- We are working with regional partners to develop a data set that will enable regional work on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence to be more intelligence led. This will improve flow of information will enable public sector partners to work more proactively in this area on safeguarding, prevention and early help to improve outcomes for victims and survivors.
- We attained Level 2 Disability Confident Employer status in May 2024 to make our jobs and workplaces more appealing and accessible. We are continuing to work on the three-year action plan and are collaborating with the Department of Work and Pensions to promote the scheme to local employers.

3.6 Tackling inequality runs through everything we do as a Council. All policy decisions taken are accompanied by an integrated impact assessment which highlights the potential impact on groups with protected characteristics and encourages those developing proposals to identify how they could be improved to have a more positive impact.

4 EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 The actions within the Monitoring Report are presented in a way that enables the reader to understand the impacts of actions taken within the year to March 25. The Strategic Equality Plan is by its very nature a plan that is looking to address, mitigate and positively address identified issues in Monmouthshire that have an adverse impact upon people or groups of people with protected characteristics.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 We are required to publish the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 The annual monitoring report is the way in which the committee is able to evaluate progress against the delivery of the objectives approved by Council in the Strategic Equality Plan

7 REASONS:

- 7.1 To ensure that the authority is able to comply with the legislative requirements of the Equalities Act to produce an annual monitoring report and to

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 There are no resource implications associated with the delivery of the monitoring report.

9 CONSULTEES:

The Monitoring Report provides the roles of officers within Monmouthshire County Council who have contributed.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28

11 AUTHOR:

Pennie Walker – Equality and Welsh Language Manager

12 CONTACT DETAILS:

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Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2024 - 2025



monmouthshire
sir fynwy



Introduction and Policy Context

This annual monitoring report covers progress during the year ending March 2025. It reports progress on the Council's Strategic Equality Plan which was approved by Council on the 20th February 2024. You can access the latest Strategic Equality Plan on the Council's website at: <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity/>

Links to strategies

This is not a standalone plan and has close links to a number of other key council, partnership and national strategies, plans and policies. Some of these are specifically focussed on equality and others have included equality as one of the key themes. Examples being:

- Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- Cymraeg 2050 (1 million Welsh speakers by 2050)
- Strategaeth Mwy na geiriau/More than words strategy
- Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan
- Strategy for Older People Wales
- Well-Being of Future Generations Act
- Social Care and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan
- LGBTQ+ Action Plan
- Action on Disability Plan
- Advancing Gender Equality Plan

The Equality Act 2010 not only requires the Council to comply with its general and specific duties highlighted below but also provides an opportunity for it to demonstrate its commitment to the principles of equality which have been a feature of its functions prior to the implementation of the Act.

Legislative Context

The General Duty of the Equality Act 2010

In exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard to:

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

The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Specific Duties in Wales

The broad purpose of the specific duties is to help public bodies, such as this Council, in their performance of the general duty, and to aid transparency. In Wales the specific duties are set by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

The following are the specific duties:

- Setting equality objectives and publishing strategic equality plans
- Engagement
- Assessment of impact
- Equality information
- Employment information, pay differences and staff training
- Procurement
- Reporting and publishing

Our Foundation: Purpose and Values

Our Purpose

Monmouthshire will be a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

This purpose is at the heart of everything we do to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Monmouthshire.

Our Values

Values matter to us. They set out our expectations for ourselves, each other and the way we conduct business with organisations that we work with on your behalf. Our values are:

Teamwork

Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved. We will make the best of the ideas, and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Openness

We are open and honest. People have the chance to be involved and tell us what matters.

Flexibility

We are flexible, enabling delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Fairness

We provide opportunities for all people and communities to thrive. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently, recognising that we will sometimes need to take positive action to overcome some of the challenges faced by people with different protected characteristics.

Kindness

We will show kindness to all those we work with, putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions

Monmouthshire's strategic equality objectives 2024-2028

The strategic objectives that have been agreed in the new Strategic Equality Plan are:

- **Objective 1:** Give every child the best start in life.
- **Objective 2:** Support the creation of fair employment and good work for everyone.
-
- **Objective 3:** Work with partners and residents to build inclusive and cohesive communities.
- **Objective 4:** Expand our provision of community-based services that extend people's healthy life expectancy.
- **Objective 5:** Ensure our services are accessible to the public.
- **Objective 6:** Ensure we have a diverse workforce and a fully inclusive workplace.
- **Objective 7:** Reduce the gender pay gap.

This report provides an update on progress against these objectives.

1. Give every child the best start in life

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	
Disability	x	Sex	
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity		Poverty	x
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Work with partners across the Gwent Public Services Board, including Public Health and the NHS to embed actions to reduce health inequalities in early years services.	Children, young people and families are supported to improve their health and well-being.	Strategic Partnerships Manager	<p>The Gwent PSB has four areas of focus, one of which is 'Best Start in Life', which is focusing on tackling inequality at the earliest point, giving children and young people the best start in life.</p> <p>The Gwent PSB has committed to becoming a Marmot Region. A regional leadership group has been established, which includes director level input from MCC. This group is now leading the development of this area of focus, which is looking across Gwent and Monmouthshire, on how to tackle inequality. We are also collaborating with partners to improve the local data we use to understand and tackle health inequalities.</p> <p>The Monmouthshire Programme Board will be instrumental in developing and overseeing the local delivery actions that will support</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			the aims of the leadership group and ensure this work filters down to our local community and improves the lives of children, young people and families in the county.
Increase the take up of free school meals focusing on those schools where the need is greatest.	No child goes hungry in school.	Chief Officer – Children and Young People	<p>We have rolled out of universal free school meals. Healthy, free meals at school help all children to learn and thrive irrespective of their background or income. Uptake of meals remains varied across schools, on average 75% of pupils received the meals in the last year. We are working with schools, parents and learners to understand and remove any barriers to take-up.</p> <p>Cooking sessions have been developed and delivered to schools with low free school meal uptake to try to encourage families to take up the offer.</p>
Poverty proof our schools to reduce the cost of the school day, recognising that every pound matters to many families.	Children, young people and families are supported to improve their health and well-being.	Chief Officer – Children and Young People	<p>The Monmouth cluster of schools has created a draft anti-poverty policy. The other clusters are to follow. The majority of schools have now introduced uniform Swap Shops, and many have also introduced food pantries alongside the swap shop or in a community space to share surplus food with families and the local community.</p> <p>The work mentioned above, teaching cooking skills to increase uptake of free school meals, can be used at home to empower families to cook from fresh, which often costs less than buying ready-made meals.</p> <p>We have engaged Barclays Bank to deliver financial wellbeing sessions to young people in our schools.</p> <p>Welsh Government allocated just over £450K to Monmouthshire schools to make them more community focused. Four project ideas have been put forward for consideration. These included supporting families with the cost of living.</p>
Ensure that every	Children, young	Chief Officer –	All schools outline their support for Vulnerable Groups, defined as those

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Monmouthshire school identifies a senior leader responsible for tackling poverty and raising the achievement of vulnerable learners.	people and vulnerable learners are supported to achieve their full potential.	Children and Young People	who may be more likely to experience emotional, social and developmental barriers and hold data as part of their School Improvement Plan. These may include financial and social hardships within pupils' families including: pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and pupils from low-income families.
Develop a new Additional Learning Needs Strategy and related toolkits and resources, focusing on positive behavioural support.	Vulnerable learners are supported to achieve their full potential.	Head of Inclusion	<p>We have finalised a new Inclusion Strategy and Additional Learning Needs Policy. These have been considered by People Scrutiny Committee ahead of a decision.</p> <p>We have established processes to ensure Independent Development Plans are raised in a timely manner and are in place where required to support transition into school or Specialist Resource Bases.</p> <p>The majority of children with ALN or emerging needs have a school or nursery entry planning meeting to enhance transition and ensure schools have appropriate support in place for the start of the school term. Schools and parents have reported that this has resulted in a smoother transition and a more positive start to the child's school life.</p> <p>A wide range of ALN training has been offered to childcare practitioners to upskill them so they are able to meet children's individual needs.</p>
Continue taking a preventative approach to reducing school absences through developing Emotionally Based	Children, young people and families are supported to achieve their full potential.	Head of Inclusion	We have put in place arrangements to enable schools to access Professional Learning and online Q&A sessions to support the delivery of Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). This is to address the decline in school attendance since the pandemic. Our offer includes support from the Educational Psychology Service to develop high quality EBSA support plans. We are developing additional resources to support schools.

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
School Avoidance and Trauma Informed approach in schools.			<p>A multi-tiered Trauma Informed Practice Skills and Strategies offer has been developed in collaboration with Traumatic Stress Wales. Trauma Skilled training is currently being piloted Monmouthshire schools, and the LEA. Guidance and tools have been developed to support the embedding of these approaches, and the work is overseen by a Steering Group.</p> <p>There has been a gradual increase in attendance in our primary schools. At the end of the academic year 2023/24 attendance was 93.6%; provisional data shows attendance was 94.1% in the summer term 2024/25. Attendance in secondary schools has been slower to increase. Attendance was 88.2% in the academic year 2023/24, provisional attendance was 90.1% by in summer term 2024/25. Attendance for those eligible for free school meals (eFSM) remains lower.</p>
Improve access to, and use of, data gathered by schools concerning bullying, harassment and discrimination, and provide support.	Better data to provide support for children and young people to feel safe in their school environment.	Head of Inclusion	<p>We have established a new template to improve recording of Rights, Respect and Equality/ Anti Bullying (RRE) issues, and obligatory reporting of protected characteristic incidents. This is in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Equality Act 2010 and Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan.</p> <p>We are using data proactively and preventively to identify and address concerns, including those raised by parents. Feedback has been given to schools where data returns identify issues and where schools have sent in returns with zero entries. Work is ongoing with secondary schools who are seeking to improve their systems</p> <p>We have delivered training on RRE anti bullying as part of the Vulnerable Learner Lead offer. The content will now be made available online to all school staff and officers.</p> <p>We used an external organisation - No Boundaries – to deliver a specific session on anti-racism in October 2024. A survey has been created to</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			create an accurate baseline of school training so far and future needs. We are collaborating with another authority to enable peer-to-peer learning.
Provide an LGBTQ+ inclusive education through the Relationships and Sexuality Education section of the Curriculum for Wales.	Children, young people and vulnerable learners are inclusively supported.	Head of Inclusion	<p>We continue to offer professional learning, resources and termly Q&A sessions on the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum. This includes professional learning in identifying vulnerable learners, providing support and signposting to services.</p> <p>We ran the Diversity roadshow in two secondary schools for 380 Year 7 pupils during Pride month 2024. Throughout Monmouthshire 915 young people engaged, workshops and clubs. This was funded through the Welsh Government's Youth Support Grant.</p> <p>During 2024-2025 the Youth Service ran 32 LGBTQ+ lunchtime sessions in King Henry VIII school in Abergavenny, ten young people attended.</p> <p>Our staff also delivered a session at Usk College on Equality and Diversity/Gender and Sexuality. The evaluations from the session scored an average rating of 7/10.</p> <p>We also received referrals to our Shift project for young people who are LGBTQ+. This programme supports young people with mental health and emotional wellbeing needs and funded through the Welsh Government's Youth Support Grant.</p>
Work with others to increase childcare provision and quality in areas of higher deprivation with the aim of reducing	Children, young people and families are supported to improve their well-being.	Head of Achievement and Extended	<p>The overall number of childcare providers has reduced by three, however the number of childcare places has increased slightly, and some settings have extended their opening hours to meet the needs of parents / carers. We will continue to work with existing and potential childcare providers and attend careers fairs, to develop additional childcare provision.</p> <p>Between April 2024 and March 2025, there have been 67 training</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
inequalities.			opportunities offered to childcare practitioners across 25 different courses. These range from statutory courses such as Paediatric First Aid and Safeguarding to best practice courses such as Froebel, Early Communication, Team Teach, Positive Approaches to Behaviour and ALN modules.

2. Support the creation of fair employment and good work for everyone

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership	x	Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Encourage local firms to become accredited disability confident employers.	Disabled people have better access to employment. More local firms with disability confidence status	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	39 local firms are Disability Confident Committed (Level 1). Seven local firms are Disability Confident Employers (Level 2) as of 31 st March 2025. This is a slight improvement from 23/24 figures which showed 39 local firms as Disability Confident Committed and two local firms as Disability Confident Employers. We are working with the Department for Work and Pensions develop a joint event for local employers to raise awareness of the scheme.

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Ensure our tender documentation encourages and promotes diversity amongst our suppliers and contractors.	Diversity is supported within the workplace	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>We are using tendering to promote diversity in the supply chain. We use criteria to identify if potential suppliers have been involved in Employment Tribunals; have ongoing investigations or charges, in relation to human rights/modern slavery. We also ask that they ensure all employees receive equalities training and that Welsh language requirements are adhered to.</p> <p>We also ask bidders to submit social value commitments that will form part of their contracts on various initiatives to tackle homelessness, inequalities and improve employability to disadvantaged and young people.</p> <p>There are also opportunities to include further information within specifications on each individual project.</p>
Deliver employability programmes and build partnerships with employers and local businesses.	Diversity is supported within the workplace and with partners	Head of Economy, Employment and Skills	<p>We continued to deliver support as part of the Business Monmouthshire project funded by Shared Prosperity Fund.</p> <p>In September 2024 we held two jobs fairs for attendees to meet local employers from sectors including: Care; Construction; Hospitality; Logistics and Retail</p> <p>We also made employment support and training opportunities available.</p>
Maintain a sustainable and accessible public bus network (including community transport) that serves our town centres.	Accessibility to town centres is maintained.	Head of Decarbonisation, Transport and Support Services	We adopted a new Local Transport Strategy in May 2024. We also used Welsh Government funding to increase the frequency of some public bus services to ensure a well-connected county for our residents.
Offer networking,	Diversity is	Head of Economy,	Business Monmouth and MCC's Sustainable Food Team have offered

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
signposting and, where appropriate, grant funding opportunities to support diversification of rural businesses.	supported within the workplace and with partners.	Employment and Skills	networking, support, signposting and some grant funding opportunities to support diversification of rural businesses during 2024/25. Eight businesses were supported during 2024/25.
Provide support for the creation of 6,240 sustainable job opportunities.	More people have access to employment opportunities.	Head of Placemaking, Regeneration, Highways and Flooding	We have developed a deposit Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). This was endorsed by Council in October ahead of a public consultation in December 2024. This will be presented to Council in autumn 2025. We continue to provide support to anyone interested in starting their own business via the Business Monmouthshire project funded by Shared Prosperity Fund). We assisted 49 businesses in 2024/25 which exceeds the target of 30.

3. Work with partners and residents to build inclusive and cohesive communities

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership	x	Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Celebrate diversity and hold awareness raising events, including key dates in the calendar such as Black History Month and Ramadan	Increased awareness of diversity within the community	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>We have held several events throughout the year.. These included the Annual Youth Conference at County Hall; Windrush Day celebration at County Hall; Young Carers Forum family fun day at Caldicot Castle; Outdoor Accessible Adventure Day at Gilwern Outdoor Centre.</p> <p>We marked Ukrainian Independence Day, by encouraging communities to join the International Campaign Making Noise for Ukraine and celebrated 30 years of Fairtrade during Fairtrade Fortnight with a host of events across the county.</p> <p>Other events we ran included: International Day of Older People event held in Caldicot; Holocaust Memorial Day Event at County Hall; International Women's</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			<p>Day at County Hall; Commonwealth Day at County Hall</p> <p>We also hosted an Iftar event at County Hall in partnership with Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association.</p>
Support and enable the creation of community groups to ensure everyone has a voice and can participate and help shape the future of our county.	Increased diversity in consultation	<p>Equality and Welsh Language Manager</p> <p>Community Development and Delivery Manager</p>	<p>We seek input from young people through the <i>Engage 2 Change</i> forums, and our annual Youth Conference to support their involvement in council and community decision-making. This year, 3,509 pupils participated in the 'Make Your Mark' survey, highlighting concerns such as the cost of living, health and well-being, climate change, and loneliness. Youth services used this feedback to adapt their provision accordingly. Young people also contributed to our 2024/25 Play Sufficiency Assessment during Young Ambassadors Days, with feedback from 347 children—a notably high level of engagement compared to other authorities.</p> <p>We have established a resilient Heritage & Culture service that offers high-quality engagement with local history. The Anti-Racist Wales project has created partnerships with groups like the Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association and Chepstow-Ukrainian Culture & Heritage, resulting in working groups and a temporary exhibition at Abergavenny Museum.</p> <p>At Chepstow Museum, the 'Changing Faces of Chepstow' exhibition was developed in partnership with the Ukrainian community, including updated displays and new research.</p> <p>Councillors have been key in local projects to improve accessibility, such as installing the first tranche of dropped kerbs in Penperlleni.</p> <p>We nurture inclusive, empowered, and resilient communities across the county, ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, has the opportunity to participate, contribute, and help shape the future of their local area. Some key examples are the Wyesham Community Garden – Growing Together and the Be Community – Training for Inclusive Practice.</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			We also connect groups with vital resources and funding opportunities.
Become an age friendly county and seek accreditation from the World Health Organisation.	Older people are supported in maintaining their health and well-being. Accreditation from World Health Organisation	Partnerships Officer (Age Friendly Communities)	Our application to the World Health Organisation to become accredited as an age friendly county was submitted in July 2025. We will also commit to the Centre for Ageing Better's Age-Friendly Employer Pledge. This will improve work for people in their 50s and 60s to help them flourish in a multigenerational workforce.
Support the development of a forum for disabled people.	Disabled people have a forum to inform policy making and service delivery.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager Community Development and Delivery Manager	We are visiting disabled groups to engage and build capacity and to understand their needs. We are using our new platform 'Let's Talk Monmouthshire' to develop an Access for All Forum and conduct an online survey to ask people what they would like.
Work with partners to tackle violence against women and girls and domestic and sexual violence.	Women feel safer within their environment.	Strategic Partnership Manager	We are working with regional partners to develop a data set that will enable the VAWDASV (Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) board to be more intelligence led. This will improve flow of information to Monmouthshire's Community Safety Partnership to work more proactively in this area on safeguarding, prevention and early help to improve outcomes for victims and survivors.
Ensure that we have a clear pathway for those	Assistance and advice is available to those with no	Strategic Partnership	We have developed guidance on a no recourse to public funds pathway and distributed it to all front-line colleagues. This should minimise the risk that the most vulnerable in our communities so not fall through any gaps in the systems

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
with no recourse to public funds.	recourse to public funds.	Manager	of support.
Improve our use of data analysis and CCTV to prevent crimes and provide evidence to the police when they do take place.	People feel safer within their environments.	Strategic Partnership Manager	<p>We continue to utilise CCTV across the county, centred around the main towns to deter and detect ASB and crime & disorder.</p> <p>Work is underway to develop a strategic needs assessment for crime, and ASB in the county. This is being supported by a public survey, to garner the views of the population across Monmouthshire on how safe they feel living and working in the county. The needs assessment will form the baseline. Priorities for the Community Safety Partnership will be drawn from the evidence and will shape how best to use the resources available to tackle the main challenges.</p>
Improve housing support for refugees and asylum seekers and other marginalised groups.	Marginalised communities receive housing support.	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships Housing and Communities Manager	<p>We are working collaboratively with the WLGA and other rural councils to improve housing options for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.</p> <p>A short-term proposal has provisionally identified private sector properties that could be used for this purpose.</p>
Become an accredited county of sanctuary and a place of sanctuary for LGBTQ+ migrants.	Monmouthshire is an accredited county of sanctuary.	Strategic Partnership Manager	<p>We are continuing to develop the arrangements that will support an application for Monmouthshire to become an accredited County of Sanctuary following cross party support at Council. A strategy will be presented to cabinet in autumn 2025.</p> <p>Work is being undertaken within the community to strengthen the cohesion across the county and develop networks of support, which will provide the evidence required to assist with the application process.</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Address period poverty and promote period dignity.	People have access to affordable period products.	Community Wellbeing Development Lead	<p>We are supporting primary and secondary schools as well as the Pupil Referral Service schools to ensure they have the period products they need along with any training required to upskill staff in their knowledge of the products and needs of young people in this area. All schools have a stock of period products, including 1900 units of period pants distributed to pupils.</p> <p>We are encouraging all organisations and community groups to have a stock of free period products to give out. Each Community Development Coordinator links with community venues to ensure stock and supply levels are met. 89 community-based organisations have received funding or products as a result of the Period Dignity Grant.</p> <p>We have partnered with Womb Wisdom to promote period dignity across Monmouthshire. They have created a pamphlet for parents/guardians of disabled youth regarding menstruation and any additional support needs this demographic may have, as well as supported the Menstrual Ambassadors pilot in partnership with Monmouth Comprehensive School. They have also supported an additional needs consultation which will help inform next steps.</p> <p>We secured £71,286 of Welsh Government funding to support Period Dignity initiatives across the County.</p>

4. Expand our provision of community-based services that extend people's healthy life expectancy

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership	x	Welsh Language	
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Ensure new walking and cycling infrastructure reaches areas with the lowest rates of physical activity.	People are supported in their physical activity.	Head of Customer, Communication and Engagement	<p>We continue to support the development of sustainable transport and infrastructure through the development of active travel routes that encourage people to walk and cycle to towns, schools and local key destinations. We have expanded our active travel network including dropped kerb installation to improve the network. We created or enhanced 18 active travel routes throughout and currently have over 100 active routes in place and an additional 20 in development.</p> <p>We are extending road safety training to more schools, supporting behaviour change with more walking, cycling and scooting to school. We employed a Schools Active Travel Officer to help bring education of children</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			in road safety together with improved safer routes for not only children but adults to walk to school and work.
Continue to provide a broad range of opportunities for people to be healthy and active including the National Exercise Referral Scheme.	People are supported in their physical activity.	Chief Officer – Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	<p>We have continued to help residents to improve their health and fitness levels through the National Exercise Referral Scheme. The percentage of participants who completed the scheme increased to 66% last year. Those completing the scheme reported improvements in balance, fitness levels and independence, and importantly their mental health. 75% of people reported that their general well-being had improved and that they felt happier.</p> <p>We relaunched our Passport to Leisure scheme in 2024 and have seen a significant number of people taking up the offer exceeding our annual target. The scheme makes fitness and wellness accessible and more affordable and includes access to gyms, swimming, classes, and more.</p> <p>We ran a targeted Food & Fun programme through the summer holidays in 2024/25. This provided two healthy meals and activities for children during the summer holidays, aiming to reduce the financial burden on families. This scheme supported 617 children throughout this year. Action for Children also ran bespoke sessions for children with additional needs.</p> <p>Our Free Swim Initiative recorded 3,691 swims in year 24/25 of which 1,486 were junior sessions. Across our programmes, 2,463 children benefitted from free or subsidised play provisions in 2024/25.</p> <p>The Nature Networks programme has supported 41 community groups for health and wellbeing, engaging 492 people. The completion of the green space at Gilwern Outdoor Adventure Centre will enhance learning for PRS EOTAS learners, Re-Engage ALN Bespoke pupils, and visitors to the site. Out of the 6,582 service users we have welcomed in 2024/25 276 had Additional Learning Needs, 34 had Accessibility Requirements and 438 were eligible for Free School Meals.</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Support community groups in raising awareness of health inequalities and access to information in the most deprived areas.	A reduction in health inequalities through access to information	Head of Leisure and Wellbeing Community Partnerships and Wellbeing Lead Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>We are ensuring that all departments are contributing towards the outcomes of the Play Sufficiency Assessment to provide inclusive play opportunities for all, regardless of income or background.</p> <p>We have collaborated with partner to improve access to information in some of the most deprived areas of Monmouthshire. Through targeted support, inclusive training, and grassroots engagement, we have empowered community groups to lead change from within. These include: The Gathering Community – Abergavenny; The Be Community Training Programme; Food Access and Community Nutrition and youth and cultural engagement.</p>
Support community groups to tackle isolation and loneliness with a focus on rural communities.	A reduction in the effects of isolation and loneliness	Community Development and Delivery Manager Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>We provide a varied range of activities for children, young people and adults that contribute to health and well-being. These included open-access sessions at our four youth centres, trips, events, residentials and outreach sessions. This service provides young people, including vulnerable young people, with the opportunity to foster social connections, try new skills and find new hobbies.</p> <p>We delivered two 10-week programmes for people living with dementia and their carers. Twelve community volunteers have been trained to deliver <i>object reminiscence</i> and memory cafes for older people and people living with dementia. This work has helped to reduce feelings of loneliness, boredom and has increased the self-esteem and confidence of those living with dementia. The success of this programme has resulted in Monmouthshire being selected as a case study for both Welsh Government and Age Friendly Wales.</p> <p>we have been able to further develop our work with community volunteer groups to improve and maintain public rights of way routes in their local area as part of our Paths2Communities project. This has been done in close partnership with Ramblers Cymru,</p> <p>We have seen an increase in the number of volunteer groups and over 6,381</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			<p>volunteer hours have been delivered by members of the community.</p> <p>The project included work to improve accessibility for those with mobility issues, for example through replacing stiles and gates to ensure everyone can access our beautiful countryside. Our work is based on the Monmouthshire principle of 'least restrictive access'.</p>

5. Ensure our services are accessible to the public

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	
Disability	x	Sex	
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity		Poverty	x
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Continue to ensure our public buildings are appropriately accessible to all service users.	Buildings are fully accessible to all people.	Head of Landlord Services	As part of the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund 'Destination for All' project we have commissioned an accessibility audit of attractions and visitor sites and have launched a small grants programme to support access improvements. This included the introduction of an accessible carriage on the miniature train at Old Station Tintern. We have also completed the Welcome Tintern project providing improvements to car parking, tourism signage and visitor welcome and signage. We have enhanced the visitor experience through improving the accessibility

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			<p>of information on our destination website including AudioEye installation which has seen 383 clicks. We have been developing pre-visit access information for all MonLife attractions to make it easier for people with specific access needs to check whether a certain site is accessible to them.</p> <p>We delivered a Family Accessible Outdoor Adventure Day at Gilwern Outdoor Adventure in August 2024. The day was open to families who have a family member or members who have accessible requirements to include learning needs, or other impairments, to access adventurous activities. Following the event, we received our latest all terrain chair courtesy of GM4X GM4X – All Terrain Wheelchairs to support more accessible adventures in the future.</p> <p>We also secured SPF capital funding to improve accessible toilets and a washroom for day visitors.</p> <p>We are making improvements across our heritage sites, ensuring they are accessible for all. We've completed a visitor's survey to understand how we can make the experience better for those attending and to understand why some people aren't attending.</p> <p>We have installed push button, self-opening internal doors at County Hall in Usk to make it fully accessible.</p>
Work with partners to ensure the provision of accessible toilets in our town centres.	Town centre toilets are accessible to all people.	Head of Landlord Services	In accordance with the Council's Local Toilet Strategy, we continue to give consideration to investment in MCC owned town centre toilets. A number of toilets continue to be managed and maintained via partnership arrangements with Town and Community Councils, or via third party lease with adjacent operators.
Ensure that all communications are accessible, including recognising the	All people can access communications.	Head of Customer, Communication and	We are developing on-going improvements to our website to ensure it remains accessible for all users in accordance with national guidelines known as WCAG2.2 specifications. We now track the progress of this project monthly and have seen continued progress. Our continued updates to the site see us improving month by month. We are collaborating with stakeholders to

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
needs of neurodiverse people.		Engagement	improve accessibility including enhanced screen reader performance. We launched Let's Talk Monmouthshire in January 2025. This provides residents with a single place to visit for all consultations and digital engagement opportunities across the organisation to improve resident engagement.
Ensure we use the social model of disability when developing new services and reconfiguring existing ones.	Barriers for disabled people are removed. Social Model of Disability is embedded across the organisation	Equality and Welsh Language Manager Head of Social Care, Safeguarding and Health	We have created new service model called My Support Service. This is based on a reablement/enablement approach. People are supported on a 1:1 basis and are encouraged to undertake activities of their choice within their community. The aim is to help the person become independent in that activity. We recognise that some individuals will always need support in these activities and will need to access a base at times during the day. The Monmouthshire Autism in Schools and Settings programme has been developed over the last few years with the Autism Education Trust/ National Autistic Society and is centred on the social model of disability. The programme focuses on building capacity within all our schools/ settings to develop the notion of autism as a 'difference not a deficit' and for us to develop 'enabling environments' to ensure that autistic children and young people are enabled to make progress. The initial whole school/ setting training module of the programme 'Making Sense of Autism' has been delivered to over 95% of schools and Early Years Settings, as well as to a range of local authority officers including teams such as the Children with Disabilities team, MonLife and the Youth Service as well as school-based counsellors and play therapists. All schools and most Early Years settings have a named Autism Champion. A Monmouthshire Autism in Schools and Settings Partnership Board has been created to have ongoing oversight of the Programme as we move to roll out 'Good Autism Practice'.
Promote courses to raise digital	Accessibility is improved through	Community Hubs,	We offer Entry Level 1 and 2 Digital Literacy learning opportunities as part of the 2024–25 curriculum. This was done in partnership with Coleg Gwent,

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
skills and literacy amongst all groups through community education courses and our community hubs.	digital skills.	Community Education & Libraries Manager	These accredited courses, awarded by Agored Cymru, are available at Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow, and Monmouth Hubs. Designed with flexibility in mind, they provide residents with a supportive and welcoming environment to re-engage with learning, helping to break down barriers and build confidence in digital skills.
Increase the number of Welsh speakers employed by the council to improve access.	Welsh speakers can fully access services in their own language.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>From April 24 to March 25, we published 683 job adverts. 659 (96.49%) of these were Welsh Language Desirable and 24 (3.51%) of these were Welsh Language Essential.</p> <p>We include the Welsh language skills framework in every job advert. We also use Welsh language recruitment sites to advertise posts that are assessed as Welsh language essential, as well as some Welsh language desirable posts. By advertising roles on these dedicated recruitment sites, we make it easier for Welsh speakers to find our vacant posts, and we have successfully appointed Welsh speakers as a result.</p> <p>53 colleagues are currently completing a Welsh course. Classes started in September 24.</p>
Promote the active offer of language choice in social care.	People can access services in their language of choice.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>We use the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) to provide translation. This year 283 requests have been made to the service through social care. Tamil is the language most often requested.</p> <p>Our More Than Words Active Offer included 13 adults who requested their assessment in Welsh and were offered their assessment in Welsh. 28 children who requested their assessment in Welsh and 27 received their assessment in Welsh.</p>
Ensure that training on equalities is	Inclusive decision making is improved.	Equality and Welsh Language	We have developed and delivered Equality Training for a new Leaders/Managers Development Pathway. This includes: Protected Characteristics, Intersectionality, Inclusion and Belonging, Inclusive Language

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
available to all staff and councillors to improve inclusive decision-making.		Manager	and Unconscious Bias. A separate equality training course is also available through Thingi as part of the Essential Training for all of the workforce. A Reasonable Adjustment presentation is available for all colleagues.
Review Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process	The Integrated Impact Assessment process is fit for purpose and embedded.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	We have revised and updated the Integrated Impact Assessment template and guidance. This has been published on Sharepoint for all colleagues to access. Directorate Management Teams have been informed, and it was also advertised in Compass, our internal newsletter. A guidance film has been made which will be available to all managers via Thingi and the Leader/Managers Development Pathway.

6. Ensure we have a diverse workforce and a fully inclusive workplace

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity		Poverty	
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Ensure that we attain disability confident level 2 status within the first year of this plan and then work towards levels 3.	Disability Confident Level 2 is attained.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	We attained Level 2 Disability Confident Employer in May 2024. We are continuing to work on the three-year action plan which is monitored and updated quarterly by the Accessibility Inclusion Group. We are working in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions and Welsh Government to ensure our progress and share information.

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Put in place measures to support and accommodate the needs of neurodiverse colleagues.	Neurodiverse colleagues are supported within the workplace.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	We are surveying colleagues to determine the need for support and interest in colleague networks via posters in our buildings, articles in Compass and attendance at the staff conference. These would include the needs of neurodiverse colleagues.
Actively target recruitment opportunities towards groups who are under-represented in our workforce.	Under-represented groups have more representation with the workforce.	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	<p>Our jobs website actively promotes our desire to receive applications and enquiries from all members of the community. We have a proactive offer to those who are disabled, have a sight or hearing loss, have a learning difficulty, or are neurodiverse to get in touch to find out more about employment opportunities.</p> <p>We have a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled people as well as armed forces veterans and care leavers.</p> <p>87% of colleagues reported that they felt MCC promoted an inclusive working environment.</p>
Address the data gaps that exist across all protected characteristics (particularly ethnicity and disability) and disaggregate data by across policy areas.	Data gaps are reduced to better inform decision making.	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	We are working to gather data to identify where there are gaps. Our gender pay gap report is published annually by 31st March each year. We will start reporting on ethnicity and disability pay gaps from 2026.
Provide access to	Diversity within the	Equality and	We have developed equality training as part of the Leadership/Manager

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
inclusion training for all staff to ensure awareness of inclusivity and diversity within the workplace	workforce is celebrated.	Welsh Language Manager Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	Development Pathway. This includes Protected Characteristics, Intersectionality, Inclusion and Belonging, Inclusive Language and Unconscious Bias. Reasonable Adjustment training has also been provided. As covered above, equality training is a mandated module available on Thinqi, e-learning training platform for all colleagues.
Develop staff networks to raise awareness of under-represented groups within the workforce	Staff networks developed.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	We have developed a staff survey to better understand the needs of colleagues and whether there is an appetite for colleague networks. This has been advertised through posters, at our Colleague Conferences and through internal communications. We continue to provide support for colleagues wishing to start up a new network and each network will have an HR contact We have a Dyslexia in the Workplace Network and webpage. We are looking to further support this network with the possibility of opening it up as part of a wider Neurodiverse Network. We are ensuring that colleague networks are instigated and developed by our colleagues. We also hold a Menopause Café last Wednesday of every month (online).

7. Reduce the gender pay gap

This is objective is related to:

Age		Religion or belief	
Disability		Sex	x
Gender reassignment		Sexual orientation	
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race			

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Ensure that career pathways do not limit the ability of part-time staff to progress into senior roles.	Part time staff are not limited in progressing into senior roles.	Head of HR	Our Flexible Working Policy supports colleagues' entitlement to request part time working. In conjunction with this, our Recruitment and Selection Policy and Protection of Employment Policy support all colleagues, including those working part time hours, into new and senior roles. Our People Strategy aims to further develop strategic workforce planning practices, across the organisation, and this will include evolving a greater number of career pathways, in accordance with associated policy reviews, which will promote the ability of part-time staff to progress into senior roles.

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Continue to operate a transparent job evaluation scheme to ensure equitable pay rates.	Equitable pay rates are ensured.	Head of HR	The GLPC (Greater Provincial London Council) Scheme is used for all National Joint Council roles in Monmouthshire County Council. New governance arrangements around the usage of this scheme, within the organisation, were put in place in October 2024 and associated revised policy and guidance documents were approved in January 2025, to ensure equitable pay rates. Chief Officer Job Evaluation Schemes are currently being reviewed and considered for implementation, relating to all JNC (Joint Negotiating Committee) roles in Monmouthshire County Council, to ensure equitable pay rates for senior officers.
Publish information on the gender pay gap annually, evaluate the reasons for the difference in pay and explore appropriate actions to address them.	Annual publication of gender pay gap information and actions to address this are explored.	Head of HR	Our Gender Pay Gap Report was published in March 2025, relating to data as of 31 st March 2024. Our Gender Pay Gap Report was published in March 2025, relating to data as of 31 st March 2024. This report evaluates the reasons for the differences in pay between genders and explores appropriate actions to address these reasons. Gender-Pay-Gap-Report-2025.pdf

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SUBJECT: OUTCOME OF THE CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) INSPECTION OF ADULT SERVICES APRIL 2025

MEETING: PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 22.07.25

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE

To set out the findings of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Improvement Check inspection of adult services in April 2025 and present the areas for improvement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. People Scrutiny Committee note the findings of the inspection and provide any comments in respect of the steps adult services are taking to deliver the required improvements.

3. KEY ISSUES

Background

3.1 In July 2022 CIW conducted a Performance Evaluation Inspection of Adult Services (appendix 1) and found 23 areas of improvement under the following categories

- (1) People
- (2) Prevention
- (3) Well-being
- (4) Partnerships.

3.2 In April 2025 CIW conducted a follow up Improvement Check focusing specifically on the 23 areas identified in 2022 to determine if improvements had been made.

Methodology

3.3 The follow-up inspection was conducted over 3 days of on-site field work (31st March – 2nd April). The inspection included:

- Reviewing 30 individual case files for people who had received a service
- 6 tracked cases which involved a more detailed review and interviews with practitioners and people receiving services

- Pre-submitted questionnaires from people receiving services, staff and partners.
- A range of focus groups with colleagues including senior leaders, team members and partners
- Individual interviews with the Chief Officer, Head of Service, Deputy Chief Executive and senior Health colleagues.

3.4 The findings provide an overview against the improvement areas with 3 levels of rating: - (i) no improvements made action required; (ii) some improvements made with further actions required; (iii) improvements made and must be sustained. The ratings are supported by a more detailed findings letter (appendix 2).

Findings

3.5 The inspection identified that improvements were evidenced in 20 out of 23 areas:

(1) People	All 8 areas identified in 2022 evidenced improvement
(2) Prevention	All 4 areas identified in 2022 evidenced improvement
(3) Well Being	5 out of 7 areas identified in 2022 evidenced improvement
(4) Partnerships	3 out of 4 areas identified in 2022 evidenced improvement

3.6 The areas which were deemed to still require improvement were contingency planning, identification of risk and co-production of outcomes for carers. The inspection found little evidence within case records of risks being explored or contingency planning with individuals and their families. This means that the service needs to improve how we help people to explore alternative scenarios and identify responses to potential emergencies or how an individual's needs / care requirements might change over time. The inspection found variable practice in providing formal carers assessments and that improvements are required in how outcomes with carers are co-produced using a strengths-based approach and ensuring clarity of what is on offer for carers.

3.7 Alongside areas for improvement, the inspection identified a number of areas that represented good practice in Monmouthshire. They found a dedicated workforce who are 'passionate about supporting people' and recognised positive strategic planning to address what is recognised as a challenging operating context for adult social care. Specific areas of positive practice included:

- Person centred biographies in assessments
- People who lack capacity are well supported
- Expansion of assistive technology
- Developing the micro carer economy
- Our strategic plans to develop the service
- Safeguarding procedures
- Staff communication significantly improved
- Staff receiving good line management support
- Effective partnerships
- Integrated structures and relationships with health colleagues.

3.8 In response to the follow up inspection the service will continue to develop the current strategic plan that received endorsement from CIW as representing positive service development namely:- (i) Domiciliary care commissioning strategy; (ii) Specialist information advice and assistance service and (iii) Expansion of Reablement.

3.9 The outcomes from the inspection are being developed into a more detailed set of actions, cross-referenced against existing programme implementation plans. In particular the plans include:

- Further development of a quality assurance framework for the service and how that can be used to support good assessment practice and consistency in decision making across the service
- Provide additional focus on case recording and implementation of Mosaic (new case management system)
- Further extend and implement the bespoke practitioner training and support programme including mandatory risk management and contingency planning training
- Fully implement and monitor compliance with the service supervision policy
- Review how we integrate carers' assessments within the service and that the carers offer aligns with the new information, advice and assistance approach at the 'front-door'.

3.10 In terms of follow up CIW will monitor progress through its ongoing performance review activity with the local authority via the established regular monitoring meetings.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 The service provides care and support to adults with protected characteristics including physical disabilities; older adults; people with mental illness including dementia, people with learning disabilities and people undertaking caring roles. Care and support, including our early help and reablement services, allows people to achieve good personal wellbeing outcomes including accessing the community, maximising independence and doing what matters most to them. We will consider in detail the outcome findings of the follow up inspection to ensure that we continue to improve the quality and timeliness of our services.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Not applicable.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The service submits quarterly returns to WG, copied to CIW, covering a range of performance measures and quantitative information. This includes numbers of people accessing reablement; waiting times for assessments and services; and numbers of

carers' assessments undertaken. There are, in addition a number of local measures through which we track specific areas including numbers of care and support plan reviews completed within timescale and the outcome of reablement interventions. The findings and improvement planning in response to the follow up inspection will be monitored through these established performance frameworks.

7. REASONS

The report is provided to ensure that members have the opportunity to scrutinise findings of the CIW follow up inspection undertaken in April 2025.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional resource implications.

9. CONSULTEES

- Cllr Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services.
- Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Directorate Management Team (DMT)

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 CIW Performance Evaluation Report (July 2022)

Appendix 2 CIW Improvement Check outcomes letter (June 2025)

11. AUTHOR

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Adult Social Care Inspection

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

IMPROVEMENT
CHECK APRIL 2025

Areas of Inspection



MCC last inspection in 2022



4 categories

People
Prevention
Well-being
Partnership

Methodology

Pre information - list of cases/complaints/compliments/carers assessment & support plans/

30 cases - 6 tracked – practitioner and service user discussion

Questionnaires – staff – people receiving services – partners

Focus groups – staff – IAA/care and support and senior staff supervising practitioners managing the 6 tracked cases

Staff interviews – CEO – CM - Director – HoS – Health – Safeguarding – Quality Assurance

Findings

Page 54

23 areas of improvement identified in 2022

2022

3 areas identified as not improved in 2025

2025

2025

20 areas identified as improved in 2025

People

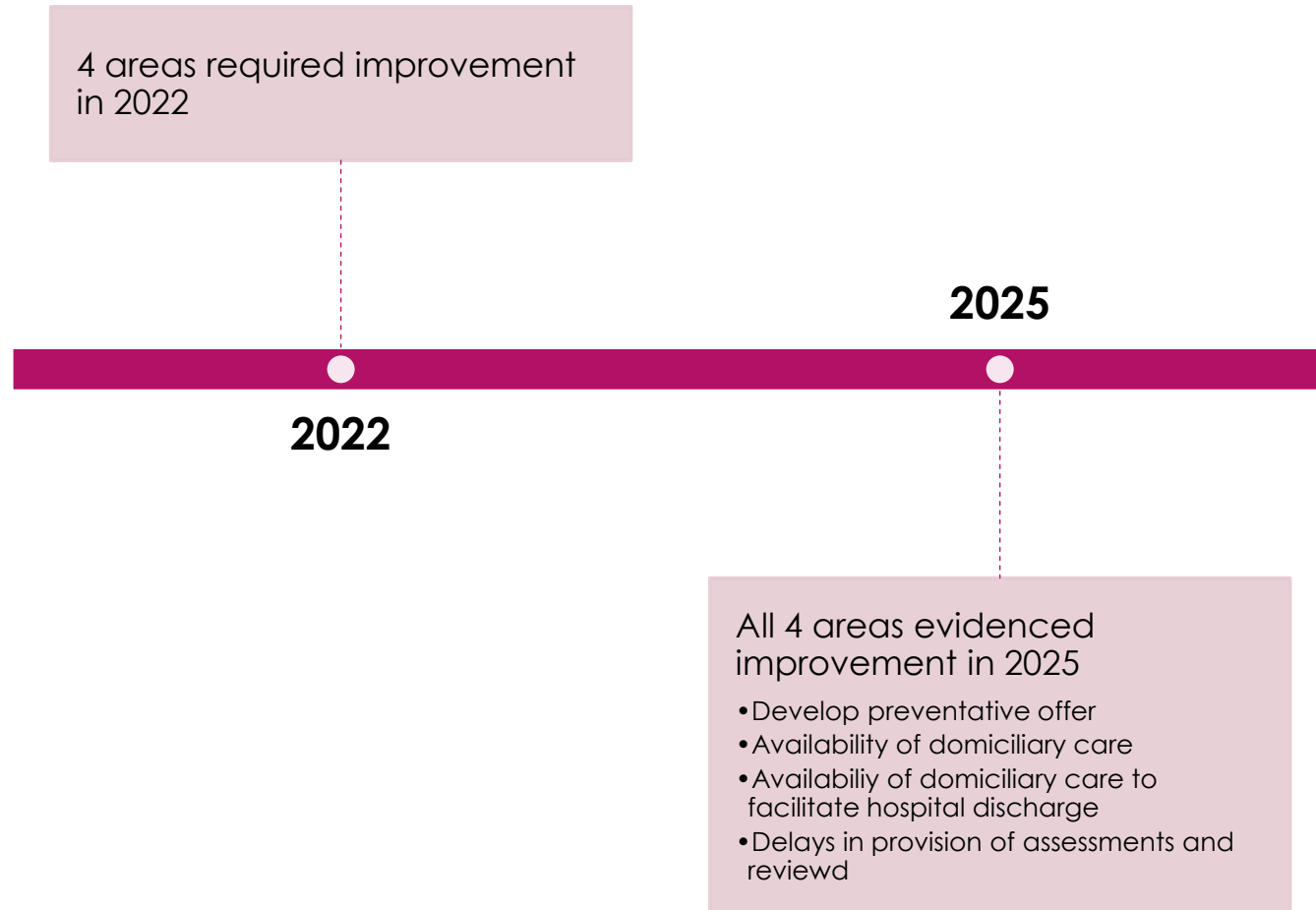
8 areas identified as requiring improvement in 2022

2022

2025

All 8 areas evidenced improvement in 2025

- Advocacy offer
- Carers assessments
- Welsh Active Offer
- Direct Payments
- Quality of assessments
- Strengths and capabilities
- Eligibility
- Quality Assurance Framework



Prevention

Well Being



7 areas identified for improvement in 2022



5 areas evidenced as improved in 2025

Section 126

Recording outcomes in safeguarding processes

Securing a management safeguarding lead

Ensuring recording processes reflect All Wales Safeguarding Procedures

Internal communication strategy



2 areas did not evidence any improvement

Contingency planning

Risk management

Partnerships



4 areas identified for improvement in 2022



3 areas evidenced as improved in 2025

Relationships with secondary health colleagues

Commissioning strategy for domiciliary care

Commissioning roles and responsibilities to be clarified



1 area did not evidence any improvement

Co-produced outcomes for carers

What we do well in 2025



The use of person centred biographies in assessments highlighted as good practice



People who lack capacity are well supported to voice their opinions with the offer of advocacy



Expansion of Assistive Technology (AT)



Increasing the availability of Micro Carers



Our strategic plan to transform ser were acknowledged as positive

Information advice and assistance service – acknowledged specialist carer IAA

Development of reablement – intake model

Commissioning – arrangements in general.

The domiciliary care tendering process in the South and service user participation

What we do well in 2025

- ▶ Safeguarding procedures are effective and performance around reporting timescales have achieved sustainable improvement
- ▶ Communication with staff is significantly improved
- ▶ Staff feel supported by their Managers and 64% would recommend working for MCC
- ▶ 87% of staff surveyed said partnerships are effective
- ▶ Integrated teams recognised as a strength with examples of a flexible interdisciplinary person centred approach to joint working
- ▶ Relationships with health colleagues and the collaborative approach delivers holistic and co-ordinated support. This was acknowledged as positive practice

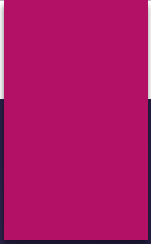
Continue to Embed Strategic Plan

- ▶ 3 inter related strands
- ▶ Front Door - Information Advice & Assistance Service – Corporate Well being Strategy
- ▶ Intake Model of Reablement – increasing capacity and specialism to improve independent living outcomes and reduce social work waiting lists
- ▶ Domicilliary Care Commissioning Strategy

What Next?

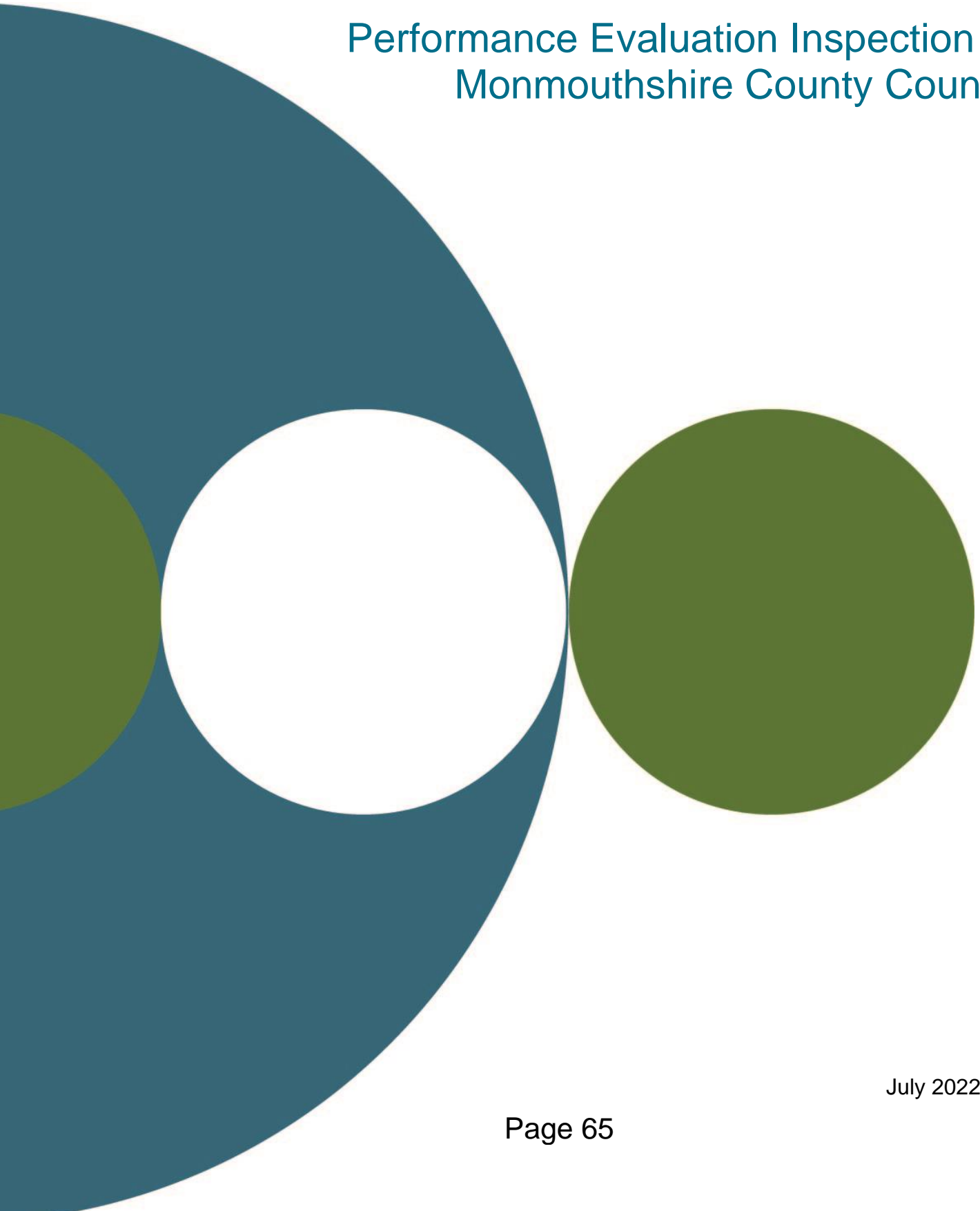
Designated quality assurance & practice development post – 2 years (learning from Childrens Services)

- ▶ Develop and embed a quality assurance framework
- ▶ Develop the role of the Quality Assurance Learning Group
- ▶ Implement a formal Quality Assurance process
- ▶ Roll out an enhanced Practitioner training and support programme
- ▶ Review and monitor compliance with the case recording policy
- ▶ Monitor the full implementation of the new supervision policy
- ▶ Mandatory risk management training
- ▶ Recording – Mosaic
- ▶ Review carers offer to align with IAA function
 - ▶ Develop Carer lead role as a consultative function to universalise the offer
- ▶ Ongoing monitoring in place, regular meetings with HoS & CIW



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Performance Evaluation Inspection of Monmouthshire County Council



Introduction

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) carried out a performance evaluation inspection of adult services in Monmouthshire County Council ('MCC'/'the local authority') in July 2022. The purpose of this inspection was to review the local authority's performance in exercising its social services duties and functions in line with legislation, on behalf of Welsh Ministers.

We seek to answer the following questions aligned under the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (The 2014 Act).

1. People - voice and control

How well is the local authority ensuring all people are equal partners who have voice, choice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them?

2. Prevention

To what extent is the local authority ensuring the need for care and support is minimised, and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring that the best possible outcomes for people are achieved?

3. Well-being

To what extent is the local authority ensuring that people are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm?

4. Partnerships

To what extent is the local authority able to assure themselves effective partnerships are in place to commission and deliver fully integrated, high quality, sustainable outcomes for people?

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect people. The scope of the inspection included:

- evaluation of the experience and outcomes people achieve through their contact with services.
- evidence of the local authority and partners having learnt lessons from recent experiences and plans for service developments and improvement.
- consideration of how the local authority manages opportunity and risk in its planning and delivery of social care at individual, operational and strategic levels.

1. Summary

- 1.1 In common with many other local authorities in Wales, MCC is experiencing a challenging time in relation to the provision of social care. Many of the pressures currently experienced by the local authority's adult services reflect the national pandemic recovery context including high levels of demand and increased complexity of people's needs.
- 1.2 The challenges of a shortage of domiciliary care are clearly having an impact on the delivery of care and support. Though compounded by the pandemic, the issue of sufficiency of domiciliary care has persisted in the local authority for some time, as evidenced in CIW's inspection report in 2019. The local authority has multifaceted challenges with its demographics and geography which impact on the availability of the workforce. The cost of living in the county is high, which will only be exacerbated by the current cost of living crisis, potentially resulting in people who would work in the domiciliary care sector not being able to afford to live within the local authority area.
- 1.3 Staff told us about the challenges in supporting people to achieve their personal outcomes due to a lack of resources. Although there are good operational examples of professionals working together, especially in the integrated teams, effective partnerships are not always in place to deliver good outcomes for people. We heard hospital discharge can be a particular area of pressure. The local authority needs to continue to work strategically and operationally with its partners in the local health board to look for solutions to alleviate the situation.
- 1.4 The recruitment and retention of social work and occupational therapy staff is also a national issue. We heard from managers the growth in staff teams has not aligned with the growth in demand. A key future challenge is a number of staff are nearing retirement age, and with this comes a risk that knowledge and experience will be lost. The local authority recognises this risk, and must take action, as it is their responsibility to maintain a sufficient and suitably qualified workforce to meet increasing demand.
- 1.5 The local authority responds to immediate safeguarding concerns. Through reading social care records, we saw evidence of professionals in the safeguarding team working effectively with colleagues from the local health board and the police, as well as wider local authority teams, to protect adults at risk. Whilst we found evidence of improvement in the time taken to undertake enquiries, there remains delay in some situations. The local authority needs to continue to work with partners to embed the threshold for

safeguarding concerns as well as the need for enquires to be completed in line with statutory guidance.

- 1.6 We found, in general, most people's voices are heard. However, we also found gaps in social work practice where strengths and risk were not fully considered and documented, and the impact of caring was not always recognised. A lack of professional curiosity, analysis and recording may mean people are not getting the quality of services the local authority has a statutory duty to provide.
- 1.7 We found eligibility for services was not always fully explored and documented, resulting in people's rights and entitlements not being consistently communicated to them. At times, we found it difficult to understand the rationale for services being provided. Statutory reviews are also not undertaken in a timely manner. The local authority is missing opportunities to ascertain whether people have met their outcomes or continue to need support to do so.
- 1.8 The areas highlighted for improvement in this report lead us to determine management oversight is an area requiring further development. Leaders and managers need to ensure they have an improved line of sight on front line practice via improved quality assurance processes.
- 1.9 In adult services, there is a strong strategic focus on prevention and transforming practice through the 'Monmouthshire Aligning Place Based Care' project. The local authority describes place-based working as a way of building a network of community support, in a particular place, to help people remain connected to things that matter to them to support their health and well-being and help prevent, delay, and reduce the need for more formal care and support. The high level 'Integrated Well Being Network Plan 22/23' details how the local authority plan to maximise the place-based way of working to include co-locating the integrated social services and health care teams with universal wellbeing partners. CIW will monitor the effectiveness of these arrangements in the future.
- 1.10 Whilst recognising the national challenges which are in common with those impacting on other local authorities in Wales, further work is required by MCC, and its partners, to ensure their strategic and operational developments are focused on meeting their statutory responsibilities as well as ensuring practitioners are consistently working to the principles of the 2014 Act, ensuring people can receive the right service at the right time and in the right place.

- 1.11 During this inspection we found progress has been made in several areas. This has resulted in developments to practice and better outcomes for people. This progress has been achieved against a backdrop of the additional pressures and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key findings and evidence

We present some key findings and evidence below in line with the four principles of The Act.

2. People – voice and choice

Strengths:

- 2.1 For many people, their voices are heard, and people's personal outcomes are captured. We saw some detailed and comprehensive biographies and personal circumstances, evidencing 'what matters' to the person. Many people said social services were helpful and they were treated with dignity and respect by practitioners.
- 2.2 There was evidence of capacity being considered in most of the social care records reviewed and assessments of people's mental capacity we read were generally good, with evidence of practitioners' knowledge and ability to practice in accordance with the principles of Mental Capacity Act (2005).
- 2.3 Direct payments afford people the opportunity to tailor and manage their own care and support and it is positive that there has been an increase in the number of people receiving them. The local authority must however continue to assure itself direct payments are consistently offered as well as ensuring the reason for the person refusing them is recorded.

What needs to improve:

- 2.4 The quality of assessments and care and support plans seen was varied. People's strengths are not well considered. Professional judgment and analysis of risks can be poor with very few records documenting risks have been considered. The local authority must improve the way it reflects people's strengths and barriers to achieving their personal outcomes, and the risks of them not achieving them. A review of the documentation to explicitly include the five areas of assessment, as defined by the 2014 Act, may help practitioners articulate the circumstances of the people they are working with more effectively and in a more strengths based, outcome focused way.

- 2.5 Whilst we saw the offer of the Welsh language and people's language preference captured in many social care records, the local authority's performance data indicates improvement is needed in consistently offering and recording the Welsh active offer, to ensure people can effectively communicate the outcomes they want to achieve. When English or Welsh is not the person's first language the local authority should consider the use of an interpreter to benefit the person in articulating their outcomes, as using family members to interpret could be considered a conflict of interest.
- 2.6 We are not assured the need for advocacy is considered consistently by all practitioners. The offer and provision of advocacy is not only important in ensuring people have their voice heard, but it also contributes to ensuring people's rights are promoted and protected. The local authority must ensure the importance of advocacy is understood and that formal advocacy is commissioned when this is required. The local authority may want to consider a way of routinely recording the offer to assure itself of the appropriate consideration and use of advocacy.
- 2.7 Despite a positive increase in the number of people accepting the offer of a Direct payment, there is a lack of sufficient resource to process these requests. The local authority needs to prioritise increasing its resource to ensure people can access a direct payment in a timely way. We are aware of regional collaboration to see if the process of implementing a direct payment can be streamlined.
- 2.8 Consistency in recording people's eligibility for support services needs to improve. We saw some evidence of people having an occupational therapy assessment for equipment, but who were paying privately for support, and while this may be personal choice, they were not offered an assessment. The local authority should ensure people's rights are protected by explicitly offering an assessment for care and support with any eligible needs noted. The local authority should ensure that practitioners of all disciplines in the integrated teams are aware of the statutory duties under the 2014 Act.
- 2.9 Whilst some carers were offered assessments and those we heard from were generally happy with the support they received, in other social care records it was difficult to identify how the impact of being a carer was considered or see an offer of an assessment. During discussions with staff, they recognised the impact on carers due to the lack of domiciliary care, but this did not translate into a consistent offer of support. The local authority needs to ensure practitioners consistently comply with the general duty to promote the well-being of the carer as well as the cared for, by explicitly offering carers assessments to people to discuss what support they require to continue ensure their caring role is sustainable, with reasons for refusal of an assessment routinely recorded.
- 2.10 Most practitioners reported receiving regular supervision from their managers.

Supervision files viewed varied in content and quality. In common with many other adult services across Wales, supervision discussions are not recorded on social care records, which makes it difficult to understand the level of managerial oversight when reading the record. Supervision provides an opportunity for reflection, constructive challenge to create change, identify potentially missed opportunities and build confidence. We are aware the local authority is in the process of redrafting its supervision policy. It needs to assure itself there is robust management oversight of cases and reflective conversations are had, with sufficient information noted to evidence decision making.

- 2.11 Senior managers need to further develop quality assurance systems and performance information. The local authority should focus on reinvigorating its quality assurance process as we are not assured that the processes involved are effective. We are aware of an audit tool in the safeguarding team but the use of it has not been fully embedded yet due to the challenges with staffing in the team. Robust quality assurance procedures would assure local authority managers have the necessary improved sight on front line practice and decision making and be assured care and support in MCC is safe and effective

3. Prevention

Strengths:

- 3.1 MCC has a clear vision and plan to work towards place-based approaches. This ensures staff are working towards agreed principals and have a common purpose. We can see how it is a particular strength of the local authority and how there is a strategic focus on universal wellbeing services being available within communities. The local authority has worked hard to reshape and re-design its service with a focus on ensuring people receive the right help at the right time. We heard how the success of the preventative, wellbeing service is measured through gathering people's stories and experiences of change resulting from accessing universal support which highlights how they are achieving the things which matter to them.
- 3.2 The local authority is aware of and is monitoring waiting lists across service areas, which clearly impacts on providing early intervention and support for people, but despite this demand we saw some good examples of support offered in a timely manner. The model of integrated teams, where different professionals work together, is flexible enough so support can be tailored and directed. Requests for urgent support are responded to.

What needs to improve:

- 3.3 In the current context of adult social care, it is an overwhelming challenge to effectively prioritise preventative support and services. We know a particular strength in MCC is universal support services, however, the challenge for senior managers is they must also ensure equal time and energy is directed into statutory care and support services to ensure these are also able to deliver a range of preventative options to meet people's outcomes.
- 3.4 We know demand is outstripping supply, and with regard to domiciliary care, this has been the case for some time in MCC. We saw examples of people requiring care in their own homes to remain independent, but this not being available. In some cases, this leaves carers needing to provide more care than they can without a detrimental effect on their own wellbeing. There is no doubt the workforce is striving to support people and we heard it is a frustration for them to assess people in the knowledge there is no domiciliary care available. There is also the impact of the time and resource directed into managing the ongoing risk of people living without the care and support they need.
- 3.5 The importance of timely hospital discharge is understood and remains a priority but providing domiciliary care to facilitate people's safe discharge is a challenge for the local authority. We were told how this can result in people having to go into a care home whilst awaiting a package of care. Without the focus on keeping the person as independent as possible these interim arrangements have, at times, resulted in the person becoming permanently resident in a care home as their needs have increased or they become dependent on twenty-four-hour care. This raises important questions about people's human rights, and the impact on public funds and sustainability.
- 3.6 For many people, their assessments and reviews are delayed due to waiting lists evident across teams and professions. The local authority's performance figures demonstrate only roughly half of all reviews due are completed within statutory timescales. This runs the risk of people's changing needs not being addressed and any deterioration not identified at the earliest stage. It also misses the opportunity for services to end when no longer required which would release capacity into the domiciliary care market. It is unclear from the recording system whether a formal review of care and support has taken place and whether the support already in place is meeting a person's outcomes as anticipated. Providers also commented on how they are not regularly invited to take part in reviews. The local authority needs to ensure reviews are undertaken in a timely manner, and all relevant professionals are invited to contribute, as it is missing the opportunity to assure itself that resources are being used to best effect.

4. Well-being

Strengths:

- 4.1 We saw good examples of effective and timely adult safeguarding, and this opinion was supported by key partners.
- 4.2 Practitioners in adult safeguarding are confident in their ability to respond to safeguarding concerns and act where necessary. We saw the response to safeguarding referrals was timely and that strategy discussions and meetings involved relevant professionals, and most are held in a timely manner, despite reports that it can be challenging to obtain a police response at times due to the pressure of prioritising their work.
- 4.3 The safeguarding team have positively developed aspects of the service including raising awareness of thresholds and discussing concerns with partners through engagement, for example regular meetings with Llanarth Court, a specialist secure hospital for people with mental illnesses and/or learning disabilities.
- 4.4 Generally, feedback from the staff survey was staff/ practitioners feel well supported by management and workloads are manageable. The Integrated Service Business Plan 21/22 highlighted staff wellbeing as a high risk with actions to mitigate this in the plan. We heard how staff morale was generally positive, managers were well regarded by staff, and managers in turn commented they have a committed and dedicated workforce. Workers valued the accessibility of managers and peer support from team members.

What needs to improve:

- 4.5 We saw how the performance measure for section 126 enquiries being undertaken within 7 days has seen an improvement. The end of year figure for 2020/21 was 51.1%, which rose to 65.5% at the end of 2021/22. This has further improved with the end of quarter 1 2022/23 now showing as 75.7%. However, there are clearly still some improvements required. We heard at times there can be a delay with colleagues in the local health board, and in internal teams, completing the safeguarding enquiries within the statutory timescale, due to the pressure this places on staff. The local authority needs to ensure all staff and partners have an improved understanding around recognising their role in protecting people and working in partnership with the safeguarding team.
- 4.6 Improvements are required in ensuring the voice of people is heard during the safeguarding process as the outcomes people want are not always clearly

recorded. Further work is needed to ensure this remains central during safeguarding enquiries.

4.7 We acknowledge the safeguarding team have a development plan, but progress has been hampered by lack of management capacity due to staffing issues. The local authority must ensure an appointed manager can focus on delivering improvements detailed in the plan, to ensure that the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures are embedded in practice, including monitoring its effectiveness.

4.8 We heard about how the local authority's recording system requires improvements to fully reflect the requirements of the All Wales Safeguarding procedures. The local authority has plans to address this, including ensuring all frontline practitioners have timely access to historical and current safeguarding concerns and actions taken by the safeguarding team.

4.9 In more general care planning, the recording of risk and risk management is an area for improvement. There is often no evidence of consideration of risk noted in people's care plans and therefore professional judgement and analysis of people's situations is not easily evidenced.

4.10 Contingency planning is largely absent from people's social care records. The local authority should review this practice to ensure care and support plans are person centred, can aid duty/out of hours practitioners who may not be familiar with the person, and avoid people having to repeat their stories.

4.11 We heard from practitioners they are feeling the negative impact of the lack of domiciliary care support, knowing that people are at risk in the community and hearing the frustrations that people and their families express to them. They also spoke about the impact of having to undertake the commissioning role of sourcing packages of care. Practitioners told us the establishment of some teams has not increased to recognise the increase in demand and complexity. We were told by senior managers they are currently undertaking workforce modelling with the aim of aligning complexity of need with appropriate resources. The local authority should consider their internal communication strategy, as practitioners may benefit from reassurances that senior management are working towards providing solutions to alleviate their concerns.

5. Partnership and Integration

Strengths:

- 5.1 We saw evidence of practitioners developing a professional working relationship with people built upon co-operation and a shared understanding of what matters.
- 5.2 Generally, we saw how opportunities for partnership working are positively exploited. We heard how collaborative partnerships are evident in relation to universal wellbeing services being place based at 'street level' in the community – with a shared understanding of wellbeing illustrated in its broadest sense by the 'wellbeing tree' of the Monmouthshire Collaborative Approach to Wellbeing, which was developed by community partners and Swansea University. We understand more work is being done to add statutory services into the place-based model to ensure a holistic, place-based, team within communities.
- 5.3 Most partnerships are working well at an operational level. The vast majority of staff expressed the view the integrated model of delivering services is a strength. We saw evidence of close collaboration between occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and social workers and heard about the benefits of integration and co-location to ensure better outcomes for people. The partnerships built with primary health care clearly benefit people working in and receiving services from the integrated team model.

What needs to improve:-

- 5.4 We heard how relationships in secondary health are challenging particularly in regard to hospital discharge. Communication can be difficult and lack of consideration of the pressures in the community can lead to inappropriate hospital discharges which leave community teams dealing with crisis. Practitioners have appropriately escalated their concerns about the practice to their senior managers.
- 5.5 Working in partnership with people and carers on co-produced outcomes requires improvement with the domains of assessment and principles of the 2014 Act needing further embedding in practice. At times, the support is service led and functional rather than focusing on the outcomes the person wants to achieve. We understand there are plans in place, including further training sessions on strengths-based practice to enhance this.
- 5.6 We were unclear of commissioning roles and responsibilities as practitioners told us that they contact providers directly to commission care. The local authority should review this given the current challenges the teams are facing with the pressure from waiting lists.
- 5.7 We are aware of the plan to develop 'Microcarers' and welcome any new initiative to remedy the current situation. This work has not come to fruition yet, but may help with rural, hard to reach areas, and low levels of need. Further

assurance is required in regard to the local authority's commissioning strategy to commission domiciliary care for all individuals who require it.

Next Steps

CIW expect MCC to consider the areas identified for improvement and take appropriate action to address and improve these areas. CIW will monitor progress through its ongoing performance review activity with the local authority.

Methodology

Fieldwork

Most inspection evidence was gathered by reviewing the experiences of people through review and tracking of their social care record. We reviewed 28 social care records and tracked 8.

Tracking a person's social care record includes having conversations with the person in receipt of social care services, their family or carers, key worker, the key worker's manager, and other professionals involved.

We also; -

- interviewed a range of local authority employees
- interviewed a range of partner organisations, representing both statutory and third sector
- reviewed a sample of staff supervision files.
- reviewed supporting documentation sent to CIW for the purpose of the inspection.
- administered surveys to staff, partner organisations and people.

Acknowledgements

CIW would like to thank staff, partners and people who gave their time and contributed to this inspection.

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Ms. Jane Rodgers
Statutory Director of Social Services
Monmouthshire County Council
County Hall
The Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Dyddiad / Date: 04 June 2025

Dear Director,

Improvement Check visit to Monmouthshire County Council adult services

1. Introduction

This letter describes the findings of the Improvement Check visit to Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) between 31 March 2025 – 2 April 2025. This was an Improvement Check following the Performance Evaluation Inspection (PEI) in July 2022.

We carry out inspection activity in accordance with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, key lines of enquiry, and the quality standards in the *Code of Practice in relation to the performance and improvement of social services in Wales*. This helps us determine the effectiveness of local authorities in supporting, measuring and sustaining improvements for people and in services.

The Improvement Check focused on the progress made in the following areas identified for improvements during our PEI in July 2022.

Principle	Areas of improvement identified from PEI in July 2022	Progress identified at improvement check
People	The quality of assessments and care and support plans seen was varied. People's strengths were not well considered. Professional judgment and analysis of risks can be poor with very few records	Some improvements made – further action is required

	<p>documenting risks have been considered.</p> <p>The local authority's performance data indicated improvement was needed in consistently offering and recording the Welsh active offer, to ensure people can effectively communicate the outcomes they want to achieve.</p> <p>We were not assured the need for advocacy is considered consistently by all practitioners</p> <p>Despite a positive increase in the number of people accepting the offer of a Direct payment, there is a lack of sufficient resource to process these requests.</p> <p>Consistency in recording people's eligibility for support services needs to improve</p> <p>There was inconsistency in practitioners offering carers assessments.</p> <p>Supervision files viewed varied in content and quality. Supervision discussions were not recorded on social care records, which makes it difficult to understand the level of managerial oversight when reading the record</p> <p>Senior managers needed to further develop quality assurance</p>	<p>Some improvements made – further action is required</p> <p>Some improvements made – further action is required</p> <p>Some improvements made – further action is required</p> <p>Some improvements made – further action is required</p> <p>Some improvements made – further action is required</p> <p>Some improvements made – further action is required</p> <p>Some improvements made – further action is required</p> <p>Some improvements made –</p>
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	systems and performance information	further action is required
Prevention	<p>Senior managers must ensure equal time and energy is directed into statutory care and support services as well as preventative support to ensure these are also able to deliver a range of preventative options to meet people's outcomes</p> <p>We saw examples of people requiring care in their own homes to remain independent, but this not being available.</p> <p>Providing domiciliary care to facilitate people's safe discharge was a challenge for the local authority which could result in people having to go into a care home whilst awaiting a package of care</p> <p>Assessments and reviews were delayed due to waiting lists evident across teams and professions. Not all relevant professionals were invited to participate in the reviews.</p>	<p>Some improvements made – further action is required</p> <p>Some improvements made – further action is required</p> <p>Improvements made and must be sustained.</p> <p>Some improvements made – further action required</p>
Well-being	<p>Further improvements were required in meeting section 126 enquiry timescales.</p> <p>Improvements were required in ensuring the voice of people is heard during the safeguarding process as the outcomes people want are not always clearly recorded.</p>	<p>Some improvements made – further action is required</p> <p>Some improvements made – further action is required</p>

	The local authority must ensure an appointed manager can focus on delivering improvements detailed in the safeguarding team development plan.	Some improvements made – further action is required
	The local authority's recording system required improvements to fully reflect the requirements of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.	Some improvements made – further action is required
	The recording of risk and risk management was an area for improvement.	No improvement made – action required
	Contingency planning was largely absent from people's social care records.	No improvement made – action required
	The local authority needed to consider their internal communication strategy to provide reassurances to staff about their concerns.	Some improvements made – further action is required

Partnership	Relationships with secondary health colleagues were noted to be challenging particularly regarding hospital discharge.	Some improvements made – further action is required
	Working in partnership with people and carers on co-produced outcomes needed to improve to reflect the domains of assessment and principles of the 2014 Act.	No improvement made – action required.
	Commissioning roles and responsibilities were unclear.	Some improvements made – further action is required
	Further assurances were required regarding the local authority's commissioning strategy regarding domiciliary care.	Improvements made and must be sustained.

2. Glossary of Terminology and Quantity Definitions

A glossary of terminology is contained in Appendix one and a table of quantity definitions in Appendix 1.

3. Summary

- 3.1 The local authority has a dedicated workforce within adult services who are passionate about supporting people. Peer support is promoted, and staff receive good quality support from their managers, including formal and informal supervision opportunities.
- 3.2 The local authority is implementing a reablement pathway within the service that includes a re-design of the IAA service, reablement workforce planning and domiciliary care procurement. There is indication the reablement model of practice has mitigated peoples' need for support and wait times for domiciliary care support have significantly reduced over time.

- 3.3 The safeguarding team work in partnership with colleagues and are responsive to queries. However, safeguarding enquiries are not always timely, and actions and outcomes are not consistently recorded in a clear way. Further improvements are required to meet statutory duties outlined in the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (WSP).
- 3.4 People continue to experience delays with assessments and reviews of their care and support plans. Whilst waiting lists are reviewed, approaches vary across teams and disciplines and people may receive an inconsistent service across the county.
- 3.5 Leaders have a comprehensive strategic plan that is already in motion to improve the delivery of services to meet the care and support needs of people. This includes a pilot commissioning strategy for domiciliary care services and new service models for reablement and Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA).
- 3.6 Adult Services across Wales are working within a challenging environment, with reports of increased demand and complexity and financial challenges. Some staff express concern about the need to deliver service efficiencies and of the impact it could have on achieving outcomes for people. Leaders have implemented Quality Assurance Learning Groups (QALG) to discuss cases as a way of ensuring agreed practice standards are communicated across the service.
- 3.7 Leaders are cited on the improvements needed and communicate with staff to provide updates on service developments and training regarding practice requirements. Leaders say addressing staff morale 'is a process of change that needs continuous attention'.

4. Key findings and evidence

Key findings and some examples of evidence are presented below in line with the four principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

People – We asked:

How well is the local authority ensuring all people are equal partners who have voice, choice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them?

Strengths

- 4.1 The use of biographies in assessments is person centred and promotes an understanding of the individual's background and context to evidence strengths. **This is positive practice.**
- 4.2 The views of family and friends are consistently referenced in assessments. This could be strengthened further with explicit reference to their role in care and support.
- 4.3 When people do not have capacity in relation to decisions, they are mostly supported to voice their opinions and have as much control as possible on their arrangements. Most respondents to the staff survey (77%) agree or strongly agree that people are equal partners with voice, choice and control. Practitioners identify and use a range of advocacy services to support people.
- 4.4 People were given opportunities to participate in the tendering process for domiciliary care providers as part of the domiciliary care commissioning strategy, providing reassurance that people are involved with the development and delivery of services.
- 4.5 Most staff members feel supported by their managers and peers, with opportunities for formal and informal support. 64% of staff surveyed would recommend working for Monmouthshire local authority.

Areas for Improvement

- 4.6 Changes have been made to the recording system to prompt practitioners to make the active offer of advocacy and 75% of respondents to the staff survey agree or strongly agree that the offer is consistently made. However, there has been a reduction in the number of new assessments evidencing the active offer of advocacy. **The local authority should implement recording and reporting mechanisms for advocacy to measure success, identify gaps, and inform service development and training needs.**
- 4.7 The recording system has been updated to prompt practitioners to make the active offer of Welsh however, this is not consistently completed and the number of assessments evidencing the active offer of Welsh has reduced since 2021-2022. **The local authority must ensure compliance with the Welsh Government's 'More Than Words' strategy to enable people to effectively communicate the outcomes they want to achieve in their language of choice.**
- 4.8 The number of care and support plans using direct payments has slightly reduced since 2022. We heard variable views about the sufficiency of resources to support direct payments. Leaders anticipate that requests for

direct payments may increase as part of the domiciliary care commissioning strategy and are addressing this as part of the local authority contract implementation plan to ensure referrals are expedited to maintain continuity of existing care arrangements. **The local authority should ensure there is sufficient resource to meet anticipated demand and communicate the approach to staff.**

- 4.9 The local authority has implemented a Quality Assurance Learning Group (QALG) to increase management oversight of care and support plans. The aims are to improve accountability, provide opportunities for learning, and ensure consistent decision making. Leaders describe this forum as supporting equitable decision making for people in Monmouthshire. By contrast, most staff told us the QALG negatively impacts strengths-based practice and the voice and choice of people. It is important the purpose of QALG is understood by staff. A strong senior management drive, fully supported across tiers of management will play an important role in delivering improvement. The foundations to achieving this change are in place with staff describing managers as mostly available and approachable. Leaders have a strategic plan to transform culture and practice that is in motion. **Senior managers should reflect critically on the culture of the organisation to establish a clear strategic approach to quality assurance, ensuring efficiency and improvement whilst retaining focus on the wellbeing of people.**
- 4.10 The quality of assessments and care and support plans is varied. People's strengths and capabilities are not detailed and few records document risks and contingency plans. The recording system has been updated to prompt practitioners to record decisions regarding eligible care and support needs; however, this is not consistently completed. Care and Support Plans are limited in scope reflecting only eligible needs for which commissioned services are provided. **The local authority must use a strengths-based approach in What Matters conversations to identify what works well, evaluate risks, and determine personal outcomes, as required by Part 3 of the 2014 Act. Additionally, care and support plans must be developed collaboratively with individuals, identifying all needs, including those that would be eligible if not met by a carer, in accordance with Part 4 of the 2014 Act.**

Prevention – We asked:

To what extent is the local authority ensuring the need for care and support is minimised, and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring that the best possible outcomes for people are achieved?

Strengths

- 4.11 The local authority has an established place-based approach and is implementing a commissioning strategy focusing on efficiency and expertise in

provider support. The availability of domiciliary support has significantly improved since 2022 demonstrating the **positive impact** of the commissioning strategy. Leaders should continue to retain focus on the timeliness of care and support being offered.

- 4.12 The local authority is developing a reablement pathway where reablement support is provided for all referrals to support people to maintain their independence at home and support timely hospital discharge. Evidence of this approach was observed across all activity and has reduced or mitigated the need for support for most people who have accessed the service.
- 4.13 Plans are underway to introduce a dedicated Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) role to each of the Integrated teams thereby enhancing workload management and ensuring consistent and stable IAA support for individuals. Staff have indicated they view this change positively, but the local authority should ensure there is a clear timeline for implementation.
- 4.14 The local authority continues to expand the availability of assistive technology, including the creation of Assistive Technology Hubs where people are able to experience the technology in a bedroom or living room set up prior to installation. This provides more opportunities for people to make informed decisions about assistive technology and experience and benefit from improved outcomes.
- 4.15 The local authority implemented micro carers in 2022 as an innovative solution to recruitment of care workers in rural areas. Micro carers are self-employed individuals who can provide a tailored care and support to people and enables people to make choices about how their care and support is delivered.
- 4.16 The Carers team demonstrates a model of community engagement through information and advice provision.

Areas for Improvement

- 4.17 Monmouthshire consistently has a high number of people waiting for assessment. The number of people waiting has reduced and waiting times have improved with the number of people waiting over 91 days also reduced. The local authority is working to redesign its service in line with its vision of people receiving prompt reablement and community-based rehabilitation, however current waiting times mean people may not be supported, and their needs escalate, with risk of additional burden on unpaid carers and breakdown of independence. **The local authority must ensure assessments**

are completed in a timely manner and respond to the urgency of the individual's needs in accordance with Part 3 of the 2014 Act.

- 4.18 The number of care and support plan reviews completed within a year has increased since 2022, however the recording of care and support plan reviews is inconsistent and insufficiently detailed. Part 4 of the 2014 Act stipulates that review records must *monitor progress and changes, consider the extent to which the delivery of the plan is meeting assessed needs and how it has helped the individual or family to achieve their outcomes, and determine what support is needed in the future, confirming, amending, or ending the services in accordance with the requirements*. **The local authority must keep under review the plans that it maintains, ensure reviews are completed at least annually and conducted and recorded in accordance with the 2014 Act.**
- 4.19 The local authority does not record any actions or outcomes on contacts which lead to information and advice only. This means practitioners cannot make informed decisions on the basis of the case history. There is also a gap in data collection and analysis to inform service development and understand the experience of people and staff. A new system is due to be introduced that may provide an opportunity to address this matter. The Code of Practice for Part 3 of the 2014 Act states *recording of information about the initial contact or referral contributes to the later stages of assessment* and it is essential practitioners are aware of the importance of the information collected and recorded at this stage. **The local authority should implement mechanisms for recording and reporting outcomes and data to support the assessment of people's needs and inform service development outlined in strategic plans.**

Well-being – We asked:

To what extent is the local authority ensuring people are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm?

Strengths

- 4.20 The local authority has taken action to address areas of improvement identified in the PEI of 2022, including improvements to case recording systems, processes, and the implementation of a new supervision policy.
- 4.21 Most people in Monmouthshire feel safe. Nearly all staff told us safeguarding practice is effective and many stakeholders report safeguarding concerns are reviewed and addressed in a timely way.
- 4.22 The number of safeguarding enquiries completed within 7 days has improved over time, from 65.5% in 2021-2022 to 84.3% 2023-2024. this progress made

is positive, however further and sustained improvement is required to consistently meet the requirements of Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

- 4.23 There are examples of Duty to Reports being appropriately submitted by partner agencies. This is important as it means partners are taking appropriate action, providing relevant information to ensure people's safety and well-being can be addressed.
- 4.24 Partners state there is good communication between health and social care and highlighted no concerns regarding safeguarding partnerships. Many respondents to the stakeholder survey indicated safeguarding concerns are reviewed and addressed in a timely way.
- 4.25 Practitioners can access shared learning opportunities to enhance their skills, and safeguarding training has recently been delivered to providers at their request. Mandatory Safeguarding training is also taking place which provides assurance safeguarding staff training and development is in line with the national safeguarding training, learning and development standards.
- 4.26 The Safeguarding Team is a small, but responsive and effective resource. Where issues have arisen with consistency across teams these have been discussed and arrangements made to visit respective team meetings.
- 4.27 Staff briefings have taken place, arrangements for regular team management meetings established, and regular bulletins put in place to provide updates to staff members. This is significant in terms of communication and establishing a shared understanding across different disciplines and posts.

Areas for Improvement

- 4.28 The PEI of 2022 identified that senior managers need to further develop quality assurance systems and performance information. The QALG was developed by leaders to promote improvements, and the impact of this process is variable. There has not been recent audit activity to provide assurance about practice and there are limited plans for future audits. **There is an ongoing need to develop systems and performance information, and leaders should strengthen focus on quality assurance and practice improvements.**
- 4.29 Sharing personal information across social care and health IT systems presents challenges and potential delay when relevant and important information connected to well-being and safety is not readily available. Part of the challenge relates to data privacy, consent and compliance with regulations like GDPR. This means it can be difficult for practitioners to compile a timely holistic understanding of an individual's needs. A new social care system will be introduced. **The local authority should consider information sharing protocols, particularly in relation to safeguarding.**

- 4.30 The current case recording system is fragmented, it is not possible to view all records relating to Safeguarding enquiries in one place and difficult to track an enquiry chronologically through the process. In some cases, there was a lack of clarity as to the conclusion of investigations and follow-up requirements. **The local authority must ensure that investigations and outcomes of safeguarding enquiries, including responsibilities for follow-up or review are clearly recorded. The local authority should ensure that the new case management system is compliant with all aspects of Wales Safeguarding Procedures.**
- 4.31 There is a lack of professional curiosity regarding the identification and exploration of risks. Few records document risks and contingency plans. Where risks are recorded, they tend to relate to functional aspects of daily living such as risk of falls. **The local authority must ensure the provision of supplementary training and support to encourage professional curiosity, enabling practitioners to refine their approaches to risk analysis.**
- 4.32 Practitioners shared mixed views about service developments, including the approach of QALG and the changes to IAA. Team Managers and Senior Practitioners value the practice forums and would welcome more frequent sessions as a mechanism for development. Leaders demonstrate an awareness of staff concerns and have implemented a communication strategy and improved training opportunities. **Leaders should continue to focus on engagement with staff, strengthen training offers and coproduce service development plans to ensure there is a shared vision.**

Partnership – We asked:

To what extent is the local authority able to assure itself effective partnerships are in place to commission and deliver fully integrated, high quality, sustainable outcomes for people?

Strengths

- 4.33 87% of staff surveyed agree or strongly agree that partnership agencies work well together and relationships at strategic levels have improved, with senior staff across the authority and health board advising of increased communication and trusting relationships. The Integrated Services Partnership Board is well established.
- 4.34 Integrated Teams (including CMHT and CLDT) within Monmouthshire are a strength for the local authority providing opportunities for seamless partnership working supported by regular Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) discussions.

- 4.35 Relationships with primary health colleagues are generally positive and hospital teams work well together. When health and social care staff work together collaboratively, it leads to more holistic, coordinated, and effective support for individuals. By sharing information, expertise, and resources, professionals can reduce duplication of efforts, and this is evident in Monmouthshire. **This is positive practice.**
- 4.36 Commissioning arrangements are tested, piloted and evaluated with positive learning shared and new ideas encouraged. Leaders have action plans detailing timescales to achieve a consistent approach to commissioning across the local authority. This is a **positive improvement** since the PEI and leaders should continue to drive implementation based on these plans.
- 4.37 There are examples of a flexible, inter-disciplinary person-centred approach to joint working. For example, occupational therapist practitioners often provide an appropriate first point of contact with people who have acute presenting needs, providing a valuable service when people require prompt support.

Areas for Improvement

- 4.38 Staff note continued challenges with hospital discharges due to increased demand and complexity. Whilst there are many examples of positive communications, there are challenges addressing issues with health colleagues in some practice areas, with matters escalating to Senior Leaders unnecessarily. **The local authority should consider proportionate escalation processes for addressing issues between partners in a timely way.**
- 4.39 The Carers Team provides a useful IAA function for carers. However, there is variable practice in acknowledging the carers right to a formal carers assessment and few assessments have coproduced outcomes. The local authority refers to Bridge the Gap for some carers. However, practitioner understanding of services available is variable. The effectiveness of support for carers is complicated further when the carer has care and support needs in their own right. **The local authority should develop a clear model of working which resonates with staff to help the drive for practice to become more strengths based with co-production featuring prominently. The local authority should provide clarity of the offer for carers and consider mechanisms to ensure carers assessments are offered and completed in a timely way.**

5. Next steps

CIW expects the local authority to consider the areas identified for improvement and take appropriate action to address and improve these areas.

CIW will monitor progress through its ongoing performance review activity with the local authority.

Where relevant, we expect the local authority to share the positive practice identified with other local authorities, to disseminate learning and help drive continuous improvement in statutory services throughout Wales.

6. Methodology

Fieldwork

- Most inspection evidence was gathered by reviewing the experiences of 30 people through review and tracking of their social care records. We reviewed 24 social care records and tracked 6.
- Tracking a person's social care record includes having conversations with the person in receipt of social care services, their family or carers, key worker, the key worker's manager, and where appropriate, other professionals involved.
- We engaged, through interviews, with 5 people receiving services and/or their unpaid carer and 58 people responded to our survey.
- We engaged, through interviews and focus groups, with 36 local authority employees, this included social workers and team managers.
- We reviewed supporting documentation sent to CIW for the purpose of the inspection.
- We administered surveys to local authority social services staff, stakeholders and people.

Our Privacy Notice can be found at <https://careinspectorate.wales/how-we-use-your-information>.

7. Welsh Language

The inspection team included a Welsh speaking inspector, enabling CIW to make the active offer of conducting part of the inspection process in Welsh.

The active offer was not required on this occasion. This is because the local authority informed us that people taking part did not wish to contribute to this improvement check in Welsh.

8. Acknowledgements

CIW would like to thank staff, partners and people who gave their time and contributed to this inspection.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lou Bushell-Bauers', with a stylized, cursive script.

Lou Bushell- Bauers
Head of Local Authority Inspection
Care Inspectorate Wales

9. Appendix 1: Glossary

Term	What we mean in our reports and letters
Must	Improvement is deemed necessary in order for the local authority to meet a duty outlined in legislation, regulation or code of practice. The local authority is not currently meeting its statutory duty/duties and must take action.
Should	Improvement will enhance service provision and/or outcomes for people and/or their carer. It does not constitute a failure to meet a legal duty at this time; but without suitable action, there is a risk the local authority may fail to meet its legal duty/duties in future.
Positive practice	Identified areas of strength within the local authority. This relates to practice considered innovative and/or which consistently results in positive outcomes for people receiving statutory services.
Prevention and Early Intervention	A principle of the 2014 Act which aims to ensure that there is access to support to prevent situations from getting worse, and to enhance the maintenance of individual and collective well-being. This principle centres on increasing preventative services within communities to minimise the escalation of critical need.
Voice and Control	A principle of the 2014 Act which aims to put the individual and their needs at the centre of their care and support, and giving them a voice in, and control over, the outcomes that can help them achieve well-being and the things that matter most to them.
Well-being	A principle of the 2014 Act which aims for people to have well-being in every part of their lives. Well-being is more than being healthy. It is about being safe and happy, having choice and getting the right support, being part of a strong community, having friends and relationships that are good for you, and having hobbies, work or learning. It is about supporting people to achieve their own well-being and measuring the success of care and support.
Co-Production	A principle of the 2014 Act which aims for people to be more involved in the design and provision of their care and support. It means organisations and professionals working with them and their family, friends and carers so their care and support is the best it can be.

Multi-Agency working	A principle of the 2014 Act which aims to strengthen joint working between care and support organisations to make sure the right types of support and services are available in local communities to meet people's needs. The summation of the Act states that there is a requirement for co-operation and partnership by public authorities.
What matters	'What Matters' conversations are a way for professionals to understand people's situation, their current well-being, and what can be done to support them. It is an equal conversation and is important to help ensure the voice of the individual or carer is heard and 'what matters' to them

Appendix 2

Quantity Definitions Table

Terminology	Definition
Nearly all	With very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	Over 60%
Half	50%
Around half	Close to 50%
A minority	Below 40%
Few	Below 20%
Very few	Less than 10%

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Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

People Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
P&O Invitation: 9 th July 2025	Domiciliary Care Procurement	Invitation to Performance & Overview Scrutiny to scrutinise the process of domiciliary care procurement.	Jane Rodgers Jenny Jenkins Cllr Chandler	Performance Monitoring
Special Meeting 16 th July 2025	Review of HSG Programme INVITE ALL MEMBERS	Pre-decision Scrutiny of the Recommission of the Housing Social Grant Programme	Ian Bakewell	Pre-decision Scrutiny
22 nd July 2025	Petitions received on Home to School Transport Policy	To consider two petitions received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mathern Community Area - Home to School Transport St Arvans Village Area - Home-to-school transport 	Councillor Louise Brown Councillor Ann Webb	Petition
	County of Sanctuary Strategy	Scrutiny of the county of sanctuary strategy, which promotes inclusion and welcome across the wider community.	Sharran Lloyd Jane Harvey Councillor Sandles	Policy Development
	Strategic Equality Plan 24/25 AMR	To scrutinise the council's progress in delivering the Strategic Equality Objectives for the year 2024-2025.	Pennie Walker Matt Gatehouse Councillor Sandles	Performance Monitoring
	Adult Services Inspection Report	To present the finding of the Adult Services Inspection.	Jane Rodgers	Performance Monitoring

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

People Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
			Councillor Chandler	
30th September 2025				
	Whole Authority Approach to Wellbeing and Prevention	Scrutiny of a strategy to take forward a whole authority approach to wellbeing and prevention.	Jane Rodgers Councillor Ian Chandler	Policy Development
	Community Meals	Scrutiny of an approach to ensure a good quality and sustainable service model for Community Meals.	Jane Rodgers Councillor Ian Chandler	Policy Development
Special Meeting October TBC	Homelessness Update	To scrutinise a progress update.	Ian Bakewell Rebecca Cresswell	Policy Development
	Monmouthshire Public Library Strategy 2025-30	To scrutinise the Monmouthshire Public Library Strategy 2025-30 following public consultation.	Richard Drinkwater	Policy Development
	Attendance and Children Missing Education Policy	To scrutinise the policy ahead of adoption.	Sharon Randall Smith Councillor Wright	Pre-decision Scrutiny
25th November 2025	Disability Confident Pledge	Report outlining actions for the next three years.	Pennie Walker	Policy Development

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

People Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
<i>To be confirmed</i>	Planning and Provision of School Places	<i>To scrutinise data and projections for pupil places and the impact of future housing development.</i>	<i>Will Mclean Matthew Jones</i>	<i>Policy Development</i>
Corporate and Community Plan Items for the Committee's consideration for inclusion into the People Scrutiny Forward Plan:				
Participatory Budgeting Programme				
Race equality action plan for Wales				
LGBTQ+ action plan				
Disability Action Plan				
Gender Equality Action Plan				
Homes for Social Rent and work to bring empty properties back into use				

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

People Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
Review and update shared housing allocations policy				
Rapid Rehousing approach/rapid rehousing action plan delivery				
Care without profit – increase in-county placement options				
Support effective discharge from hospital – integration between health and social care				
Provide a high-quality residential care facility for people with dementia				

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

People Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
Chief Officer for Social Care and Health Annual Report				
Safeguarding Performance Report				
Develop a broader 14-19 education offer through collaboration with partners				

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Action List for People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting:	17th June 2025	
People Scrutiny Committee		
Minute:	Action	Officer / Member
6	<p>Audit Wales Report on Hospital Discharge (Gwent Wide)</p> <p><u>Sharing additional data:</u></p> <p><i>Jenny acknowledged the importance of sharing updated information and agreed to circulate the data being discussed and the presentation.</i></p>	Jenny Jenkins
7	<p>Play Sufficiency Assessment</p> <p><u>Play in Rural areas:</u></p> <p><i>Becky offered to set up a meeting with local councillors and the Community Council to discuss potential opportunities.</i></p> <p><u>How 'play value' is calculated/scrutinised/checked for consistency?</u></p> <p><i>Mike offered to circulate the assessment form used to evaluate play value scores.</i></p>	Becky Hall and Mike Moran
8	<p>People Scrutiny Forward Work Programme</p> <p>The Committee agreed to split the July items by holding a Special meeting – 16th July was agreed in addition to 22nd.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Manager would add the report 'County of Sanctuary' to the 22nd July meeting.</p>	Hazel Ilett

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Committee / Decision Maker	Meeting date / Decision due	Report Title	Cabinet member	Purpose	Author	Date item added to the planner
Cabinet	Deferred	Pavement Café Policy	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the pavement café policy as the basis for making decisions on applications for licences	Carl Touhig	4-Oct-22
Cabinet	11-Feb-26	2025/26 Revenue & Capital Monitoring Update 3	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	11-Feb-26	2026/27 WCF/Mon Farm treasury strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	21-Jan-26	2026/27 Draft Revenue & Capital budget proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	10-Dec-25	2025/26 Revenue & Capital Monitoring Update 2	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	19-Nov-25	Destination Management Plan	Sara Burch & Paul Griffiths		Collette Bosley	17-Apr-25
Council	23-Oct-25	RLDP for Adoption	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Rachel Lewis	17-Apr-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	Review of Monmouth Cluster and proposed statutory consultation	Laura Wright - Education		Matt Jones	3-Mar-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	2025/26 Revenue Monitoring Update 1	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12/76/25
cabinet	15-Oct-25	Ensuring a good quality and sustainable service model for Community Meals	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Jane Rogers	19-Jun-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	A strategy to take forward a whole authority approach to wellbeing and prevention	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Jane Rogers	19-Jun-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	Cultural Strategy	Sara Burch		Tracey Thomas	20-May-25
Council	18-Sep-25	Self-assessment 2024/25		To seek Council approval of the self-assessment report 2024/25 in line with requirements outlined in the Local Government and Elections (Wales)	richard Jones	10-Jun-25
Cabinet	17-Sep-25	Real Living Wage Employer Accreditation	ben Callard - Resources	Further to Cabinet's decision on Wednesday 6th November 2024, and an evaluation of the authority's supply chain, to bring forward a further report detailing the plan to pay the real living wage rate to employees of third parties contracted	Philippa Green	13-Jun-25
Cabinet	17-Sep-25	County of Sanctuary Strategy	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To approve a county of sanctuary strategy which establishes clear principles which will run through all council services and which promotes inclusion	Sharran Lloyd and Jane Harvey	27-May-25

Cabinet	17-Sep-25	Review of Housing Support Grant Programme.	Sara Burch		Ian Bakewell	23-May-25
ICMD	23-Jul-25	Lloyds tour of Britain Stage 5 Pontypool to Tumble	Angela Sandles - Engagement		Nick John	2-Jul-25
ICMD	23-Jul-25	Welsh Church Fund Working Group	Ben Callard - Resources		Dave Jarrett	2-Jul-25
Council	17-Jul-25	Chepstow Integrated Transport LUF project			Deb Hill Howells	24-Jun-25
Council	17-Jul-25	Strategic Director's Report, Children, Learning, Skills and the Economy'	Laura Wright - Education		Will Mclean	18-Jun-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	2024/25 Revenue & Capital monitoring Outturn (incl early update on 2025/26)	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	2026/27 Revenue & Capital MTFP update and process	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	Shire Hall Delivery Stage - Financial Approval	Ben Callard - Resources		Tracey Thomas	25-Mar-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	ADD AS FIRST ITEM Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023: Monmouthshire County Council's Annual Report	Ben Callard - Resources	To seek approval of the Social Partnership Duty Report 2025, setting out how the Council will build on existing practice, and work collaboratively with trade unions, to ensure compliance with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act	Philippa Green	6-Jun-25
Cabinet	16-Jul-25	Play Sufficiency Update	Angela Sandles - Engagement		Nick John	28-Mar-25
Council	26-Jun-25	Strategic OfficerLeadership and Organisation Structure changes	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy		Paul Matthews	5-Jun-25
Council	26-Jun-25	Appointments to Outside Bodies	Angela Sandles - Engagement		John Pearson	23-May-25
Council	26-Jun-25	Separation of Licensing Functions	Angela Sandles - Engagement		Linda O Gorman	28-May-25

Council	26-Jun-25	Licensing Act Policy 2025	Angela Sandles - Engagement	Policy has to be approved by Full Council and it needs to be in place by 1 st July 2025	Linda O Gorman	10-Jan-25
Cabinet	25-Jun-25	Strategic Risk Assessment	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To provide Cabinet with an overview of the current strategic risks facing the authority.	richard Jones	10-Jun-25
Cabinet	25-Jun-25	Nature Recovery Action Plan & Green Infrastructure Strategy	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Collette Bosley	17-Apr-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Placemaking Grant 25/26 & 26/27	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Craig O Connor	29-Apr-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Marches Forward Partnership	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy		Peter Davies / Cath Fallon	1-Apr-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Active Gwent Sports Partnership	Angela Sandles - Engagement	For Monmouthshire County Council to formally enter into the Active Gwent sport partnership.	Nick John	28-Mar-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Y Prentis Update	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Hannah Jones	26-Feb-25
Cabinet	21-May-25	Digital, Data and Technology Collaboration	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To develop proposals to build on existing collaborative arrangements in place for the provision of technology services through the Shared Resource Service. Expanding on these to include digital and data services will generate	Peter Davies & Matt Gatehouse & Sian Hayward	14-Mar-25
Council	15-May-25	SAC Membership Report	Martyn Groucutt - Education	To inform Council of SAC recommendations to appoint members of SAC	Sharon Randall-Smith	16-Apr-25
Council	10-Apr-25	Constitution Review	Angela Sandles - Engagement		James Williams	25-Mar-25

Council	10-Apr-25	Senior Pay Review	Ben Callard - Resources		Julie Anthony	3-Mar-25
ICMD	09-Apr-25	PSPO Lane Closure to prevent fly tipping & off roading	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Mark Cleaver	13-Mar-25
ICMD	09-Apr-25	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 4	Ben Callard - Resources			
Cabinet	02-Apr-25	Marches Forward Partnership	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy		Peter Davies - Lead (Cath Fallon)	3-Mar-25
Cabinet	02-Apr-25	Reponse to Boundary Commission Electoral Review Consultation	Angela Sandles - Engagement		John Pearson	12-Feb-25
ICMD	26-Mar-25	Proposal to increase the fee payments to Monmouthshire Foster Carers	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Charlotte Drury	4-Feb-25
ICMD	12-Mar-25	Highway Traffic Regulation Amendment Order No 16	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment			
Council	06-Mar-25	Appointment of Chief Officer - Head of Transport - Exempt info	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Deb Hill Howells	21-Jan-25
Council	06-Mar-25	Publication of the Councils Pay Policy	Ben Callard - Resources	To approve the publication of Monmouthshire County Council's Pay Policy, in compliance with the Localism Act.	Matt Gatehouse / Pip Green	17-Jan-25

Council	06-Mar-25	Contract Procedure Rules	Ben Callard - Resources		Scott James	9-Jan-25
Council	06-Mar-25	2025/26 Final Budget sign off including CT resolution	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
Council	06-Mar-25	2025/26 Capital Strategy & Treasury Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
Cabinet	05-Mar-25	Approval of a Discretionary Policy for Council Tax Premiums	Ben Callard - Resources		Ruth Donovan	27-Jan-25
Cabinet	05-Mar-25	2025/26 Final Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	05-Mar-25	2025/26 WCF/Mon Farm Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
ICMD	26-Feb-25	County of Sanctuary: Homes for Ukraine	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To confirm future support arrangements for Ukrainian's living in Monmouthshire as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme following changes to the national arrangement for both funding & visas	Richard Drinkwater/Matt Gatehouse	7-Feb-25
ICMD	26-Feb-25	Housing Allocations Policy				
Cabinet	19-Feb-25	2024/25 Revenue and Capital Monitoring Month 9	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	19-Feb-25	UK Shared Prosperity Fund post March 2025 – financial implications and impact	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Hannah Jones	10-Jul-24

ICMD	29-Jan-25	2025/26 Community Council and Police Precepts final	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	17-Dec-24
Council	23-Jan-25	Council Diary 2025/26	Angela Sandles - Engagement		John Pearson	
Council	23-Jan-25	GWENT REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD (RPB) AREA PLAN AND RPB ANNUAL REPORT 23/24	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Natasha Harris (Torfaen)	
Council	23-Jan-25	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24
Cabinet	22-Jan-25	Business case for the purchase of a property in Abergavenny to develop supported accommodation for care experienced young people	Ben Callard - Resources		Jane Rogers	7-Jan-25
Cabinet	22-Jan-25	2025/26 Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-24
Cabinet	22-Jan-25	Education Middle Tier	Martyn Groucutt - Education		Will McLean	20-Nov-24
ICMD	15-Jan-25	Decision to transfer Dixton Archive from Monmouth Museum to Herefordshire Record Office			Rachael Rogers	9-Dec-24
ICMD	15-Jan-25	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 3	Ben Callard - Resources		Dave Jarrett	13-Jun-24
ICMD	18-Dec-24	2025/26 Community Council and Police Precepts draft	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-24

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Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Tuesday, 17th June, 2025 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Jackie Strong, (Chair)
County Councillor Sue Riley, (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: Jan Butler,
Christopher Edwards, Simon Howarth,
Penny Jones, Maureen Powell, Jill Bond
substituting for Martyn Groucutt and Peter Strong
substituting for Maria Stevens

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Rebecca Hall, Play Development Lead
Jenny Jenkins, Head of Adult Services
Nick John, Business Manager
Mike Moran, Community Infrastructure Coordinator
Leanne Watkins, Integrated Service Manager
Bethan Hopkins

APOLOGIES: County Councillors Maria Stevens and Martyn Groucutt

1. Election of Chair.

Councillor Strong was nominated by Councillor Powell, seconded by Councillor Bond. There were no other nominations. Councillor Strong was elected.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair.

Councillor Riley was nominated by Councillor Bond, seconded by Councillor Edwards. There were no other nominations. Councillor Riley was appointed.

3. Apologies for Absence.

Councillor Groucutt offered his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Bond. Apologies were also received from Councillor Stevens, who was being substituted by Councillor Peter Strong.

4. Declarations of Interest.

Councillor Jones declared a non-prejudicial interest in Item 6 as an independent member of Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

Councillor Butler and Councillor Bond declared non-prejudicial interests in Item 6 as they sit on Llais Cymru.

5. Public Open Forum.

None present.

6. Audit Wales Report on Hospital Discharge (Gwent Wide) - Audit Wales to present its findings of the inspection report on hospital discharges in Gwent.

Bethan Hopkins and Leanne Watkins introduced the report and presented their key findings of the audit. Jenny Jenkins delivered a presentation and together, they answered the members' questions:

Key Questions from Members:

- Councillor Bond expressed frustration that the information she reviewed was outdated and that the updated information presented during the meeting was not shared beforehand, limiting her ability to scrutinise effectively. She requested that updated information be shared upfront in future meetings to allow for proper scrutiny.

Jenny acknowledged the importance of sharing updated information and agreed to circulate the data. She emphasised that the main theme was the improvement in the length of stay despite the constant number of delays. Action: Jenny Jenkins.

- Councillor Bond asked how the risk appetite has changed and whether there are still issues with resources despite the improvements made.

Bethan explained that risk aversion was a common theme in acute settings, with clinicians often trying to get patients to a higher standard before discharge. Leanne added that communication and education are key to reducing risk aversion.

Jenny confirmed that there are ongoing issues with resources and capacity, impacting performance, and that prioritization and allocation of cases are used to manage these challenges.

- Councillor Edwards asked if any data is kept on discharged patients in the weeks after leaving hospital and if this impacts their need to return for medical treatment.

Leanne explained that data on readmissions is kept by secondary care, and if a patient returns, they review what went wrong and how to fix it.

- Councillor Edwards enquired whether the discharge period starts again if a patient moves to another hospital within the Aneurin Bevan structure.

Jenny clarified that the length of stay does not start again when a patient moves; it is continuous regardless of hospital moves.

- Councillor Edwards asked about the unplanned absence rates in exhibit 5 and why no data has been available since June 2023.

Jenny mentioned that they are working to minimize unplanned absences with HR support and regular reports to managers. Bethan added that the lack of data since June 2023 is due to Welsh government not publishing it.

- Councillor Edwards questioned why Monmouthshire's figure for social care assessments was so high and if best practices from Caerphilly were shared.

Jenny noted that Monmouthshire has done a lot of work to reduce social care assessment figures and has worked with Caerphilly to embed best practices, particularly in developing their reablement service.

- Councillor Riley acknowledged the limitations of the data validation approach and expressed concern about people escaping the data.

Jenny acknowledged the challenges of the data validation approach and the need to manage it effectively.

- Councillor Riley asked how the need for family agreement sits or conflicts with people deemed to have capacity, noting the absence of best interest assessments can be daunting for those with lasting power of attorney (LPA).

Jenny explained that family dynamics and individual circumstances require management, and families often need time to get their heads around decisions. Leanne supported this by noting the challenges faced on the ward.

- Councillor Riley questioned whether self-funding leads to smoother transitions for patients.

Jenny clarified that self-funding does not necessarily facilitate quicker transfers, as it involves finding appropriate placements and negotiating with care homes.

- Councillor Riley enquired if care workers are now working their full contracted hours, as there were concerns about this not recovering since COVID.

Jenny confirmed that care workers in work are working their full contracted hours.

- Councillor Butler asked for clarification on acronyms. She expressed concern about the need for multiple computer systems and asked if there is any work being done to standardize them, and if Monmouthshire has a role in this.

Leanne explained the challenges of using multiple computer systems and mentioned that it has been flagged as a concern. Jenny added that previous attempts to integrate systems faced technical and legal issues, and Monmouthshire is working regionally to develop standardization with a new system called Mosaic. Bethan Hopkins commented on the challenges of integrating IT systems for health and social care, noting that this is a national issue, not just specific to the region. She emphasised the need for a sophisticated, integrated IT system that allows health and social care to share information seamlessly. Bethan acknowledged the practical challenges faced by staff, such as using multiple screens and logins, and highlighted the importance of recognising these barriers in the report.

- Councillor Butler asked for clarification on the significance of the cost of domiciliary care being capped at £100.

Jenny Jenkins explained that the maximum charge for domiciliary care is £100 per week following the completion of a financial assessment. This simplifies the financial assessment process for domiciliary care, as it does not require consideration of capital assets, unlike the more complex financial assessments needed for residential placements.

- Councillor Howarth questioned why it took nine months for the audit report to be scrutinised.

Bethan explained that the delay in scrutinising the report was due to the extensive coordination required for a regional report, which had to go through the Regional Partnership Board structures.

- Councillor Howarth enquired about the health boards' operations from Friday to Monday and how this impacts discharges.

Bethan noted that the issue of weekend discharges is a national challenge, with operational patterns affecting the discharge process.

- Councillor Howarth asked about the effectiveness of the £15 million grant from the Welsh Government intended to improve discharge operations.
- *Bethan and Jenny clarified that the £15 million grant was intended to address operational challenges, but specific details were not provided.*

- Councillor Howarth expressed a desire to review the 2024-2025 data in detail rather than being presented with it during the meeting.
- *Jenny acknowledged the desire to review the 2024-2025 data in detail and noted that the average number of delays remains constant, but the length of stay has improved. Bethan clarified that the review undertaken was part of the Welsh Government's six goals program, specifically focusing on goals five and six, which pertain to discharge planning and urgent care flow. She noted that prevention and early intervention, covered under goals one and two, were not included in this particular review. Bethan mentioned that these areas would be addressed in separate pieces of work.*
- Councillor Howarth asked if Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) handles discharges when there are complications with care plans and funding.

Jenny and Leanne discussed the handling of complex care discharges, noting that continuing healthcare assessments are being managed within primary care to improve the process.

- In highlighted the increasing budget demands for health and social care due to the aging population in Monmouthshire, Councillor Howarth questioned the impact of critical care units and patient transfers on the connectivity and coordination of care.

Jenny highlighted the strategic focus on early intervention and prevention to address the increasing demands due to the aging population.

Leanne addressed the impact of critical care units and patient transfers, acknowledging the challenges and the need for better coordination.

- **Councillor** Powell asked if providing better pay and facilities for local carers would help in recruiting more community carers.

Jenny acknowledged that while better pay might encourage more people to join the workforce, Monmouthshire is already paying some of the highest rates for domiciliary care. She also emphasised the importance of providing good training and offering long-term contracts to domiciliary care agencies to ensure workforce stability and investment.

Chair's Summary:

The Chair thanked Bethan from Audit Wales for her time in attending to present and answer questions and thanked officers for their hard work in supporting staff to provide the best quality of care for our residents.

7. Play Sufficiency Assessment Report - To conduct pre-decision scrutiny of the report.

Rebecca Hall introduced the report and delivered a presentation before answering questions, together with Mike Moran:

Key Questions for Members:

- Councillor Butler asked if there could be some organised play days in the park during the summer holidays, as currently, there is plenty of unorganised play but no organised activities.

Becky responded that while they are aware of the need for more play provisions in rural areas, the ability to offer outreach play opportunities is dependent on funding and staffing levels. She offered to set up a meeting with local councillors and the Community Council to discuss potential opportunities.

- Councillor Howarth expressed concern about the lack of facilities for children to play sports during the winter in rural areas, specifically mentioning the need for 3G or 4G playing areas. He emphasised the importance of listening to children about what they want for play facilities, rather than deciding for them. He highlighted the success of the play facilities in Gilwern, noting that it was based on what the children wanted, and stressed the importance of consulting directly with children in other areas. He mentioned the need for long-term vision and provision behind successful play schemes to ensure sustainability.

Becky agreed with Councillor Howarth's emphasis on children's voices being central to planning play provisions. She mentioned that during their consultations, a high percentage of children expressed a preference for playing outside. She assured that children's voices are considered in planning supervised play provisions and open spaces.

- Councillor Riley asked if the consultation with children for the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) had been completed or if it was ongoing through the summer. She commented on the Welsh Government's parental questionnaire, noting that some questions were poorly worded and emphasised the need for age-appropriate consultations with children.

Becky clarified that the consultation for the PSA had been completed, as it was necessary to complete the PSA this year. However, she mentioned that there would be further consultation with children over the summer for planning spaces and parks.

Becky acknowledged the importance of age-appropriate consultations and assured that children's voices are central to planning play provisions.

- Councillor Edwards expressed concern about the accessibility of summer play provisions for children in rural wards, noting that parents have to travel to take their children to these schemes. He mentioned the improvements made by the Community Nature Spaces project in his ward but noted that the play equipment in the area was still lacking. He saw this as a missed opportunity to complete the scheme and asked about funding for improving or renovating these play areas.

Becky acknowledged the concern about rural play provisions and mentioned that they are continuously monitored. She noted that funding and workforce availability are key factors in determining the extent of outreach and play opportunities provided.

Mike Moran explained that the play value assessments looked at the range of activities available rather than the quality of the equipment. He mentioned that funding for play area improvements typically comes from section 106 funding, occasional Welsh Government capital funding, and working with local groups. He noted that the play areas in Councillor Edwards's ward, such as the Danes and Bayfield, are still considered play areas and have been enhanced with Community Nature Spaces.

Mike also mentioned the importance of prioritising larger play areas (neeps and leaps) to offer better play value and suggested that smaller play areas with low play value might be converted into something different in the future. He acknowledged the need to cater to older children (10-12 years old) and mentioned that some new play areas are designed to accommodate this age group.

Mike confirmed that the play area in the centre of Councillor Edwards's ward is still considered both a community nature space and a children's play area.

- The Chair, Councillor Jackie Strong, asked several questions on behalf of Councillor Bond. She asked what the criteria is for the tables in the PSA report? She highlighted that some 'ambers' have actions, whilst some don't. Could 'not applicable' be relevant? She noted that some ambers don't relate or link to the action list (on page 188). She commented that some gaps are missed in the actions list.

Becky explained that the RAG rating (Red, Amber, Green) is based on whether the criteria are fully met (green), have areas for improvement (amber), or need significant improvement (red). She noted that some ambers might not have actions if they are not achievable within the three-year timeframe. Non-applicable (n/a)

was used for new criteria introduced this year that couldn't be compared to previous assessments.

- Councillor Strong challenged the assessment of Longfellow decaying play area. She asked whether if the park couldn't secure this funding, where would the only park in West End, Caldicot, get funding? She commented that it would be unlikely to secure funding through placemaking, as it's not in scope and there isn't Section 106 due to no building. Given there is deprivation, she asked when this area would receive help?

Becky mentioned that the play areas would be reassessed, and future plans would be made based on these assessments.

Mike acknowledged that Longfellow Road play area needs upgrading and explained that funding typically comes from section 106, Welsh Government grants, or working with local groups. He mentioned that the location of Longfellow Road play area might also be a factor to consider for its improvement.

- Councillor Strong asked how play value is calculated and scrutinised/checked for consistency?

Mike offered to circulate the assessment form used to evaluate play value scores and mentioned that they plan to reassess play areas to get updated assessments.

- The Chair, Councillor Jackie Strong asked a question on behalf of Councillor Penny Jones. She asked whether LAPs (Local Areas for Play) considered to be as important as NEAPs (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play) as they provide play areas for those in less populated areas such as villages, thus providing social interaction for children and families?

Mike explained that LAPs on their own do not provide much play value for many villages. He suggested that for larger villages, the aim should be to have at least one NEAP, which offers more play value for a wider range of children. He acknowledged the mixed bag of play area provisions across the county and mentioned that a piece of work could be done to bring focus to this issue.

- Councillor Peter Strong mentioned the idea of taking out small play areas with virtually no play value, which he referred to as "106 play areas." He suggested that a more flexible approach might be appropriate, considering the changing demographics of areas.

Mike explained that the play value assessment did not necessarily look at the quality of equipment but rather the range of activities children could participate in.

He mentioned that the majority of play areas were ranked as poor initially, but improvements have been made. He suggested that for larger villages, the aim should be to have at least one NEAP.

Becky agreed with the importance of children's voices in planning play provisions and mentioned that children's preferences for playing outside were considered in the PSA. She emphasized that children's voices are central to planning supervised play provisions and open spaces.

- Councillor Peter Strong stressed the importance of self-help groups and community councils in maintaining play areas, citing an example from his ward where parents approached the council to clean up and paint a play area, and MCC provided support.

Becky acknowledged the importance of community engagement and offered to set up a meeting with local councillors and community councils to discuss play provisions.

- Councillor Peter Strong noted the importance of community councils in responding to changing situations and mentioned that they can often find small pots of money to add to play area improvements. He pointed out a blank space under Community Focused Schools in the PSA report and suggested that the idea of Community Focused Schools might be something for scrutiny committees to pick up at a later stage.

Mike acknowledged the importance of community councils and self-help groups in maintaining play areas and mentioned that MCC often finds small pots of money to add to play area improvements.

Becky confirmed that there is ongoing work with the Community Focused Schools officer, Lisa Grant, who is a big advocate for play. She mentioned that Lisa Grant sits on the play strategy group and that there is good communication between them. Becky offered to double-check the blank space in the report and provide more information.

- Councillor Jackie Strong commented on the importance of considering the needs and aspirations of girls. She highlighted that girls use parks and open spaces differently than boys, especially during adolescence, and may not access these spaces due to factors like fear of crime. She emphasised the need to ensure that girls' voices are heard and their needs are met, suggesting that features like curved benches for socialising could be beneficial. She also mentioned the importance of organised play and social clubs for young girls and women, noting their impact on well-being in later years.

- Councillor Howarth raised his concern about the timing and effectiveness of capital grants for play areas. He questioned how much time is given to communities to decide on their needs and the support they receive. He emphasised the importance of conducting a full survey of everyone in the community before deciding to remove a play area. He expressed unease about the proposals and stressed the need to engage with children of all age groups to ensure their needs are met. He also mentioned that areas should not be left wild and overgrown if play areas are removed.
- Councillor Jackie Strong asked for clarification on the blank space under Community Focused Schools on page 65 of the report. She noted that there was a brief comment later, but nothing in the main box. She suggested that the whole idea of Community Focused Schools might be something that one of the scrutiny committees should pick up at a later stage in its forward work programme.

Mike responded by acknowledging the importance of Community Focused Schools and mentioned that there is ongoing work and good communication between the play team and the Community Focused Schools officer, Lisa Grant. He noted that Lisa is a strong advocate for play and that there are joint efforts to develop play opportunities in schools. Mike also mentioned that he would double-check the report to ensure nothing was missed.

Chair's Summary:

The Chair thanked the officers for their hard work and concluded that the Committee endorsed the report.

8. People Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

The Committee agreed to split the July items by holding a Special meeting – 16th July was agreed in addition to 22nd. The Scrutiny Manager raised the report 'County of Sanctuary' which was detailed in the Cabinet and Council Forward Planner and the Committee agreed that they would like to scrutinise it in advance of Cabinet's consideration of the report.

9. Council and Cabinet Work Planner.

Councillor Bond's request about an additional column to highlight the implications for service users to help scrutiny in considering the priority of adding it to any future work programme was noted.

Members agreed to add County of Sanctuary to the Special on 22nd July 2025.

10. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meetings held on 30th April 2025 were accepted as true and accurate records of the meeting held. Councillor Strong requested an addition to her comments made therein "in light of the Supreme Court judgement".

11. Next Meeting: Tuesday 22nd July 2025 at 10.00am.

16th July 2025 at 10am.

The meeting ended at **1.20 pm**

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