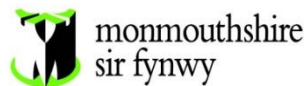


Public Document Pack



County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Monday, 15 September 2025

Notice of meeting

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

**Tuesday, 23rd September, 2025 at 10.00 am,
The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk**

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. 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	
4.	Revenue Monitoring Update 1 - To scrutinise the revenue position for services falling within the committee's remit.	1 - 42
5.	Chief Officer for Social Care AMR - To scrutinise the progress and strategic direction for the service area.	43 - 120
6.	Safeguarding Annual Report - To scrutinise the performance of safeguarding arrangements.	121 - 160
7.	Council and Cabinet Work Plan.	161 - 168
8.	Performance and Overview Scrutiny Work Programme and Action List.	169 - 176
9.	To confirm the minutes of the previous meetings:	
9.1.	Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee - 9th July 2025 (Special Meeting).	177 - 184
9.2.	Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee - 15th July 2025 (Ordinary Meeting).	185 - 194
10.	Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 18th November 2025 at 10.00am.	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillor Jill Bond, West End;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Rachel Buckler, Devauden;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor John Crook, Magor East with Undy;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Steven Garratt, Overmonnow;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Meirion Howells, Llanbadoc & Usk;, Independent
County Councillor Alistair Neill, Gobion Fawr;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Martin Newell, Town;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Paul Pavia, Mount Pleasant;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Peter Strong, Rogiet;, 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

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Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

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.

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.

Role of the Pre-meeting

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?
- Agree the order of questioning and which Members will lead
 - Agree questions for officers and questions for the Cabinet Member

Questions for the Meeting

Scrutinising Performance

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?

Scrutinising Policy

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?

	<p>8. Have all relevant sustainable development, equalities and safeguarding implications</p> <p>9. been taken into consideration? For example, what are the procedures that need to be in place to protect children?</p> <p>10.</p> <p>11. How much will this cost to implement and what funding source has been identified?</p> <p>12.</p> <p>13. How will performance of the policy be measured and the impact evaluated</p>
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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:	2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET – FINANCIAL UPDATE
MEETING:	PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	23rd September 2025
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with an update of the progress against the Council's revenue budget for the 2025/26 financial year.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- i. That the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the revenue budget forecast for the financial year;
- ii. That the Committee as part of their role assesses whether effective budget monitoring is in place; the extent to which budgets are spent within the agreed budget and policy framework, including the reasonableness of the explanation for variances and; consider the achievement of progress in meeting budget savings targets.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS (to Cabinet):

- 3.1 That Cabinet note the forecast revenue budget overspend of £533,000, representing a forecast 0.2% variance against the approved budget for the year.
- 3.2 That Cabinet note the budgetary risks that are inbuilt into this forecast, namely;
- The volatility of demand for high-cost services, particularly in Adults & Children's Social Care;
 - Higher inflation levels currently being experienced than originally budgeted for;
 - The risk of further non-delivery of the £10.7m of budgeted savings targets, with services currently forecasting 92.1% delivery;

- The trend of reducing debt recovery, particularly within Council tax and Social Care where there has been a slowing down in collection rates, and where there are increasing numbers of discounts and exemptions being awarded;
- The potential impact upon the Council's financial resilience from the forecast increase in the cumulative schools reserves deficit that is being carried on the Council's balance sheet.

- 3.3 Cabinet notes that confirmation has been received for funding related to the increased cost of Employers' National Insurance Contributions, resulting in a funding shortfall of £811k or 24% compared to the actual cost increases. The Council will use its contingency budget of £850k to address this shortfall, as reflected within this forecast.
- 3.4 That Cabinet note the forecast increase in the deficit on cumulative schools reserves as outlined in **Appendix 4** of this report of £2,835,000. This would result in school balances ending the financial year in a deficit of £6,926,000, with eighteen of thirty-five schools forecast to be in a deficit balance.
- 3.5 That Cabinet note that schools which are budgeting to end the 2025/26 financial year in a deficit balance are required to bring forward recovery plans by October half term to ensure that the proposed actions to address their budget shortfalls are instigated.

KEY ISSUES:

4.1 Context

- 4.2 The 2025/26 budget round reflected the sustained period of increased demand, complexity, and costs within School ALN provision, and Adults and Children's social care, which were addressed through significant base budget increases.
- 4.3 The budget set by Council in March also needed to consider other headwinds which continue to impact the Councils service operating environment:
- The wider socio-economic landscape and cost of living challenges that continue to have an impact on our communities, with a consequential increase in demand for Council services, and impact upon income generating services
 - The wider public sector challenges which impact upon Council services, notably within Health where efforts to improve patient pathways impact upon the level and complexity of demand for Social care
 - Headline inflation rates remain above UK Government targets, with some discrete areas of Council services continuing to experience cost pressures on supplies and services alongside supply chain issues

- In continuing efforts to combat inflation, interest rates have remained higher for longer and above previous UK Government forecasts

4.4 The above results in a growing need for supportive Council services, pressure on income generating services, increased risks around debt recovery, and a higher-cost operating environment.

4.5 Revenue budget forecast

4.6 Full Council approved a revenue expenditure budget of £236,778,000 for the 2025/26 financial year. The latest forecast against this budget at a directorate level is shown below:

Table 1: Revenue budget forecast by directorate

Directorate	Budget £000's	Forecast £000's	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) £000's	% Variance to budget
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	77,982	79,056	1,074	1.4%
Learning, Skills & Economy	72,635	72,675	40	0.1%
Infrastructure	21,462	21,402	(61)	-0.3%
Place & Community Wellbeing	7,632	7,773	141	1.8%
People, Performance & Partnerships	4,655	4,754	99	2.1%
Legal & Governance	3,089	3,153	64	2.1%
Resources	9,216	9,121	(95)	-1.0%
Corporate & Treasury management	40,106	40,564	458	1.1%
Expenditure to be financed	236,778	238,497	1,719	0.7%
Financing	(236,778)	(237,964)	(1,186)	-0.5%
Total	0	533	533	0.2%

4.7 Specific cost pressures remain within Social Care despite significant investment as part of the base budget for 2025/26. In Adult services this is driven by the rising demand for high-cost care packages, particularly in placements. While reablement efforts are expanding, they

are not yet sufficient to offset the overall need for care. Service and practice changes are beginning to mitigate costs, but further progress is needed.

- 4.8 In children's services, although placement costs remain stable, financial strain has emerged due to the need to sustain family support following the withdrawal of certain Welsh Government grants. Maintaining this support is crucial to prevent increased placement costs and to ensure better outcomes for children.
- 4.9 Both Adults and Children's services are vulnerable to fluctuations in demand, especially as winter approaches. In housing and homelessness, the opening of Severn View offers some immediate cost mitigation, but pressures within private leasing through increased costs and rental debt arrears present ongoing financial challenges that require further mitigation.
- 4.10 Fleet Maintenance is forecasting a £171k overspend, driven by increased fuel costs, hire charges, and EV charger inspection and maintenance. The service is actively monitoring vehicle utilisation to reduce this overspend by year-end.
- 4.11 Passenger transport faces a net overspend of £392k, driven by a £265k shortfall in School transport against the catchment area savings planned for 2025/26. Changes in pupil numbers and route safety have limited the ability to fully realise expected savings. Internal operations are also under strain due to reduced income from contract changes and delays in adjusting vehicle and staffing costs. While grant income has helped offset some of the pressure, further mitigation options are being explored, with more accurate figures expected once September pupil numbers and contracts are confirmed.
- 4.12 Funding for the increased cost of Employers' National Insurance Contributions was not included within the final Welsh Government grant settlement. For the purposes of budget setting, it was assumed that the additional £3.32m pressure relating to the increase in 'direct' employers' national insurance contributions would be fully funded. Confirmation was received in July that Monmouthshire will receive £2.51m of funding, a shortfall of £811k or 24%. The Council set aside a contingency budget of £850k as part of budget setting that will need to be drawn upon to address this shortfall and this is reflected within forecasts. Whilst it has been confirmed that the funding will transfer into the Welsh Government grant base for 2026/27, the recurrent cost pressure will also need to be considered as part of the budget process for 2026/27.
- 4.13 The NJC pay award for 2025/26 was agreed in July at 3.2% which is marginally above the budgeted assumption of 3.1%. The resultant additional cost pressure of £0.1m will need to be met from within existing service budgets, with an increase in base budget pressure considered for 2026/27.

- 4.14 The NJC have agreed that from 1 April 2026, Spinal Column Point (SCP) 2 will be permanently deleted from the NJC pay spine. Whilst this is not expected to result in an immediate cost pressure, it may be necessary to review existing pay band structures given the erosion in the pay differential between bands.
- 4.15 Welsh Government have confirmed a 4% pay award will be implemented for teaching staff from September 2025. Whilst this increase is above the Councils budget assumption of 3.1% increase, Welsh Government have confirmed they will continue with their recent commitment of providing additional grant funding in-year to meet the increased costs falling to local government. As a result, no budget cost pressure is anticipated.
- 4.16 Underspends within Waste and Decarbonisation, alongside ongoing staff vacancies across some services, and out-performance of Council tax income targets have all helped mitigate the overspends reported.
- 4.17 **Appendix 1** to this report outlines the summary reasons for the service budget variances, with a more detailed explanation outlined in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.18 **Budgeted service savings**
- 4.19 As part of the approved revenue budget, services were required to bring forward and deliver savings totalling £10,701,000. The current forecast indicates a projected shortfall of £847,000 (7.9%) in meeting this target.
- 4.20 Full details of progress against individual savings targets can be found at **Appendix 3** to this report, however the main variances are as follows:

Table 2: Progress against budgeted savings targets

Savings proposals by Directorate	Budgeted Saving	Current Forecast	Variance	Percentage met	Comment
	£000	£000	£000	%	
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	(2,950)	(2,589)	361	87.8%	£250k Adult's services - Too early in the year to ascertain if the full £250k of savings will be delivered from practice change, given the complexity and level of demand for care presenting.

					£111k Homelessness – Delay in Severn view opening that impacts on 4 months of savings being generated.
Learning, Skills and Economy	(745)	(745)	0	100%	No variance forecast
Infrastructure	(5,679)	(5,254)	425	92.5%	£265k Passenger Transport routes - Pupil figures have changed, and some routes are unsafe, requiring continued transport. £160k Waste funding – the final extended producer responsibility funding has been confirmed as slightly lower than anticipated.
Place & Community Wellbeing	(606)	(606)	0	100%	No variance forecast
People, Performance and Partnerships	(165)	(104)	61	63.0%	Savings anticipated from further structure changes are not deemed achievable following further review. Savings in subscriptions has not been achieved.
Legal & Governance	(1)	(1)	0	100%	No variance forecast
Resources	(555)	(555)	0	100%	No variance forecast
Totals	(10,701)	(9,854)	847	92.1%	

4.21 Schools' budgets and reserves

4.22 The overall level of school reserves are currently forecast to move further into deficit by £2,835,000 by the end of the 2025/26 financial year, to a collective deficit balance of £6,926,000. This forecast draw is £120,000 above the budgets schools have set for the year.

School reserve balances at 31 st March (Surplus) / Deficit	2022 £000	2023 £000	2024 £000	2025 £000	2026 (Forecast) £000
Comprehensive schools	(2,253)	(1,259)	976	1,366	1,973
Middle schools	0	0	329	1,386	1,917

Primary schools	(4,622)	(3,027)	(1,142)	(306)	265
Special schools	(79)	31	742	1,645	2,771
Total	(6,955)	(4,255)	905	4,091	6,926

4.23 The legacy impact of the pandemic continues within the school environment, particularly in respect of attendance, behaviours and increased additional learning needs. This has required increased staff and specialist resources to tackle the issues presenting and increased overall costs of provision. Higher than budgeted pay awards for both teaching and non-teaching staff have also impacted upon budgets in recent years.

4.24 All schools that forecast a deficit balance at a financial year-end are required to bring forward budget recovery plans. Close monitoring and support continues to be given to these schools, as well as those at risk of entering a deficit position over the medium term, to ensure that the proposed actions to address medium term budget challenges are instigated.

4.25 Financial implications and future focus

4.26 The budget planning framework for 2025/26 reaffirmed the need to progress the Council on a path towards financial sustainability including conserving an appropriate and prudent level of financial resilience, of which the Council's reserves are a key component. As a consequence, the final revenue budget proposals for 2025/26 did not include any use of reserves to meet recurrent revenue expenditure.

4.27 The delivery of a balanced budget position for 2025/26, alongside substantial budget recovery action within schools will be fundamental in maintaining financial stability and limiting any further impact upon the Council's reserves.

4.28 The continuing financial headwinds, increasing demand for services, funding uncertainty, and the need for £10.7m of service savings to be delivered present tangible ongoing budget risks for the year.

4.29 When this is considered alongside a significant budget gap to be resolved for 2026/27, and a challenging and uncertain funding outlook over the medium term, there remains ongoing challenge to the financial resilience of the Council.

- 4.30 The forecast budget deficit of £533,000 will need to be managed through the collective financial discipline that has been a feature of recent budgets.
- 4.31 As we move towards the next formal monitoring period, work will continue to deliver on the structured approach to tackling the underlying budget pressures, with particular importance assigned to tackling costs which have the ability to be recurrent for 2026/27 and beyond.
- 4.32 In order to deliver this, a range of mitigation measures will need to be implemented, including, but not limited to:
- Maximising all grant and income opportunities, including the transfer of core costs into grant where conditions allow
 - Vacancy management with a strategic and thoughtful approach to the filling vacant posts that is in line with the needs of the service, and the longer term objectives of the Council
 - Maximising the opportunity to meet the costs of organisational reform from capital receipts where regulations allow

4.33 Remaining budgetary risks

- 4.34 There remain specific budgetary risks that have the ability to further impact upon the revenue budget during 2025/26:
- **Further non-delivery of budget savings targets**, especially where these involve income generation, changes to structures, alternative delivery models or those involving community or other partners.
 - The trend of **reducing debt recovery**, particularly within Council tax and Social Care where there has been a slowing down in collection rates, and where there are increasing numbers of discounts and exemptions being awarded;
 - **The recruitment market** remains challenging, with some services encountering difficulty hiring and retaining suitably qualified and skilled staff. Whilst this will result in a reduction in immediate expenditure, it will impact the ability to deliver services in line with the Councils objectives.
 - **CPI inflation** rose by 3.8% in the 12 months to July 2025, up from 3.6% in June 2025 and the highest since January 2024. This is above budgeted assumptions. Current projections suggest that inflation will rise to 4% over the coming months before easing. This has the consequence of increasing costs and contracts agreed over the remainder of the financial year.
 - **Schools reserve balances** – the further forecast draw on balances for 2025/26 of £2.8m would significantly increase the cumulative schools reserve deficit that is being carried on the Council's balance sheet. This consequently impacts upon the Council's overall financial resilience and increases its risk exposure by reducing available balance sheet resources.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 The report itself covers the resource implications of the entirety of the revenue budget activity during the year. There are no further resource implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

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

- 6.1 This report provides Members with an update on the progress being made against the revenue budget of the Authority and carries no decisions. There are therefore no equality and future generations' implications directly arising from this report.

CONSULTEES:

Senior Leadership Team
Cabinet

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Summary service variances

Appendix 2 – Detailed service variances and commentary

Appendix 3 – Progress against budgeted savings

Appendix 4 – Individual school balance forecasts

AUTHORS:

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Appendix 1 – Summary of service variances forecast

Directorate	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	1,074	1.4%	Children's services £598k – Primarily additional Counsel costs of £293k and reduction in WG grant £274k	
			Adult services £201k – level and complexity of care needs tracking slightly above budgeted levels	
			Housing & Homelessness £238k – Delay in opening of Severn view and repair costs to B&B premises	
Children, Learning, Skills & Economy	40	0.1%	Central budgets £40k – Various smaller over spends relating to management staff costs, income reductions and ICT costs	
Infrastructure	(61)	-0.3%	Passenger transport £392k – Shortfall in meeting pupil transport route savings £265k, reduced income & vehicle/staffing adjustments taking longer than anticipated £127k	Grounds Maintenance £76k - staff savings and increased fee income

Directorate	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
			Fleet Maintenance £171k – fuel, hire charges and EV charging inspection and maintenance	Decarbonisation £152k – increased income from the Solar farm, staff vacancies, offset by inability to meet corporate mileage savings
				Schools catering £93k – increased grant and staff vacancies
				Waste £285k – one-off dividend from incineration partnership alongside savings in disposal and recycling contracts, and some staff savings
Place & Community Wellbeing	141	1.8%	Car parking £109k – under recovery of fixed penalty charges and higher than anticipated publication costs	
			Culture & Community Learning £38k – staffing costs, inflationary impact on some contracts	
People, Performance and Partnerships	99	2.1%	Communications £88k - Staffing structure changes and reduction in income.	Contact Centre - £39k – system and licence spend coming in below budget
			Community & Partnership developments - £50k - Tour of Britain cycling contribution and requirement for security, road closures, and cleansing	Payroll & System Support - £73k – reduction in system and supplies & services spend and staff vacancy
			People Management - £44k – unachievable staff vacancy factor and extra staff resource being put in place to bolster team capacity	
			Subscriptions - £32k – costs have exceeded available budget, in addition the membership of New Local was renewed which was an agreed budget saving	
Legal & Governance	64	2.1%	Members - £54k – overspend against superannuation contributions plus an inability to achieve vacancy factor savings, coupled with an increase in Mod Gov system charges.	Staff savings - £22k

Directorate	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
			Legal - £32k – inability to achieve staff vacancy factor savings and an anticipated reduction in court fee income	
Resources	(95)	-1.0%	Newport leisure park £44k – the income surplus of £278k is £44k below budget due to unbudgeted utility costs associated with a vacant unit	Finance/Audit £58k – grant income and staff vacancies
			Castlegate £90k - increased operating costs associated with vacant units that fall to the authority to manage	Building cleaning & Public conveniences £130k – part-year staff vacancies as the service implements a restructure, as well as savings on maintenance and business rates in public conveniences.
			County Farms & Industrial units £78k – Void Property Costs (£50k) from covering running costs of vacant farms and cottages. Professional Fees (£20k) for valuations and succession reports needed for tenancy management	Landlord services £94k - staff vacancies offset by a shortfall in other rental income
Corporate & Treasury Management	458	1.1%	Earmarked reserves £535k – unbudgeted contribution to Council Tax Premium reserve is forecast. This will be mirrored by a corresponding underspend within Council tax	Lower net borrowing costs £50k - reflective of higher than anticipated cash balances, forward starting loans, and capital slippage.
Financing	(1,186)	-0.5%		Council tax reduction scheme £400k - cases have tracked slightly lower than budgeted for the year
				Council tax £250k – changes in the domestic registration list of properties chargeable has resulted in an increase of income forecast
				Council tax premiums £535k – The collection rate is currently higher than anticipated when setting the budget
Total	533	0.2%		

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Section 1	Revenue budget summary forecast
Section 2	Detailed service commentary
Section 3	School balances update

Section 1 - Overall Revenue Position

Table 1: 2025/26 Revenue budget forecast by directorate

Service Area	Original Budget 2025/26	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 1
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	77,916	66	77,982	79,056	1,074
Learning, Skills & Economy	73,030	(395)	72,635	72,675	40
Infrastructure	21,442	20	21,462	21,402	(61)
Place & Community Wellbeing	7,460	172	7,632	7,773	141
People, Performance & Partnerships	4,596	59	4,655	4,754	99
Legal & Governance	3,050	39	3,089	3,153	64
Resources	9,353	(137)	9,216	9,121	(95)
Corporate, Treasury & Finance	29,147	350	29,497	29,470	(27)
Net Cost of Services	225,994	175	226,169	227,403	1,234
Appropriations	10,784	(175)	10,609	11,094	485
Expenditure to be Financed	236,778	0	236,778	238,497	1,719
Financing	(236,778)	0	(236,778)	(237,964)	(1,186)
Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	533	533

Table 2: 2025/26 Revenue budget forecast by service

Service Area	Original Budget 2024/25	Budget Adjust-ments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 1
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Adult Services	47,536	8	47,544	47,745	201
Children Services	24,105	40	24,145	24,743	598
Housing & Homelessness	2,512	(21)	2,491	2,729	238
Public Protection	1,886	0	1,887	1,881	(5)
SCH Support	1,877	39	1,916	1,958	42
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	77,916	66	77,982	79,056	1,074
Economy, Employment & Skills	853	(48)	805	805	0
Emergency Planning	178	0	178	178	0
Individual Schools Budget	58,790	0	58,790	58,796	6
Resources	1,217	(50)	1,167	1,198	31
Standards	11,992	(297)	11,695	11,698	3
Learning, Skills & Economy	73,030	(395)	72,635	72,675	40
Enterprise, Housing & Community Animation	559	(213)	345	348	2
Facilities, Fleet & Decarbonisation	11,692	31	11,723	12,332	609
Neighbourhood Services	8,668	(4)	8,664	8,283	(381)
Operations	523	206	729	439	(291)
Infrastructure	21,442	20	21,462	21,402	(61)
Culture and Community Learning	2,394	(18)	2,375	2,413	38
Countryside, Destination and Environment	1,149	6	1,154	1,140	(14)
Leisure and Wellbeing	1,764	(121)	1,643	1,643	(0)
Performance, Finance and Resources	1,639	130	1,768	1,763	(5)
Placemaking, Highways & Flooding	515	175	691	814	123
Place & Community Wellbeing	7,460	172	7,632	7,773	141
Chief Executives Office	1,197	71	1,268	1,384	117
People	1,934	(10)	1,924	1,910	(14)
Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service	1,466	(2)	1,464	1,460	(4)
People, Performance & Partnerships	4,596	59	4,655	4,754	99
Democratic Services	1,957	39	1,996	2,035	39

Legal and Land Charges	1,093	0	1,093	1,118	25
Legal & Governance	3,050	39	3,089	3,153	64
Commercial, Corporate & landlord Services	2,133	(58)	2,075	2,047	(27)
Corporate Health & Safety	163	0	163	163	0
Finance	4,061	(79)	3,982	3,924	(58)
Information Communication Technology	2,996	0	2,996	2,986	(10)
Resources	9,353	(137)	9,216	9,121	(95)
Precepts & Levies	28,699	0	28,699	28,666	(33)
Coroner's	278	0	278	297	19
Archives	228	0	228	228	0
Corporate Management	452	0	452	439	(13)
Non Distributed Costs (NDC)	387	0	387	387	0
Strategic Initiatives	(2,820)	350	(2,470)	(2,470)	0
Insurance	1,923	0	1,923	1,923	0
Corporate Costs & Levies	29,147	350	29,497	29,471	(27)
Net Cost of Services	225,994	175	226,169	227,404	1,234
Interest & Investment Income	(788)	0	(788)	(1,045)	(257)
Interest Payable & Similar Charges	7,624	0	7,624	8,047	423
Charges Required under Regulation	6,158	0	6,158	5,943	(215)
Other Investment Income	0	0	0	(1)	(1)
Borrowing Cost Recoupment	(3,918)	0	(3,918)	(3,918)	0
Contributions to Reserves	2,483	0	2,483	3,018	535
Contributions from reserves	(775)	(175)	(950)	(950)	0
Contribution from Council Fund	0	0	0	0	0
Appropriations	10,784	(175)	10,609	11,094	485
Expenditure to be Financed	236,778	(0)	236,778	238,498	1,719
General Government Grants	(100,637)	0	(100,637)	(100,637)	0
Non Domestic Rates	(34,612)	0	(34,612)	(34,612)	0
Council tax	(110,596)	0	(110,596)	(111,381)	(785)
Council Tax Benefit Support	9,066	0	9,066	8,666	(400)
Financing	(236,778)	0	(236,778)	(237,964)	(1,186)

Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	533	533
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Section 2 - Directorate – Service Variance Comments

SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & SAFEGUARDING	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	1,074	0	0	0
CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY				
<p>The overall position for the directorate is showing a forecast overspend of £1.074m.</p> <p>The pressures within adult services predominantly relate to the cost of care and the number of people requiring costly packages of care due to the needs being presented to the service. Whilst the progress is being made in increasing the numbers of people benefitting from reablement, this is not able to fully mitigate the need for care particularly within adult placements. The service and practice changes that have been put in place are starting to take effect in terms of mitigated the cost and requirement for care, but there is still more to do.</p> <p>In children's services, the costs of placements are holding steady, however, pressure has arisen through the need to maintain family support despite the loss of some WG grants. Family support is essential to avoid significant increases to placement costs as well as securing better outcomes for children.</p> <p>Both adults and children services are predicated on demand rates holding steady – which is not easy to predict, particularly heading into the winter period.</p> <p>In housing the opening of Severn View should help mitigate pressure moving forward; however, rising operating costs and rent and debt arrears within private leasing needs to be explored further for potential mitigation.</p>				
Adult Services				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	201	0	0	0
<p>The position at update 1 highlights a projected year end overspend of £201k, which is a more favourable position when compared with update 1 last year.</p> <p>It is a somewhat complicated picture across the service however where the main pressure includes the full year effect of care provision and adult placements made at the end of the previous financial year.</p> <p>The current position is predicated on maintaining stable demand; however, winter is a notoriously unpredictable and challenging time for adult services where ongoing pressure from both community and hospital settings is likely to arise. Our residential placements continue to rise and are currently at the highest ever level of 357 across the County. Despite there being a stable level of demand of referrals into the service, more referrals are leading to the need for services. In comparison, domiciliary care is trending down, although this could change.</p> <p>Our service transformation plan to expand reablement is moving forward with the number of people receiving reablement increasing. This represents cost avoidance for the Local Authority as we continue to reduce the number of people who do not need care and support at the end of a period of reablement.</p> <p>The significant underspend on staff vacancies in Care at Home is supporting the financial position. A workforce re-modelling exercise is underway and it is likely that recruitment will be a requirement once the structure has been finalised, but we are currently taking steps to mitigate any effect on the budget.</p>				

The savings target of £250k is not yet evidenced; however, our review activity has significantly increased. For the first time we met our 70% target of the number of care and support plans reviewed at the end of 24/25 increasing to 74% at the end of the first quarter of 25/26. Savings achieved by reducing packages of care via the review process are already captured in the bottom line and we are still validating the data to demonstrate actual impact.

We are still experiencing difficulties in progressing CHC cases for younger people with mental health and learning disabilities that is impacting on our ability to move eligible adults into health service budgets. This is an issue for all Welsh Local Authorities. The regional team are in the process of appointing a CHC lead to act on behalf of the Gwent region to address our concerns and gather information with a view to progressing a legal challenge.

Despite the unpredictability of the coming months, the service continues to take every opportunity to adopt cost avoidance approaches to care, our information advice and assistance service (IAA) will be implemented during the latter part of this year with recruitment of 6 posts currently underway. This allows us to develop our preventative offer and will feed our new intake model where reablement is the first consideration to mitigate or prevent care.

Domiciliary care commissioning has concluded in the South. We anticipate this will stabilise cost and improve capacity in the area of most demand.

MCC has had confirmation of a £900k recurring annual funding stream from Welsh Government to support the work that social care does to prevent delayed discharges. This money is subject to a spend plan that will support our transformation work but the actual spend against the whole year allocation and impact against our bottom line is yet to be confirmed.

Children's Services

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	598	0	0	0

At the end of update 1 there are 190 children looked after including 15 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Although the number remains stable, the service activity of assessment, family support and risk management remains intense. During this first 4 months of the year 15 children became looked after and 15 children left care. Nevertheless, the service is currently showing a balanced budget for placement costs which is an improvement from previous years.

The overspend reported at update 1 is partly due to the use of external counsel / barrister costs for children who are in a public law process in the family courts. This represents a pressure of £293,262 based on current activity. As at update 1 there were 22 children (16 families) within the family courts. The service only refers children to the family court if it is the only way to secure a child's safety and long-term stability / welfare. The costs associated with a court process are high, and the use of barristers is often unavoidable. In terms of corrective action the service will continue to liaise with the legal team to explore any potential to reduce the costs associated with court.

The other element of the reported overspend relates to pressure that has arisen through a reduction in the Welsh Government grant that supports our Family Support services. This is a pressure of £274k. Family support is critical to supporting children to remain safely at home wherever possible and helps both to safely reduce the numbers of children who need to come into care and safely return children to their families and communities at the earliest opportunity. Although it represents a cost pressure, the service has maintained family support despite the significant reduction in the WG grant. Family support is fundamental to cost avoidance (particularly given the costs of placements) and helps us to secure best outcomes for children and families. The majority of children open to children's services (normally around 550 at any one time) will be

receiving family support of some description, with many others receiving services through early help and community based support. If these services were disrupted or reduced more children would need to come into care.

The current overspend position is predicated on there being no new high-cost demand into the service and on the service achieving 100% of the required service savings. Whilst this is currently on track, there are risks. New demand within the service is not always predictable. The savings are based on our care planning and progression for children, which can on occasions may need to change.

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	238	0	0	0

Housing services is showing an overspend of £238k.

The main reasons are the delay in the opening of Severn View and some additional costs of repairs to B & B premises following hand back representing £154k pressure. Severn View is now operational which should alleviate future pressure on homelessness / temporary accommodation provision (dependant on stable demand patterns).

An additional financial pressure of £186k has emerged within private leasing, driven by increased repair, maintenance, and cleaning costs, alongside reduced income due to rent arrears and bad debt. The area presents a financial risk that warrants further review to identify potential mitigations.

The bottom-line position within housing has benefitted from £197k due to the Housing benefit clawback reduction.

Public Protection

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	(6)	0	0	0

This division, even though the first forecast of the year, is forecast to be close to its allocated budget.

SCH Support

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	42	0	0	0

There is a £42k budget pressure currently forecast in SCH support due to changes in payroll costings following the Chief officer pay review, changes to employer national insurance contribution rates, and from pay awards.

Learning, Skills & Economy DIRECTORATE

Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	40	0	0	0
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CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

The Directorate's current position is a forecasted overspend of £39,751, which is mainly due to an increase in management costs and a reduction in income (please see further detail in Resources below).

Economy, Employment & Skills

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	0	0	0	0

Economy, Employment & Skills are currently reporting a balanced budget

Emergency Planning

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	0	0	0	0

Emergency Planning are currently reporting a balanced budget

Individual Schools Budget

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	5	0	0	0

There is currently a small forecasted overspend due to several small, unexpected costs relating to schools

Resources

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	31	0	0	0

The current forecasted overspend of £31,007 is due to the following:

- £15,779 increase in management staff costs, due to the restructure
- £9,488 reduction in income, as we no longer receive income for the administration of the EIG, now that it is part of the LA Education Grant
- £5,740 SIMS costs not budgeted

Standards

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	3	0	0	0

There is currently a small forecasted overspend of £3,223, which is mainly due to Agency costs covering an absence.

Whilst there is not a financial impact at this stage, it is important to note that the ALN LA IDP Budget is currently overspent by £108k, but this can be offset with the reduction in the Independents Budget, as several pupils have recently left independent placements.

INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTORATE

Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
(61)	0	0	0

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

Whilst the Directorate is forecasting a £61k underspend this is largely due to a one off share receipt from our waste incineration partnership with Cardiff County Council and increased income from the solar farm. The Directorate is still managing financial pressures amounting to £563k from home to school transport and fleet. Changes to the home to school policy have not realised the savings target due to walking route assessments and a changed learner cohort from the time of the initial forecasts. Work will continue to identify opportunities to mitigate the pressures in fleet through different tenure models.

Enterprise

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	2	0	0	0

Small overspend due to the inability to fully meet staff vacancy savings.

Facilities & Fleet

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	563	0	0	0

Facilities and Fleet is forecasting a projecting a £563k overspend, due to:

- **Fleet Maintenance** - £171k overspend – Fleet Maintenance is forecasting a £171k overspend, driven by early-year pressures including increased fuel costs, hire charges, and EVCI maintenance expenses. The service will continue to monitor vehicle utilisation closely with the aim to reducing this overspend by year end.
- **Passenger Transport** – net £392k overspend – The service is currently forecasting a £265k shortfall against the £447k catchment area saving built into the 2025/26 budget. Pupil figures have changed since original projections were prepared and some routes have been deemed unsafe meaning transport still has to be provided. From September, early forecasts suggest savings of only £26k per month on contracts, significantly below original assumptions.

Internal operations are also under pressure, as contract changes have reduced income and adjustments to vehicle and staffing costs are taking time to implement. These overspends have been partially offset by transport admin grant income. The service is actively exploring mitigation options, but accurate figures will not be available until pupil numbers and contracts are confirmed in September.

Neighbourhood Services

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(381)	0	0	0

Neighbourhood services is forecasting to return a £381k underspend, broken down as follows:

- **Waste Services** - £285k underspend – this is primarily due to a one-off gain share receipt from Cardiff City Council related to the waste incineration partnership. This resulted from an improvement in green and trade waste income. Additionally, forecasted savings on disposal and recycling contracts, as well as savings in staff costs due to part-year vacant posts, contributed to the underspend. However, recycle prices are volatile, so this could change. Notice is also awaited from the Welsh Government on the Sustainable Waste Grant award, where a lower-than-budgeted allocation could reduce the underspend.
- **Grounds Maintenance** - £76k underspend – this is due to staff savings from part-year vacant posts and an anticipated increase in fee income.
- **Highways Operations & External Clients** – On Budget
- **StreetLighting** – On Budget
- **Highways Design, Flooding & Road Safety** – £20k net underspend – this is due to reduced expenditure on professional fees and supplies & services across the department, these savings have

been partially offset by increased costs associated with flooding including for tide watches and sandbagging provision.

Operations

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(245)	0	0	0

Operations is forecasting to underspend by £245k, due to:

- **Schools Catering** - £93k underspend – mainly due to part-year staff vacancy savings and favourable UFSM income.
- **Decarbonisation** - £152k underspend – this is primarily due to increased income from our solar farm and renewables portfolio due to improved ROC rates, favourable weather and improved inverter performance (£184k) and a £45k staff saving in the decarbonisation team due to a vacant post, offset by an overspend in a prior year corporate mileage saving of £77k where the proposal has been delayed by procurement issues and won't be rolled out until later in the year.

PLACE & COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
142	0	0	0

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

The Place and Community Wellbeing Directorate is currently forecasting an overspend of £142k. This is primarily due to income pressures related to the under recovery of parking penalty charges and building control fees.

Overall, the directorate is actively monitoring these variances and exploring mitigation options to ensure financial stability and continued service delivery.

Culture and Community Learning

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	38	0	0	0

The Culture and Community Learning division is projected to experience an overspend of £38k. This is primarily due to higher than budgeted staffing costs, inflationary pressures and increased expenses relating to supplies and services contracts.

Countryside, Destination and Environment

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(14)	0	0	0

The Countryside, Destination and Environment division is forecast to underspend by £14k due to higher than budgeted income.

Leisure and Wellbeing

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0

The Leisure and Wellbeing division expects a balanced budget, as higher income from leisure facilities has offset the £89k loss of income due to Abergavenny LC's closure and reduced service agreement income.

Performance, Finance and Resources

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(5)	0	0	0

The Performance, Finance and Resources division is forecasting a small underspend of £5k due to staff vacancies.

Placemaking, Highways & Flooding

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	123	0	0	0

The Placemaking, Highways and Flooding division is forecasting to overspend by £123k due to:

- **Development Management and Building Control** – The section is forecasting an overspend of £14k, relating to under-recovery of building control fees and increased software costs.
- **Planning Policy** – This section is currently on budget. Spending levels will be closely monitored and aligned with the approval of the RDLP.
- **Highways Development and Car Parks** – The section is forecast to overspend by £109k. This is mainly due to the under recovery of fixed penalty charges and higher than anticipated publication costs associated with the implementation of the new fees and charges.
- **Strategic Projects** – This area is currently on budget

PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE & PARTNERSHIPS

	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	106	0	0	0

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

People, Performance & Partnerships and the Chief Executives Office is forecasting to over spend by £106k. The overall picture within PPP masks variability within services, particularly staffing budgets. There is still a degree of risk attached to changes to the Welsh language translation service which need to be fully implemented in the second half of the year. In year staffing savings made in HR during 2024-25 have proved difficult to maintain resulting in an overspend in 2025-26 as capacity has been bolstered. Within the CEO's Office, the overall forecast reflects a mixed financial position. Overspends are primarily driven by staffing pressures, reduced income, and an unbudgeted contribution to the Tour of Britain event. Some areas are offset by underspends, but key pressures remain that officers will look to mitigate as the year progresses.

Chief Executives Office

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	125	0	0	0

The Chief Executives Office is forecasting a £125k overspend, this is due to:

- **Communications** - £88k overspend – This is primarily due to a budget pressure of £56k for the creation of the Head of Communications and Active Travel post, and a £50k reduction in income. These pressures are partially offset by £37k relating to the secondment of the Head of Communications.
- **Contact Centre** - £39k underspend – due to system and licence spend coming in below budget.

- **Strategic Change** - £15k overspend – due to insufficient budget to cover our City Deal contribution.
- **Community & Partnership developments** - £50k overspend - Tour Of Britain has no budget provision to cover the £25k contribution to TOB organisers plus the estimated £25k required for security, road closures, and cleansing.
- **Libraries, Hubs, and Community Learning** – Forecast to underspend by £20k due to staff vacancies and higher than budgeted income.
- **Strategic Operations** - £8k overspent – inability to make vacancy factor savings.

People

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(14)	0	0	0

People is forecasting to underspend by £14k, due to:-

- **Organisational Development** - £15k overspend – due to staff costs exceeding budget due to the inability to achieve vacancy factor savings.
- **Payroll & System Support** - £73k underspend – due to a reduction in system and supplies & services spend of £39k and a net staff saving in staff costs of £27k due to changes in hours and a payroll technician post being held vacant.
- **People Management** - £44k overspend – additional costs incurred due to unachievable staff vacancy factor and extra staff resource being put in place to bolster team capacity.

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(4)	0	0	0

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Services is forecasting to underspend by £4k, broken down as follows:

- **Corporate** - £17k overspend – mainly due to the inability to achieve staff vacancy factor savings and an increase in subscription costs.
- **Scrutiny** - £4k overspend – unable to achieve staff vacancy savings.
- **GIS** - £21k underspend – saving in system and supplies & services spend.
- **Levies & Subscriptions** - £32k overspend – corporate subscription costs (WLGA, LGA) have exceeded available budget, in addition the authority has made the decision to renew the membership of New Local causing a further pressure as this budget was removed as part of 25/26 budget savings.
- **Performance & Data** - £19k underspend – due to staff savings from part year vacant posts.
- **Equalities & Welsh Language** - £3k underspend – the authority is due to enter into a new translation SLA with Torfaen Council in October, with current projections indicating that this will generate a 3k saving.
- **Community Safety** – Net £15k underspend – due to staff savings from part year vacant posts.

LAW & GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE

	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	64	0	0	0

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

Law & Governance is forecasting to overspend by £64k mainly due to staffing pressures and income shortfalls across the service areas. Officers will look to mitigate these in the coming months and will provide an update on progress at Month 6.

Democratic Services				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	39	0	0	0
<p>Democratic services is forecasting to overspend by £39k, this is due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members - £54k overspend – mainly due to staffing where there is an overspend against superannuation contributions plus an inability to achieve vacancy factor savings, coupled with an increase in Mod Gov system charges. • Committee & Election services - £15k underspend – primarily as a result of 2 staff retirements and the saving generated from the delay in filling the posts. 				
Legal and Land Charges				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	25	0	0	0
<p>Legal & Land Charges is forecasting to overspend by £25k, due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal - £32k overspend – This has been caused by the inability to achieve staff vacancy factor savings and an anticipated reduction in court fee income. • Land Charges - £7k underspend – due to savings from a vacant part-time post. 				
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(95)	0	0	0
CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY				
<p>It is pleasing to see a small net underspend being forecast for this first formal reporting period. The majority of the under spend has resulted from vacancies across Landlord Services and Building Cleaning along with savings forecast against some non-pay budgets. With recruitment currently being progress vacancy savings will be one-off in nature as posts are successfully filled.</p> <p>This under spend has been offset by overspends against investment properties and county farms resulting from increased operating costs, fees and unbudgeted costs resulting from a small number of vacant units. These overspends will be mitigated where tenancies can be secured for the remaining lettings, contributing to a further strengthening of the directorate's financial position this year.</p>				
Commercial, Corporate & landlord Services				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(27)	0	0	0
<p>Commercial, Corporate and Landlord services is forecasting to underspend by £27k, due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment Properties - £135k overspend, due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Newport Leisure Park - £44k overspend – NLP is forecasting to generate a surplus of £278k in 25/26, however this is £44k below budget due to unbudgeted costs (such as electricity and rates) associated with a vacant unit. There is potential for this position to improve if a tenant can be found for the unit during the year. ○ Castlegate Business Park - £90k overspend – The overspend is driven by increased operating costs associated with vacant units that fall to the authority to manage, including higher-than-expected rates, electricity charges, and one-off fees. As above there is potential for this position to improve if tenants can be found during the year. 				

- **Landlord Services** – £94k underspend – mainly due to staff vacancy savings offset by a shortfall in rental income. The Head of Landlord services has now been appointed, and it is anticipated that the current service vacancies will be addressed as part of a wider management and portfolio review.
- **County Farms** - £78k overspend: Mainly due to (1) Void Property Costs (£50k) from covering running costs of vacant farms and cottages, which aren't included in the base budget. This issue is expected to resolve next year as a farm has been re-let and cottage disposals are being considered. (2) Professional Fees (£20k) are higher because of increased demand for valuations and succession reports needed for tenancy management.
- **Cemeteries** – £17k under spend primarily due to savings on supplies and services. There is potential that this could change if any unforeseen repairs or emergency tree works are required later in the year.
- **Building Cleaning & Public Conveniences** - £130k underspend – due to full and part-year staff vacancies as the service implements a restructure, as well as savings on maintenance and business rates in public conveniences.
- **Property Services** – On Budget - the service is forecasting overspends on maintenance and rates within office accommodation and a shortfall in external fees but these have been offset by employee underspends due to managed staff vacancies.

Corporate Health & Safety

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0

Corporate Health & Safety is forecasting a balanced budget, any costs incurred in response to directorate H&S matters will be accommodated from within services and reported as part of their outturn position.

Finance

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(58)	0	0	0

The Finance division is forecasting to under spend by £58k, this is mainly due to:

- **Revenues, Systems & Exchequer** - £54k net underspend:
 - **Benefits** - £40k underspend - A reduction in non-pay costs and additional grant income is forecast to save £31k and the Housing Benefit Budget is currently forecast to underspend by £9k.
 - **Council Tax** - £12k overspend - The majority of spend pressures for this cost centre are managed by one off Welsh Government grant income for the administration of this year's Retail Rate Relief scheme. The remaining £11k overspend relates to a residual budget pressure from the Finance restructure which was left against this cost centre.
 - **Charity Relief** - £3k underspend – early indications are awards will be lower than budget.
 - **Debtors** - £4k overspend - Unmet vacancy factor savings and additional National Insurance costs.
 - **Cashiers** - £7k underspend - Card payment fees are estimated to over spend by £26k, as more payments are made by card. However these additional costs are offset by reduced security carrier costs, holding off system developments and holding open, for a time, a cashier vacancy to generate an overall saving against this cost centre.
 - **Revenues System Administration** - £18k overspend - due to increased annual contract costs for the Northgate system.

- **Financial Systems Support & Vat** - £39k underspend – a £21k saving resulting from vacant posts plus an £8k saving against the non-pay budget and £10k additional recharge income.

- **Finance** - £12k under spent - due to part year staff vacancies.

Information, Communication & Technology

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(10)	0	0	0

The ICT division is forecasting to underspend by £10k, this is due to:

- **SRS** - £10k overspend – the latest forecasts from SRS indicate that our contribution will be £10k over budget due to increased costs in O365 licences and PSBA line rental.
- **Digital, Design & Innovation** – On budget – As of August 2025, the team moved under the Shared Resource Service (SRS) via the Cabinet-approved Digital, Data and Technology agreement. This caused a forecasted £33,000 overspend due to higher collaboration costs, exceeding the current budget. In line with Cabinet's decision, this shortfall will be covered by the IT reserve, so there is no negative effect on the Directorate's overall financial position.
- **Cyber Security Partnership** - £13k underspend - the Cyber Security Partnership is scheduled to transfer to SRS from 1st September 2025 and indications are that we will see an in-year underspend of £13,000 due to vacancy savings.
- **Telephony** - £6k underspend – due to a reduction in call charges.

CORPORATE COSTS & LEVIES DIRECTORATE

	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(27)	0	0	0

Coroners

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	18	0	0	0

Final levy is expected to be higher than budgeted due to additional requirements of the services following Chief Coroner review.

Precepts & Levies

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(33)	0	0	0

Forecast saving due to the South Wales Fire Service precept being lower than originally anticipated for the financial year.

Archives

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0

No variance forecast

Corporate Management

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(13)	0	0	0

Minor unbudgeted income that cannot be attributed to services				
Non-Distributed Costs				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
No variance forecast				
Strategic Initiatives				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
No variance forecast				
Insurance				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
No variance forecast				
TREASURY & RESERVES				
Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4	
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	486	0	0	0
Interest & Investment Income				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(257)	0	0	0
Higher than anticipated cash balances along with higher than budgeted rates have increased the return on the authority's investments leading to a forecast underspend of £257k.				
Interest Payable & Similar Charges				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	423	0	0	0
The rate payable on new borrowing has not decreased as previously projected. Additionally, additional borrowing undertaken late in the previous year has contributed to a forecasted overspend of £423k.				
Charges Required Under Regulation				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(215)	0	0	0
Capital slippage funded from borrowing was higher than anticipated at the end of the previous year which has resulted in lower than anticipated charges.				
Other Investment Income				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(1)	0	0	0
Minor income received.				

Borrowing Cost Recoupment				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
No variance forecast.				
Contributions to / from Reserves				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	535	0	0	0
An unbudgeted contribution to Council Tax Premium reserve is forecast. This will be mirrored by a corresponding underspend within Council tax.				
FINANCING				
Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4	
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(1,185)	0	0	0
Council Tax Reduction Scheme				
Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4	
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(400)	0	0	0
Anticipated underspend as in year caseloads are lower than the budget set.				
Council Tax				
Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4	
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(785)	0	0	0
The Council Tax Premium collection rate is currently higher than anticipated when setting the budget which results in forecast additional income of £535,000. Alongside this, the changes in the domestic registration list of properties chargeable has resulted in an increase of income forecast of £250,000.				
General Government Grants				
Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4	
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
No Variance forecast				

2. Section 3 – School Balances

- 2.1. A Board of Governors who are responsible for managing the school's finances, directly governs each of the Authority's Schools. However, the Authority also holds a key responsibility for monitoring the overall financial performance of schools. Below is a table showing the forecast Schools' balances position, for each Educational Cluster.

School Reserves	(A) Opening Balances (Surplus) / Deficit Position 2025/26 £000's	(B) Draw / (Contribution) on School Balances @ Update 1 £'000	(C) Draw / (Contribution) on School Balances @ Update 2 £'000	(D) Draw / (Contribution) on School Balances @ Update 3 £'000	(E) Draw/ (Contribution) on School Balances @ Update 4 £'000	(A+B) Forecast 2025/26 Balances £'000
Cluster						
Abergavenny	1,351	635	0	0	0	1,985
Caldicot	(37)	641	0	0	0	604
Chepstow	989	26	0	0	0	1,015
Monmouth	144	407	0	0	0	552
Special	1,645	1,126	0	0	0	2,771
Total	4,092	2,835	0	0	0	6,926

- 2.2. Collective School balances at the beginning of the Financial Year amounted to a deficit of £4,091,578. The anticipated further draw on reserves is £2,834,735, against a budgeted draw on reserves of £2,714,668, resulting in a forecast deficit balance of £6,926,313 by year end.

- 2.3. The movement of individual schools forecast to be in deficit at the end of the year is shown below:

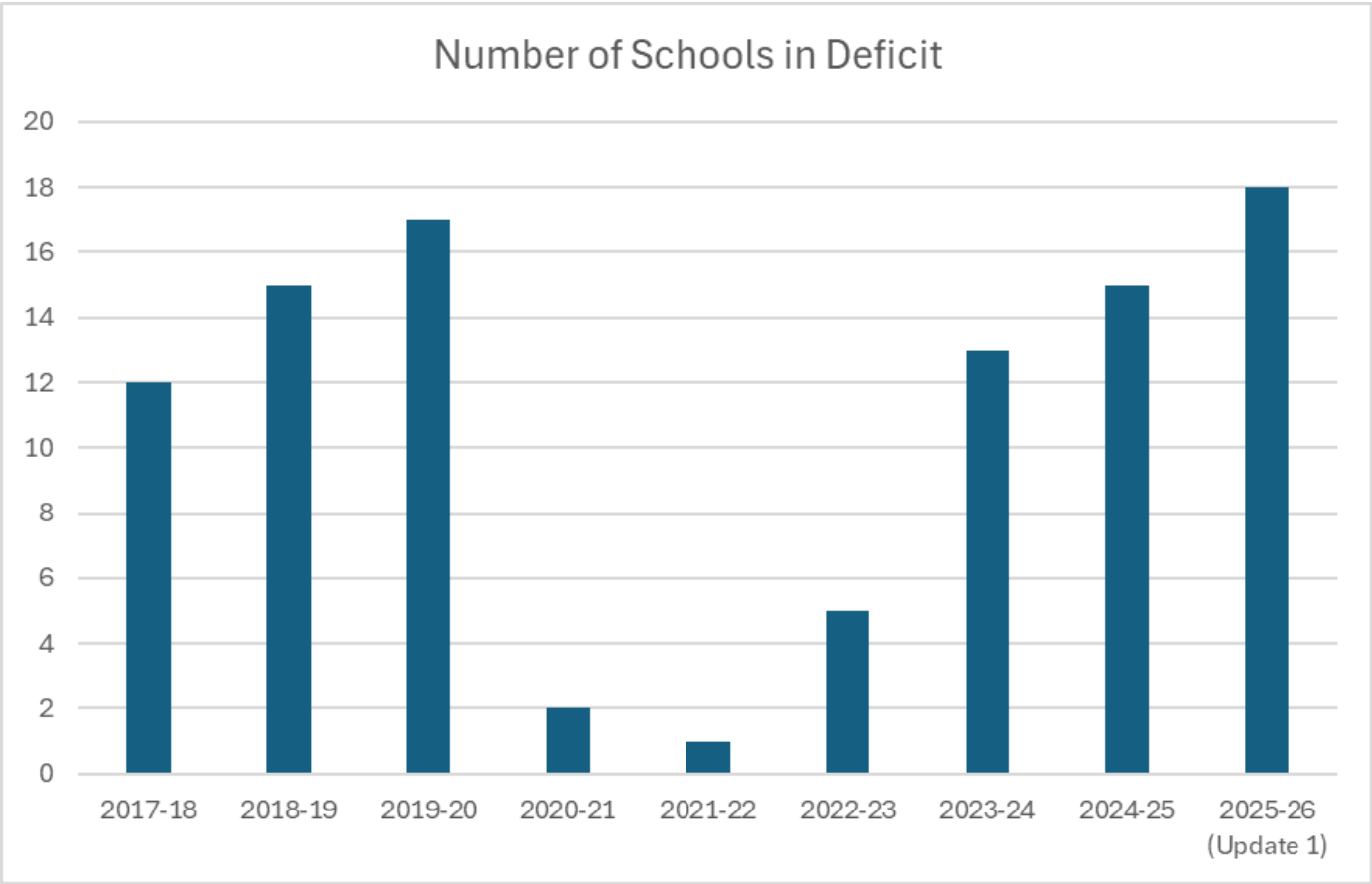
Start of year	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Total: 15	Total: 18	Total:	Total:	Total: 0
KHS VIII 3-19	KHS VIII 3-19			
Gilwern	Gilwern			
Our Lady & St Michael's	Our Lady & St Michael's			
Ysgol y Fenni	Ysgol y Fenni			
Caldicot School	Caldicot School			
Rogiet	Rogiet			
Ysgol y Ffin	Ysgol y Ffin			
Chepstow School	Chepstow School			
The Dell	The Dell			

Thornwell	Thornwell			
Kymin View				
Osbaston	Osbaston			
Overmonnow	Overmonnow			
Ysgol y Trefynwy	Ysgol y Trefynwy			
PRS	PRS			
	Castle Park			
	Monmouth Comprehensive			
	Cross Ash			
	Llandogo			

- 2.4. The legacy impact of the pandemic continues within the school environment, particularly in respect of attendance, behaviours and increased additional learning needs. This has required increased staff and specialist resources to tackle the issues presenting and increased overall costs of provision. Higher than budgeted pay awards have also impacted upon budgets.
- 2.5. All schools that are budgeting to register a deficit balance at the end of the 2025/26 financial year are required to bring forward budget recovery plans. These recovery plans will be confirmed with both the Local Education Authority, each School's Governing Body and, in some cases, the plans will need to be agreed by the relevant Cabinet Member. All recovery plans are expected to be received by October Half Term.

Financial Year-end	Net level of School Balances (Surplus) / Deficit in £000's
2015-16	(1,156)
2016-17	(269)
2017-18	(175)
2018-19	232
2019-20	435
2020-21	(3,418)
2021-22	(6,956)
2022-23	(4,257)
2023-24	904
2024-25	4,092
2025-26 (forecast)	6,926

- 2.6. The decrease in school balances has resulted in an increase in the number of schools in deficit, as illustrated in the following table:



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Appendix 3 - Budget savings progress

	Savings proposals by Directorate	Budgeted Saving	Update 1 Forecast	Variance	% Met	
		£000	£000	£000		
	Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	(2,950)	(2,589)	361	87.8%	
	Learning, Skills and Economy	(745)	(745)	0	100.0%	
	Infrastructure	(5,679)	(5,254)	425	92.5%	
	Place & Community Wellbeing	(606)	(606)	0	100.0%	
	People, Performance and Partnerships	(165)	(104)	61	63.0%	
	Legal & Governance	(1)	(1)	0	100.0%	
	Resources	(555)	(555)	0	100.0%	
	Totals	(10,701)	(9,854)	847	92.1%	

Service savings progress

Ref	Social Care & Health	Budgeted Saving	Update 1 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
SCH S2	Community Meals - cost neutral or cease	(15)	(15)	0		
SCH S3	Adults Practice Change	(250)	0	250		Too early in year to ascertain full saving being delivered
SCH S4	Fees and Charges	(336)	(336)	0		
SCH S5	Public protection Workforce reduction	(100)	(100)	0		
SCH S6	Wedding fees (registrars)	(30)	(30)	0		
SCH S7	Childens Practice Change	(1,887)	(1,887)	0		
SCH S10	Adults workforce review	(125)	(125)	0		
C&P S20	Savings driven from the reduction of B&B usage and full year effect of Severn View	(207)	(96)	111		Saving assumed Severn View would be open from 1st April, but due to building delays tenants did not move in fully until early August - this meant we had to incur 4 months of additional of B&B costs that were not budgeted.
Total		(2,950)	(2,589)	361		

Service savings progress

Ref	Learning, Skills and Economy	Budgeted Saving	Update 1 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
CYP S1	Reduce 0.6 FTE Most (Monmouthshire Specialist Teachers) team	(40)	(40)	0		
CYP S3	Grant funding increase to meet costs of EWS post	(51)	(51)	0		EWS has not been reduced by 1 FTE, a grant funding increase was able to meet the costs of the EWS post
CYP S4	Bring ALN MCC pupils from OOC back to MCC	(100)	(100)	0		
CYP S5	KH8 Maintenance costs	(40)	(40)	0		
C&P S21	Youth Service - Passport more core service costs to grant funding.	(45)	(45)	0		
C&P S14	Reduction in utility costs for education estate	(429)	(429)	0		
ML S4	Reduction in Youth Service Provision (delete 1 FTE post)	(40)	(40)	0		
Total		(745)	(745)	0		

Ref	Infrastructure	Budgeted Saving	Update 1 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
C&P S4	Passenger Transport Commissioning - We revert to the statutory distances of 2 miles for primary and 3 miles for secondary - Subject to political approval - will commence from 01/09/2025	(447)	(182)	265		Pupil figures have changed since original projections were prepared and some routes have been deemed unsafe meaning transport still has to be provided. From September, early forecasts suggest savings of only £26k per month on contracts. The service is actively exploring mitigation options, but accurate figures will not be available until pupil numbers and contracts are confirmed in September. An update will be provided at M6.
C&P S7	Savings in C&P senior Mgt costs as a result of SLT restructure	(170)	(170)	0		Achieved - restructure completed - posts deleted.
C&P S8	Grass routes - Introduce an annual £10 membership charge for users	(3)	(3)	0		Achieved
C&P S9	Reduce gritter fleet by extending the working hours of each vehicle	(20)	(20)	0		Fleet reduced - achieved
C&P S10	Reduction in utility prices for the corporate estate	(136)	(136)	0		Early year projections are indicating that this saving will be achieved.

Service savings progress

C&P S11	Undertake energy audit of invoices to identify discrepancies and potential savings	(20)	(20)	0		Currently in process of appointing firm to undertake audit - assume achievable.
C&P S22	PTU Increase the cost of concessionary season tickets by 10%	(6)	(6)	0		Fees have been uplifted - saving will be achieved.
C&P S23	Increase in Highways fee income to external clients to reflect recovery of pay award and inflation.	(52)	(52)	0		Fees have been uplifted - saving will be achieved.
C&P S24	Indicative EPR funding	(4,825)	(4,665)	160		Final award was confirmed to be £160k under original figure - this has been managed by other savings within the service.
Total		(5,679)	(5,254)	425		

Ref	Place & Community Wellbeing	Budgeted Saving	Update 1 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
ML S1	Borough Theatre - Reduced production days (3 days a week)	(50)	(50)	0		
ML S5	Increase Income across the four Leisure Centres	(150)	(150)	0		
ML S7	Lease Old Station Tintern	(30)	(30)	0		
ML S9	Externalise Markets Waste Collection	(20)	(20)	0		
ML S13	S106 - Increase office time recharge	(24)	(24)	0		
ML S14	Rights of way - Charge officer time to capital	(20)	(20)	0		
C&P S2	Request to WG to increase statutory planning application fees by 25% - Consultation Autumn - potential uplift for 1st April or 1st October	(100)	(100)	0		
C&P S3	Increase car park fees by 10%	(180)	(180)	0		Carparking fees have been increased and delivering the saving the income pressure declared
C&P S15	Increase Building Control Fees	(32)	(32)	0		Fees have been uplifted.
Total		(606)	(606)	0		

Ref	People, Performance and Partnerships	Budgeted Saving	Update 1 Forecast	Variance		Comment
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Service savings progress

		£000	£000	£000		
CEO S2	Welsh Language translation	(82)	(82)	0		Set to enter into new SLA with Torfaen in October - early forecasts project that this saving will be achieved.
CEO S4	New staffing model in Systems and Payroll	(22)	(22)	0		Achieved
CEO S5	Implement Apprentice First approach	(8)	0	8		Currently no progress on this initiative - further update to be provided at Update 2
CEO S8	End membership of New Local from June 2025	(15)	0	15		Not achieved - decision made by senior leadership to continue with membership.
ML S12	Phase 2 - Restructure	(38)	0	38		Not Achievable
Total		(165)	(104)	61		

Ref	Legal & Governance	Budgeted Saving	Update 1 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
LG S1	Cancellation of LLG Training	(1)	(1)	0		Achieved
Total		(1)	(1)	0		

Ref	Resources	Budgeted Saving	Update 1 Forecast	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
RES S1	Cease our Cyber Security Insurance provision	(98)	(98)	0		Achieved - insurance cover has ceased.
C&P S13	Building Cleaning - Release of recurrent service saving	(20)	(20)	0		Achieved
RES S3	Freeze/Remove Head of Digital, Design & Innovation Post (Net of cover/honoraria arrangements)	(64)	(64)	0		Achieved - Post deleted
RES S5	Finance - HB penalty will reduce as Severn view comes online and temporary accommodation reduces	(250)	(250)	0		Reduction in B&B usage down to 5 has had a beneficial impact on reducing the HB subsidy penalty - M4 forecasts project that this saving will be made in full.
RES S6	Finance - HB penalty reduction as a result of a further reduction in the remaining B&B portfolio.	(100)	(100)	0		

Service savings progress

RES S7	Reduction in Chief officer admin Support (0.6 FTE)	(23)	(23)	0		Achieved - Post deleted
Total		(555)	(555)	0		

Appendix 4 - Forecast movement in school balances

	Opening Reserves 2025-26 (Surplus)/Deficit	In Year position at Month 4 (Surplus)/Deficit	Projected carry forward at year end 2025-26 (Surplus)/Deficit	Risk Category
Abergavenny cluster				
King Henry V111 3-19 School	1,386,169	531,024	1,917,193	
Cantref Primary School	(101,495)	17,805	(83,690)	
Gilwern Primary School	15,717	83,675	99,392	
Goytre Fawr Primary School	(43,645)	31,121	(12,524)	
Llanfoist Fawr Primary School	(87,620)	51,334	(36,286)	
Llantillio Pertholey CiW Primary School (VC)	(74,764)	55,440	(19,324)	
Llanvihangel Crucorney Primary School	(83,609)	23,752	(59,857)	
Our Lady and St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)	53,889	(32,604)	21,285	
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni	286,080	(127,045)	159,035	
Caldicot cluster				
Caldicot School	267,256	332,548	599,804	
Archbishop Rowan Williams CiW Primary School (VA)	(82,144)	40,907	(41,237)	
Castle Park Primary School	(18,741)	59,849	41,108	
Dewstow Primary School	(6,305)	(39,449)	(45,754)	
Durand Primary School	(93,396)	7,756	(85,640)	
Magor CiW Primary School (VA)	(206,124)	31,135	(174,989)	
Rogiet Primary School	169,213	12,383	181,596	
Undy Primary School	(142,211)	98,937	(43,274)	
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin	75,216	97,023	172,239	
Chepstow cluster				
Chepstow School	1,130,990	(37,836)	1,093,154	
Pembroke Primary School	(268,044)	53,412	(214,633)	
Shirenewton Primary School	(130,917)	35,178	(95,739)	
St Mary's Chepstow RC Primary School (VA)	(70,363)	69,538	(826)	
The Dell Primary School	158,181	(53,505)	104,676	
Thornwell Primary School	168,782	(40,885)	127,897	
Monmouth cluster				
Monmouth Comprehensive	(31,922)	311,783	279,861	

Cross Ash Primary School	(14,677)	35,397	20,720	
Kymin View Primary School	63,486	(63,525)	(39)	
Llandogo Primary School	(7,412)	11,633	4,221	
Osbaston CiW Primary School (VC)	63,807	(5,118)	58,689	
Overmonnow Primary School	255,229	(37,483)	217,746	
Raglan CiW Primary School (VC)	(161,289)	81,235	(80,054)	
Trellech Primary School	(92,530)	11,456	(81,074)	
Usk CiW Primary School (VC)	(19,112)	(4,386)	(23,498)	
Ysgol y Trefynwy	88,855	66,117	154,972	
Special School				
Pupil referral unit	1,645,026	1,126,133	2,771,159	
Total	4,091,578	2,834,735	6,926,313	

SUBJECT:	Annual Director's Report 2024 / 2025, Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
MEETING:	Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	23rd September 2025
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

To present the Annual Report 2023/24 from the Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health to Performance & Overview Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

For the committee to receive and scrutinise the Annual Report 2024/25 prior to its presentation to Council on 23rd October 2025.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Preparing and publishing an annual report of the Statutory Director of Social Services is a requirement under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014). The report is required to show how social care in Monmouthshire meets the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. This year a template and guidance for completing the report has been issued.

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2025-03/local-authority-social-services-annual-report-additional-guidance-2025.pdf>

3.2 This is the third Director's Report for the current Chief Officer for Social Care Safeguarding and Health and reflects activity within the financial year April 2024 – March 2025.

3.3 The overall purpose of the report is:

- To evaluate progress against our social care priorities during the year.
- To provide Members and residents with an evaluation of social care and health services,
- looking at how we are making a difference in peoples lives and our performance against
- key metrics.
- To provide an analysis of the ways in which the current operating context is impacting on

- services and to identify key risks and challenges.
- To inform Members and residents about how our services meet the standards and requirements under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014).
- To set out actions and priorities for 2025 – 2026.

3.4 In accordance with the guidance the report is set out using the following headings:

i. Director's Summary

ii. Context

- Leadership
- Workforce
- Finance Resources

iii. Performance and Assessment

- People
- Prevention
- Partnership & Integration
- Wellbeing

iv. Other Information

- Inspection & Reviews
- Complaints & Representations
- Other Sources of Information

v. Glossary

3.5 The report has been written with involvement from the service and contributions from the workforce using case studies relating to their work with people. Qualitative and quantitative performance data, self-evaluation and case material is combined to describe many aspects of the service. The report provides information related to the wider operating context where relevant. This annual process is an opportunity to reflect on the overall direction of the service, what is going well as well as the further actions we need to take in order to develop and improve.

4. REASONS:

4.1 It is a legal requirement to publish an Annual Report.

4.2 To ensure that scrutiny members are provided with the opportunity to scrutinise Chief Officer's evaluation of the performance and impact of Social Services in 2024/25.

5. OPTION APPRAISAL:

N/A

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA:

6.1 The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the performance of Social Care & Health Services in 2024/25. The report draws on a range of evidence, including the performance

indicators from the measurement framework under the Social Services and Well-being Act, alongside case material and qualitative evidence.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 None specific to this report.

7.2 The Annual Report sets out the financial context of social care and health and the outturn positions for 2024/25 for Children's and Adults' Services. The report identifies the financial context and the challenges of financial sustainability for the coming year and beyond in meeting the costs of social care services against the backdrop of reducing budgets and increasing demand for care and support.

8. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

8.1 The report provides an appraisal of performance of the directorate's work with children, older people and people with disabilities or ill health. It identifies future priorities and how services might be developed to better support vulnerable people and people with protected characteristics. The report identifies the contribution social services to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, particularly with regards to prevention and working in partnership.

8.2 The report provides analysis of performance and priorities related to safeguarding and Corporate Parenting, with regard to the work that is undertaken with children who are looked after and care experienced young people.

9. CONSULTEES:

- Cllr Ian Chandler, Lead Member for Social Care and Health Directorate
- Senior Leadership Team
- Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services
- Jenny Jenkins, Head of Adults' Services
- Claire Robins, Transformation Service Manager
- Tyrone Stokes, Directorate Finance Manager

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

11. AUTHOR:

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Health & Social Care Director's Report 2024 – 2025

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Directors Summary

Our guiding principles within the Social Care and Health Directorate are founded on the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Using person-centered practice, we

strive to help people shape their own lives and remain committed to delivering high-quality care and support to those who need it most.

We hear much about some of the acute and deep-rooted challenges across the health and social care sector. This report describes the ways we are addressing these challenges, the progress we have made so far and our plans for further development and improvement.

Stability within the social care leadership team has allowed us to pursue deep-rooted programmes of change aimed at increasing the sustainability of social care in the face of increasing complexity within a resource constrained context. Achieving lasting change requires both a learning mind-set and a systemic approach, concepts which hold particularly true in the dynamic and interdependent world of social care. Within adult services this has led to some ambitious programmes around how we organise and deliver services – particularly in respect of domiciliary care, reablement and working with partners to support hospital discharge. Similarly, within children's services we continue to expand our family support teams, safely reducing the numbers of children in care, and changing the way that we provide children's placements.

Changing a whole system requires both time, and attention to the wellbeing of the workforce. We want our workforce to feel confident about their practice - using strengths-based, preventative approaches in assessing and planning care and support for people in a consistent, equitable way. We are introducing structured approaches to professional development and learning to ensure that through shared knowledge, skills and practice we are equipped to respond to the increasingly complex needs of our residents. Equally, promoting engagement and communication across the workforce is something that we want to continue to pay attention to this next year.

There are several key risks and challenges that we currently face. From a financial perspective the directorate ended the year with a budgetary overspend which has an impact on other parts of the council. Ongoing attention to how we mitigate against spend and ensure our change programmes result in better outcomes for people as well as the potential to reduce cost is required. Added to this is the uncertainty created by the reliance on a range of Welsh Government grants which support both core services as well as many aspects of our change programmes agenda.

The aging demographic within the county, together with the complexity of need presents a risk in terms of the pressure this creates on services across the council, but particularly within social care. This year we want to review our overall preventative offer,

joining up with partners to ensure that people have early access to community wellbeing services that help to promote better health and wellbeing outcomes.

Demand pressure, and other imperatives can impede progress around more strategic changes. At some level, all services are having to change and respond to the current circumstances – doing so ‘on the go’, whilst simultaneously dealing with intense operational pressures. This year moving forward with implementing the newly procured social care management system, with the associated risks this brings, will require considerable resources and leadership attention.

The process of change can be impactful and unsettling, particularly when it affects how individual people receive their care. We will continue to plan ahead, communicate and mitigate the impact of any changes we make.

Operational pressure is felt acutely by the workforce. It is the workforce who carry the reality of how the various pressure points and challenges within the wider system impacts the residents they encounter day to day. I am only too aware of the extent to which this can take both an emotional and physical toll on people. Ensuring that the workforce feels supported and valued remains a priority for the year ahead. I am continually grateful for the resilience and resourcefulness of the workforce - their on-going commitment, heartfelt motivation, professionalism and dedication is a true inspiration.

The commitment to providing high quality services and working with people to achieve good wellbeing outcomes remains the driving force and is the basis for an optimistic outlook. I am proud of the way the service is addressing the challenges we face and confident that together with our partners, our skilled workforce, our commitment to delivering good quality sustainable services to people we have what we need to navigate the year ahead and beyond.

Social Care for Children | 2024-25

About Children's Services



The budget for children's services is **£22** million



We employ **241** people in children's social care



We received **5,819** contacts about **2,612** children

Who we Support



79 children on the child protection register



190 children in the care of the local authority



39 carers who provide placements for children

Supporting People Earlier



100% of families supported with what matters to them by early help services



We provided advice or assistance to **3,223** contacts for children



68% of children were supported to remain with their families

How we Work



97% of children's assessments were completed on time



98% of reviews of children on the child protection register were completed on time



100% of reviews of children in care were completed on time

What Difference Did we Make?



585 children supported with care and support plan



33 children left care for permanent homes with adoptive families or special guardians



74% of care leavers were in education, training or employment

Social Care for Adults | 2024-25

About Adult Services



The budget for adult services is **£43** million



We employ **421** people in adults' social care



And completed **2,340** assessments for adults

Who we Support



309 packages of reablement completed



477 adults were supported with care at home



We received reports on **490** adults at risk

Supporting People Earlier



We provided advice or assistance to **3,626** contacts



78% of adults feel they had the right information or advice when needed



120 adults arrange their own support with direct payment

How we Work



76% of adults felt involved in decisions about their care



87% of adult safeguarding enquires completed within 7 days



71% of adult's care plan were reviewed during the year

What Difference Did we Make?



48% of adults felt able to do things they consider important



56% of people need no ongoing support following reablement



85% of people were happy with their care and support



monmouthshire
sir fynyw

Priority Actions for 2024 – 2025

Action Set	Progress
Maintain focus on recruiting into child protection social work posts in Children's Services; and therapy and adult mental health practitioners in Adult Services.	We are seeing a general improvement in our ability to recruit to key roles. On average there were 23/540 vacancies in adult services and 6/280 in children's services.
Implement the outcomes of the Children's Services CIW inspection (Feb 2022).	We have responded to the findings by reviewing processes at the front-door and taking steps to mitigate the volume of work to help focus on practice. We have significantly improved our recording of child protection statutory compliance data. Maintaining these improvements is now the priority.
Implement the relaunched training in 'Keeping Children Safe'.	An updated training programme was implemented and will continue as a rolling programme.
Prioritise training to undertake Mental Capacity Act and Best Interest Assessing in Adult Services.	4 people were trained this year as best interest assessors which remains an insufficient number according to expected demand. This remains a training priority.
Design and implement a finance module for adult care practitioners.	A finance module was designed and has been implemented – improving the provision of information regarding financial assessments and charging is the next step.
Procure and begin to implement a new Social Care Management System to replace FLO and PLANT within a Gwent partnership.	A new system has been procured in partnership with the 4 other Gwent LAs. Implementation is at an early stage with a completion date of summer 2026.
Deliver system redesign in 3 key areas of adult's services:	
Develop the front-door response, including pathways into community-based wellbeing support, with the aim of increasing effective Information, Advice and Assistance and decreasing the number of people waiting for social work and therapy assessments	This is in progress with a new IAA role being designed. Pathways are being developed into early help including "community conversations". The teams are reviewing and prioritising waiting lists and there has been a gradual decrease in waiting times for assessments.

Design the reablement pathway including access to specialist home carers, so that more people receive reablement services and the demand for longer term care and support is mitigated	Linked with the Domiciliary Care Commissioning strategy, the reablement pathway is at early stages of implementation. There is a gradual increase in the numbers of people benefitting from reablement. The priority actions for 25/26 are to continue to increase reablement capacity and pilot the START (Short Term Assessment and Reablement Team) pathway
Implement the initial stages of the Domiciliary Care Commissioning Strategy.	The strategy was endorsed by Cabinet in May 2024, and the procurement process is underway in the south of the County. Ensuring a smooth transition to new providers and reviewing the process are key areas for action in 25/26.
Accelerate the use of assistive technology within care planning for adults.	The increasingly strong connection between care planning and assistive technology has seen positive benefits to supporting people's independence. The assistive technology room in Chepstow hospital was opened with plans to open a similar room in Monnow Vale in 25/26.
Work in partnership with health to expand community-based health services for frail older people in the central and north parts of the County to avoid any unnecessary hospital admissions and keep people safe and well at home.	The strength of the integrated partnership in MCC supported a successful bid for funds to allow for the expansion of services supporting people living with frailty in the north and central teams. New posts have been agreed, and the expanded service will be implemented during the next year, helping us keep people safe and well at home wherever possible.
Implement a system for ensuring that adult care and support plans are reviewed at least annually.	We have increased capacity to ensure that care and support plans are reviewed within timescale and figures have improved.
Fully implement the new Individual Support Service including the completion of accessible bases in Abergavenny and Monmouth.	Accessible bases for the My Support Service were completed in Nov 2024 (Melville Centre) and Sept 2024 Over Monnow Family Learning Centre. This has supported the development of the My Support Service giving people increased choice and opportunities in how they receive support.

Deliver the objectives of the placement development strategy for children to increase the number of in-house residential and supported accommodation placements.	This is in progress with the first new provision (supported accommodation) opening in Nov 2024. 2 residential children's homes schemes are in the pipeline and expected to open during 25/26
Develop an in-house residential children's workforce.	A service manager and team manager are in place, and plans are being prepared to ensure that the residential workforce will be ready for the opening of the first children's home in summer 2025.
Review the foster care offer to Monmouthshire carers to support the recruitment of new carers.	This was achieved – in May 2024 Cabinet agreed to a 30% reduction of council tax for Monmouthshire Foster Carers and in March 2025 cabinet agreed to an uplift in the fees and allowances for carers. Increasing the number of in-house foster placements is a goal for 25/26.

Summary of Priority Actions for 2025 / 2026

- Review our overall preventative offer and work with partners to ensure that people have early access to community wellbeing services that help to promote better health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Implement changes at the front door of adult services including the introduction of specialist IAA roles to help provide clear and consistent advice and strengthen pathways into community-based support. Evaluate the impact on people of community conversations.
- Improve the provision of information regarding financial assessments and charging.
- Continue to increase in-house reablement capacity and pilot the START pathway.
- Take the commissioning strategy forward by completing the procurement process in the south, ensuring a smooth transition to the new providers and undertake a review of the process to inform next steps.
- Together with partners expand frailty services in north and central teams. Reflect on learning from 2024 and continue to put in place mechanisms for avoiding unnecessary admissions to hospital and achieving timely discharge.

- Take forward the outcomes from the Adult Services inspection undertaken in April 2025 particularly the work to support good outcomes for carers.
- Open an Assistive Technology room in Monnow Vale hospital
- Ensure that the optimal workforce structures are in place within direct care services to deliver good quality services and ensure staff wellbeing
- Continue to deliver the placement development strategy for children including completing the current pipeline projects
- Increase the number of in-house foster placements
- Maintain effective family support and mitigate against the risks associated with grant funding
- Maintain improvements in adherence to statutory timescales for child protection.
- Implement new Case Management System to replace Flo and Plant
- Ensure the supervision policy is fully embedded across the service
- In partnership with the Workforce Development Team develop and implement the START project reablement competency framework, implement the children's residential services training programme and increase training numbers for Best Interests Assessors
- Work in partnership across the council to progress recommendations regarding the delivery of anti-racist social care

Context Section

Overview of Performance

The tables below provide an overview of some of our core metrics across social services. 2024/25 is the fifth year of reporting metrics as part of the *measuring activity and performance* framework and therefore trend data is becoming more meaningful. This makes it easier for us to identify where improvements can be made as well as to see if changes we have made are making a difference to how social care in Monmouthshire performs. The metrics contained below are those recommended within Welsh Government guidance through which to present the overall level of activity and provision by the local authority throughout the year.

Metric Number	Metric – Adults Social Services	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Front Door						
AD/001	The number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year:					
AD/001a	The total number of contacts	N/A	N/A	8806	8085	8119
AD/001b	The number of new contacts	5787	6633	6437	5951	5945
AD/002	The number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	3961	4215	3808	3635	3626
Assessments						
AD/004	The number of new assessments completed for adults during the year	2035	2177	2205	1929	2340
AD/005	Of which:					
AD/005a	Needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan	721	826	671	486	689
AD/005b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	630	542	583	482	557
AD/005c	There were no eligible needs to meet	627	506	553	573	522
Plans						

AD/012a	The number of adults with a care and support plans at 31 March	1813	1728	1651	1580	1378
AD/013	The total number of adults with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment at 31 March	123	139	149	140	120

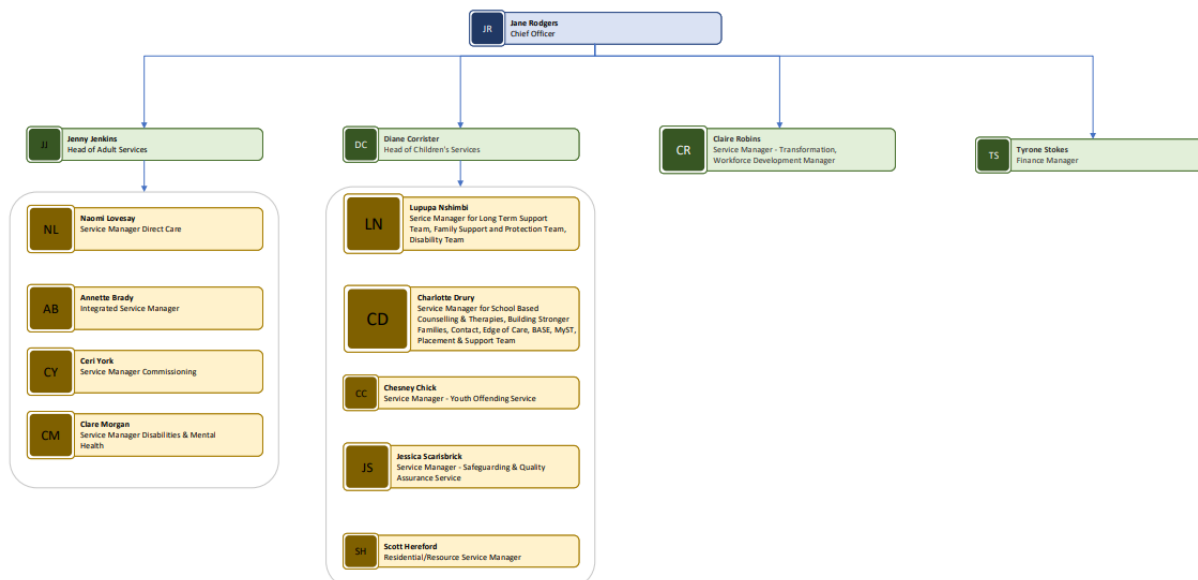
Metric Number	Metric – Children’s Social Services	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Front Door						
CH/001	The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year	4329	5776	5825	7071	5819
CH/002	The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	2700	3379	3508	3879	3223
CH/003	The number of contacts received by statutory children's social services during the year where a decision was made by the end of the next working day	3042	5769	5698	7065	5818
Assessments						
CH/006	The total number of new assessments completed for children during the year	828	884	907	1088	872
CH/007	The total number of new assessments completed for children during the year where:					
CH/007a	Needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan	249	264	253	374	290
CH/007b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	448	424	493	522	435
CH/007c	There were no eligible needs to meet	26	17	16	35	34
Plans						

CH/015a	The number of children with a care and support plan at 31st March	515	518	542	502	585
CH/016	The total number of children with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment at 31st March	48	54	51	55	57

Leadership

Monmouthshire County Council is overseen by an elected political leadership comprising the Council Leader, Cabinet Members, and committee chairs, supported by a Chief Executive and a team of Senior Leaders. This leadership framework ensures clear strategic direction and effective decision-making, with the Chief Executive working closely with political leaders to implement policies and manage the delivery of services. Key decisions regarding social care are made within formal Cabinet meetings.

The social services department is headed by a Chief Officer for Social Care, responsible for the strategic direction and operational management of the service. The Chief Officer is supported by Heads of Service and Service Manager leads for children's and adults' services, enabling strong governance and integrated working across the directorate. The stability of the social care leadership team has enabled the strategic direction and implementation of plans over the longer term. Directorate leadership meetings are held on a fortnightly basis ensuring that Chief Officer decisions are not taken in isolation and are assessed for impact across the directorate.



The Chief Officer meets weekly with the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health and Accessible Services, monthly with the Leader of the Council and reports regularly into Cabinet. These meetings ensure proper oversight and accountability. The Cabinet Member has held their position since 2023 and over that time has developed a deep understanding of the service – its relative strengths weaknesses – allowing constructive challenge and driving the focus on outcomes for people.

The Chief Officer works within the framework of the Council's Community & Corporate plan 2022/28. The objective set within '*A Connected Place Where People Care*' aims to achieve:

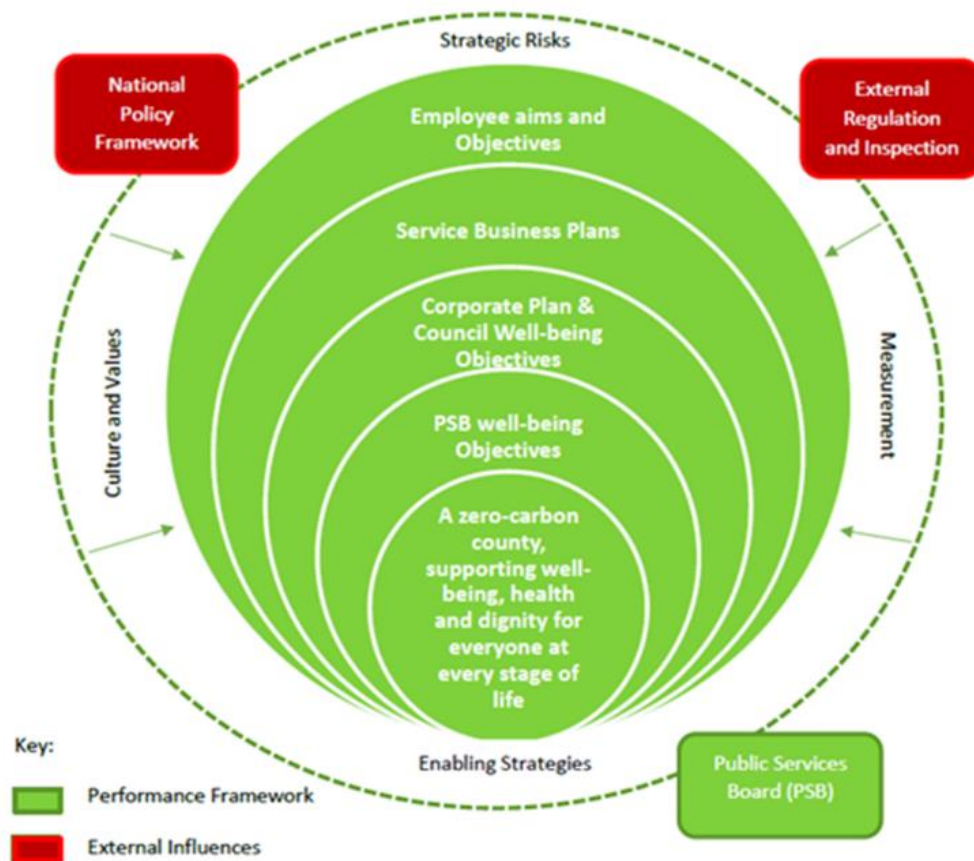
- High quality social care which enables people to live their lives on their terms
- A healthy and active Monmouthshire where loneliness and isolation are reduced, well-being is promoted, and people are safeguarded
- A professional and passionate social care workforce.

The Council's annual whole authority self-assessment process evaluates progress and performance against the objectives set in the Community and Corporate Plan. The report is available here [Council Performance - Monmouthshire](#)

Scrutiny plays a vital role in ensuring transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement within Monmouthshire County Council. The People Scrutiny Committee focuses on social care, education, and public health, reviewing service delivery and outcomes for residents, and making recommendations for enhanced quality and effectiveness. Wherever possible, key decisions affecting people receiving social care

services are taken to People Scrutiny. The Performance and Overview Committee scrutinizes the Council's strategic objectives and corporate performance, monitoring progress against key targets and plans, including the Community & Corporate Plan. Reports taken into scrutiny committees this year have included: The Director's Annual and Annual Safeguarding Reports (2023/2024); Updates on the Placement Development Strategy for Children; the outcome of CIW Children's Services Inspection Report and pre-decision scrutiny regarding proposed measures regarding Care Experienced People.

Monmouthshire Council Performance Management Framework



Workforce

The number of people employed within the social care workforce has remained consistent with approximately 820 colleagues. The workforce comprises 86% females and 14% males with a large part being part-time with an average of 23 weekly contracted hours across the whole service.

Adult Services has around 540 colleagues across all teams. There have been on average 23 vacancies throughout the period. This is a mixture of social work posts, occupational therapist and home care posts. The service has employed on average 3 colleagues through agencies during the year, usually occupational therapists and social work posts. Agency workers are used for critical cover to ensure that people's needs continue to be met in as timely a way as possible. The labour turnover for Adult Services is 15.37%.

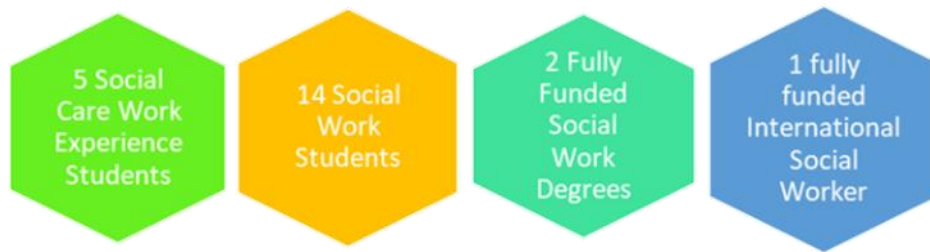
Children Services has an average of 280 colleagues working across multiple teams. There have been an average 6 vacancies. These are mainly social work posts. The Memorandum of Understanding between all the Welsh Local Authorities, regarding how agency workers are deployed, has made a positive difference in achieving a more stable workforce. There have been on average 6 agency workers during this period to cover both social work posts and business support. The labour turnover for Children Services is 10.71%.

Overall, management and leadership posts have been successfully covered from within the service reflecting the emphasis that remains on succession planning and supporting people's professional development. The demography of the workforce, however, indicates that encouraging people to enter the care sector as a positive career of choice remains a priority. We continue to work in partnership with local colleges and universities as well as remaining committed to supporting 'growing our own' social workers and practitioners.

Qualifications & Education

The workforce development team continues to support both existing and prospective employees with their education and learning, helping with the attraction and retention of people who have an interest in working for Monmouthshire.

In year 24-25 we have hosted and supported:

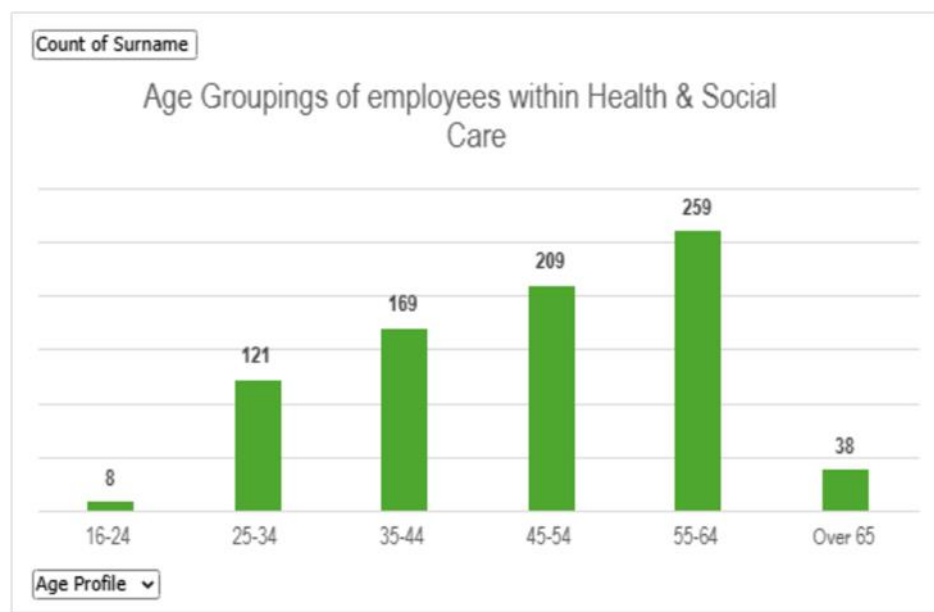


Further qualification opportunities across the directorate this year are as follows:



Workforce Planning

We take a strategic approach to workforce planning in response to population need and service changes. Understanding the demographics of the workforce is key to aid planning and identify workforce risks. Having a robust workforce data capture system and keeping the establishment up to date is crucial to understanding workforce issues, managing budgets, recruitment processes and forward planning.



Absenteeism across the directorate remains higher than we would wish it to be. To manage workforce absence in a fair and consistent way we are seeking to increase the focus on individual case management using a partnership approach between HR colleagues and line managers. This year, particularly within Direct Services, we are seeking to ensure that the optimal workforce structures are in place, both to deliver good quality services and promote staff wellbeing.

Wellbeing of the Workforce

Psychological illnesses, stress and mental ill-health are the highest reasons for absenteeism. There are several pathways in place to support colleagues with their welfare including Occupational Health, Counselling and financial advice. There are a range of peer networks in place for people affected by specific issues including peer groups for the menopause, people who are neurodivergent and people with disabilities. Support available is well signposted and detailed on our intranet.

The workforce development team have arranged for Human Resources colleagues to train in Connect 5 wellbeing training, as well as a train the trainer refresher session in preparation for the re-launch of the course for the workforce in 2025. Connect 5 is an Aneurin Bevan Health Board backed initiative which covers emotional, physical and mental well-being for self and others and provides sign posting to specialist resources through the Melo website.



In the summer, Children's Services hosted an Olympic event. This was a great opportunity to celebrate and have fun whilst fostering teamwork and connection within the service.

The head of adult services produces a quarterly newsletter to keep people updated and involved.

Financial Resources

The overall budget for 2024/25 for social care was £68,088,000 split over Adult Services (£42,771,000) and Children's Services (£22,317,000). Savings mandates of £4,949,000 were applied for 2024/25 with savings of £3,627,000 being achieved. Both Adult and Children's Services experienced financial pressures during the year with Adult Services showing an overspend of £1,357,000 and Children's £2,393,000.

Adult Services Pressures

Financial pressure within adult services arose through the cost of meeting existing and new demand for care provision, with increased demand and greater complexity reflecting the needs of an aging population. This contributed to overspending, particularly due to higher costs for care providers in line with changes in Real Living Wage and inflationary pressures. This year there was a £230K shortfall against the budgeted cost of in-year fee increases for provider services (including domiciliary care, residential care and support service contracts).

Another pressure arose through external care home placements which increased by 10% over the year increasing from 310 at the start of the year to 341 at year end. The service supports placements for older adults, dementia care and younger people with

complex learning disability or mental health support needs. Care home placements are not made without management oversight and where all other options for care provision have been explored. For non-residential care provision, there was an increase in the care provided towards the end of Quarter 2 and into Quarter 3 with a further increase in Quarter 4. At year end there 570 people supported and provided with 1,230 weekly care hours.

Additional financial pressures (£375,000) arose from the non-implementation of an expected care charging cap increase, partly offset by a small grant (£70,000).

On-going service development is aimed at achieving increased sustainability in the face of on-going demand. This includes the implementation of the reablement pathway; new approaches to commissioning; enhancing advice and support at the 'front-door'; and ensuring consistency around eligibility and the application of a strengths-based approach within assessments, care planning and reviews.

Children's Services Pressures

Over recent years the number of children looked after by the Local Authority continues to maintain a slight downturn. At year-end, numbers reduced from 200 (23/24) to 190 (24/25). There is considerable movement under these top-level figures with children leaving and exiting care. This year 70 children left care and 60 children entered care. The children who enter the care system tend to have more complex care and require more costly placements than the children stepping down from care.

A shortage of placements for children remains a significant challenge within the service with ongoing instability and uncertainty within external providers of both residential and IFA placements. The complexity of children's needs, together with on-going shortages in placements, continues to drive up the cost of children's care.

The £2.4mil overspend within children's services relates predominantly to the cost of new children coming into care (including those on a temporary basis) or where new placements have had to be sought following placement breakdowns. There was an added pressure this year because of the number of children requiring "Parent and Child" assessment placements. Although these placements are temporary, they are at extremely high cost.

The service has a well progressed placement development strategy which is starting to support the ambition to achieve better outcomes for children using in-house placements whilst representing better value for money. The recruitment of in-house foster carers

remains challenging. This year has seen an increase in the financial offer extended to foster carers to help recruit new carers and retain existing carers.

There is a range of family support services in place to manage risk in the community and work directly with parents to ensure that all opportunities for children to remain in family care or return to family care are maximised. The on-going success of this approach is illustrated by the ability to generate savings of £1.2mil through effective care and progression planning for children (a deficit of just of £100K against the mandate).

GRANTS

As in previous years, the directorate benefited from several Welsh Government revenue grants amounting to approximately £3mil including a Workforce grant, Regional Integration Fund and children's Radical Reform and Eliminating Profit grants. These grants were utilised in full and supported the development of core service provision in line with the relevant terms and conditions. In particular, the children's grants were used to further enhance and extend the suite of family support available to children and families with care and support needs. Family support has been the bedrock of the service achieving good outcomes for children, enabling children to remain with their families wherever possible and safely reducing the numbers of children in care. The fact that these services are funded through grants creates instability and uncertainty. Addressing this issue and maintaining effective family support is a key priority for 2025/26.

Budget for 2025/2026

The budget setting process for 2025/26 allowed for pressures of £7.8M to be introduced into the social care budget accounting for the full effect of new care provision, increases to employee National Insurance, enhanced payments to foster carers and potential uplifts to external provider fees. The pressure on social services budgets has a knock-on negative effect on other parts of the council's services. On-going attention at both a national and local level is required to ensure social care is on a sustainable financial footing. The directorate's performance around budgetary control, and its ability to meet further savings mandates, will remain under scrutiny during the year ahead.

Performance Assessment

People

“All people are equal partners who have choice, voice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them”

“Effective leadership is evident at all levels with a highly skilled well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision”.

Across the service, we adopt a strength-based approach to working with people, listening to people's stories, exploring their experiences and learning about what matters to them. To help people achieve their personal outcomes we use partnership approaches - building on people's own strengths, assets and connections as well providing a range of formal care and support services. We train all staff in collaborative communication techniques to support these assessment conversations. A central objective is to help people feel independent and have control and agency over their own lives. We encourage people's involvement and participation so that people's voices help shape and influence the services we provide.

Children's

Social workers use core skills to establish relationships with children independently from their parents / carers wherever possible, including seeing them alone. Seeing children alone as part of an assessment was achieved in 98.8% of cases. This ensures that children have the opportunity to talk openly about anything that is worrying them.

Case Study: Family Group Conference

H was referred after discovering she was pregnant. Verified by drug tests, H was using Class A substances and stopped immediately upon confirmation of pregnancy. H lived with her mother and had no ongoing relationship with the child's father. FGC's goals were to identify and strengthen H's family support, plan for contact with the paternal family as well as keep H and her baby safely within the family network and reduce reliance upon formal care. 3 FGC's were held. The first created a robust birth support plan. Despite this, H was placed in a parent and baby unit post-birth where she thrived. The subsequent FGC's enabled supervised contact with the paternal family. H was supported through housing transitions and remained engaged throughout. H is now settled in permanent housing near her support network. The child has safe contact with his paternal family and his care order has been revoked.

Family Support Practitioners are skilled at establishing relationships with parents, helping motivate and engage parents in working towards outcomes that matter to them and that will make a positive difference to their children.

We support some children with a care and support plan through a Direct Payment. 57 children were in receipt of a direct payment last year, which is similar to previous years. Direct Payments allow choice in how people access the care and support they need to achieve their personal outcomes.

Advocacy ensures that children's views and feelings are considered in their care planning. The number of "Active Offers" of advocacy for children decreased during the year. The number of Independent Advocates that were provided increased slightly.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
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Advocacy and Direct Payments						
CH/016	The total number of children with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment at 31st March	48	54	51	55	57
CH/056	The total number of "Active Offers" of advocacy for children during the year	-	105	98	98	69
CH/057	The total number "Active Offers" of advocacy for children during the year where an Independent Advocate was provided	-	43	42	24	29

Children's Services has a participation strategy in place. Over recent years this has served to encourage teams to develop ways of involving and engaging with children and young people. Here are some of our key highlights:

- The service organises an annual event to allow children and their social workers to have fun together. This is something children told us they value highly. It supports relationship building and rapport and helps children gain confidence in expressing themselves. This year saw a trip to Chessington World of Adventures.
- The Children with Disabilities team has collaborated with the Digital Team and SRS to develop an innovative app aimed at supporting children with disabilities. The goal was to create a tool that gives children with disabilities a voice and enables meaningful communication. After a thorough process of research, design, and development, the team successfully launched the app - VoiceMates. VoiceMates is a license-free, device-independent AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) app that empowers non-verbal children to communicate through symbol-based sentence building and audio playback.
- The Council's Corporate Parenting panel operates with the active involvement of young people with care experience. Young people regularly attend panel meetings and there is an annual engagement workshop between care experienced people and corporate panel members. This helps to develop actions around areas of joint concern. As a result of the workshop a report was taken through Council on 19th September 2024, where the decision was taken to add *'care experienced people' to the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment, 'so that any impact of policy decisions on people with care experience is identified and taken into account when those decisions are made.'*

Adults

Adult social care practitioners focus on listening to people who need care and support to understand their views and enable them to achieve what matters to them.

This year we have fully implemented My Support Services – with a focus on individual choice and wellbeing. The service helps to reduce isolation, supporting people to access the community and do the things that matter to them. The fully developed hubs in Abergavenny and Monmouth are supporting this aim. Here are some examples of people's achievements.

Case Study: My Support Services

X's goal was to travel by bus on their own to meet their friends at a bowling group.

As part of the My Support Care plan, a step by step plan was created with staff slowly reducing the level of support. X achieved their goal.

X said "I feel confidence and independence for travelling by bus to Cwmbran on my own. Doing it totally on my own."

S aims to access the community and live independently. They currently attend a college in Usk. With travel training to and from college, they have become more willing to try tasks on their own and build confidence in other areas besides travelling. The support staff are now working to help S keep safe at home, for example while cooking. The support helps to motivate S to put in extra effort to reach their goal of becoming independent.

We continue to develop innovative ways of helping people increase their independence and sense of control in their lives. During the year, we have continued to support people using assistive technology, building on strong partnership between social care, housing colleagues and health. Assistive technology has the potential to significantly improve people's quality of life and sense of agency and control. The Assistive Tech service supports 996 clients and provided 310 new care line installations in 2024/25. There was a steady increase of people accessing digital support during the year (941 – 996).

Case Study: Assistive Tech

The assistive technology team received a referral for P. The referral stated that P had difficulties moving around the property in their wheelchair as well as remaining independent to carry out everyday tasks.

It was established that P was unable to open and close the curtains on their own. It was difficult for P to answer the doorbell. Additionally, P had difficulty independently managing light switches.

The doorbell was linked to an Alexa Show, so that when the doorbell is rung, the person can be viewed and a two-way conversation can be had with the visitor from an armchair.

Switchbot Curtain Openers were installed allowing P to open and close the curtains using voice commands.

Smart bulbs were installed around the property which can also be turned on and off using voice commands.

P said the technology has not been complicated to learn and it has made a significant difference to everyday tasks. They said it has been a godsend. P is very thankful for all the help and helping them remain independent at home.



In February 2024
the Chepstow
Assistive Tech
room was officially
opened.

Micro Care within Monmouthshire continues to grow providing opportunities for people to access community-based self-employed carers and provide flexible, personalised support to individuals in their local area. The number of micro-carers operating within

Monmouthshire increased over the year and to date there are 60 micro carers operating.

Case Study: MicroCare

C lives in Monmouth and has MicroCarer U as their carer.

C has physical disabilities.

“U takes me out, we go to different places, sometimes we do some gardening or cooking and U has helped my confidence and speech. The service for me has been life changing. U is more like my friend and we do have fun together. This project has changed my life, I now have something to look forward to every week.”

F lives in Chepstow, their mother has dementia and support was needed to sit and chat with her and go for walks etc. The MicroCarer B chats about their mutual interests and complete word searches together. “B has been brilliant – responsive and caring. She has supported me to work knowing mum is safe.”

Here are 2 recent client case studies illustrating the positive difference micro-care can make and the sense of choice and control it can provide.

Direct payments give people more choice and control over their own care and support. The number of people arranging their own care through a direct payment has decreased during the year from 140 – 120 people.

The number of people receiving the aid of an independent professional advocate has also decreased during the year, however, the circumstances of those requiring advocacy are increasingly complex.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Advocacy and Direct Payments						

AD/013	The total number of adults with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment at 31 March	123	139	149	140	120
AD/032	The total number of adults during the year where the need for an independent professional advocate was identified	-	-	39	29	21
AD/033	The total number of adults during the year where the need for an independent professional advocate was identified and an independent professional advocate was provided	-	-	38	28	20

Waiting Times

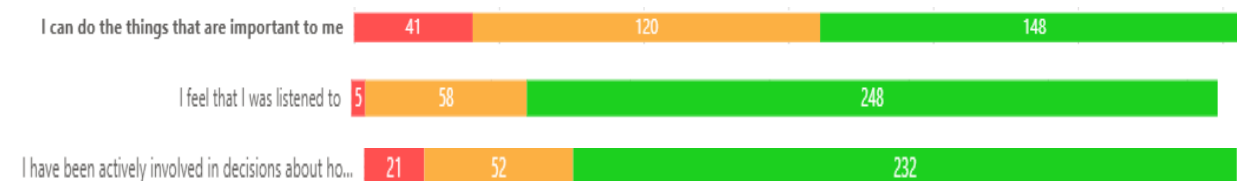
There remain challenges in responding to people's care and support needs as timely as we would want. This is due to continuing pressure across adult social care with referrals from the community as well as from hospitals. Delays in responding to people's needs can be extremely frustrating for people and in some cases can reduce the opportunity for preventative measures to be implemented.

People's presenting needs are becoming increasingly complex to resolve, which means more practitioner time spent on individual cases. We have worked hard to reduce waiting times for assessments and for domiciliary care. Although it is an improving picture there is still more to do. We are working to improve responses at the front-door and have implemented increased oversight of waiting lists.

	2024	2025
Number of people waiting for domiciliary care	33	13
Number of people waiting longer than 30 days	19	6
Number of hours of domiciliary care not filled	306	132

Number of people waiting for an SSWBA assessment	194	128
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Our service user questionnaire helps us understand how well we are achieving our aims. This year, a lower percentage of people feel involved in decisions about their care; feel listened to; and able to do the things that are important to them compared to the previous year.



Adults Questionnaire	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Actual
I can do the things that are important to me	51.3%	48.3%	48.7%	49.5%	47.9%
I have been actively involved in decisions about how my care and support was provided	83.0%	77.4%	76.6%	78.1%	76.1%
I feel that I was listened to	85.9%	81.4%	79.9%	80.4%	79.7%

Workforce

The strength of the service lies in our skilled and dedicated workforce. Practitioners work under significant demand pressures supporting vulnerable people and families through critical times in their lives. The job can be demanding and exhausting with high expectations around professional competence and performance. Ensuring that colleagues have access to effective professional and psychological support is an area of on-going attention.

Quality assurance processes are in place which helps support professional practice and we have developed bespoke training modules around specific areas of practice, for example Keeping Children Safe and the finance module (in Adult Services). We have re-launched our supervision policy but need to do more to ensure that this is fully embedded over the coming year.

In light of the scope and breadth of change programmes across the service, and within the sector as a whole, communicating and engaging so that colleagues feel listened to and supported remains a priority.

The social care workforce team is pivotal in ensuring that we have relevant training programs in place based on the needs of the service.



During the 24-25 year the social care Mon Workforce Development Team (MONWDT) have offered bespoke learning and development to Social Care staff, foster carers, connected carers and partners under the Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme (SCWWDP) grant arrangement. The team has capitalised on the full implementation of the THINQI learning platform within the directorate to increase access to training. Face to face learning and development capacity has also been increased due to temporarily moving to Innovation House Magor in January 2025 where there is access to larger training rooms.

Core Training offer over 24-25 included:



Alongside of these, specific areas of work for the team included:

- Developing a training plan to support the service objective in the implementation of reablement pathway (Short Term Assessment and Reablement Team - START). This was undertaken in partnership with the integrated teams involving subject matter experts including occupational therapy, physiotherapy, falls practitioners, assistive technology and sensory impairment. Ensuring there is a training plan in place to support practice development during implementation will be critical to its success. Ultimately, this will help to reduce waiting times for assessments and maximise opportunities for people to remain as independent as possible.
- The team have been working in partnership with Children's services to develop a bespoke induction programme for the first cohort of children's residential workers in readiness for the first residential setting to open in summer 2025. The learning focus is developing the skills needed to support children effectively using trauma informed and attachment practice models within a residential children's home

environment. This will help children to develop personal resilience, social skills and support their pathway to increased levels of independence. This links to our placement development strategy - supporting children to live in Monmouthshire close to their homes and communities, feeling safe and supported whilst having opportunities to learn life skills.

Workforce Development priorities for 25/26 include:

- Implement the START project reablement competency framework
- Implement the Children's Residential Services training programme
- Increase training numbers for Best Interests Assessors - aiming to get all suitable practitioners qualified as Best Interests Assessors.
- Work alongside children's services and legal experts to develop and roll out a bespoke training plan to ensure the practitioners have the most up to date knowledge and experience in court matters.
- Upskill internal trainers to deliver training in line with the National Safeguarding Learning and Development Standards across the directorate.

Prevention

“The need for care and support is minimised and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring that the best outcomes for people are achieved”

“Resilience within communities is promoted and people are supported to fulfil their potential by actively supporting people who need care and/or support including carers to learn develop and participate in society”

Providing early support and working to help promote individual and community resilience remains central ethos of the service. We have established a coordinated approach to early intervention in children's social services. The SPACE Wellbeing and Family Support Panel supports effective partnership working and continues to be a hub for early intervention and coordinated support for children, young people and their families. Although the total number of referrals into the service has steadily declined over the past 3 years (from the peak demand seen during and post Covid) the complexity of the presenting issues has increased. This has led to some families having to wait longer than we would want to receive the support they need. Primary referral themes relate to emotional, behavioral and psychological wellbeing issues for children.

Evaluation and feedback of family support services provides clear evidence of positive outcomes for families. During 2024/25, 100% of families reported a positive outcome

following a Building Stronger Families team intervention. This illustrates that supporting families in the right way, early on, can make a real difference in ensuring parents and children feel empowered and develop the strategies and tools they need to achieve what matters to them.

Early help services form the foundation of our long-term strategy to prevent and reduce the need for children requiring care.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Prevention and early intervention (Children)						
Local	Percentage of families supported by early help services who report being helped with matter to them (pre statutory services)	84%	84%	87.5 %	100%	100%

Case Study: Building Stronger Families

The family self-referred due to concern's about their child 's difficulties managing emotions and anger at home which was affecting relationships with siblings and overall wellbeing. The goal was to support their child in developing emotional regulation and coping strategies, equip parents with Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) techniques, and improve overall family wellbeing through the Building Strong Families intervention.

11 direct work sessions were delivered using both therapeutic and solution-focused approaches. The child was supported in recognising emotions utilising games and taught coping strategies including, mindfulness, deep breathing and sensory activities.

Emotional support was promoted for all children and improved communication within the family. The child now confidently uses calming strategies whilst the parents manage challenging behaviours using NVR techniques and consistent boundaries. All outcomes from the Families First Plan were achieved and family dynamics have improved.

The Front Door

In 23/24 we saw a significant spike in contacts received by Children's Services. We undertook an audit to understand why this was. The audit highlighted strengths in statutory compliance, assessing risk across sibling groups and decision-making. However; the audit also highlighted challenges including inappropriate referrals from partner agencies, inconsistent thresholds and pathways, and high workflow pressures affecting staff wellbeing. As a result, we reviewed the resources and processes within the Early Help and Assessment Team and engaged with partners to align thresholds and improve understanding.

This year we have seen an expected decrease in the number of contacts received by children's services. In total, we received 5,819 contacts for children regarding statutory social services, a decrease of 17.7%. Less volume means that we can focus more on strengths-based practice and risk management early on, ensuring that each referral is responded to in the best way. Over two thirds of the total contacts were received from police, education and health.

We are expected to make a decision on how to progress a contact by the end of the next working day and during 2024/25 this happened in 100% of contacts.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Front Door (Children)						
CH/001	The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year	4329	5776	5825	7071	5819
CH/002	The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	2700	3379	3508	3879	3223
CH/003	The number of contacts received by statutory children's social services during the year where a decision was made by the end of the next working day	3042	5769	5698	7065	5818
Local	<i>The percentage of contacts received by statutory children's social services during the year where a decision was made by the end of the next working day</i>	70.3%	99.9%	97.8%	99.9%	100.0%
Front Door (Young Carers)						
CA/011	The total number of contacts to statutory social serviced by young carers or professionals contacting the service on their behalf received during the year	143	233	259	282	224
CA/012	Of those identified, the number where advice and assistance was provided	61	86	106	157	124

Assessments

In line with the reduced number of contacts received for children at the front door of children service in 2024/25, there has been a corresponding 20% decrease in the number of completed assessments. Following the completion of an assessment, 33% of

these assessments recommended the need for a care and support plan which is proportionately comparable to previous years.

We are expected to conclude assessments within the statutory timescales of 42 working days and during 2024/25 we achieved this for 97.1% of assessments. This means that children and families are receiving the support they need in a timely way.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Assessments (Children)						
CH/006	The total number of new assessments completed for children during the year	828	884	907	1088	872
Local	<i>The percentage of new assessments completed for children during the year where:</i>					
Local	<i>Needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan</i>	30.1%	29.9%	27.9%	34.4%	33.3%
Local	<i>Needs were able to be met by any other means</i>	54.1%	48.0%	54.4%	48.0%	49.9%
Local	<i>There were no eligible needs to meet</i>	3.1%	1.9%	1.8%	3.2%	3.9%
Local	<i>The percentage of assessments for children completed during the year where there is evidence that the child has been seen</i>	95.1%	96.9%	98.3%	98.3%	98.8%
Local	<i>The percentage of new assessments completed for children during the year that were completed within statutory timescales</i>	87.1%	91.2%	92.3%	95.9%	97.1%
Assessments (Young Carers)						
CA/014	The total number of young carers needs assessments undertaken during the year	36	40	29	16	25
CA/015	The total number of young carers needs assessments undertaken during the year where:					
CA/015a	Needs could be met using a young carer's support plan or care and support plan	16	18	10	12	10
CA/015b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	13	11	11	4	11
CA/015c	There were no eligible needs to meet	0	0	1	0	0

Adults

One of the prime drivers for increased demand in adult social care is the county’s demographic with is seeing an increasingly ageing population. The proportion of residents aged 65 and over is expected to increase to 33.6% by 2043, compared to 25.7% across Wales. Ensuring the sustainability of adult social care requires on-going strategic attention. We want our services to work preventatively and focus on supporting people, especially our more vulnerable and deprived residents, so that people can live well and independently for as long as possible. We feel there is more that we can do across the council to facilitate a coordinated and targeted approach to prevention, strengthening and promoting the vibrant network of community-based support (both formal and informal) which currently exists. This will be a key area of focus over the coming year.

Front Door

When people contact social care, multi-disciplinary professionals are available at the first access point. During 2024/25, the front door of adult services received 8,119 contacts, almost three quarters (5,945) were from people not already in receipt of care and support. Health colleagues continue to be the main source of contacts received.

Of the new contacts received, 3,626 were provided with advice or assistance. Feedback from our customer questionnaire shows 78% (234 / 300) of adults receiving care and support feel they have had the right information or advice when they needed it. Although this relates to people right across the social care system, we would like to see that figure improve.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
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Front Door (Adults)						
AD/001a	The total number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year	-	-	8806	8085	8119
AD/001b	The number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year which were new contacts	5787	6633	6437	5951	5945
AD/002	The number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	3961	4215	3808	3635	3626
Front Door (Carers)						
CA/001	The total number of contacts to statutory social services by adult carers or professionals contacting the service on their behalf received during the year	226	272	351	352	288
CA/002	The number of contacts by adult carers received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	88	92	128	129	84

Adults Questionnaire	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Actual
I have had the right information or advice when I needed it	82.5%	77.4%	75.1%	77.6%	78.0%

We are seeking to strengthen the front-door of adult services to help improve the quality of the information, advice and assistance we provide when people first contact us. We are currently developing a small team of specialist IAA roles to help provide clear and consistent advice and strengthen pathways into community-based support. We are confident that by providing good quality front-door services we reduce the demand and overall waiting times for people who require a more in-depth assessment.

Carers and Young Carers

Providing helpful information to carers is an important element of prevention. 288 contacts were received regarding carers during 2024/25, of which 84 were provided with advice or assistance. The strategic direction of the Carers remit has been to develop and provide relevant information that supports both unpaid carers and professionals alike. To that end, the Monmouthshire Carers Network page has had a refresh, which includes useful signposting links, handbooks and easy to use sign up forms.

Welcome to Monmouthshire Carers Network - Monmouthshire

Welcome to Monmouthshire Carers Network
Article last updated: 30th April 2025



The content is based on common queries we receive and aims to help readers decide their next steps and where to go for support.

Carers' support can often be less formal, such as offering a range of free events and activities. Events remain popular, for both adult and young carers alike. Young carers' attendance increases when parents—and sometimes siblings—can join. Parents say they value time out with their child, away from the caring environment. For many, it's a rare chance to enjoy quality time as a family. Ensuring that carers are actively sign-posted to informal support can be of real benefit in developing peer networks and in helping people sustain their caring roles. This year the numbers of carers registered with the carers team increased from 900 (23/24) to 1,100 in (24/25). Whilst it is a positive that more carers are accessing support, we would like to do more to integrate how the core teams work collaboratively with carers in achieving their personal wellbeing outcomes.

Attendance Numbers	
YC's	190
Adult Carers	411
Number of YC Events	5
Number of Adult Carer Events	12

Feedback from Events

“Great fun and a chance to meet other young carers.” (Young Carer, Drayton Manor Park & Zoo)

“Thank you for giving us a break from everyday caring. It was a real treat.” (Adult Carer, Forest of Dean Railway Trip)

Community Conversations

For people who need additional help to access support we are looking to implement a standard process for accessing “community conversations” within each of the integrated teams. Community conversations are designed to empower residents to share what matters most to them, identify what support they need and work collaboratively to find solutions. Community Conversations are one way in which we want to promote well-being and resilience, helping people connect with community-based activities that prevent, delay, or reduce the need for formal care.

Case Study: Community Conversations

Mrs X is living with dementia and was supported by her husband Mr X in their own home. He provided constant support, reassurance and orientation to Mrs X. Sadly Mr X died suddenly. The family stepped in, but there was a lot to juggle. The family contacted the Integrated Service to ask for support and felt that the only outcome would likely be for Mrs X to enter a care home placement. The social worker brought the family situation into a community conversation. Through discussion within the group a package of support was designed to complement and underpin what the family could do. The support that was offered included a day-centre space for Mrs X with help from Bridges Community Car Scheme to travel there; a befriender for Mrs X; a ‘sitting service’ for additional respite for the carers; access to the memory loss group for Mrs X and her daughter and a visit from The Alzheimer’s Society to give advice to the family about living with dementia. Mrs X was able to remain safely in her own home – an outcome that everyone wanted.

The social worker said: “Meeting regularly with these core members of the Community Conversation means we have strong links as workers, and can therefore discuss people and their situations together in confidence and act quickly, without having to fill in multiple referral forms which don’t represent the full story for a person and their families. It also avoids residents and their families having to repeat their story to every agency who receives a referral, as the workers are far more informed at the starting point.”

Our aim for 25/26 is to ensure that community conversations become fully fledged across north and central teams and that we evaluate the impact on people.

Reablement

The mainstay of prevention within adult services is reablement. Reablement aims to support people to relearn how to do daily activities and increase their independence and confidence. During 2024/25, we provided 309 packages of reablement, with 55.7% of these mitigating the need for further support and 13.3% reduced the need for support.

Although we have been heading in the right direction, there is still more we want to do to increase the number of people accessing the opportunities that reablement provides. Using our integrated structures with health, we are re-designing the reablement pathway including the way we undertake assessments and deploy specialist home carers using our existing workforce. We will be trialing the new approach to reablement in the south of the County during 25/26 aligned to the work we are doing to commission long-term care differently.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Early Intervention and Prevention						
AD/010	The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year	291	240	184	331	309
AD/011	Of which:					
AD/011a	Reduced the need for support	50	54	32	47	41
AD/011b	Maintained the need for the same level of support	45	36	35	74	69
AD/011c	Mitigated the need for support	171	122	106	183	172
AD/011d	Neither reduced, maintained nor mitigated the need for support	25	28	11	27	27
Local	<i>The percentage of packages of reablement completed during the year that mitigated the need for support</i>	58.8%	50.8%	57.6%	55.3%	55.7%

Case Study: Reablement 1

J was referred for emergency reablement via the Duty Social Workers after involvement in a severe accident. They were discharged from hospital reporting they had friends who would support them once home. Once home, J began struggling and realised there were things their friends could not help with. Initially a single reablement call was put in place. On the first day it was noted that J presented as very upset, hungry and thirsty. It was apparent that J was feeling traumatised from the accident and needed help to build their confidence, strength and stamina. Initially, J required full assistance with all personal care and meal/drink preparations. After 2 -3 weeks with the Reablement Team they showed improvement in themselves, appeared less traumatised and their injuries were healing with less pain present. J now has visits twice daily and is engaging with making meals and drinks as well as helping more with personal care. With the determination and support of the Reablement Team J is well on her way to independence and achieving what matters to them.

Reablement maximises people's independence and will help to mitigate demand pressures. Here are a couple of good examples of the difference reablement practice can make for people.

Case Study: Reablement 2

D was referred to the reablement team following a prolonged period of being bed-bound. Whilst D had a care agency assisting them the care only allowed D to sit out of bed for a maximum of 15 minutes. D's goals were focused on improving her daily quality of life by spending more time out of bed. Sitting tolerance needed to be built up incrementally and a collaborative care plan was developed involving the reablement team, social worker, physiotherapist, GP and occupational therapist.

A person-centered flexible approach was maintained and the team ensured that D's progression schedule was aligned with their physical condition and comfort.

Over an 8 week period, D's outcome was achieved reaching 4.5 hours in week 6. D regained the ability to eat upright, watch television and their social engagement has improved significantly.

Assessments and Care & Support Plans

We have been implementing a renewed focus on assessment and review of care and support needs for adults requiring social care support to ensure residents receive the right support to meet their outcomes.

The number of assessments for adults we completed during 2024/25 has increased compared to the previous year, with 2,340 completed in total. Almost one third of those we assessed had needs that require a care and support plan. This is similar for assessments of carers, with an increase in assessments and a similar proportion requiring support.

Regarding carers there was a steep increase in the number of carers assessments undertaken and the number of formal carers' support plans in place.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
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Assessments (Adults)						
AD/004	The number of new assessments completed for adults during the year	2035	2177	2205	1929	2340
AD/005	Of which:					
AD/005a	Needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan	721	826	671	486	689
AD/005b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	630	542	583	482	557
AD/005c	There were no eligible needs to meet	627	506	553	573	522
AD/012a	The number of adults with a care and support plan at 31 March	1813	1728	1651	1580	1378
Assessments (Carers)						
CA/004	The total number of carers needs assessments for adults undertaken during the year	132	196	192	147	299
CA/005	Of which:					
CA/005a	Needs could be met with a carer's support plan or care and support plan	39	48	58	34	83
CA/005b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	32	43	63	24	30
CA/005c	There were no eligible needs to meet	55	25	27	44	40

Partnership and Integration

Quality Standards:

“Effective partnerships are in place to commission and fully deliver fully integrated, high quality sustainable outcomes for people”

“People are encouraged to be involved in the design and delivery of their care and support as equal partners

Children's

Partnership arrangements within the directorate remain strong. Within children's services, care and support plans depend on solid partnership working across teams and with our various partners including health, education, housing and probation amongst others. At the end of the year, 585 children had a care and support plan in place. This is an increase of 83 from the number of children that we were supporting at the same point last year.

The number of young carers with a care and support plan that includes support for their caring role has remained relatively stable.

Targeted family support is the bedrock of achieving good outcomes for children. It is deeply embedded within the service, founded on an integrated approach between therapists, psychologists, foster carers, family support practitioners and social workers. Over recent years we have continued to develop family support tailored to the needs of children and families. This means that we can support families according to the specific risk factors and issues that are affecting them. Access to family support can be on a voluntary basis following an assessment; during a period of child protection registration; if a child needs additional support because of their disability or if a child is looked after.

This year we supported 67.5% of children with a care and support plan to remain at home. The proportion of children supported to remain at home shows a gradual upward trend which correlates with our objective of safely reducing the numbers of children in care.

With the help of Welsh Government grants, we have expanded family support services further this year including:

- Family Resolutions Team – providing a holistic and intensive interparental conflict and domestic abuse service
- Families Reconnect Team – supporting Children Looked After to return home to their family through assessing and managing risk in the community.
- The Out of Hours Support Service - providing supervision and support for children to remain at home during Child Protection investigations or Court ordered assessments.

All of our family support services work collaboratively to reduce need and support families to live lives on their own terms - promoting resilience and helping people to learn, develop and define their own best outcomes.

Case Study: Family Support & Protection Team

Prospective parents with learning difficulties were referred to the Family Support and Protection Team (FSPT). The parents completed both pre and post baby parenting work as well as Circle of Security. After the birth, mother, father and baby were all placed into a parent and baby foster placement. The

FSPT found that the parents were struggling with their relationship and there was some conflict present and so the Family Resolution Team became involved.

This was extremely positive and enabled them to communicate more effectively and become a better team as parents.

With the nature of the foster carers, social worker, family support worker and the work that the family did the family are now thriving in the community.

Case Study: Family Resolution Team

The family had a domestic abuse relationship within a household with 3 children. The parents were still cohabiting despite being separated for a year and were referred to Social Services following an incident of domestic abuse.

The mother was enrolled in the Freedom Programme for Women and the father completed the Healthy Relationship for Dad's based on the Freedom Programme for Men. Both completed the work and the mother decided she needed to leave the home and the relationship.

The Family Resolution Team collaborated with housing for emergency housing and furniture.

To enable successful co-parenting mediation was initiated and agreements were met and this enabled the family to reach a place where they closed to children's services.

Diverting children from coming into care and helping children safely exit care is intensive work. It can require multi-agency involvement and careful care planning and risk management to ensure that the right outcome is achieved. In this respect it is critical that social workers and managers are supported in their practice and decision making. Supporting children to live safely within their homes and communities remains the central objective of the service.

Reviews

Reviewing care in a timely way helps us ensure children are receiving appropriate support and protection. In the last year, we undertook 97.9% of child protection reviews on time, this is a significant increase on previous years. We completed all the reviews of children looked after within statutory timescales with 100% being completed on time. During 2024/25, we focused on increasing the timeliness of reviews of children requiring care and support, we achieved this by increasing the reviews completed in statutory timescales to 88.7%.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Plans (Children)						
CH/015a	The number of children with a care and support plan at 31st March	515	518	542	502	585
Local	<i>The percentage of children supported to remain living within their family</i>	58.6%	59.8%	61.1%	60.2%	67.5%
CH/016	The total number of children with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment at 31st March	48	54	51	55	57
CA/017b	The number of children or young people with a care and support plan who also have carer responsibilities	22	34	32	28	35
Local	<i>The percentage of reviews due during the year that were completed within statutory timescales, which were:</i>					
Local	<i>Child protection reviews</i>	94.2%	96.0%	84.0%	81.7%	97.9%
Local	<i>Looked after reviews (including pathway plan reviews and pre-adoption reviews)</i>	99.8%	98.6%	99.0%	99.6%	100.0%
Local	<i>reviews of children in need of care and support (including children supported by a direct payment)</i>	67.3%	66.3%	65.4%	77.1%	88.7%

Adults

Within adult services partnership working is brought together under the Integrated Services Partnership Board (ISPB), which is co-chaired between the Head of Monmouthshire Borough, Primary and Community Care Division and The Chief Officer. The Board represents the integrated leadership structure between primary and community health and social care within Adult Services. The County's Neighborhood Care Networks are represented via the 2 GP leads (north and south) and the voluntary sector has a clear voice, represented through GAVO.

At a strategic level the partnership is developing a shared understanding of the county's population needs, gaps in services and how resources can be best aligned to improve outcomes. Operationally, strong relationships engender shared problem-solving and flexibility across the workforce. Examples of this include the development of community links workers, the expansion of frailty services in the north of the county, shared commissioning approaches to supporting people living with dementia and the partnership approach to improving hospital discharge arrangements.

Over the next year, a central objective for the partnership is to continue to focus on preventative approaches to responding to local needs aligned with ABuHB model of Place Based Care. Wherever possible, we will advocate for increased autonomy at a local level so that as a partnership we can use resources to build on existing strengths and tailor services to local communities.

Care and Support Plans and the Provision of Services

We supported 1,378 adults with a care and support plan which is a decrease on the previous year. [There has been a renewed focus on data cleansing and validation which has exaggerated the apparent difference.] We are seeing an increase in the complexity of people's support needs, linked to the county's aging demographic.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
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Care and Support Plans (Adults)						
AD/012a	The number of adults with a care and support plans at 31 March	1813	1728	1651	1580	1378
Care and Support Plans (Carers)						
CA/008a	The number of adult carers with a support plan at 31 March	68	105	86	70	32
CA/008b	The number of adults with a care and support plan who also have carer responsibilities	41	64	50	50	30

Supporting people effectively requires a partnership approach, just as it does within children's services. Our integrated structure within adult services facilitates this and helps achieve flexibility through a shared approach across social care, Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists.

Case Study: Occupational Therapy

E was identified as a functional alcoholic with depression and anxiety whose goals included regaining functionality and to improve their quality of life after experiencing self-neglect, malnutrition and frequent falls.

E was discharged from hospital with reablement services but initially refused to engage.

An OT technician visited E and using an activity analysis and a graded approach, tasks were broken down into manageable steps. They also worked on helping E to leave the house with family members and interact within the community.

E has since reconnected with key people, and is developing meaningful relationships. Their quality of life has significantly improved and they have managed to leave the house and interact in the community. Anxiety has been reduced and confidence has increased.

Supporting Carers through partnership approaches

Under the auspices of the Regional Partnership Board, this year has seen the introduction of Dementia Hubs across the five Gwent local authority areas. The hubs

function as a one-stop shop offering information, advice, and support for individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. Services include dementia cafés, support groups, and signposting to local resources. The Monmouthshire pilot is currently located at the Wellbeing Information Centre (WIC) in Abergavenny and is operated by the Alzheimer's Society.

For carers who have been assessed as requiring more formal care and support the Bridging the Gap Gwent service is making a real difference. The Bridging the Gap service in Monmouthshire is a preventative respite scheme designed to support unpaid carers both adults and young carers - by offering them short breaks from their caring responsibilities. This initiative is coordinated by the carers team in partnership with NEWCIS, the North East Wales Carers Information Service. Bridging the Gap Gwent has provided vital opportunities for both Young Carers and Adult Carers in Monmouthshire to take a break, recharge, and reconnect with themselves and others. Over the last year, there has been an increased awareness about the service reflected in a significant increase in referrals from 44 in 2023/24 to 146 in 2024/25.

Domiciliary Care (Care at Home)

Over the year we have continued to improve access to care at home for those who need it. A combination of our activities and external factors has seen the market for care at home stabilise. As a result, we have been able to significantly reduce the number of unmet care hours from 804 in March 2023 to 132 hours in March 2025, with 98.2% of hours of long-term domiciliary care now being fulfilled.

We provide care at home through a mixture of in-house provision and through commissioning with external provider agencies. We have developed a long-term strategy for commissioning domiciliary care through awarding longer-term block contracts and moving away from the current spot-purchase / brokerage model. One of the aims is to provide high quality, sustainable domiciliary care across the county and to foster an integrated partnership approach with our providers. This strategy aligns with the tenets of place-based care and will help to ensure that we have sufficient in-house provision to focus on reablement. The Domiciliary Care Commissioning strategy was approved in May 2024, and the first stages are currently being implemented. Taking the commissioning strategy forward is a priority action for 2025/26.

Hospital Discharge

We work with partners in both primary and secondary health to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital and support timely discharges. We are expanding our specialist integrated services aimed at supporting frailer people to get the acute help they need at

home and avoid any unnecessary admission to hospital. We want to use shared data so that we can offer high level preventative services to those people who are the most at risk of hospital admission. When they are admitted to hospital, frailer people potentially encounter longer stays. These ideas are at early stages and will continue to form the basis of partnership discussions over the year ahead.

Managing the pressure within the hospital system and ensuring well-coordinated, timely discharges for people remains challenging and forms a significant proportion of our work in adults' services. The impact on social care is exacerbated during periods when the health board is experiencing pressure within their acute sites.

There are risks associated with people remaining in hospital longer than necessary. To tackle this, we convene weekly multi-disciplinary meetings to identify and unblock delays when they arise. The main reasons for social care delays include waiting for assessment, capacity in care homes and capacity within reablement and domiciliary care.

Our performance is closely monitored and measured on the basis of the number of delays (people) and the total number of days delayed. The number of patients awaiting discharge varies during the year. Throughout 2024/25 our performance demonstrated that the number of Monmouthshire residents delaying in hospital ranged from 49 to 63 per month. At year end (March 2025) it had reduced to 41 patients, 26 of whom were awaiting discharge for social care reasons. More significantly, at year end (March 2025) the total number of bed days taken up with medically fit Monmouthshire residents had reduced from its highest at 3392 in November 2024 (55 people delayed) to 1325 (41 people delayed) demonstrating a significant improvement in the length of time individual Monmouthshire residents were delayed in hospital beds waiting for adult care services to support their safe discharge.

During 2025/26 we want to use the framework of the ISPB to reflect on learning and continue to put in place mechanisms for avoiding unnecessary admissions to hospital and achieving timely discharge.

Care home placements / residential care

Whilst we have seen a gradual reduction over the year in the number of adults in receipt of home care, from 535 in April 2024 to 475 in March 2025, correspondingly there has been an increase in the number of adults in receipt of residential care over the same period, from 319 in April 2024 to 357 in March 2025. The increasing need for residential

care is a trend nationally, in Monmouthshire this increased demand is mainly due to an ageing population and increasingly complex needs requiring increased support.

Reviews

Our continued focus is on ensuring we have the capacity and support available to review and assess care requirements to provide support that meets needs with the right services, allowing choice and consistency including the provision of reablement to try to reduce further needs. 70.5% of adult's care was reviewed in the year, an increase from previous years.

Feedback from adults' social care services users shows continued high levels of satisfaction with their care and support; 84.7% of adults were happy in 2024/25, the same as the previous year.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Provision of Services and Reviews						
AD/012a	The number of adults with a care and support plan at 31 March	1813	1728	1651	1580	1378
AD/016	The number of care and support plans for adults that were due to be reviewed during the year	-	2094	1717	1580	1296
AD/017	The number of care and support plans for adults that were due a review in the collection year and were reviewed at least once during the collection year	-	1123	987	856	914
Local	<i>The percentage of care and support plans for adults that were due a review in the collection year and were reviewed at least once during the collection year</i>	-	53.6%	57.5%	54.2%	70.5%
AD/030	The total volume of services provided on 31 March	-	-	1,380	1,368	1,163

Adults Questionnaire	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Actual
I am happy with the care and support I have had	89.0%	86.9%	83.5%	84.6%	84.7%
The service I get is reliable and I'm told about any changes in good time	82.1%	75.8%	79.1%	78.4%	73.5%

I usually get assistance from the same staff	70.1%	68.4%	71.3%	70.3%	65.3%
Do you think that the care and support you get still meet your needs?	91.2%	87.9%	87.0%	89.4%	86.4%

Partnership approaches to support the development of placements

Ty Castell

In November 2024 the council opened its first bespoke supported accommodation Ty Castell for young people aged 16 and over. The provision is aimed at young people who are stepping down from residential care or foster care or emergency and requiring a stable environment to work toward independence plans. Ty Castell is operated in partnership with an independent provider, with whom MCC has developed a strong working relationship. The project was enabled through capital money working through the Regional Partnership Board and depended on a close partnership approach between children's services, estates and commissioning teams. Whilst not without its teething problems, the project has been operating at full capacity in line with its intended aims, supporting young people to remain in, or return to Monmouthshire, and develop their independence.

Severn View Parc

July 2024 saw the official opening of Severn View Parc, which has been acclaimed as a pinnacle of partnership working between health, housing, Welsh Government and social care. Severn View Park is a specialist care home for people living with dementia. The home provides 32 bedrooms for long-term support, using a relationship-centered household model of care. There are 8 short-term beds to support access to both respite and reablement. The new care home aims to maintain connections with the surrounding community and is proving its worth in supporting great outcomes for people.

Case Study: Severn View Parc

Elderly couple Mr and Mrs D, had been together for nearly 6 decades. Mrs D, is living with advanced dementia and Mr D is her main carer despite being in his 90s with his own significant health challenges. Mr D was determined to continue caring for his wife at home but it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to manage her personal care needs alone.

The couple were supported by professionals through reablement with twice daily personal care which enabled Mr D to rest more and to maintain his caring role for longer. A short-term respite was arranged at Severn Park to enable Mr D to have a much needed break.

Over time as their health needs increased it became clear that long-term residential care would be required. Mr Ds positive experience with respite at Severn View gave him the confidence and reassurance that his wife would be well looked after.

Mrs D is now a settled resident in Severn View and is visited by her husband almost daily using his mobility scooter.

Mr D can't speak highly enough of the staff - "they are beyond brilliant"

Wellbeing

Quality Standards:

"People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm"

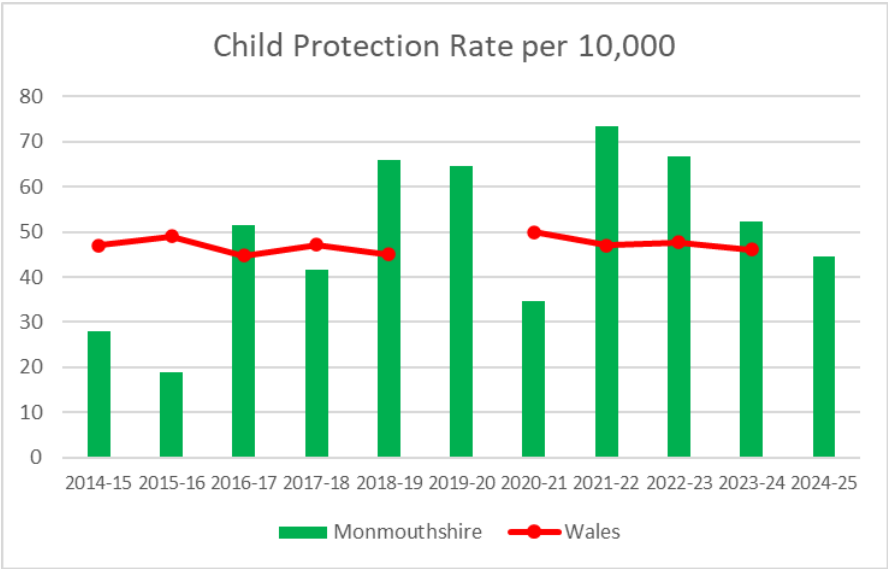
"People are supported to actively manage their well-being and make their own decisions so that they are able to achieve their full potential and live independently for as long as possible"

Children

We have robust processes in place to ensure that children are protected from abuse and neglect. All new contacts into the service are screened through the safeguarding hub where decisions are made about any next steps required. During the year we undertook 697 safeguarding, Section 47 (child protection) enquiries, a 4% decrease on

the previous year. The number of enquiries that progressed to an initial child protection conference decreased from 153 in 2023/24 to 116 in 2024/25. These slight decreases relate to the work that we have been doing at the front door to support decision making and promote strength-based practice and active risk management early on.

The number of children on the child protection register at the end of the year has also decreased from 89 in 2023/24 to 76 in 2024/25. The rate of 45 children on the child protection register per 10,000 child population in Monmouthshire is in line with the most recently published Welsh rate from the previous year, 2023/24.



The percentage of children who have been re-registered on the child protection register within a year of being removed has increased from the previous year to 4.7%.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Safeguarding Children						

CH/021	The number of Strategy Meetings held during the year that progressed to Section 47 enquiries	453	630	641	729	697
CH/022	The total number of Section 47 enquiries completed during the year that progressed to Initial Child Protection Conference	113	176	145	153	116
Local	<i>The percentage of initial child protection conferences held during the collection year that were held within statutory timescales</i>	42.6%	23.6%	79.3%	79.7%	83.6%
CH/026a	The total number of children on the child protection register at 31 st March	60	123	113	89	76
CH/027	The total number of initial core group meetings held during the year	78	131	127	134	103
CH/028	The total number of initial core group meetings held during the year that were held within statutory timescales	72	120	112	120	98
Local	<i>The percentage of initial core group meetings due during the year that were held within statutory timescales</i>	66.7%	76.4%	86.8%	87.6%	92.5%
CH/029	The total number of visits to children placed on the child protection register that were due during the year	2115	2161	2566	2533	1940
Local	<i>The percentage of visits to children placed on the child protection register that were due during the year that were completed</i>	-	-	65.0%	94.6%	98.2%
Local	<i>The percentage of visits to children placed on the child protection register that were due during the year that were completed within approved timescales</i>	66.6%	58.1%	37.5%	63.6%	81.4%
Local	<i>The percentage of re-registrations of children on local authority Child Protection Registers (CPR)</i>	5.6%	0.6%	4.7%	0.7%	4.7%
Local	The average length of time for all children who were on the CPR during the year	302	215	263	283	255

A specific area of focus this year was to improve the timeliness of statutory visits to children on the child protection register. We did this through practical support, training and mentoring and increased management oversight of data. In the last year we completed 81.4% of visits within the required timescales. Where children are at risk of

harm or abuse, statutory visits are one of the ways in which we ensure children's safety and welfare.

We also increased the timeliness of initial child protection conferences, with 83.6% completed within statutory timescales. Following registration, core group meetings are held to implement and review the multi-agency child protection plan. The percentage of initial core groups undertaken within 10 working days from conference has increased to 92.5%.

These figures show a significant improvement compared to previous years, with our aim now to ensure this improvement is maintained.

A period of child protection triggers intensive family support work and monitoring usually on a multiagency basis. A care, support and protection plan is put in place to focus on what outcomes must be achieved in order to keep the child / children safe. The majority of families access support effectively and are able to reduce risks so that children can be de-registered.

Case Study: Myst

X was removed from their birth mother's care as a baby and subsequently spent time in foster care before adoption. X was referred to MyST to help stabilise the family system and enable X to remain at home. X presented with psychological needs and risk of exploitation. MyST intervention included using attachment theory, behavioural theory, and systemic practice as well as a 24 hour on-call service. X had weekly sessions with his Young Persons Practitioner and engaged in direct therapeutic work to develop emotional literacy, distress tolerance and emotional regulation skills. MyST worked with X intensively for almost 2 years and now X has developed more confidence and reduced anxiety when out in public. X successfully passed all of their G.C.S.Es and at the point of closure was attending sixth form. X's risk of exploitation has been significantly reduced and they have been removed from the Child Protection Register.

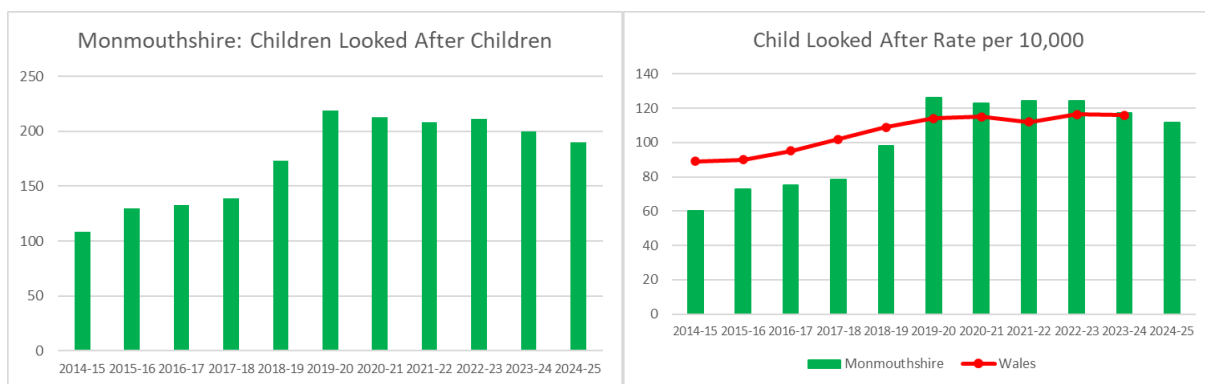
X - "I'm a much happier person now, more excitable"

Some families need support over a considerable period of time in order to sustain the positive changes they have made.

This case study from MYST is a good example of the difference that can be made through being able to maintain support over a longer period.

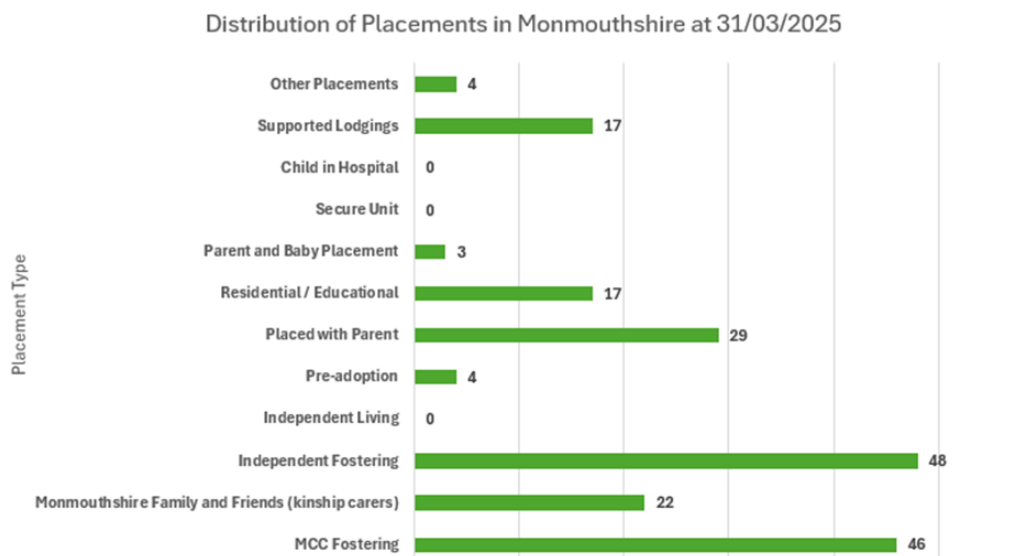
Children who are Looked After

When the risks of remaining within their families or communities cannot be mitigated, some children need to enter care to ensure that they are safeguarded. Monmouthshire is supporting 190 children who are looked after (31st March 2025) 12 of whom were Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. The number of children looked after has dropped below 200 for the first time in five years. The rate of 112 children looked after per 10,000 child population in Monmouthshire is below the most recently published average rate of children who are looked after across Wales in 2023/24. This is keeping with our objective of supporting children to remain with their families wherever it is safe to do so.



During the year 60 children entered care, and 70 children left care. Of these 70 children, 22 left care by virtue of turning 18. The service supported 48 children to leave care through developing an alternative pathway for them, drawing on the close working between social workers and family support services. During 2024/25, 11 children were supported to return to their families (5 following discharge of an interim care orders); 27 children were supported to be placed with Special Guardians and 9 children were adopted.

The distribution graph of where children are placed is gradually changing in keeping with our strategic intentions. Of note is the reduction in the numbers of children living under Placement with Parent Regulations; the reduction in numbers of children living in kinship care arrangements under Care Orders and the closing gap between IFA and in-house foster care provision.



Children's Placements

Children who become looked after can present with complex needs due to the adversity they have experienced. Although it is slowly improving, there remains a shortage of suitable placements for children requiring support, particularly those children whose needs are such that they cannot be placed with foster carers.

We have analysed demand and set an ambitious strategy to develop children's residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements within the county. This aligns with the Welsh policy objective to transition to *not-for-profit care*. Developing our own in-house placements will secure better outcomes for children and help in achieving high quality, sustainable social care services for the Council.

Developing placements requires a partnership approach. We have completed one project providing aged 16+ supported accommodation with a further three projects, two children's residential homes and one further aged 16+ supported accommodation. This will improve availability of placements and help to ensure children and young people can remain close to their communities. Progressing the Placement Development Strategy is a priority action for 2025/26.

Foster Care

The recruitment and retention of foster carers remains a significant challenge across Wales and the rest of the UK. We have an unfailing commitment to the recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers. Our fostering strategy has helped us achieve a small

increase in fostering households and whilst our foster carer retention is generally good; we have an aging population of foster carers, with the potential for some of our fostering households to retire in the next few years.

Overall, the total number of Local Authority foster carers has not increased sufficiently to meet our needs. We still have a reliance on commissioning “for profit” foster placements for children from independent fostering agencies.

As of March 2025, 35.8% of placements of children looked after were made with in-house foster carers, with a net increase of one fostering household. We have reviewed the foster care offer to Monmouthshire carers to support recruitment and retention and agreed a case for investment in generic in-house foster carers [agreed May 2025]. This includes increasing the fees paid to Monmouthshire (in-house) foster carers, and a 30% reduction in Council Tax. Being able to place children with Monmouthshire carers, where we can support the quality and integration of the care provided, improves outcomes for children and helps to reduce costs.

Communicating and engaging with foster carers helps the service to listen and understand what makes a difference to them. We have been working this year on improving the connection between foster carers and the children's social work teams and ensuring that they are actively involved in care planning wherever possible. Our in-house carers are skilled, caring and generous people who are a tremendous asset to the Council. We continue to celebrate their invaluable contributions to children through our annual foster carer appreciation event.

In 2025/26 we have a target to recruit more in-house foster carers.

Working with care leavers

When children are in care, we work in partnership with the carers to promote the development of personal and emotional resilience in children and increase their independence. We have a specialist service (BASE) so that foster carers (both generic and kinship carers) receive the support they need to navigate the care of children who will have experienced adversity, disruption, loss and broken relationships.

This support extends when children leave care. A care leavers group is in place to facilitate peer support, prevent feelings of isolation, have fun and develop confidence and independent living skills. The young people play an active part in what the groups discuss and in planning social trips. The young people really value the social aspect of getting together and through it some valuable friendships have been made and maintained. Young people benefit from hearing what their peers have to say about their

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Children Looked After and Care Leavers						
Children Looked After						
CH/039	The number of children looked after at 31 March	213	208	211	200	190
Local	<i>Number of Children Adopted during the Year</i>	1	9	10	7	8
Local	<i>Number of Children Leaving Care with Special Guardianship Orders during the Year</i>	11	13	9	23	25
Local	<i>Number of Generic Foster Carers at 31 March</i>	38	40	39	38	39
Local	<i>Percentage of Looked After Children placed with MCC generic or kinship foster carers at 31 March</i>	41.3%	41.3%	42.2%	36.5%	35.8%
CH/043	The total number of children looked after at 31 March who have experienced three or more placements during the year	9	14	16	22	Not available
CH/044	The total number of children looked after on the 31 March who have experienced one or more changes of school during the year (excluding transitional arrangements, moves associated with adoption or moves home)	15	8	17	11	18
Care Leavers						
CH/052	The total number of care leavers who experience homelessness during the year (As defined by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014) within 12 months of leaving care	4	4	5	8	8
CH/053	The total number of care experienced young people in categories 1 to 6 at the 31 March	64	60	73	77	88

experiences of leaving care, moving into their own accommodation and building their futures as young adults on their own terms.

Adults

Adults are referred into safeguarding where they are vulnerable or lack of capacity and where there are concerns about the risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Adult safeguarding has seen an increase in the volume of reports received during the year.

During 2024/25, 640 reports were made regarding 490 adults. Most reports are from care providers and the highest reason for referral is under the category of neglect.

The number of reports leading to enquiries has decreased during the year, despite there being an increase in reports. During 2024/25, 86.5% of enquiries were completed within 7 working days.

80.3% of adults tell us they feel safe, which is in line with the longer-term trend of responses. Where people do not feel safe, comments often refer to concerns about mobility and fear of falling.

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Adult Safeguarding						
AS/001	Number of adults suspected of being at risk of abuse or neglect reported during the year	463	528	438	441	490
AD/020	The total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk received during the year	680	799	577	586	640
AD/022	The total number of reports received during the collection year where it was alleged that there was abuse under the primary category of:					
AD/022a	Neglect	258	344	242	286	337
AD/022b	Physical abuse	260	269	229	210	225
AD/022c	Sexual abuse	35	56	27	41	38
AD/022d	Emotional or Psychological abuse	176	214	145	160	158
AD/022e	Financial abuse	106	97	114	102	87
AD/023	The total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk where it is necessary for enquires to be made	509	583	418	396	347
AD/024	The total number of enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse	262	382	361	334	300
Local	<i>The percentage of enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse</i>	51.5%	65.5%	86.4%	84.3%	86.5%
AD/026	The total number of enquiries where it was determined that additional action should be taken	336	440	282	329	296

Adults Questionnaire	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Actual
I feel safe	78.8%	78.3%	81.3%	80.6%	80.3%

Over the year, there were 296 adults where it was felt that additional actions needed to be taken to ensure that the individual was safeguarded. Actions will vary depending on the situation and require a partnership approach.

Case Study: Adult Safeguarding

X suffers from depression and anxiety. She is an informal carer for her mother. X's brother misuses substances and has a history of antisocial behaviour and criminal activity. X was referred to Adult Safeguarding as her brother's substance misuse increased, escalating risks at home. X reported physical assaults and financial and emotional abuse by her brother. An urgent strategy discussion with Gwent Police led to immediate safeguarding actions. The case was referred to MARAC, and X was allocated an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA). Additional safeguards were put in place to protect X and her mother at home. Through a multi-agency approach, X now lives safely with her mother and continues to receive support from various services, helping her to protect herself from her brother and rebuild her life.

Aside from formal safeguarding processes, many cases across the service require a sensitive approach balancing the rights of individuals to make their own decisions and choices.

Case Study: Adult Safeguarding 2

X is an elderly gentleman who has lived in Monmouthshire all his life, running his own business. He has lived alone in a privately owned bungalow for over 30 years and has no relatives living in the UK. X was experiencing significant self-neglect, both personally and within his home environment. Concerns were raised about poor hygiene, unclean living conditions, and safety risks due to clutter and disrepair. X expressed a strong desire to remain in his own home, where he feels safe and comfortable, but he was worried about falling and acknowledged difficulties with dressing and maintaining hygiene. The practitioner listened carefully to what was important to X and took time to explore risks and options with him. Support was gradually introduced including meal deliveries, care line to assist in the event of falls and access to specialist reablement. X has now accepted support with hygiene and dressing and his home environment has improved significantly reducing his risk of falls. X has regained confidence, reduced self-neglect behaviours, and has restarted using public transport independently. Despite the initial concerns X has remained at home, aligning with his expressed wishes and wellbeing goals.

Other Information Section

Inspections and reviews

We work closely with Care Inspectorate Wales inspectors and value their involvement and feedback to help drive service improvements. In April 2025 Care Inspectorate Wales carried out an improvement check of Monmouthshire's adult services. The improvement check letter was received in June 2025 and taken into scrutiny committee. The improvement check was a follow up to their Performance Evaluation Inspection (PEI) conducted in July 2022. The inspection assessed the progress made in addressing previously identified areas for improvement, full details are available here [Local authority improvement check letter: Monmouthshire County Council adult services | Care Inspectorate Wales](#)

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 centered 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

Areas requiring further development included:

- 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'

The outcomes from the inspection are being developed into a more detailed set of actions, cross-referenced against existing programme implementation plans in the service. Further details are available here [Template \(with notes\) - Cabinet Report and exempt certificate](#). Taking forward the outcomes from the inspection will be a key focus over the year ahead.

Each year, Audit Wales publishes an Audit Plan setting out the work they plan to undertake at the council. As part of the plan, they have undertaken a range of audits during the year. This included a regional review examining whether health boards and local authorities have effective arrangements in place to ensure the timely discharge of patients out of hospital.

The report, available here [Aneurin Bevan University Health Board – Discharge Planning Progress Update | Audit Wales](#), sets out the findings from the Auditor General’s review of the arrangements to support effective flow out of hospital in the Gwent Region. The report makes several recommendations for both the health board and local authorities to respond to and a collective response to address these has been developed and is contained within the report.

Complaints and Representations

Children

28 complaints were received about Children’s Services in the year ending 31 March 2024 compared with 33 in 2023/24. Llais Advocacy service assisted 3 people to raise a complaint about Children’s Services. No complaints were linked to a protected characteristic.

Stage 1

23 stage 1 complaints were registered, 17 of which were resolved at Stage 1, the local resolution stage.

Stage 1 complaints were received from parents with the most discernible trend being a perceived lack of communication, alleged failure of processes, staff conduct, disagreement with decisions made, lack of support and concern over standards. More complaints were received within the front-door of the service than with other teams. This is reflective of the volume of referrals that the team deals with as well as the fact that the majority of new child protection enquiries are undertaken by this team. We have taken steps to address volume and resource issues with the front door.

Stage 2

8 complaints were dealt with at the formal investigation stage. 6 complaints escalated from stage 1 and there were 4 complaints that proceeded directly to Stage 2.

Most stage 2 complaints were from parents/carers. For this reporting period, we did not receive any complaints directly from young people. However, we received 2 from NYAS Advocacy service who advocated on behalf of 2 young people.

Stage 2 Complaint	Concern	Outcome
1	Lack of compassion, errors in the process, miscommunication, misrepresentation and inaccuracies in documents	19 elements not upheld 4 partially upheld 2 were upheld 2 withdrawn

2	Inaccurate and incomplete assessment, not following procedures	6 elements upheld 1 element not upheld 1 element inconclusive
3	Inappropriate response to a referral; lack of information regarding timeframes; lack of communication and staff conduct	8 elements upheld 5 elements not upheld 2 elements partially upheld.
4	Misinformation; issues with contact arrangements; poor communication	0 elements upheld
5	Poor handling of a Section 47 investigation; lack of support offered with any care or support; flawed Court report	3 elements upheld 8 elements partially upheld 4 elements inconclusive 6 elements were not upheld.
6	Mistakes in process; poor communication; incorrect reports; delays in support	4 elements not upheld 1 element partially upheld
7	Staff conduct; lack of continuity, failure to conduct statutory visits; receiving correspondence late; issues with contact sessions; lack of communication	6 elements upheld 3 partially upheld 8 were not upheld
8	Issues with a social worker's visits to their child; lack of responses; issues regarding Child Looked After reviews, staff conduct.	2 elements upheld 8 were not upheld

All the stage 2 complaints relate to families who are (or had been) within formal child protection processes. Complaints are becoming increasingly detailed and reflect some of the challenges in working with families either where there are already high levels of parental conflict; or where parents fundamentally disagree with the outcomes of child protection processes. Themes that arise include ensuring that practitioners understand the importance of working with parents who have Parental Responsibility but who do not have the direct care of their children; skills in working with conflicting parents; working on the accuracy and timeliness of reports and maintaining clear communication about the child protection framework / process. These issues are being addressed through core training.

Adults

22 complaints were received regarding Adult Services in the year ending 31 March 2025 compared with 18 in 2023/24. Llais Advocacy service assisted 3 people to raise

their complaints about Adult Services. No complaints were linked to a protected characteristic.

Stage 1

19 complaints were registered at Stage 1. 1 Stage 1 complaint from 2023-2024 was also started in this period. 16 of the complaints were resolved at Stage 1 (the local resolution stage).

The most discernible trends within stage 1 complaints included a perceived lack of communication e.g. complaints that staff do not return calls or update them on their cases. Other topics of complaints include alleged failure of processes, staff conduct, reduction in services, concerns with transfer of care as well as the standard Stage 2

Stage 2

5 complaints were dealt with via the formal investigation (stage 2). 2 complaints escalated from Stage 1 and there were 3 complaints that proceeded directly to Stage 2.

Stage 2 Complaint	Concern	Outcome
1	Lack of communication / failure to take action / inaccurate information	2 elements of the complaint were upheld 1 element not upheld.
2	Reduction of direct payments / issues concerning the assessment.	2 elements upheld
3	Issues regarding a financial assessment and deprivation of assets.	2 elements not upheld
4	Disagreement with the decision made regarding the financial assessment	1 element upheld 4 elements not upheld 1 element partially upheld
5	No annual review of need being undertaken and the inadequate support	2 elements not upheld

Alongside of ensuring clarity in our communication regarding processes and decision making within adult services, there is an emerging theme within complaints regarding financial assessments and charging. In response we have introduced a finance module to support practice knowledge regarding financial assessments and charging and are looking to review how we provide early information and advice to people around social care finance.

Other Sources of Information

Equality and Diversity

The council has a long-standing commitment to equality and diversity. Our fourth Strategic Equality Plan, produced under the Equality Act 2010 sets the council's objectives to ensure we deliver better outcomes for people with protected characteristics. We produce annual monitoring reports that provide updates on progress on the action plan in the Strategic Equality Plan and evidence of good practice being carried out across the council departments. These can be found [here](#).

In July 2024 and September 2024 ADSS Cymru published 2 reports specifically addressing racism within social care across Wales.

The first Recruitment and Career Progression for Staff from Ethnic Minority Backgrounds raised issues regarding potential bias within recruitment practices and potential gaps in data. <https://www.adss.cymru/en/blog/post/delivering-social-care-in-an-anti-racist-wales-report>

The second report Delivering Social Care in an Anti-Racist Wales reported on the lived experiences of people from ethnic minority backgrounds working in the sector. The report found many instances where staff from ethnic minority backgrounds were subject to racism by colleagues. <https://www.adss.cymru/en/blog/post/delivering-social-care-in-an-anti-racist-wales-eliminating-racism-in-the-workplace-report>

The reports contain a number of recommendations for Local Authorities. The service is starting to respond to these in partnership with HR colleagues and linked closely with the strategic equalities action plan. This includes implementing mandatory cultural awareness training for all social care practitioners, managers and leaders. Progressing some of the recommendations in the report is a priority action for 2025/26.

The Welsh Language

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and accompanying Welsh Language standards, place a legal duty on councils to treat Welsh and English equally, to promote the Welsh Language and provide services to the public through the medium of Welsh. We have a Welsh Language Strategy for 2022-2027, which identifies a vision of how the language will look in Monmouthshire in five years and is accompanied by targets to help achieve it. We produce annual monitoring reports that assess our progress against our Welsh language commitments under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards. These can be found [here](#).

Our Welsh Language Officer plays a crucial role in supporting all workforce plans for the Welsh language. These plans are bespoke for social care and offer more self-study courses for greater flexibility. We are utilizing Thinqi LMS platform for recording induction, and work is in progress on the reporting framework. All staff have access to the SCW Welsh Language Awareness course, which is also incorporated into our corporate induction.

In terms of recruitment, we have advertised a total of 384 Local Authority posts. Of these, 9 posts are assessed as Welsh Language Essential, and 375 are assessed as Welsh Language Desirable. All vacant posts are assessed for the level of Welsh language skills required. As a minimum, every role is advertised as Welsh Language Desirable, in line with the Council's commitment to bilingual service delivery. Each job advertisement includes the Welsh Language Skills Framework, and all postings are published bilingually to ensure accessibility and compliance with the Welsh Language Standards.

Additionally, we have implemented a marketing plan to promote Camau courses to social care staff across the authority. Social care career events are coordinated via the regional team, including attendance at our Gwent Welsh Language Schools.

We have established a dedicated Teams Channel for Welsh-speaking and Welsh-learning staff, providing a space to practice the language and access information and support from the Welsh Language Officer. We also provide laith Gwaith and 'Dysgwyr' lanyards to Welsh-speaking and Welsh-learning staff. Teams backgrounds with the laith Gwaith logos indicate if they are a Welsh learner or a Welsh speaker. Additionally, a "More Than Just Words" specific Teams background has been created for social care staff to use. Staff are provided with text and logos to include in their email signatures to indicate if they are a Welsh speaker or learner.

Currently, Welsh language skills data is collected by our HR system. We are reviewing this process with the aim of integrating Welsh language reporting into our learning platform, Thinqi. This integration would help streamline data collection and significantly improve the accuracy and quality of the information we hold. At this stage, we're actively exploring the functionalities within Thinqi to support this integration.

Glossary of Terms **[In process of making this more bespoke to MCC]**

Term	Description
Reablement / Rehabilitation / Interim care	This short-term care is sometimes called intermediate care, or aftercare. Reablement is a type of care that helps people relearn how to do daily activities, like cooking meals and washing. It is provided by local authorities with the aim of mitigating the need for long term care and support.

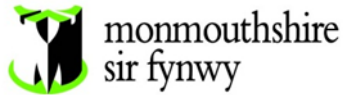
Domiciliary Care / Domiciliary Support Service / Home Care	Domiciliary care, also known as "care at home", refers to a broad range of care services provided in a person's own home. It can include assistance with day-to-day living and certain health care issues for the elderly.
Residential Care Home / Nursing Home	A residential care home provides accommodation and 24-hour personal care and support to the older people and others who may find it difficult to manage daily life at home. Both a residential care home and nursing home provide care and support 24 hours a day, however the main difference is that a nursing home is able to provide a higher level of care. Nursing homes have qualified nurses on-site around the clock to provide medical care as needed whereas residential homes help people with personal care and support them to engage in physical activity.
Care Experienced Children	Care experienced is an umbrella term which can mean children / young people who are: Looked after at home through a Care Order; Looked after away from home in a residential children's house, in a foster placement or in a kinship placement (Looked After or Non-Looked After); Previously looked after, where at some point in their lives they have had any of the above experiences. The child / young person may never have been formally looked after.
Care Leaver	In Wales, care leavers are individuals who have been in the care of the local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and have left care on or after their 16th birthday. The support provided to care leavers is intended to be equivalent to what a child who has not been looked after might reasonably expect from their parents.
Children looked after (CLA)	Children and young people who are 'looked after' don't live with their parents, either temporarily or permanently, because for many reasons they can't safely take care of them.
Safeguarding	Safeguarding is about protecting children and adults from abuse or neglect and educating those around them to recognise the signs and dangers.
Wales Safeguarding Procedures	They detail the essential roles and responsibilities for practitioners to ensure that they safeguard children and adults who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Provides a useful glossary of safeguarding terms: Safeguarding Wales.
Performance and Improvement Framework: Measuring	This sets out a framework of metrics covering adults, children, and carers, which must be collected and submitted to Welsh Government together with anonymised person-level data and aggregated data on specific aspects of social care. It states local authorities should also gather their own data to understand better how the local delivery of social care is working according to local priorities.

activity and performance data	
Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)	CIW is the social care provider regulator. They will register, inspect and take action to improve the quality and safety of services for the well-being of the people of Wales.
Social Care Wales (SCW)	SCW is the workforce regulator. As part of this they register and set standards for the care and support workforce and develop the workforce. SCW also has an improvement remit, by which they will share good practice, set priorities for research and provide information for the public and other organisations.
Resident / Citizen	A person whose usual residence is within the local authority boundary.
Service User	A person who is accessing social services.
Shared Lives / Adult Placement Scheme	Shared Lives Schemes – also known as adult placements – are a family-based way of supporting a vulnerable person’s housing needs. This type of supportive accommodation can be the ideal stepping stone on the way to independent living. This sharing arrangement is often referred to as ‘shared lives’.
Direct Payments	Direct payments are issued to individuals to allow them to pay for their own care. They are a way that local authorities can help to meet individual’s eligible need for care and support, or a carer’s need for support. They are a way for people to arrange their own care and support.
Supported Living / Accommodation	Supported living accommodation is a type of housing that provides personal care, support or supervision to help people live independently. The care and support are separate from the housing contract. The accommodation can be shared or single, depending on the needs and preferences of the occupants.
Unpaid Carer	An unpaid carer is someone who provides care and support to family members, friends, or neighbours who are affected by disability, physical or mental ill-health, frailty, or substance misuse. The carer does not need to be living with the person they care for.
Young Carer	A young carer is an unpaid carer who is up to the age of 18. They may be providing care and support to parents, siblings or other family members.
Care and Support Plan	A care and support plan is a document that sets out what has been discussed during a social care needs assessment and what is going to happen as a result. It is a plan which a local authority is required to prepare and maintain under section 54 (1) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

Carer's Support Plan	If unpaid carers have needs that are eligible for support, the local authority has a statutory duty to plan for and meet those needs by providing a 'Carer's Support Plan.' Where eligible needs for support are identified for the unpaid carer, local authorities must ensure these needs are met.
Advocacy	Advocates in social care are independent from the local authority (local council) and the NHS. They are trained to help people understand their rights, express their views and wishes, and help make sure their voice is heard.
Prevention and Early Intervention	Prevention and early intervention are forms of support aimed at improving outcomes for people or preventing escalating need or risk. They are also sometimes referred to as early help or preventative services.
The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014	The Regulations which introduced a new two stage process to deal with complaints and representations about local authority social services. It brings the process for social services in line with the Model Concerns and Complaints Policy and Guidance and the NHS Complaints Procedure Putting Things Right.
Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)	The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) is a legal procedure in the UK designed to protect vulnerable people in care settings. It applies to adults who lack the mental capacity to give consent to their care arrangements and need to be deprived of their liberty. DoLS ensures that those who cannot consent to their care are protected when their arrangements deprive them of their liberty. It will be replaced by Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) in the future.
Mwy Na Geiriau / More than words	More than just words is a strategy and delivery plan to aim to improve the quality of care for individuals living in a bilingual country.
Extra care	The provision of a domiciliary care package to an individual living in supported living/accommodation.
Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP)	The Welsh government plan to tackle racism and make 'meaningful and measurable changes' to the lives of BAME people in Wales. The plan aims to make Wales an anti-racist country by 2030.
Information, Advice and	Refer to contacts and referrals – consent and level of information recorded – link to proportionate assessment.

Assistance (IAA)	
Not in education, employment or training (NEET)	NEET stands for "Not in Education, Employment, or Training". It refers to young people who are neither engaged in education or vocational training nor in paid employment. NEET individuals may experience social and economic disadvantage.
Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014	The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 is a law that aims to improve the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and to transform social services in Wales.
FGC	Family Group Conference
BSF	Building Stronger Families
FSPT	Family Support and Protection Team
OT	Occupational Therapy

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SUBJECT:	Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report 2024/25
MEETING:	Performance & Overview Committee
DATE:	23rd September
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is:

- To evaluate the progress of Monmouthshire County Council's key safeguarding priorities during 2024 / 2025, highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2025 - 2026.
- To inform Members about the effectiveness of safeguarding in Monmouthshire and the work that is in progress to support the Council's aims in protecting children and adults at risk from harm and abuse.
- To inform Members about the progress made towards meeting the standards in the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy approved by Council in July 2017, amended July 2022 and January 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

For members to scrutinise the Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report and Activity prior to its presentation at Council in November 2024.

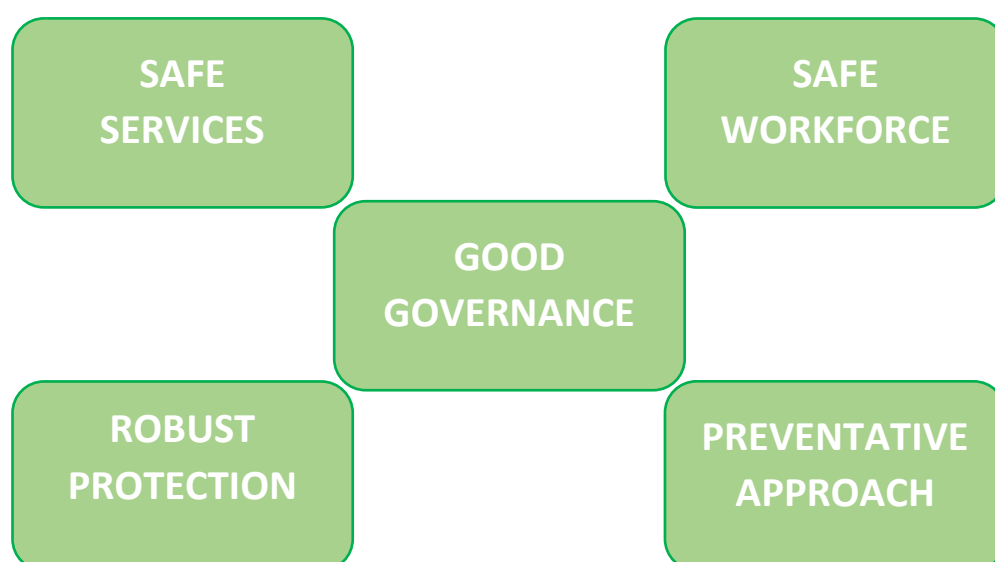
3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Monmouthshire County Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy, which covers duties for both children and adults at risk in line with the Social Services and WellBeing [Wales] Act [2014] and Wales Safeguarding Procedures, has helped to inform this evaluation report. The analysis reflects progress against priority areas set out within the policy and forms an integral part of the continual development of Safeguarding practice across the Council.
- 3.2 2024-25 has been a period which has seen issues raised in previous reports in relation to increase demand for safeguarding services, the recommendations of the CIW Inspection Report into Children Services (Feb 24), and the vacancies in key roles in the Safeguarding Unit managed and addressed. This meant that whilst budget and resources remained a driver for change and accountability across the council, and with

statutory partners the increased resilience and restructuring within the Safeguarding Unit ensured Safeguarding remained a priority in Monmouthshire.

- 3.3 The Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025 received Royal Assent on the 24th March 2025. The main aim of the Act, to restrict the making of profit in the provision of Residential Care homes or fostering services for children, remains a work in progress for the Government and full implementation of the Act has been extended to 2030. There is still significant disruption within the private care provider market which has seen price increases and further challenges securing safe and appropriate placements to meet children's more complex needs whilst Monmouthshire's "inhouse" provision is developed.

THE CORNERSTONES OF SAFEGUARDING IN MONMOUTHSHIRE:



- 3.4 The self-assessment score has been agreed by the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG] through critical challenge on the basis of evidence reviewed to date. It uses the corporate scoring framework to provide an overall judgement of effectiveness between 1 [major weaknesses] and 6 [excellent / outstanding]. To balance the Self-Assessment process WASG seek triangulation utilising a number or sources of information:

- (1) A shared understanding of "what good looks like" based on experience, professional judgement, and representation on national and regional safeguarding boards;
- (2) Data provided to and produced by Care Inspectorate Wales on both a National and Regional basis;

- (3) Progress against the Action Plan set following Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection of Children Services Feb 24;
- (4) Review of performance data monthly by Children's Services Safeguarding Leads, Leadership Team to track trends and highlight performance issues to consider against local, regional and national targets;
- (5) Quarterly Safeguarding reports produced by Independent Reviewing Officers.

Any priority Action will form part of the Action Plan which is implemented by the Safeguarding Service and overseen by WASG

3.5 The current self-assessment is set out below:

SELF ASSESSMENT SCORES:

CORNERSTONE	April – Sept 2017	Oct 2017 – March 2018	April 2018 – March 2019	April 2019 – March 2020	April 2020 – March 2021	April 2021 – March 2022	April 2022 – March 2023	April 2023 – March 2024	April 2024 – March 2025
GOOD GOVERNANCE	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
SAFE WORKFORCE	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	4/5	5
ROBUST PROTECTION	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	5	5
SAFE SERVICES	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4

3.6 THE CORPORATE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK:

The evaluation score from 1-6	The evaluative context
Level 6: Excellent	Excellent or outstanding
Level 5: Very Good	Good Major strengths
Level 4: Good	Important strengths with some areas for improvement
Level 3: Adequate	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Level 2: Weak	Important weaknesses
Level 1: Unsatisfactory	Major weakness

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

Not applicable to this report

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Each 'cornerstone' section of the report opens with descriptors of 'what good looks like'. These descriptors provide the basis of how we measure the standard over time using both qualitative and quantitative sources.
- Safeguarding progress is reported on an annual basis to full Council.

6. REASONS:

- Safeguarding vulnerable people is central to the Council and requires strong leadership and governance. An evaluation of Safeguarding within Monmouthshire County Council is, therefore, reported to the Council on an annual basis.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no resource implications to this report.

8. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS [INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING]:

This report is critically concerned with the effectiveness of Safe/guarding in Monmouthshire County Council.

9. CONSULTEES:

Members of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG]
Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Corporate Safeguarding Policy](#)

11. AUTHOR:

Head of Children's Services – Diane Corrister

Safeguarding and Early Help Service Manager – Jess Scarisbrick

12. CONTACT DETAILS:

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jessicascarisbrick@monmouthshire.gov.uk

SAFEGUARDING PROPOSED ACTIVITY PLAN [2025 – 2026]:

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
GOOD GOVERNANCE		
Regional SAFE digital roll out to commence, with all Directorates to complete/update their respective SAFEs on a quarterly basis. Safeguarding to review / audit SAFEs during this two-year period.	Directorate Leads Safeguarding Unit	March 2027
Core Data set to continually be reviewed and include Harmful Sexual Behaviour [HSB].	Safeguarding Unit WASG	Ongoing
SAFE WORKFORCE		
National Safeguarding Training Standards [role specific training] to be implemented to ensure full compliance across the Council.	Gwent Safeguarding Board Corporate Training Team Workforce Development Team	Ongoing
Continue to implement the Violence Against Women and Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Learning and Development Framework, to increase the accessibility across the Council.	Workforce Development Team	March 2026
Review and exploration of PCM data to explore themes and trends and form part of quality assuring the PCM process within Gwent. This will incorporate any amendments to the Section 5 PCM	Quality Assurance sub-group GSB	March 2026

process identified as part of the Welsh Government Consultation period; and will consider a complaints process and future training programmes.	Safeguarding Unit	
Micro Care Team to review the effectiveness of the recruitment process of Micro Carers and the review of those individuals once employed.	Micro Care Team All Age Disability and Mental Health Service Manager	March 2026
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH		
Expand the knowledge and understanding of the PREVENT and CHANEL Panel across the Council; and the Safeguarding Unit to be a standing Panel member	Safeguarding Unit PREVENT and CHANEL Panel members	March 2026
Continue to support the VAWDASV regional strategic plan	GSB Community Safety Leads Safeguarding Unit	March 2026
Continue to record and produce HSB data to review thresholds, safeguards and any themes. This to include data from partner agencies including YOS	Safeguarding Unit YOS	March 2026
Full review of the Out of Hours Service	Residential Service Manager	March 2026
ROBUST PROTECTION		
Ongoing review of the Safeguarding Hub and attendees present; to include the implementation of the All-Wales Referral Form.	Safeguarding Unit EHAT	Ongoing

	Partner Agencies	
Continuation of implementation of 'Keeping Children Safe' and plans for review and refresher courses.	Safeguarding Unit Workforce Development Team	Ongoing
Children Services Workshops to continue to be delivered with replicated workshops to be established within Adult Services.	Safeguarding Unit Workforce Development Team	Ongoing
SAFE SERVICES		
Review of effectiveness of Strike process especially with adult cases.	Community Safety Team	March 2026
PTU to commission a trainer to deliver Safeguarding Training to ensure ongoing compliance	Passenger Transport Unit	March 2026

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THE EVALUATION:

1. GOOD GOVERNANCE

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5

WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?

In Monmouthshire County Council we ensure that safeguarding for children and adults at risk is understood as “everyone’s responsibility”. With strong leadership there is a continuous focus on embedding safeguarding culturally across all parts of the Council at a “hearts and minds” level. Safeguarding is supported by robust policies and operating procedures which are embedded within all settings and services. We work effectively with the Gwent Safeguarding Board to ensure good alignment and maximise our resources.

PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS:

The chief officer ensures that live safeguarding issues are raised with leaders in the council through SLT and Cabinet. There are weekly meetings between the Chief Officer and the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services. The Chief Officer and the Head of Children’s Services meet with the Leader of the Council bi-monthly to ensure safeguarding issues, and risks and trends are discussed or escalated as required.

The role of the Scrutiny Committee within Monmouthshire County Council provides an additional layer of governance in relation to safeguarding across the Council. The Performance & Overview Committee scrutinises the Council’s performance in delivering corporate objectives outlined in its corporate plan. The committee scrutinises the annual safeguarding evaluation report prior to its presentation at Full Council.

SAFEGUARDING AUDIT FRAMEWORK EVALUATION [SAFE]:

- The SAFE programme has been completed for the 2023-2025 cycle. This ensures that all directorates have the opportunity to conduct a structured assessment of safeguarding practice within individual service areas.
- A programme of supporting Directorates to become more autonomous in managing safeguarding in their area has been facilitated by the Safeguarding Unit and the Directorate Safeguarding Leads. This has supported the development of a digital platform for the access to and safe storage of the SAFES’s allowing wider oversight of issues and compliance by Senior Management and the Safeguarding Unit. A programme of audits has been drawn up to support Quality Assurance over the next 2-year period

SAFEGUARDING CORPORATE POLICY:

- The Safeguarding Corporate Policy was reviewed in January 2024 and subsequently updated to include the Modern-Day Slavery statement, which was endorsed by the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG] in April 2025. We will continue to review the Safeguarding Corporate Policy on a two-yearly basis or as required.

GWENT SAFEGUARDING BOARD [GSB]:

- There remains strong links between the Gwent Safeguarding Boards and The Safeguarding Unit, with key members representing Monmouthshire on all Subgroups. The Chief Officer, Jane Rodgers, co-chairs the Board and Head of Service, Diane Corrister represents Monmouthshire on the Board and on the Case Review Group.
- The Gwent Safeguarding Board continues to provide oversight and accountability for all partner agencies in ensuring effective safeguarding across the region. The board leads on regional projects such as the Child Sexual Abuse action plan, implementation of the National Training Standards and the development of regional safeguarding procedures.

WHOLE AUTHORITY SAFEGUARDING GROUP [WASG]:

- WASG has continued to meet on a bi-monthly basis to ensure Directorate Leads are appraised of Safeguarding developments. The Core Data Set for whole authority safeguarding has been reviewed and updated to include Commissioning and Adult Safeguarding, and there are plans to include Harmful Sexual Behaviour [HSB]. This allows WASG members to interrogate safeguarding activity and outcomes through a data lens.

CARE INSPECTORATE WALES ACTION PLAN [Children Services April 24-March25]:

- Feedback from the Care Inspectorate Wales [CIW] Inspection [February 2024] was provided to WASG members; progress against the Action Plan was subsequently presented to WASG on 10 September 2024 for oversight. The Action Plan has been fully implemented with compliance to the statutory timescales for visits to children on the Child Protection Register, and the timescales for Initial Conferences now well above the National averages. There is improved oversight and analysis of data via the Children Services Data Management Clinic [DMC], which reviews the statutory obligations of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and levels of compliance. Issues of demand impacting practice quality have been managed via more a more robust Quality Assurance Framework.

ANALYSIS

Despite the ongoing financial pressures, and changes in Directorate Lead Officers, Monmouthshire County Council has maintained strong safeguarding practices. This has been facilitated in part by key appointments to the Safeguarding Unit making it more robust, and a year-on-year improvement in Quality Assurance and reporting mechanisms. The move to increase Directorate autonomy in managing their own safeguarding through the SAFES is positive and reinforces that safeguarding is everybody's business. Oversight and support will be facilitated via the digital platform by the Safeguarding Unit. The Council's commitment to safeguarding is evident through its reviews of policies, updated training, and effective collaboration with regional partners demonstrating that Safeguarding practice across the council continues to evolve and develop meeting the challenges and trends as they emerge.

2. SAFE WORKFORCE

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4

WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?

We ensure that safe recruitment and human resource practices operate effectively and are embedded across the Council for the whole workforce [paid and unpaid]. We ensure that individuals working with children and adults at risk are suitable for the role they are employed to do and are focused on outcomes for people. The whole workforce is clear about their duty to report concerns and to keep children and adults at risk safe.

PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS:

SAFE RECRUITMENT:

- A new digital platform was introduced in January 2025 [Talentlink] to encompass recruitment for the Council. Talentlink has been configured to assist compliance with the Safeguarding Policy in relation to safer recruitment, which include the mechanisms to ensure staff requiring DBS or Risk Assessments are managed effectively.
- New Services which have been developed including Micro Carers and Children's Residential Care Home Staff have all worked within the Monmouthshire Safe Recruitment Processes.

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING:

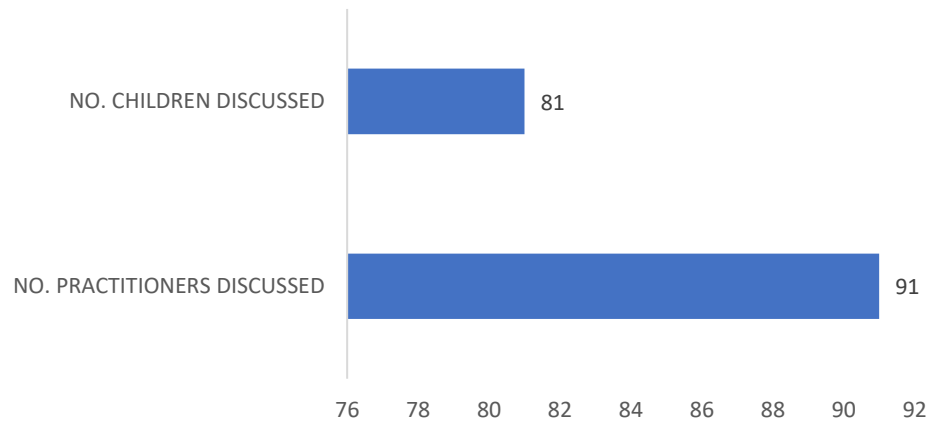
- Following the full implementation of Thingi [the council's digital learning platform] and the National Safeguarding Training Standards, a working group was set up to assign each job role across the Council to the appropriate safeguarding training group. MCC Workforce Development have successfully completed this exercise for the Social Care and Health Directorate and are now supporting the Corporate Organisation Training Team to achieve this for the rest of the workforce in partnership with the Safeguarding Unit.
- Every staff member in the Council will need to undertake the Social Care Wales National **Group A** training, which is a digital learning course embedded into Thingi. Both Corporate Organisation Training and Workforce Development Team are continuously reviewing the completion of this online module to ensure the Council are compliant in this mandatory training for staff.
- Monmouthshire have adopted Social Care Wales National **Group B** training package. The Social Care Workforce Development Team will be rolling out monthly training sessions for the Social Care and Health workforce and the relevant partners. There are further plans for a Train the Trainer approach within the rest of the authority to ensure those who require Group B training can access it.
- Pilot courses for **Group C** for both Adult and Children's Services are underway via the Regional Safeguarding Board. A Train the Trainer event to deliver Group C training was scheduled and went ahead in June 2025. Enquiries are being made with all organisations whether there are any staff who would want to support the delivery of the training on behalf of the Board.
- In the absence of a standardised training package there has been ongoing collaboration at national and regional levels to identify learning and development

opportunities that meet **Group D, E and F** [Elected Members and School Governors] ensuring learning for practitioners within these groups is relevant to their individual roles.

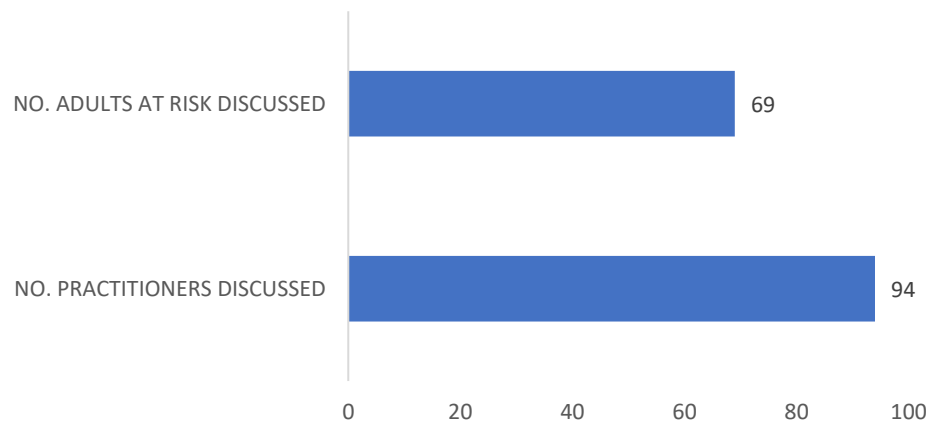
PRACITITONER CONCERNS / ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THOSE IN A POSITION OF TRUST (PCM):

- The Safeguarding Unit has overall responsibility for the management of the PCM process in line with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. This year there has been an increase in referrals related to both Adult and Children safeguarding. Within Childrens Service, there has been a 34% increase in cases compared to last year and a 6% increase for Adult Safeguarding. This is a trend across Gwent and is considered to relate to increased awareness if safeguarding responsibilities in partnership agencies.
- There is no change within the primary professional setting for referrals to PCM with the majority of concerns relating to children linked to educational staff and within Adult Safeguarding, health and care staff.
- Within this period, 20 cases have been ongoing for 4+ months. The length of time relates to delays in the Criminal Justice process that includes Police investigations and the response time from the Crown Prosecution Service [CPS].
- For all cases within the PCM process, and particularly for cases ongoing with police investigations, there is an impact on both the individual and the employer. The welfare of the individual remains a key priority within the process. If individuals are suspended from their duties, this can have a significant operational or financial impact.
- Whilst there is a limit to how much the PCM Chair can influence the timescale of investigations, there continues to be good communication between the Safeguarding Unit and the Safeguarding Hub within Heddli Gwent Police to escalate cases and resolve issues around timeliness and appropriateness of Police investigations where possible. There continues to be consideration for re-deployment of staff or alternative duties for those who are under investigation, with staff wellbeing remaining a focal point through the entirety of the process.
- The Safeguarding Unit works closely with the other Gwent Local Authorities to ensure consistent thresholds and case management. The Quality Assurance sub-group [part of the Gwent Safeguarding Board] will be considering Practitioner Concerns data from April 2025 onwards to explore themes and trends but also providing additional quality assurance of the PCM process within Gwent.
- Welsh Government are currently revising the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, Section 5 [PCM], which includes a review of threshold guidance, training and the devising of a complaint's procedure. There will be a consultation period with all regional Safeguarding Boards, which will involve Monmouthshire's Safeguarding Unit, scheduled for June 2025.

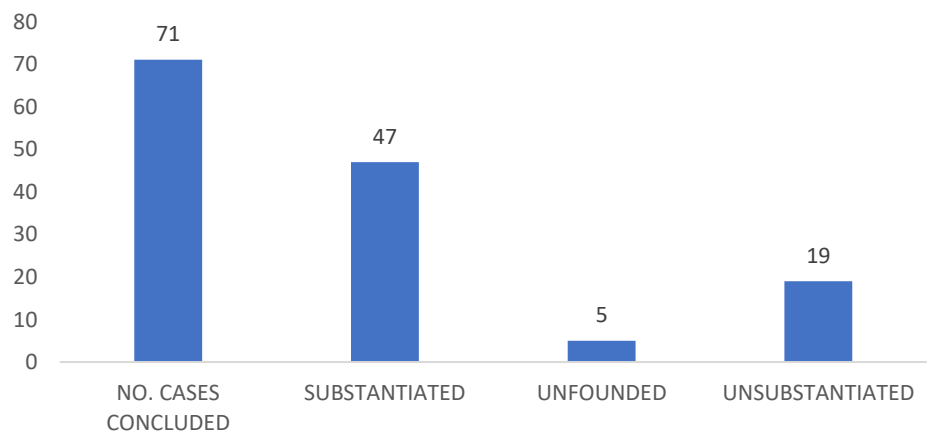
PCM - CHILDREN'S
01/04/24 - 31/03/25

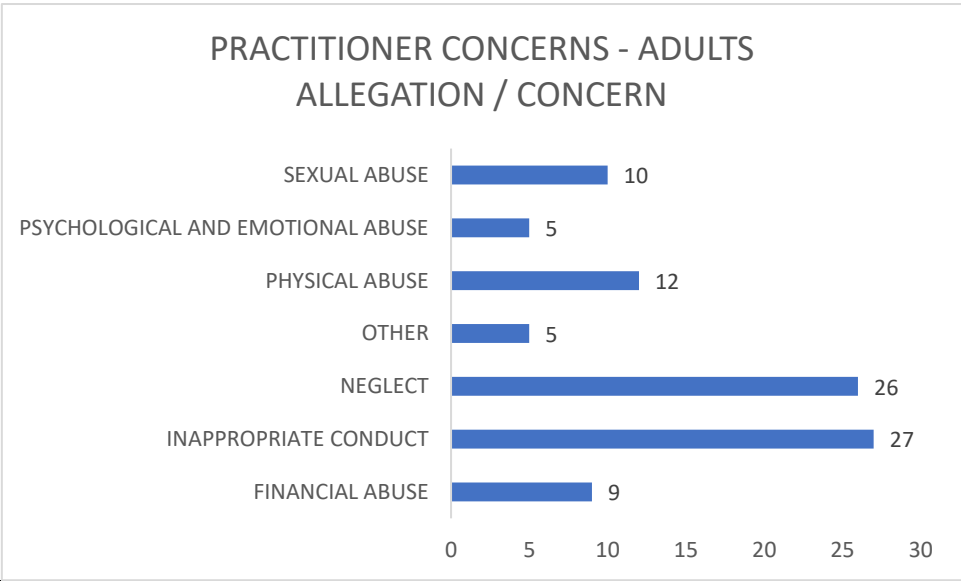
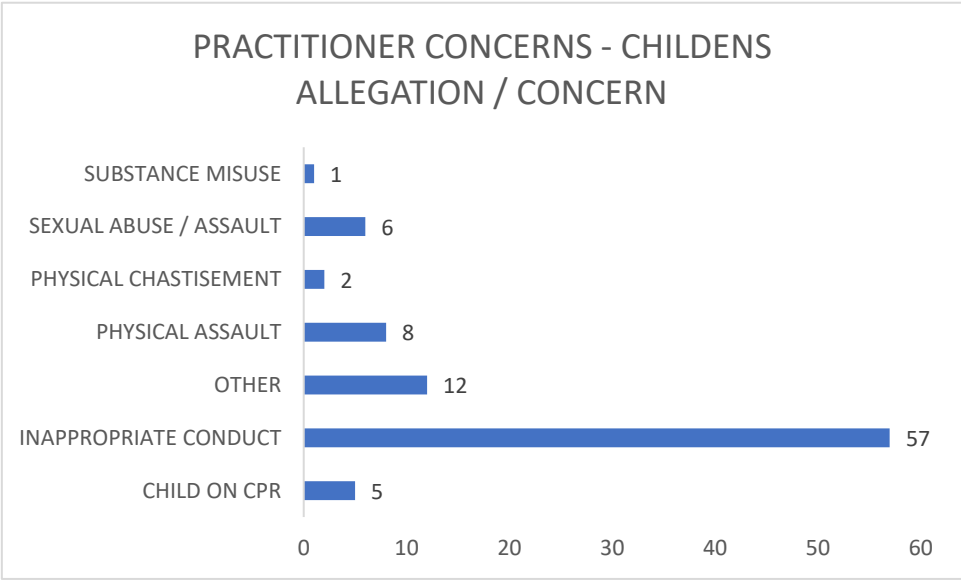
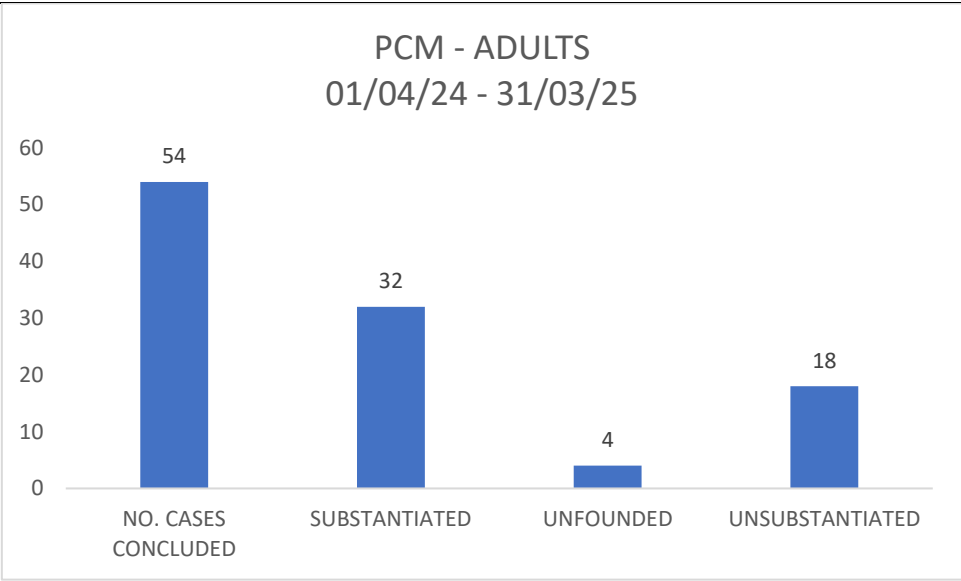


PCM - ADULTS
01/04/24 - 31/03/25



PCM - CHILDREN'S
01/04/24 - 31/03/25





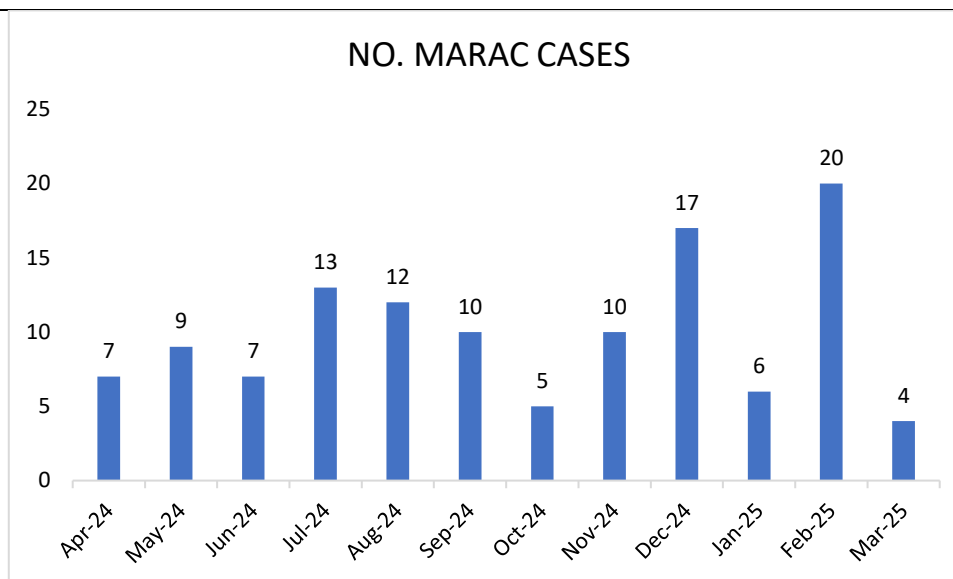
ANALYSIS

Monmouthshire Safe Recruitment processes continue to be applied robustly, with new services being compliant with the process. We have continued to develop Safeguarding Training and compliance is supported via both the SAFE process and via Thinqi training platform. This includes the ongoing development of National Safeguarding Training Standards where Monmouthshire is well advanced within the region in moving towards full implementation.

Our efforts in increasing safeguarding knowledge across the region is evidenced by the increase of Practitioner Concerns being referred into the Safeguarding Unit. The process for managing these referrals is well established and thresholds are consistently applied. Our strong relationship between the Unit and the Police help mitigate the impact of delays and HR act as strong partners to manage employment and welfare issues. The council collaborates with other Gwent Local Authorities to maintain consistent safeguarding practices.

3. PREVENTATIVE APPROACH

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5
<u>WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?</u> We work with partners to identify emerging issues, risks and challenges to our communities. We demonstrate clear multiagency approaches to developing protocols, processes and practice in how we respond to these issues therefore reducing risks through early intervention and preventative approaches. We develop services at all levels aimed at preventing children from experiencing harm and supporting the development of parental understanding and skills so that children can safely exit statutory systems and access universal services for support.
<u>PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS:</u> DOMESTIC ABUSE AND HIGH-RISK MANAGEMENT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monmouthshire remains committed to preventing Domestic Abuse within our communities. Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence [VAWDASV] is mandatory training for all staff, and is included at induction, with a 3-year requirement for refresher training.• There has been an increase in completion of VAWDSV training this year following its inclusion on the Thinqi platform with 61% compliance with VAWDASV Group 1 and 93% compliance with VAWDASV Group 2 training (Ask and Act).• MARAC [Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee] is chaired by the Safeguarding Service Manager and Heddle Gwent Police. In 24-25 there was a 19% decrease in the number of referrals into MARAC in Monmouthshire. There is no clear reason identified for the reduction. It is unknown at this time if this is a part of a wider trend within Gwent as the post of MARAC Co-ordinator has been vacant; this will now be reviewed by the Quality Assurance Group for the Gwent Safeguarding Board.• For cases which do not meet the high-risk threshold for MARAC, Monmouthshire apply a Sec 115 process under the Crime and Disorder Act to support victims of domestic abuse. This was recognised as good practice by Gwent Safeguarding Board, and the process is therefore going to be replicated across the other Gwent Local Authorities, supported by Monmouthshire's Community Safety Lead.



MONMOUTHSHIRE EXPLOITATION GROUP:

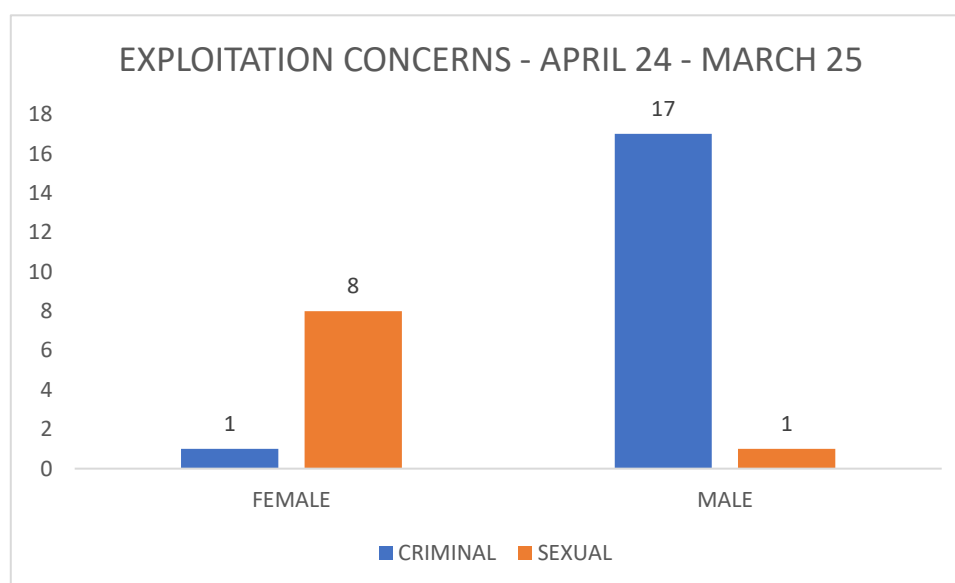
- Monmouthshire Exploitation Group [MEG] meets quarterly. Following changes of personnel within the Safeguarding Unit, a review of partnership membership was undertaken to support improved participation, safety and disruption planning. This has supported consistency, agency responses and allows for greater capacity to analyse trends, locations and perpetrators.
- A key priority for MEG is Transitional Safeguarding. Transitional Safeguarding seeks to ensure the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable young people as they transition from childhood to adulthood. This addresses the unique risks they face during this critical period and the harm associated with sexual and criminal exploitation.
- Attendance at MEG includes children and adult managers from within Social Care as well as the appropriate partner agencies.

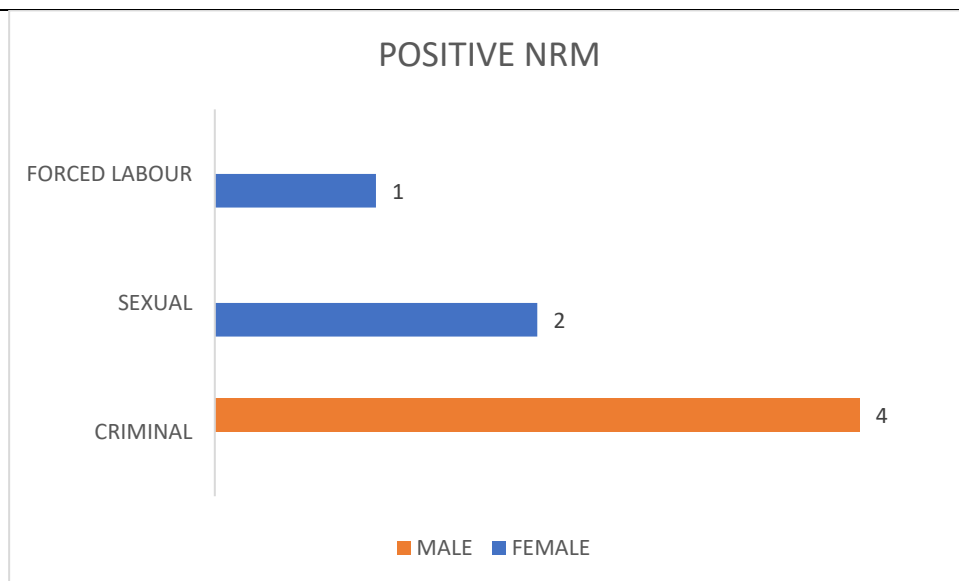
EXPLOITATION / MODERN DAY SLAVERY / NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM [NRM]:

- Appropriate information sharing and robust safety and support planning is in place for individuals who are at risk. There is consistent attendance from a variety of professionals at exploitation meetings including Education, Youth Offending Service [YOS], Youth Homelessness Co-ordinator, Engagement & Intervention Workers, Health and Police. To increase consistency and timeliness, Heddli Gwent Police now operate a Gwent wide approach in supporting identified children.
- A review of exploitation processes in Monmouthshire in 2023 streamlined the multiagency process for identification and case management of young people considered at risk of exploitation. The police recognised this as good practice and have requested that this streamlined process is rolled out across Gwent in 2025/26.
- Multi Agency Children's Exploitation [MACE] meeting continues to be held bi-monthly, chaired by Heddli Gwent Police, with attendance and participation from all partner agencies. Adults at Risk of Sexual Exploitation [AROSE] meetings are

currently managed on an individual basis. In light of the increased recognition of the issues regarding transitional Safeguarding Gwent Police have extended the age range of Operation Quartz from 18 years to 25 years.

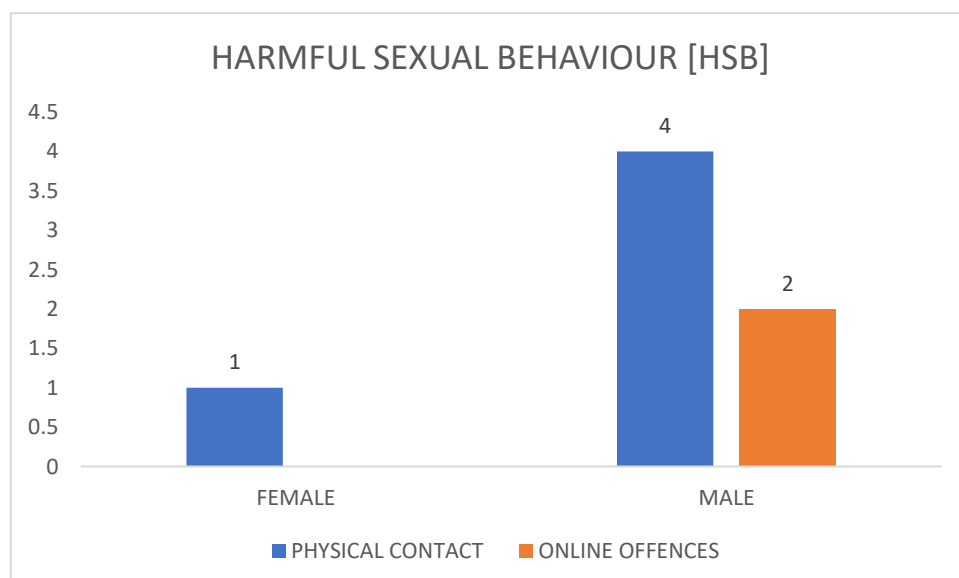
- In Monmouthshire, the majority of males discussed are subject to criminal exploitation whilst for females the majority are subject to sexual exploitation. More males are identified as being at risk than females. Notably, 90% of the children discussed attend mainstream Education.
- During this period, Monmouthshire has submitted 13 NRM referrals where a specific individual has been identified as the “exploiter”. This is an increase from 8 the previous year. Out of the 13 referrals, 7 cases were awarded a positive NRM status (4 males and 3 females]. The four males were referred under criminal exploitation and two females under sexual exploitation, with one female under Forced Labour. The NRM Home Office Co-ordinator continues to attend all exploitation meetings on a consultation basis; a second NRM Co-ordinator has been recruited who will attend the meetings going forward. This reflects the increase in demand and will allow the opportunity for analysis of the current pilot scheme - identifying any exploitation themes and trends within Monmouthshire in order to support next steps.





HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR [HSB]:

- As of January 2025, the Safeguarding Unit commenced recording data in relation to multi agency Strategy Meetings where children were identified as experiencing or perpetrating Harmful Sexual Behaviour whether physical/contact offences or online offences. These meetings ensure multiagency assessment of risk and robust case management and planning.
- During the period January – March 2025 there were six cases discussed, comprising of seven children. Of the six cases, the concerns have related to a mixture of both physical / contact and online concerns. All the cases have exited the HSB arena within three months.
- There continues to be positive communication between the Safeguarding Unit, Education and Youth Services to ensure appropriate risk assessments are completed and regularly reviewed to make sure a young person is not restricted disproportionately. An action going forward we will continue to record and produce HSB data to review thresholds, safeguards and any themes.

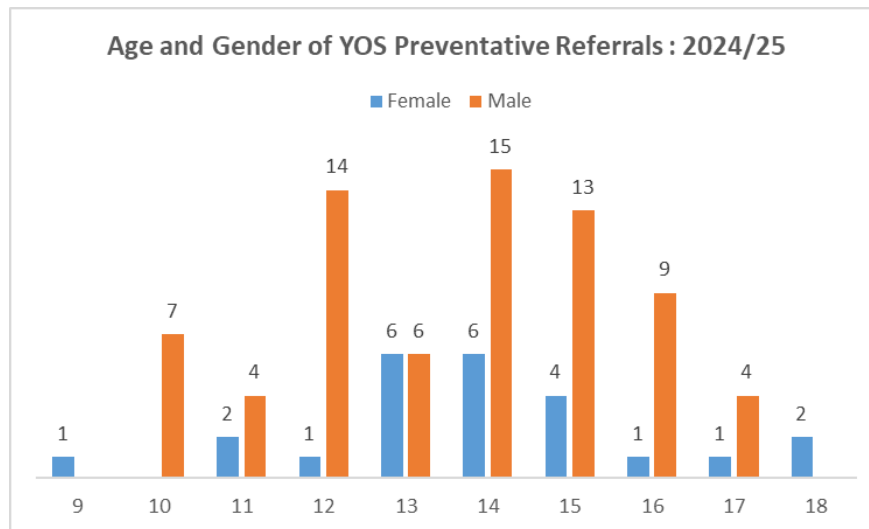


SAFEGUARDING IN SCHOOLS:

- This has been an intensive period of activity in relation to safeguarding training because of implementing the National Safeguarding Training Learning & Development Standards. This has required a review of all school and corporate Education posts to determine the level of safeguarding training necessary.
- There has been an identified increase in reported incidents of Harmful Sexual Behaviour [HSB] at both pre statutory and statutory thresholds. Training needs for Education providers have been reviewed and there is now a tiered approach to training around HSB and Child Sexual Abuse including how Education Practitioners can work with and support children who are harmed and those children who harm.
- This year saw funding loss from WG which resulted in the loss of the School Police Liaison Officer role. To mitigate this loss Education Practitioners and the Education Safeguarding Lead are currently linking in with the Neighbourhood Policing Teams as part of the safer school's arrangements and this positive link has been recognised in partnership meetings and Heddli Gwent Police forums.
- There has been an increase in the number of exclusions, both fixed term and permanent. There are strong links to the use of threatening or actual violence and the misuse of items to weaponise them, or the presence of bladed items in school. This is not a Monmouthshire specific pattern or trend but due to the increase in these concerns, a knife crime strategy is being identified through the Gwent Safeguarding Board, and a training offer has been developed to support schools in risk assessing and supporting those children causing harm or likely to be harmed. Training has also been devised locally around what approaches can be used when screening and searching for weapons and prohibited items, working closely with Community Safety and YOS colleagues.

YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE [YOS]:

- The YOS have reported an increase in the complexity of cases, particularly in relation to mental health, exploitation, and Adverse Childhood Experiences. Caseloads have remained stable with a slight increase, but a higher intensity of support is required per case. There has been improved multi-agency working, especially with the Safeguarding Unit and Children's Services, Education and CAMHS, to manage safeguarding risks. Many children continue to commit offences that are considered Violence Against the Person, predominately assaults but also a small increase in the number of children involved in Knife Crime.
- The Service has seen a disproportionate number of girls being referred to the YOS following Out of Court Disposals for Assaults and Shoplifting. The Service has continued to be an active participant in HSB, Exploitation, and Missing Children meetings, and the involvement has proven to be invaluable in addressing these challenging cases.



EARLY HELP SERVICES:

Throughout this review period, early intervention and prevention services have experienced rising complexity and demand across Family Group Conferencing [FGC], Mediation, and Building Stronger Families [BS F]. Each service reported increased referral pressures and growing family needs, particularly around mental health, neurodevelopmental concerns, school attendance and poor home conditions and family conflict.

This year has seen the introduction of Monmouthshire's Out of Hours Service [OoH] supporting children to remain at home whilst Child Protection investigations or assessments within the Court arena are undertaken. The development of this service has reduced the use of agency workers, increased consistency of service, and improved the management oversight of risk in the community. During the year, there was a total of 60 referrals supporting 91 children. There is a growing pressure on this service particularly around the need for 24 hr home supervision. Children Services and HR are reviewing the workforce structure and contracts to ensure it is compliant with legislative changes.

SPACE WELLBEING AND FAMILY SUPPORT PANEL (single point of access for children's emotional wellbeing):

- Monmouthshire SPACE Wellbeing and Family Support Panel continues to be a hub for early intervention and coordinated support for children, young people and their families. The total number of referrals into the service has steadily declined over the past 3 years from the peak demand seen in during Covid, with reductions likely due to post pandemic family stability, the positive impact of the CAMHS In-Reach Service for school mental health support and enhanced triage from improved referral screening via the Early Help and Assessment Team.
- Primary referral themes relate to anxiety, emotionally based school non-attendance, emotional dysregulation, sensory needs, traumatic stress, and non-complaint behaviours. Whilst there is a reduction in referrals the complexity of need has increased which has meant that there have been extended periods before allocation which increases the risk of escalation.

- Vacancies within partnership services/teams [e.g. the Inspire to Work Team] has impacted on support for 16+ at risk of being out of employment/education. However, 95% of referrals have been successfully allocated, ensuring appropriate and prioritised support. There have been no waiting lists for panel discussions and positive service outcomes have been reflected in high satisfaction ratings/feedback.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION 2024-2025:

- Monmouthshire Council continues to advance its vision of making homelessness rare, brief and unrepeatable aligned with its Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (2022-2027), with prevention remaining a core strategic priority.
- Support offered by homelessness prevention officers can include affordability checks, help with searching for properties and landlord mediation. In 2024-2025 the prevention officers recorded a 71% success rate.
- This year the Compass Project has transitioned to become part of the Housing Support Team; to implement early identification and prevention among young people aged 11-25 as part of its Youth Engagement and Prevention Strategy. The project is based within Monmouthshire's secondary schools and collaborates with key stakeholders to extend the above throughout local communities to identify especially those young people deemed most hardest to reach.
- During the financial period of 2024/25, out of 70 11–16-year-olds identified and supported, approximately 25% of these included safeguarding concerns being identified and referred. For those aged 16-25 of the 31 identified and supported, approximately 60% included safeguarding identification and referral.

PREVENT: (Counter Terrorism and Radicalisation):

- Monmouthshire continues to prioritise safeguarding and counter radicalisation efforts via PREVENT, with schools playing a key role in identifying individuals at potential risk with education and Police being the main referrers to panel. Referrals primarily are for young people aged 13 – 19 years, with no referrals for younger age groups during this year. There has been an increase in the emergence of neurodiverse traits in referrals which prompted the collaboration with Monmouthshire's Autism service to enhance understanding and engagement with those individuals.
- Panel continues to meet on a monthly basis. No cases reviewed at the 6 months post closure point have required a re-referral, suggesting successful early intervention and disruption from radicalisation pathways.

COMMUNITY SAFETY:

- There is a continued downward trend in Anti-Social Behaviour [ASB] in Monmouthshire with the highest number of recorded incidents in May 24 [130 incidents] reducing to 88 reported incidents in February 25. In October 2024, the Community Safety Team revitalised the ASB Strike Process—a multi-agency framework designed to address ASB, primarily among young people, but also

applicable to adults. The process aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of individual behaviours within identified cohorts.

- The Community Safety Team actively participates in various multi-agency forums focused on children and young people. Analysis indicates that many individuals involved in ASB also display similar behaviours in educational settings, youth service activities, and, in some cases, engage in criminal activity from an early age.
- In contrast, the adult ASB Strike Process has seen limited application, with partner agencies typically opting for legislative approaches to address problematic behaviour at an earlier stage.

ANALYSIS

Monmouthshire continues to be proactive in identifying emerging issues, risks, and challenges within communities. Preventative services demonstrate a clear multi-agency approach to developing protocols, processes, and practices to respond to issues that arise. This approach aims to reduce risks through early intervention and preventative measures, diverting children and families from statutory Children Services interventions and safely access universal services for support.

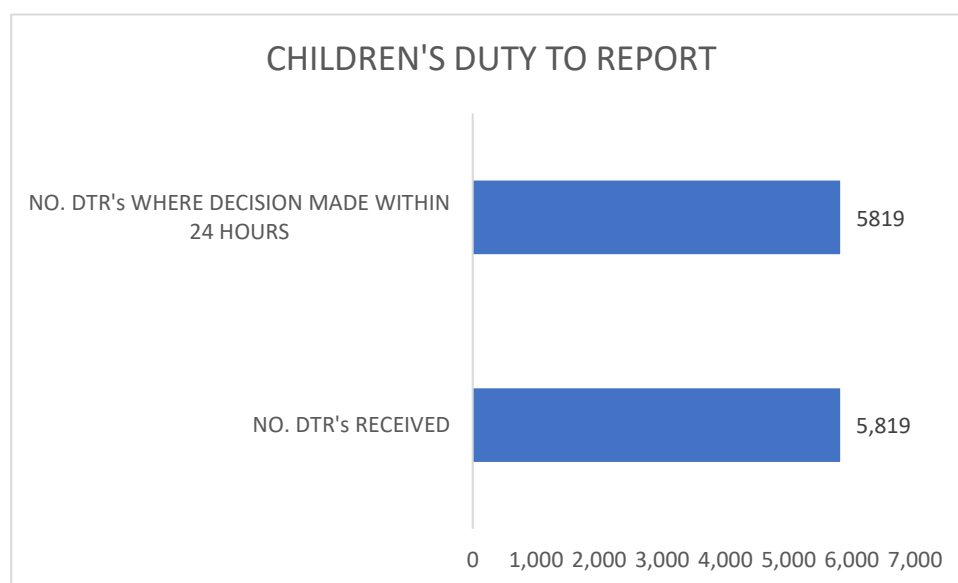
Complexity of individual needs is a primary pressure, and this is seen through the rising issues of Harmful Sexual Behaviour, ongoing issues of Domestic Abuse, and the new understanding of Transitional Safeguarding whereby vulnerable young people require ongoing support post 18 years to manage risk, even though not reaching the formal threshold for statutory Adult Services. The complexity of need and its accompanying behaviours has been seen in all service areas including YOS, Education, Housing and Homelessness and Early Help Services. We continue to provide effective preventative work through strong partnership working and a focus on individual relationships - this is a particular strength within Monmouthshire.

Monmouthshire demonstrates a strong multiagency approach to prevention at both operational and strategic levels. Partnership forums facilitate information sharing and risk management, addressing issues such as exploitation, homelessness, and safeguarding. The council continues to focus on prevention and partnership working, despite financial pressures, to support vulnerable individuals and communities effectively.

4. ROBUST PROTECTION

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5
<u>WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?</u> <p>We operate best practice in protecting children and adults at risk and ensure that all concerns about possible abuse or neglect are recognised and responded to appropriately and within a Statutory framework. Multi-agency plans and interventions reduce risks and needs for children and vulnerable adults including those at risk of significant harm.</p>
<u>PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS:</u> <p>SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Safeguarding Hub continues to have a strong multiagency presence for Child and Adult Safeguarding meetings which is supported by digital platforms. Unfortunately, Police Officers have been withdrawn from the Gwent Hubs [including Monmouthshire] for re-training. This has had an impact on timescales for meetings. However, although it is more time consuming, communication and relationships remain positive between Police and the Local Authority ensuring that children and adults are safeguarded. The issue of having a Police presence within the hubs has been regularly raised within strategic forums and at the Gwent Safeguarding Board. Police Senior Officers have given assurances that there would be a physical presence returning to the hub in the new financial year, although this is yet to come to fruition.• From April 24 the Monmouthshire Children's Risk Assessment Framework 'Keeping Children Safe' was updated and fully implemented and a mandatory whole service training programme was completed, with a rolling refresher programme for staff and an induction. In line with this work a review of all statutory processes within Children Services was completed to support children's transitions, consistency and efficiency. This work has reduced bureaucracy, leading to clearer processes and more timely decision making. The work was supported by workshops led by the Safeguarding Unit and will be expanded to include Adult Safeguarding during 2025-26. <p>CHILDREN'S SERVICES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Following the significant increase in Child Protection 'Duty to Reports' [DTR's] noted in the CIW inspection report and the Evaluation report 23-34 Monmouthshire's Children's Services Leadership Team (CSLT) undertook a comprehensive review of the Early Help and Assessment Team [EHAT], with an audit being undertaken of 150 cases (of cases with 5+DTR's). The audit highlighted strengths in statutory compliance, sibling work and decision making. However, the audit highlighted systemic challenges including inappropriate referrals from partner agencies, inconsistent thresholds and pathways, and high workflow pressures affecting staff wellbeing, engagement and recruitment.

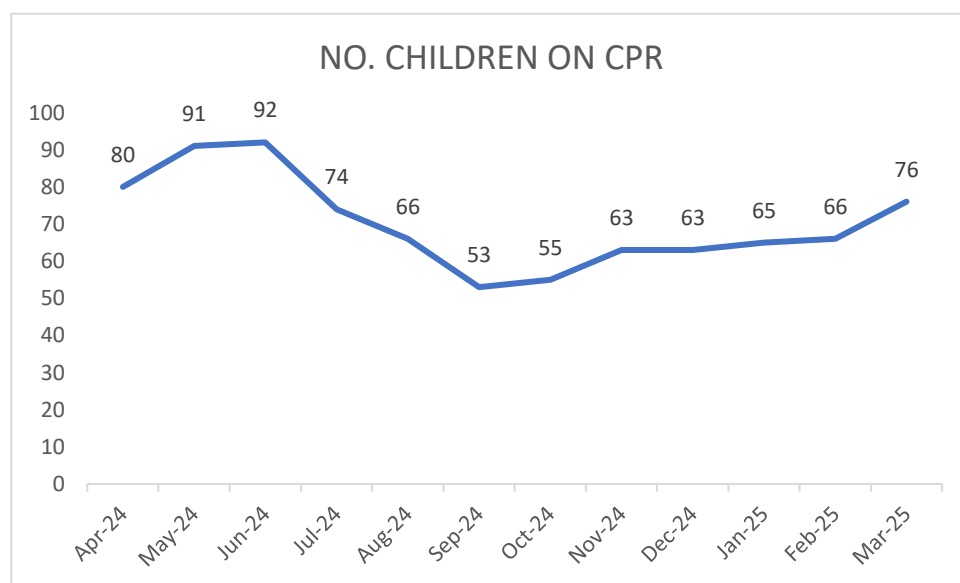
- As a result, there has been a review of the roles and responsibilities within EHAT to support the operational direction of the team. Work has been undertaken to standardise referral processes, strengthen training, embed quality assurance systems, increase resource capacity and enhance data analysis and monitoring of referral trends. We have engaged with partners to align thresholds and improve understanding. This has resulted in a reduction of 800 DTR's and 100 less Strategy Discussions being held. It has been recognised that there is an increase to the complexity of cases necessitating the need for Strategy Discussions, however this data indicates improved referral appropriateness and threshold decision making.

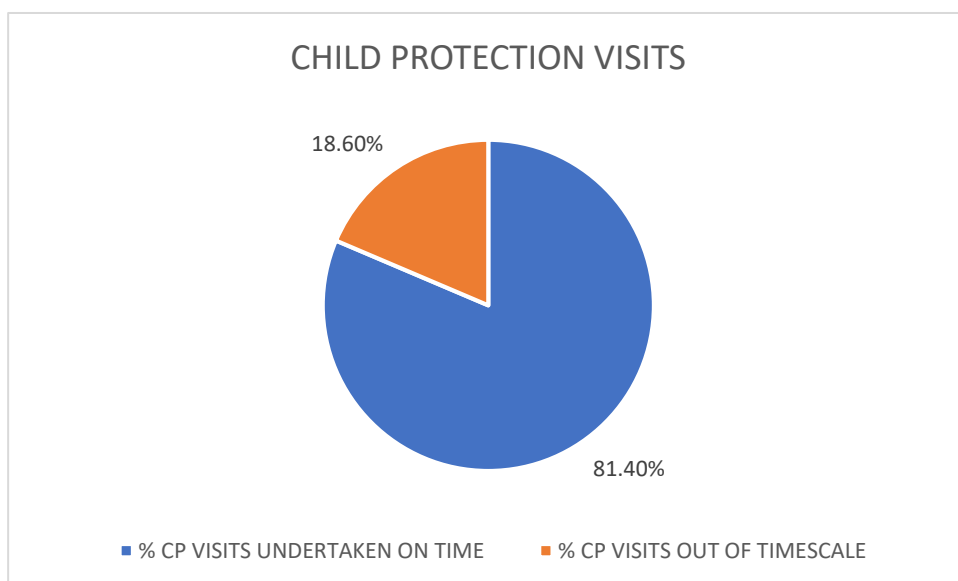
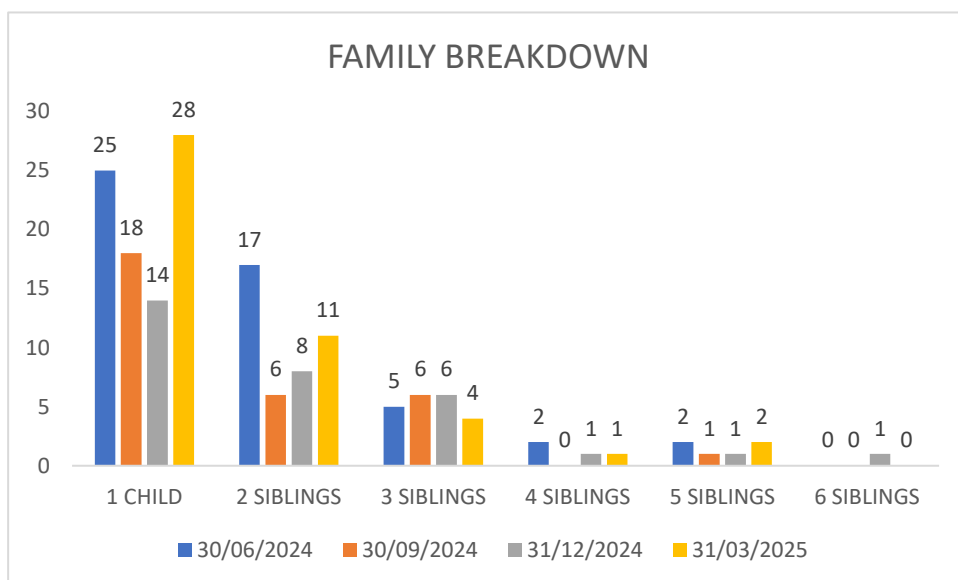
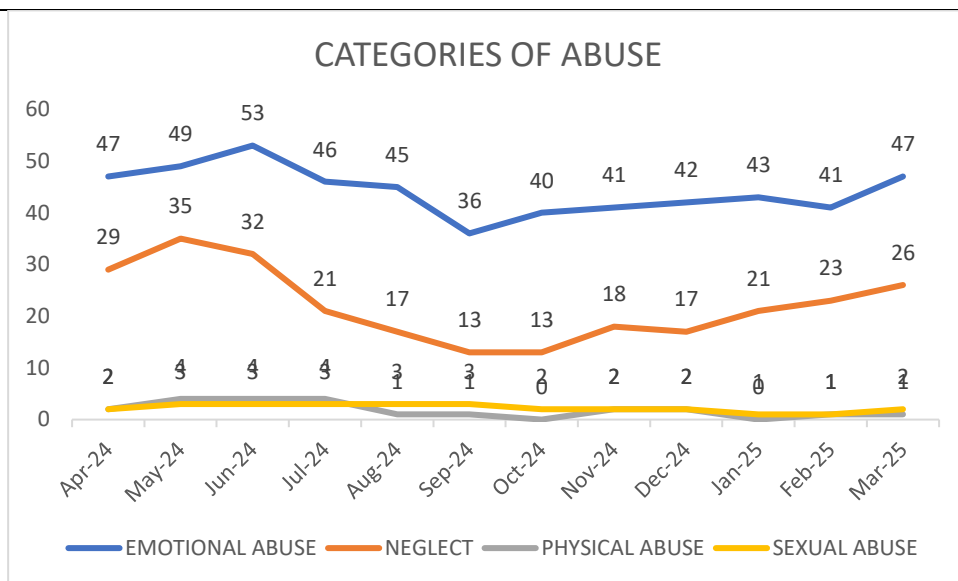


CHILD PROTECTION REGISTRATION:

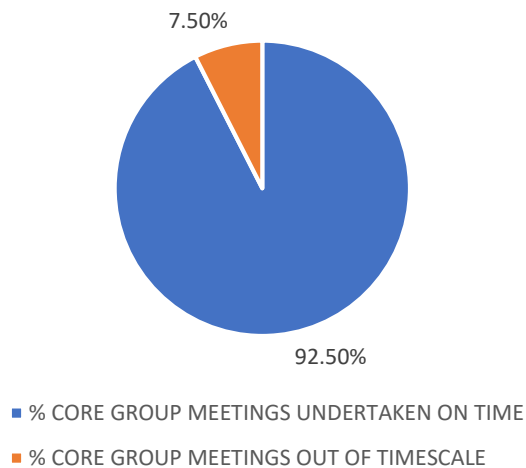
- Despite fluctuations in numbers, there has been a downward trend in the number of children whose names are on the Child Protection Register [CPR]. This relates to the expansion of Family Support services for children who need a statutory service who are able to provide an intensive package of support tailored to the individual / family needs. This is further evidenced by the cases being de-registered from the CPR due to the successful completion of the Child Protection Plan and / or the risks being effectively managed.
- Emotional abuse remains the highest category, linked to incidents of domestic abuse. Neglect is the second highest category for registration. This pattern is replicated regionally and nationally.
- Sexual abuse remains under reported, again which is reflected in national data. Children's Services Leadership Team [CSLT] undertook a Whole Service workshop to raise awareness of familial sexual abuse and there is a Child Sexual Abuse subgroup with the GSB producing a regional Sexual Abuse Protocol to help raise awareness and improve practice.

- Police availability for Initial Child Protection Conferences, related to resource and staffing issues within Police has been challenging. There have been occasions where Police have been unable to accommodate an Initial Child Protection Conference within the statutory timeframes. The Police have introduced a new booking system to try and mitigate this, and there has been some improvement noted. This issue has been escalated to Senior Management within Gwent Police, and they are in the process of recruiting more staff.
- Children's participation in their Conference is considered on a case-by-case basis. This year saw a reduction in take up of the NYAS advocacy service by children. Quarterly monitoring meetings demonstrate this is due to lack of parental consent for the service, and staffing availability to meet the need within the initial conference timescale. To mitigate this each childcare team consider how best to engage children via a trusted adult (SW., Teacher, relative etc) to increase a child's participation.
- There has been the introduction of monthly meetings between the Team Managers and the Safeguarding Unit to review the team's data to ensure they are compliant with statutory timeframes, but also to explore the quality or practice and recordings. There has noted improvements particularly in assessment quality and compliance.



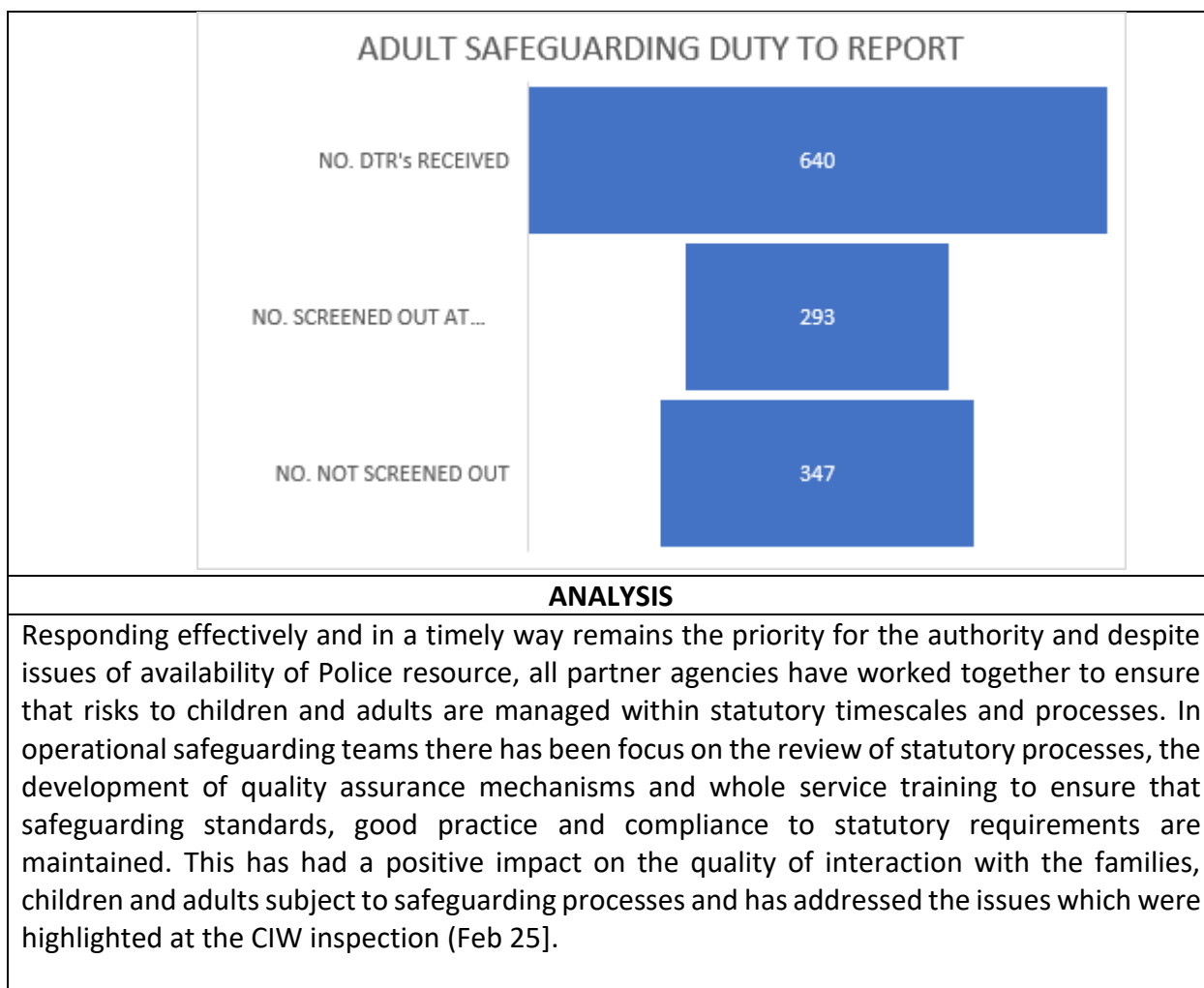


CORE GROUP MEETINGS



ADULT SAFEGUARDING:

- Adult Safeguarding have received 640 Duty to Reports in relation to 490 adults. Of these 640 reports 293 were screened out.
- Of those cases being allocated for further enquiries, almost 87% were completed within the 7 working day statutory timeframe, which is a 1% increase from last year. The 13% of cases which did not meet Statutory timescales were managed by Health Safeguarding, where system delay and complexity were the main causes of delay. In cases where delay occurs, these are reviewed by Adult Safeguarding to ensure they do not drift.
- Regarding categories of abuse, neglect remains the highest reports of concern [337 referrals] followed by physical abuse [225 referrals]
- The main sources of referral are from provider services, followed by Health. Work is ongoing with partner agencies to explore the appropriateness and quality of referrals.



5. SAFE SERVICES – delivered through commissioning arrangements, grants and partnerships

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 4

WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?

We use our influence to ensure that services operating in Monmouthshire, including commissioned and those outside the direct control of the Council, do so in ways which promote the welfare and safety of children and adults at risk.

PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS:

COMMISSIONING:

- Quality assurance processes remain in place for adult care provider services in the county receiving an annual monitoring visit, and in the case of larger providers 1-2 additional visits a year to maintain relationships.
- For Childrens Services formal monitoring has been done mainly at a desktop level due to services being individual and out of county, however, when necessary, in person visits are carried out. All 'in county placements' are completed face to face.
- One Older Adult Care Home that was in the Provider Performance process, escalated to the Escalating Concerns process due to concerns around leadership and management, staffing and quality of care. With support from ABUHB and Monmouthshire County Council the provider service (care home] worked hard to improve, and the Escalating Concerns process was ended in February 2025 following completion of the improvement action plan.
- There has been one Domiciliary Care service supported and monitored via the Provider Performance process; the provider made significant progress, and the process was concluded with normal monitoring returning.
- There were 2 children's commissioned placements where the providers were subject to an Improvement Plan with one concluding in September 24, and the second home commencing in March 25. The children were safeguarded through that process.
- In terms of other children's provision, there were no other services in formal processes during this period.

MONMOUTHSHIRE RESIDENTIAL SERVICE:

In November 24 a 4/5-bedroom 16+ Supported Living home was opened in Caldicot. The service provider was commissioned via the appropriate tendering process. The contract continues to be monitored by all parties on a quarterly basis. The service has settled well without significant issues.

LICENSING:

Taxi Licensing requires stringent testing before a licence is granted, and requires DBS checks every 6 months for taxi drivers. Conditions of an operator's licence require them to conduct DBS checks on all staff they employ as call handlers. Licensing works closely with Passenger Transport Unit and takes part in school transport checks along with attending and putting measures in place in strategy meetings as and when required. Licensing also works closely with Immigration and the Police anti-slavery teams and conduct operations within the hospitality sector. Three venues are currently under investigation.

In 2024/25 The Gambling Policy review took place which was adopted at Full Council in January 2025. The policy must be reviewed every 3 years. The policy deals with the following objectives:

- Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime,
- Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way, and
- Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

The policy looked at the harmful effects that gambling has and proposed a *no casino* resolution in Monmouthshire which was upheld. However, venues and the operation of gambling can also provide a vibrancy to towns and raise money for good causes if conducted safely and the policy aims to strike this balance.

PASSENGER TRANSPORT [PTU]:

- Following the completion of an internal audit, it was established that drivers the PTU had commissioned were not compliant with their Safeguarding Training. Appropriate action has been taken to resolve this, and with support from the Safeguarding Unit to deliver training, drivers have been able to undertake the appropriate level of safeguarding training. As of 16th April, compliance was 100%.
- Following discussions between the Safeguarding Unit, PTU and Education, it was identified that not all the one-page profiles completed for children accessing transport were shared with PTU following them being updated and/or reviewed. This was highlighted due to an increase in the number of drivers or passenger assistants being discussed within the PCM arena, as they were not responding to the child as agreed. A piece of work has been undertaken by PTU, Safeguarding Unit and Education to rectify this and ensure all one-page profiles are up to date and shared appropriately. This has resulted in the reduction of concerns being identified and subsequent PCM's being held with only 2 cases during quarters 3 and 4.

ANALYSIS

There are clear processes in place to ensure a robust monitoring for all social care commissioned services for children and adults. There is good evidence that safeguarding is embedded within all areas of the Council, which includes Licensing and Public Protection and Passenger Transport Units. Schools, and other parts of the Council working with children / adults at risk, indicate there are secure arrangements for contracted services. The Safe Services score remains at 4 to recognise these positives along with the strengthened working relationships between Safeguarding and Commissioning for both adults and children.

SAFEGUARDING CURRENT ACTIVITY PLAN [2024 – 2025]:

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING
GOOD GOVERNANCE			
Regional SAFE roll out 2023 – 2025.	Directorate Leads Safeguarding Unit	March 2025	
Directorates to develop increased autonomy in completing their individual SAFEs, with advice and guidance to be sought from the Safeguarding Unit where necessary.	Directorate Leads	March 2025	
Recruitment of a Safeguarding Service Manager.	Head of Children’s Services	July 2024	
Ensure correct link between Thinqi and the implementation of the National Training Standards to include Safeguarding training for Elected Members and School Governors	Workforce Development Team and Safeguarding Unit	March 2025	
Continue to develop the core data set as a standard agenda	Safeguarding Unit	Sept 2024	

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING
item for WASG to ensure whole council scrutiny.			
SAFE WORKFORCE			
Thinqi system to be fully implemented across all areas of the council to support full and accurate production of safeguarding training data.	Systems and Data Team Workforce Dev Team Safeguarding Unit	Dec 2024	
National Training Standards to be embedded with Thinqi	Workforce Development Team and Safeguarding Unit	March 2025	
To review and implement any actions arising from the national task and finish group developing further guidance around Practitioner Concerns.	Safeguarding Unit Safeguarding Board	March 2025	
Undertake an audit of the adapted arrangements for digital recruitment to ensure safeguarding is at the forefront (brought forward from 2023-24]	Systems and Data Team HR	Jan 25	
Training and Guidance to be developed around understanding of Practitioner Concerns, for	Safeguarding Unit Gwent Safeguarding Board	March 2025	

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING
those who are employers and those who are at greater risk of being discussed in the arena, eg Education, Foster Carers and Health professionals (brought forward from 2023 -24]			
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH			
Strengthen the links between the Wellbeing Team, the Safeguarding Unit and MEG.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2025	
MEG to work with partners both regionally and locally to develop transitional safeguarding to support young adults vulnerable to exploitation	Safeguarding Unit	March 2025	
Complete the Modern-Day slavery statement and update the Corporate Safeguarding Policy	Safeguarding Unit and Community Development Service	Dec 2024	
Support Gwent Police in recruiting for MARAC Chairs across the 5 LA's (to support consistency of practice]	Procurement Safeguarding Unit to offer advice and guidance	Dec 2024	
Include Neuro Diversity in the training profile for PREVENT		March 2025	

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING
Implement Thinqi to support compliance with VAWDASV training	Safeguarding Unit	Dec 2024	
ROBUST PROTECTION			
Undertake an analysis of demand data at both front door of adults and children to identify trends, resource need and to inform partnership approaches.	Safeguarding Unit	Oct 2024	
Undertake further planned engagement with Adult Services to promote safeguarding statutory compliance and understanding	Safeguarding Unit [Adult] Health Safeguarding	Dec 2024	
Utilise a 12-month Implementation Officer post to support the roll out of Keeping Children Safe practice framework and to support compliance with statutory timescales	Safeguarding Leads Children Services	July 2024	
Appoint to Safeguarding Service Manager position	Head of Children's Services	July 2024	
Recruit a 4th Service Manager to take forward the development of	Head of Children's Services	July 2024	

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING
Monmouthshire Children and young people placements.			
Review grant funded services to understand risks and resource need post 2025	Head of Children's Services	Dec 2024	
Implement the Safeguarding QA Framework	Safeguarding Service Manager	Dec 2024	
SAFE SERVICES			
Use of SAFES to continue learning and improvement in safe commissioning practice within Directorates.	Safeguarding Unit	March 2025	
Undertake a further check to ensure that Hiring and Letting processes adhere to Safeguarding policy.	WASG	March 2025	

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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	21-Jan-26	Cultural Strategy	Sara Burch	To approve the Monmouthshire Cultural Strategy which lays out clear ambitions and actions to ensure that Monmouthshire is a desired cultural	Tracey Thomas	20-May-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	Annual Safeguarding Report	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Diane Corrister	18-Jul-25
Council	23-Oct-25	Director's Annual Report	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding		Jane Rogers	18-Jul-25
Council	23-Oct-25	RLDP for Adoption	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Rachel Lewis	17-Apr-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	Proposed amendments to the provision of Early years education at Durand Primary School	Laura Wright - Education	The Council is considering replacing the Local Authority maintained Nursery class at Durand Primary School with a private non maintained setting. We would like to seek the views of the local community and are therefore seeking permission from Cabinet to enter into the necessary statutory consultation processes	Matthew Jones	11-Sep-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	2025/26 Revenue Monitoring Update 1	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	12/76/25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	Panel Performance Assessment	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To provide an update on the proposed approach for the Council's Panel Performance Assessment which is a requirement under the Local	Matt Gatehouse	28-Aug-25
Cabinet	15-Oct-25	Connect to Work and Future Focus programmes	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Hannah Jones / Rory Clifford	21-Jul-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
ICMD	24-Sep-25	Health & Safety Annual Report	ben Callard - Resources		Kate Thompson	5-Aug-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	Proposed endorsement of the Monmouthshire Local Area Energy Plan	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	Welsh Government commissioned the production of Local Area Energy Plans for Local Authority areas which will be used to develop a regional and national Energy Plan. The Local Area Energy Plan for Monmouthshire provides data on the	Deb Hill Howells	28-Jul-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 To approve a county of sanctuary strategy which establishes clear principles which will run through all council services and which promotes inclusion	Philippa Green	13-Jun-25
Cabinet	17-Sep-25	County of Sanctuary Strategy	Angela Sandles - Engagement		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	20-Aug-25	Highway Traffic Regulation Amendment Order No 17	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Gareth Freeman	4-Aug-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	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	Play sufficiency assessment update.	Nick John	28-Mar-25

Cabinet	16-Jul-25	Shire Hall Delivery Stage - Financial Approval	Ben Callard - Resources		Tracey Thomas	25-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	Separation of Licensing Functions	Angela Sandles - Engagement		Linda O Gorman	28-May-25
Council	26-Jun-25	Appointments to Outside Bodies	Angela Sandles - Engagement		John Pearson	23-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	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

Cabinet	21-May-25	Y Prentis Update	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Hannah Jones	26-Feb-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	UK Shared Prosperity Fund post March 2025 – financial implications and impact	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Hannah Jones	10-Jul-24

Cabinet	19-Feb-25	2024/25 Revenue and Capital Monitoring Month 9	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-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 Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	13-Jun-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)	
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	Education Middle Tier	Martyn Groucutt - Education		Will McLean	20-Nov-24
Cabinet	22-Jan-25	2025/26 Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	4-Jun-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's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
23 rd September 2025	Revenue Monitoring Update 1	To scrutinise the revenue position for services falling within the committee's remit.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
	Chief Officer for Social Care AMR	To scrutinise the progress and strategic direction for the service area.	Jane Rodgers Jenny Jenkins Cllr Chandler	Performance Reporting
	Safeguarding Annual Report	To scrutinise the performance of safeguarding arrangements.	Jane Rodgers Diane Corrister Cllr Chandler	Performance Reporting
18 th November 2025	Revenue & Capital Monitoring Update 2	To scrutinise the budgetary position (revenue and capital) for services falling within the committee's remit.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
	Complaints Process	To scrutinise the performance of the Council's complaints process, and issues raised by it.	Annette Evans Cllr Sandles	Performance Monitoring
	Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy action plan update	To update the committee on the Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy action plan.	Hannah Jones Will McLean Cllr Griffiths	Performance Monitoring
SPECIAL 3 rd December 2025	Planning Annual Performance Report	Scrutiny of the annual performance report prior to submission to Welsh Government.	Philip Thomas Andrew Jones Craig O'Connor Cllr Griffiths	Performance Monitoring

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
	Potholes and road conditions	To scrutinise the assessment of requirements, how these are prioritised, MCC's approach, etc.	Carl Touhig Cllr Griffiths?	Performance Monitoring
	Community & Corporate Plan progress update	To inform members of the plan's progress.	Richard Jones Hannah Carter Cllr Brocklesby	Performance Reporting
SPECIAL 27th January 2pm	School Exclusions update	To scrutinise the latest figures and the Council's performance.	Morwenna Wagstaff Keeva McDermott Cllr Wright	Performance Monitoring
	Schools Health Research Network (after 2.30)	To inform the committee about the data and insights from the SHRN work led by Cardiff University relating to pupil well-being.	Emma Taylor Will McLean Cllr Wright	Performance Monitoring
10th February 2026	Draft Revenue & Capital budget proposals	To scrutinise the 2025/26 Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
	Revenue & Capital Monitoring Update 3	To scrutinise the budgetary position (revenue and capital) for services falling within the committee's remit.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
10th March 2026				

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
21 st April 2026	Development of Children's Placements – 12mth update	To update the committee following scrutiny in April 25.	Morwenna Wagstaff Will McLean Cllr Wright	Performance Reporting
	Investment and Commercial Interests Update – 12mth update	To update the committee following scrutiny in April 25.	Nick Keyse Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
To be confirmed	Grants item – with People members?*	To scrutinise the Council's use of grant money, to assure that it is fit for purpose.	Jonathan Davies Hannah Jones	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed	Consultants and Agencies – with People members?*	To scrutinise the Council's use of consultants and agency workers – the number, relative value, reasons, etc.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies?	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed	Risk Register Update – by email? (Add to Dec onwards if something else drops?)	To follow up from June 25.	Richard Jones Hannah Carter Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
To be confirmed	Shared Prosperity Funding 2023-25	Shared Prosperity Funding measures 2023 - 2025, update on the measures for transition year 25/26 and future funding risk.	Hannah Jones Will McLean	Performance Reporting
To be confirmed – April/May best	NEET Reduction Strategy	To scrutinise the strategy's performance.	Hannah Jones Louise Wilce Cllr Griffiths	Performance Monitoring

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
<i>[1 page summary – see minutes]</i>				
To be confirmed (15/10/24 – covered by Audit Wales item in July?)	Socially Responsible Procurement strategy	To review progress of the strategy.	Gemma Ellis John Paxton Cath Fallon Cllr Brocklesby	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed – June 2026	Update on the Pupil Referral Service (PRS)	Discussion on significant changes that have occurred in the service and the risks around increasing demand.	Morwenna Wagstaff Jackie Elias Hayley Page Cllr Wright	Performance Reporting
	Specialist Resource Bases & Additional Learning Provision (including progress with ALN implementation)	To review progress at 12-month stage and include reviewing progress with ALN following the implementation of new legislation.	Morwenna Wagstaff Jackie Elias Hayley Page Cllr Wright	Performance Reporting
	Supporting Vulnerable Learners	To follow up from June 25 – annual.	Morwenna Wagstaff Lucie Doyle Cllr Wright	Performance Reporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
<i>To be confirmed</i>	Recruitment and retention	<i>Effect on the Council's performance and ability to deliver.</i>		
<i>To be confirmed</i>	Use of Reserves	<i>Future proofing and resilience planning as well as supporting long-term strategic priorities.</i>	<i>Peter Davies Jonathan Davies Cllr Callard</i>	
Social Justice Strategy progress				
Business Monmouthshire Project monitoring				
'Learning led' review of educational provision in Chepstow				
Review of Property Assets				

- **Exclusions** ~ Annual Reporting ~ January/February
- **Additional Learning Provision & Specialist Resource Base development** ~ Annual Reporting ~ June
- **Support for Vulnerable Learners** ~ Annual Reporting ~ June

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Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

Action List

15th July 2025

Minute Item:	Subject	Officer / Member	Outcome
6	To provide members with data on vacancies: where they have been held longest, how long they remain unfilled, whether each vacancy is still considered essential to service delivery, and the costs involved	Ben Callard, Jonathan Davies	Requested.
4	To provide specific updates on Flying Start and permanent exclusions	Richard Jones, Hannah Carter	Asked to the Chief Officer at Council 17 th July
9	To discuss with the Chair a plan to deal with the committee's volume of work and the number of items on each agenda	Scrutiny Officers, Cllr Neill	Done.
9	To remind officers again of the intention to scrutinise grant funding more widely, noting that if left until the new year there might not be the chance for scrutiny to inform the council's policy for the next financial year	Scrutiny Officers, Jonathan Davies	Reminded, further information to be sent by officers for areas of/approach of scrutiny to be determined.

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Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Wednesday, 9th July, 2025 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Alistair Neill (Chair)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Rachel Buckler, John Crook, Steven Garratt, Meirion Howells, Alistair Neill, M. Newell, Paul Pavia, Peter Strong, Penny Jones, Maureen Powell, Sue Riley, Martyn Groucutt, Ann Webb, Lisa Dymock and Ian Chandler

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Ceri York, Service Manager Commissioning and Disability
Jenny Jenkins, Head of Adult Services
Nicola Venus-Balgobin, Lead Commissioner - Adult Social Services Care
Penny Haywood (Ardal)
Samantha Harry (Ardal)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Jan Butler and Christopher Edwards

1. Apologies for Absence.

Christopher Edwards, Lisa Dymock as substitute. Jan Butler, Ann Webb as substitute. Cabinet Member Ian Chandler.

2. Declarations of Interest.

None.

3. Public Open Forum.

No members of the public were present but questions were submitted from residents which were aired by the members during the main item.

4. A Review of the Process and Decision Making Involved in the Commissioning of Domiciliary Care Contracts in the South of the County.

Jane Rodgers, Penny Haywood (Ardal) and Samantha Harry (Ardal) introduced the report. Ceri York, Jenny Jenkins, Jane Rodgers and Nicola Venus-Balgobin answered the members' questions.

- *Were CIW and CQS inspection reports taken into account during the evaluation process?*

No, inspection reports were not considered to allow new start-ups to apply. However, all applicants had to meet quality standards and be registered before the contract commenced.

- *So to clarify, companies could tender who were not registered – with whom?*
- Yes, companies that were not yet registered could still tender. The process excluded inspection reports to avoid disadvantaging new providers. While registration wasn't required to apply, it was mandatory to meet quality standards under RISCO and the Social Care Act before the contract could begin. Inspection reports were also considered unreliable due to their time-specific nature.
- *How did the previous provider score lower on quality despite their long service and local workforce?*

The evaluation process was thorough and equitable, focusing on specific questions and criteria. Testimonials were not considered, but case studies were. The previous provider scored lower on quality despite their long service and local workforce because the evaluation process was highly detailed and structured. It involved 153 questions assessed by different groups of experienced officers, each focusing on specific areas of expertise. The process was designed to ensure fairness and consistency, with consensus meetings to discuss and agree on scores.

- *Can you clarify the role that Ardal played in the procurement process?*

Ardal supported the entire procurement process, including training, evaluation, and ensuring compliance with procurement regulations. They did not just collate and pass on pricing information.

- *Was there a conflict of interest between Monmouthshire County Council and Ardal?*

No, there was no conflict of interest. The separation of duties and oversight by Ardal ensured compliance with procurement standards and mitigated any potential conflicts.

- *Will the final evaluation results and scoring breakdown be shared with tendering providers?*

Yes, detailed breakdowns of scores and the advantages of winning bidders will be provided to all tendering providers.

- *How was the 60% quality and 40% cost weighting reflected in the outcome?*

Quality and cost were evaluated separately, with quality accounting for 60% of the final score. The evaluation process ensured that quality was assessed based on detailed criteria and evidence provided by bidders.

- *Would it be right to say at that point you're translating qualitative assessment into a quantitative ranking, but at the heart of it there's necessarily a qualitative element?*

Yes, that's correct. While the evaluation process involves translating qualitative assessments into quantitative scores, the core of the process remains qualitative. Quality and pricing were assessed separately and only combined at the end to produce the final ranking.

- *How does Monmouthshire County Council justify the process as transparent and in the best interest of service users?*

The process was transparent, with clear communication and engagement with potential providers. The aim was to ensure sustainable, high-quality care and improve service delivery for users.

- *Were service users and their families involved in subsequent stages of the process? Should they have been?*

Service users were asked to email their interest in participating, but no emails were received. The presentation question was developed with input from the focus group. Service users were not involved in the presentation panel, but this will be considered for future processes.

- *So if someone offered to get involved but were then not contacted, was that an oversight?*

If someone had mentioned it at the focus group but then we didn't receive any emails afterwards we can only apologise that that was missed.

- *What will happen to current service users if the new providers cannot recruit sufficient carers?*

New providers submitted mobilisation plans to ensure sufficient staffing. They are working with existing providers and have started recruitment processes. Contingency measures are in place, including deploying staff from nearby areas if needed.

- *Are there any concerns about the new providers' ability to recruit sufficient carers?*

There are concerns due to the complexity and scale of the transition, but the situation is being closely monitored, and contingency options are ready to be deployed if necessary.

- *Where was the change management in the process, and why was the voice of the most vulnerable not heard?*

The change management process was set out in the implementation plan, including engagement with individuals and providers. Additional resources were allocated to respond to requests and concerns.

- *How is the handover process going, particularly in Caldicot, and why was the existing provider not retained there?*

The handover involves new providers visiting families and ensuring smooth transitions. The allocation of lots was based on the evaluation process, with providers ranked and awarded contracts accordingly.

- *Why are the evaluation criteria missing a standard on quality of care?*

The ITT required bidders to demonstrate their experience and quality of care through detailed submissions, including training, assessment, and engagement with families. Quality of care was a significant part of the evaluation.

- *Why was the domiciliary care strategy not subjected to pre-decision scrutiny, and how will democratic oversight be ensured in the future?*

The report was presented to the cabinet without pre-cabinet scrutiny due to an oversight in the forward planner. This was acknowledged as a mistake, and an apology was given. Future processes will aim to ensure proper democratic oversight.

- *How can the council ensure that new providers have enough carers, especially considering the transfer of existing carers?*

New providers were required to submit mobilisation plans detailing how they would ensure sufficient staffing. The transfer of existing carers is facilitated through the 2P regulations, and efforts are made to ensure continuity of care.

- *How will the council ensure the financial and operational viability of service provision in rural areas?*

Providers were invited to submit bids with different rates for rural and urban areas to reflect the higher costs of delivering care in rural areas. This approach aims to ensure that both rural and urban areas are adequately serviced.

- *It might be helpful to explain where the lots are?*

The service specification is at the end of Appendix 12. To describe the map: Lot 1 is Chepstow town and Rural, starting at the top end. Tintern is the top of Lot 1 going down to Devauden, down to Chepstow town and then stopping south of Chepstow town. Lot 2 covers Caldicot and the environs and then Lot 3, the Levels and the Rural starts in the bottom of Magor and Undy going up through Caerwent to the top of Earlswood.

- *What early indicators will be used to track whether the transition has improved quality, stability, and cost-effectiveness, and how frequently will performance against the strategy's key performance indicators be reported to scrutiny?*

Early indicators include measures such as the percentage of care provided, feedback from service users, and call log data. A robust three-year contract monitoring and quality assurance framework will be used, covering both qualitative and quantitative data. Performance information will be gathered and presented to the head of service and strategic director, and it will be available for scrutiny.

- *In terms of bringing performance information forward, would that be identified as a separate contract on which performance is tracked, and that we would be able*

to see in the future, or would it be tied up with the wider performance of the services?

We will be gathering this information within Social Care & Health that we will look to present to our Head Of Service and Strategic Director. We would be happy to share that information.

- *Will spot purchasing be one of the contingency options if new providers cannot recruit sufficient carers?*

Spot purchasing is considered a tool in the contingency planning but comes with risks, such as the potential for providers to withdraw care with short notice. It will be used only if it is the best tool for the situation.

- *What will the transition arrangements look like, and will there be a gradual handover?*

The transition should feel gradual, with new providers visiting and exchanging information with outgoing providers and service users. However, there will be a specific date for the final handover of care.

- *Is there an option to maintain current domiciliary care providers for individuals whose needs may change soon?*

Provision has been made for exceptional cases where continuity of care can be maintained based on specific circumstances.

- *What steps is the council taking to anchor domiciliary care within the local foundational economy and support smaller community-based providers?*

The council supports a mixed economy of care provision, including direct payments and micro carer schemes, to maximise choice and support local providers

- *Have we made an assessment of how many workers might leave the workforce? Has there been any discussion with providers about anyone who might not go along with this process?*

While all six existing providers in the south have had their contracts terminated, they are cooperating with the transition to new providers and maintain regular communication about workforce plans. Most agencies have not reported staff departures, and others believe they have sufficient capacity to continue delivering services. However, the situation remains fluid, especially with recent changes to sponsorship rules that may affect staffing. Spot purchasing is recognised as a useful contingency tool but carries risks – particularly for service users – so it will only be used when clearly appropriate.

- *Is it realistic to expect previous carers to introduce new carers to the service users during the handover process?*

Yes, it is realistic and does happen. The new providers have written to existing service users to arrange meetings and introductions. Joint meetings between outgoing and

incoming providers are being arranged to facilitate these introductions, ensuring a smooth transition for the service users.

- *Councillor Dymock paid tribute to one of her constituents, Valerie Rhys, who recently passed away and had contacted her with concerns about the changes being discussed today. The councillor conveyed her condolences to Valerie's family.*
- *Why was online engagement used when it may not have been appropriate for many service users, and what will be done to ensure more inclusive consultation in future?*

The online engagement event was held with providers, not service users. For service users, letters were sent to around 190 individuals, resulting in a 23% response rate—consistent with other consultations. However, the council acknowledged the need to improve engagement, especially with the 80% who did not respond. They apologised for any missed follow-ups with those who expressed interest in the focus group and are exploring more accessible options like drop-in events to increase involvement.

- *Why weren't CIW (Care Inspectorate Wales) and CQC (Care Quality Commission) reports considered as part of the rationale in the procurement process?*

The aim was to maintain a level playing field during procurement. Procurement rules require treating all bidders equally, including new providers who may not have such reports. We will look into the possibility of including testimonials in the future, but it is a complex issue.

- *What lessons have been learned from the impact on service users, and how will these be applied in the northern part of the county?*

The council recognised the need to improve how service users are engaged and reassured that lessons from the southern phase will inform future work. The next implementation phase will focus on the central area, with the north scheduled for a later stage. Timing for the northern phase has not yet been confirmed.

- *Have you got a timeframe for the central area next? Will we go about this with lessons learned coming out of the south?*

In terms of a time frame, we're hoping to have a proposed model for the central area by the Autumn. Yes, the council intends to apply lessons learned from the south when implementing the new arrangements in the central area. The strategy was deliberately designed as an iterative process, allowing each phase to inform the next. This approach was chosen due to the scale of the change and the distinct needs of different areas. The council welcomes feedback and acknowledges that, despite acting with integrity and diligence, there are areas for improvement. These insights will be used to enhance future implementation and engagement efforts.

- *How will the council ensure continuity of care and stability for the workforce, given the distress caused by the changes?*

The council is committed to maintaining continuity and stability. We hope carers will transfer to new providers and are working to ensure better working conditions and longer contracts to stabilise the workforce. We also acknowledged the anxiety caused by the changes and are working to support both service users and carers.

- *The member emphasised the need for better engagement and involvement of elected Members in future processes. She welcomed the review of the commissioning process but urged that lessons be applied in the north to avoid repeating the issues experienced in the south.*
- *Is 191 the total number of those cared for in South Monmouthshire, and why are 30 people still remaining with their current providers?*

Yes, 191 is the total number of those cared for in South Monmouthshire at that point in time. The 30 people are remaining with their current providers because their existing provider successfully won the lot for their area.

- *The use of the word "sufficient" in the positive impact report sounds like basic care, and it would be better to use terms like "best quality possible."*

Officers acknowledge the clumsiness of the wording and agree that "sufficient, high quality care" would be a better term.

- *At what point were there no start-ups left in the process, and were there any start-ups in the process?*

There was a new start-up that went through the process and passed the pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) stage, progressing to the final method statement evaluation. However, the procurement regulations require treating all bidders equally from the start, so the criteria could not be changed mid-process.

- *How does the council ensure that employees want to transfer to new providers, especially if the new providers do not have high standards reported in CIW/CQC reports?*

The decision to transfer is individual and based on the information provided by the new providers. They aim to ensure that new providers offer attractive terms and conditions, including long-term employment stability and guaranteed hours.

- *When do the qualitative and quantitative pathways come together, and were higher-cost, better-quality services penalised for cost?*

The qualitative and quantitative pathways are scored separately and then combined at the end to determine the most economically advantageous tender. The process ensures that both quality and cost are considered without penalizing higher-cost, better-quality services.

- *A member argued that inspection reports are not merely a 'snapshot in time', citing a local provider whose longstanding "requires improvement" rating has not changed because inspectors found no reason to upgrade it. Inspection ratings*

are maintained or updated based on ongoing assessments, not just a single moment, and therefore should be considered more reliable and relevant than suggested.

- *Residents in Caldicot area have not had the support they require, and many have not been reached. The new provider did not provide care in Caldicot, so the maximum change is for the people of Caldicot, Portskewett, and Sudbrook. The current provider had Caldicot as their first preference. How did this happen with all the positive information available for that provider? Also, are the rates for rural and town areas the same or different?*

The process followed was impartial and based on the information provided by the bidders. The outcome was determined by the evaluation process, which adhered to procurement rules and commissioning professional practice. For Lot 1 and Lot 3, there are different rates for rural and urban areas. For Lot 2, which includes Caldicot, there is a single rate for the entire area.

Chair's Summary:

The Chair concluded the meeting by expressing appreciation for the social care teams, acknowledging their daily dedication and the thoughtful, committed work they provide. He emphasised that while the meeting focused on a specific issue, the broader contributions of the workforce should not be overlooked. He confirmed that the committee had thoroughly scrutinised the process and followed the recommendations presented. He also noted that the discussion had surfaced valuable learning points and areas for improvement, which could help enhance future processes, particularly in reference to Recommendation 2 in the report. He emphasised that the process could have been more transparent, which the Chief officer acknowledged. The Chair thanked everyone for their thoughtful questions and responses.

5. Next Meeting

15th July 2025 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at **12.44 pm**

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Tuesday, 15th July, 2025 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Alistair Neill (Chair)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Rachel Buckler, John Crook, Steven Garratt, Meirion Howells, M. Newell, Paul Pavia, Peter Strong, Ben Callard and Mary Ann Brocklesby

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
 Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
 Peter Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources
 Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
 Matthew Gatehouse, Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.
 Richard Jones, Performance and Data Insight Manager
 Jonathan Davies, Head of Finance/Section 151
 Hannah Carter, Performance Analyst
 Craig O'Connor, Chief Officer, Place and Community Well-being
 Gemma Ellis, Ardal Interim Head of Procurement
 Tyrone Stokes, Finance Manager
 Stacey Jones, Performance/Finance and Resources Manager
 Sian Hayward, Head of Information Technology and Security and SIRO (Senior Information Risk Owner)
 Cath Fallon, Head of Economy and Enterprise
 Nikki Wellington, Finance and Support Services Manager
 Nicholas Keyse, Head of Landlord Services

APOLOGIES: None.

1. Apologies for Absence

None.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Public Open Forum

None.

4. Revenue & Capital monitoring outturn

Cabinet Member Ben Callard introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Jonathan Davies, Peter Davies, Matt Gatehouse, Debra Hill-Howells, Nicola Wellington.

- *How will the council mitigate the long-term structural risk from the persistent overspend in social care and housing?*

The council is working on reablement and managing demand pathways to improve quality of life and reduce local authority burden. There is recognition that savings targets in social care have not always been fully met due to increased demand and complexity, as well as inflation. The council continues to work on these challenges, acknowledging statutory responsibilities and external factors affecting demand.

- *Significant capital slippage is reported. What measures are we using to mitigate this?*

Capital slippage is mainly due to late grant notifications and some planning issues. The council is working with budget holders and external contractors to improve planning and delivery, but recognises that capital schemes are multi-year and subject to change.

- *What assurance/mitigation can be given to the risk of relying heavily on one-off grants?*

Reliance on grant funding is significant, but late notifications make planning difficult. The council would benefit from earlier and more certain grant information to plan and use funds more effectively. There is ongoing dialogue with Welsh Government about moving some grant funding into core revenue funding. There is generally constructive dialogue with Welsh Government about grant design and funding, but uncertainty remains about future budget approaches. The council is working to ensure its interests are protected, especially regarding recurrent grants that underwrite core costs.

- *Is the real cost of social care underrepresented in our budget?*

The council has learned from past ambitious reform targets in social care, which led to overspends when savings were not fully realised. Recent years have seen some improvement, with early indications that forecast overspends are lessening, reflecting progress in reform and budget management.

- *What is the impact of increased National Insurance costs on the council's budget, including schools, and what mitigation is in place?*

The increased National Insurance is a cost pressure. Some additional funding was provided but did not cover the full liability. A contingency fund was set in last year's budget to mitigate this risk.

- *What is being done about council tax arrears and debt recovery, given the lack of movement in outstanding arrears?*

There are various reasons for arrears, not all due to refusal to pay (e.g., probate cases). Council tax arrears and social care debt have increased post-pandemic, reflecting national trends. The council uses the Council Tax Reduction Scheme to support those in need and is focusing on recovery efforts. There has also been an increase in discounts and exemptions, moving towards the Welsh average. The shared service team works to support taxpayers and ensure robust recovery measures. The council maintains a high long-term collection rate (over 99%), though delays in probate have affected in-year rates. Welsh Government is reviewing advice and legislation to support appropriate enforcement and support for those in challenging circumstances.

- *Should probate issues significantly influence Council tax arrears, given that probate is a constant factor? Are the main factors affecting arrears more likely related to the ability to pay, or avoidance of payment?*

Delays in probate over recent years have impacted collection rates, making it take longer to collect payments than previously. This has affected in-year collection rates. The duration for probate has increased from three to six months to more like twelve to twenty-four months in many cases, which has contributed to the delays in collection.

- *Can you provide a breakdown of where staff vacancies have been held the longest across the Council, how long these posts have remained unfilled, whether each vacancy is still essential, and what is being done to address risks to service continuity? How sustainable is the current use of vacancy freezes, and what are the implications for service quality, staff morale, and organisational capacity going forward?*
- Specific data on which directorates have the most vacancies is not available during the meeting, but it is likely proportional to directorate size (e.g., more in health and social care). The council has raised the threshold for recruitment, requiring higher-level management review to determine if vacancies should be filled. – **ACTION: to secure the data and share with the committee** The intention is not to keep vacancies permanent; if a role is no longer needed, the structure should be changed. If the intention is to re-recruit when conditions allow, vacancies are held temporarily. Each vacancy is assessed against criteria set by the strategic leadership team, including health and safety and risk to service users. Directorates review vacancies, and all recruitment is signed off by senior management. The process aims to avoid unnecessary harm or risk to communities and encourages creative solutions for service delivery.
- *How does the increased threshold for recruiting affect the delivery of frontline services? How is the balance maintained between financial constraints and the need to deliver essential services?*

Directors within their services are best positioned to judge the impact of holding vacancies on frontline services. There is a need to balance minimal impact on services while achieving budget recovery. Criteria were set at the strategic leadership team level to assess vacancies, including health and safety risks and the well-being of individuals. Each directorate management team considers these criteria before vacancies are signed off by senior management, ensuring that essential services are not unduly affected.

- *The passenger transport overspend of £555,000 – does this relate to regular bus services or home-to-school transport, and what can be done to mitigate these costs?*

The overspend relates to home-to-school transport, not public buses. Costs have risen due to increased numbers of learners and higher operator costs. Contract handbacks require rapid retendering or in-house coverage. Routes and vehicle sizes are continually reviewed to manage variations and new learners.

- *Regarding school deficits, how is the council working with schools to find savings, especially around supply teaching, and are there efforts to reduce reliance on agencies?*

Schools in deficit must produce recovery plans, which are monitored and supported by finance, HR, and school improvement teams. Schools are encouraged to employ staff directly for long-term cover (e.g., maternity leave) rather than use agencies. There is a Welsh Government agency staff framework, and schools have requested the council explore alternative supply staff models, such as a council-run pool.

- *15 schools are in deficit and the overall deficit has grown from around £1 million to just over £4 million. Are the recovery plans for these schools pushing towards an improved situation this year?*

When a school goes into deficit, they are required to create a recovery plan. Several schools are already in the second year of their recovery plans and are making progress. She noted that the timing of staff changes, which typically start in September, means that the first year only sees seven months of savings. Therefore, while the situation may initially worsen, improvements are expected over time as the full impact of the recovery plans is realised.

- *Is supply teaching still a cost pressure, and can we employ teachers directly rather than through agencies?*

Schools are encouraged to employ staff directly for long-term vacancies, such as maternity leave, to ensure consistency and reduce costs. There has been a recent audit around supply staff, and schools have asked the council to look at alternative ways of providing supply staff, such as creating a pool of supply staff employed by the council. This would help to reduce reliance on agencies and potentially lower costs.

- *How does the council decide the need for a position versus holding a vacancy? Has a process mapping exercise been done for all services to determine the right resource levels, and are the results available?*

The Council has a clear set of criteria for evaluating vacancies, which includes considering health and safety risks and the well-being of individuals. Each vacancy is reviewed by directorate management teams and signed off by senior officers. While there isn't a central process mapping exercise for all services, regular reviews and

evaluations are conducted at the service level to ensure the workforce is right-sized. Restructures and changes are made as needed to optimize service delivery.

Chair's Summary:

The committee agreed the recommendations and the report was moved.

5. Medium Term Financial Strategy

Cabinet Member Ben Callard introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Jonathan Davies and Peter Davies.

- *Regarding the £20m shortfall for 2 years hence, last year we were looking at £12.2m for this year – so comparing like with like the shortfall has gone up next year to £13.6m and the medium term cumulative shortfall last year was at £34.7m and that is now £38m – are those the relevant comparative numbers?*

The comparison figures are correct. The figures represent a point-in-time assessment and that they are subject to change as the budget process progresses. The figures provide a context for understanding the financial challenges and planning for the next financial year and the medium term.

- *Is it correct that Monmouthshire has the lowest reserve cover in Wales, and is this a cause for concern?*

The statement refers to an Audit Wales report from about 18 months to two years ago, which identified that Monmouthshire's reserves, as a proportion of its total revenue budget, were the lowest in Wales. The context is important, as reserves include both usable and unusable reserves, with many being earmarked for specific services. Local authorities are at different stages in their reserve investment journeys, which affects their reserve levels. So, while the statement is accurate, the context and specific circumstances of each authority must be considered.

COUNCILLOR NEILL LEFT THE MEETING, AND COUNCILLOR BUCKLER TOOK OVER AS CHAIR

- *Does the council have enough sustainable plans to bridge the projected funding shortfall?*

The concerning outlook is acknowledged but the council has successfully mitigated pressures in recent years, has robust controls and systems, and is well placed to address future challenges. The council assumes £7.5 million annually for demand pressures and inflation, and there are ongoing and planned transformation programmes across services to address the budget gap.

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to the Cabinet Member and officers. The report was moved.

6. Enabling Strategies (including Procurement)

Cabinet Member Ben Callard introduced the report. Matt Gatehouse, Nick Keyse, Sian Hayward, Richard Jones Peter Davies and Gemma Ellis (Ardal) answered the members' questions.

- *Is 60% of staff satisfaction due to an underlying cultural issue and are the increased pressure from vacancies affecting staff well-being and skills development?*

A recent staff survey provided a baseline, and actions have included consolidating well-being resources and increasing engagement. There are ongoing efforts to improve staff involvement and skills development, including new e-learning platforms and change programmes, and future surveys will measure progress.

- *Can you clarify the figures given for the difference in pay between males and females?*

The pay gap figures refer to the difference in hourly rates, with the mean and median differences being 85 pence and 49 pence, respectively. While men and women are paid equally for the same job, the gap exists due to more men in higher-paid roles and more women in lower-paid roles (e.g., care). The council is working to address this through career development and encouraging broader career choices.

- *What is the reason for the delay in the affordable housing development at Caldicot Comprehensive School and what is the proposed timeline?*

The land was sold to Monmouthshire Housing Association, which initially failed to appoint a contractor but has since re-tendered and appointed one. The target is to start on site by the end of summer, with a commitment to proceed as soon as possible.

- *Regarding the council's digital and data strategy, how is digital transformation being used to improve operational efficiency, data-driven decision making, citizen engagement, and procurement processes?*

Improving digital and data maturity is an ongoing task, with continuous efforts in service areas to enhance digital capabilities. A new assessment is planned across the SRS partners (Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, and Monmouthshire) to ensure a coordinated approach. The assessment will help to target resources effectively, but work is already underway to improve digital maturity. Digital maturity assessments should not slow down progress on digital and data initiatives, especially given the financial challenges facing the council. There is a need to inject pace into digital and data work, and that it is not necessary to complete all digital/data maturity assessments before prioritising and moving forward with key projects.

E-procurement tools and systems are a high priority due to new transparency requirements from the Procurement Act, which require more notices and digital processes. Currently, "Sell to Wales" and "Proactis" are used for e-tendering, sourcing, and contract management; there have been some teething problems with the digital platform but there is ongoing collaboration with Welsh Government and other authorities

to resolve these. Microsoft Forms is used for scoping and governance documents to improve procurement visibility. While improvements have been made, the digital procurement system is not yet perfect, and the team continues to investigate better solutions and learn from other local authorities.

- *Is a particular local authority leading on this, and how will processes be coordinated?*

Monmouthshire will lead this process, using a common template to identify skills gaps and inform investment. The assessment will be integrated into business planning, with the aim of supporting service redesign, efficiency, and better use of data for decision making.

- *How has the self-assessment process evolved over the last 3 years, and are there other ways that the process can be still more sophisticated? What about benchmarking against other local authorities?*

This is the first year for the enabling strategies self-assessment report, aligning with the broader authority self-assessment. The process is evolving, with more benchmarking information included in the main self-assessment report where data is available. Benchmarking will be considered where it is meaningful and relevant, and the process will continue to be refined to provide greater clarity on outcomes and impact as strategies are implemented over time.

- *What efforts are being pursued to stay on track for the Net Zero ambition?*

The Council is building a baseline of evidence to support leveraging external grant funding for transition goals. This includes costed surveys for decarbonising the built environment and developing business cases for grant funding. The council is also working on fleet transition plans and collaborating with Welsh Government Energy Services for electric vehicle charging infrastructure. The council is focusing on improving data collection from the supply chain to better understand and reduce Scope 3 emissions. This involves working with suppliers to capture carbon emissions data and supporting SMEs through available funding.

- *Does talk of tools extend to internal tools e.g. My Monmouthshire? Could we do a review to see if it is used as optimally as it could be? What has been the uptake of the "Let's Talk Monmouthshire" tool?*
- There are limitations of the "My Monmouthshire" tool; a review is underway to improve its use and integration with other systems. There is a need for behavioural change and consistent feedback loops. "Let's Talk Monmouthshire" is in its infancy and is being developed further, with updates to be provided by Paul Sullivan (Head of Customer, Communication & Engagement)

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to the Cabinet Member and officers. The report was moved.

7. Self-Assessment 24/25

Hannah Carter and Leader Mary-Ann Brocklesby introduced the report. Richard Jones and Craig O'Connor answered the members' questions.

- *What are the barriers to FSM uptake? Are meals produced regardless of registration?*

The uptake of free school meals is about 72%, and the council is working to improve this through various schemes. The council is collaborating with Sustainable Food colleagues to provide food education in schools.

- *Has Flying Start increased in Caldicot? How do we help people to get meal kits? What is the reason for the increase in permanent exclusions between 2010-22? Where do the students go and what is the effect on social and emotional learning?*

Specific updates on Flying Start, meal kits, and permanent exclusions will need to be provided in writing. – **ACTION**

- *What are the measures of processes and project management, the number of reviews conducted with users, and the assessment of the impact on residents?*

The Council's performance management framework includes service business plans, performance measures, and annual self-assessments to track progress and learn from outcomes.

- *Could an external body – such as Audit Wales or the Future Generations Commissioner's office – validate whether the right data is being collected and the right things are being measured? Perhaps we could hold a collaborative workshop with the Commissioner's office and invite officers to consider this suggestion – such leadership could position the authority as an example across Wales?*

External scrutiny is already embedded in the self-assessment process through the inclusion of findings from regulators like CIW, Audit Wales, and Estyn. Audit Wales recently reviewed the council's performance management arrangements and found them sound, while also recommending improvements – such as better reporting on underperformance – which have been addressed in the current report. Additionally, the council is preparing for a peer panel performance assessment, scheduled for February, to further strengthen external evaluation. We welcome the idea of working more closely with the Future Generations Commissioner's office, noting existing good contact and alignment with the Well-being of Future Generations Act. There is also ongoing collaboration through WLGA networks to improve performance management and share best practice.

- *To clarify, did Audit Wales take into account our reporting in their review of performance management?*

Audit Wales did consider the council's self-assessment as part of their review of performance management arrangements. Their findings were reported to the Governance and Audit Committee, and the officer offered to share the report more widely. One key recommendation was to improve how underperformance is explained – an area that has been a focus in this year's reporting.

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to the Leader and to officers. The report was moved.

8. Council and Cabinet Work Plan

Councillor Bond reiterated her request from Place committee that this plan be amended to show more clearly which reports have already gone to Cabinet/Council, and which are still forthcoming. Officers reassured members that this point has been passed on to Democratic Services to form part of the overall changes being made to the planner.

9. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Work Programme and Action List

A Special meeting has been added on 3rd December, and another is being arranged for January. Note that some of the 3rd June Actions have been sent to the committee since the agenda was published.

Councillor Pavia noted that there are too many items on each agenda, and that this volume of work needs to be worked through with the Chair. Officers assured members that this is already something that they wish to address, and will indeed discuss options with the Chair as soon as possible. – **ACTION**

Councillor Bond noted that the Grants item should ideally be covered before Spring so that there is the possibility of the committee's comments feeding into next year's strategy. The scrutiny team will pass this point on to the finance officers – **ACTION**

10. To confirm the minutes of previous meetings

The minutes were confirmed.

11. Date of Next Meeting

23rd September 2025 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at **12.49 pm**

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