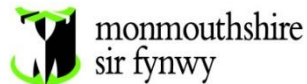


Public Document Pack



Members of the People Scrutiny Committee are invited to the meeting for the Social Care and Safeguarding agenda items

County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Monday, 21 September 2026

Notice of meeting

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

**Tuesday, 29th September, 2026 at 10.00 am,
The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA**

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.	2026/27 Financial Update - To scrutinise progress against the Council's revenue budget for the 2026/27 financial year.	1 - 44
5.	Annual Director's Report for Social Care - To scrutinise the progress and strategic direction for the service area.	45 - 144
6.	Safeguarding Annual Evaluation Report - To scrutinise the performance of safeguarding arrangements.	145 - 176
7.	Council and Cabinet Work Planner.	177 - 186
8.	Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.	187 - 190
9.	To confirm the following minutes of the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee:	
9.1.	30th June 2026.	191 - 206
9.2.	8th September 2026 (Special Meeting).	207 - 218
10.	Next Meeting: 13th October 2026 at 10.00am.	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

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 Su McConnel, Croesonen;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
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
Clare Werrett

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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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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.

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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?

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

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SUBJECT: 2026/27 REVENUE BUDGET – FINANCIAL UPDATE
MEETING: PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE: 29 SEPTEMBER 2026
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny and Cabinet with an update of the progress against the Council's revenue budget for the 2026/27 financial year.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- i. That the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the revenue budget forecast for the 2026/27 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 £464,000 at Update 1, representing a forecast 0.2% variance against the approved budget for the year.
- 3.2 That Cabinet note that, while the Update 1 forecast is reporting a small net overspend, the overall position remains broadly manageable at this stage of the year. This reflects the impact of recent service reform, demand management, income maximisation and budget discipline, while recognising the specific budget risks that will continue to be managed through future monitoring updates, including:
- demand volatility in high-cost services, particularly adults' and children's social care;

- inflationary and contractual cost pressures where these affect commissioned services, supplies, utilities or income targets;
- delivery of the approved £4.291m savings programme, with services currently forecasting 85.7% delivery and a £614,000 shortfall;
- the impact of one-off or annually allocated grant funding streams where these support core service activity; and
- the cumulative schools reserves deficit and the impact this has on the Council's overall financial resilience.

- 3.3 That Cabinet note the forecast movement in cumulative schools reserves as outlined in Appendix 4. Schools are currently forecasting a further draw on reserves of £2,457,000 during 2026/27, resulting in a projected cumulative deficit balance of £9,337,000 by year-end, with eighteen schools forecast to be in deficit.
- 3.4 That Cabinet note the forecast movement in school reserve balances and request that the Strategic Director for Learning, Skills and Economy undertake a review of all schools categorised as high risk (Appendix 4) and report, in the first instance, to the Cabinet Members for Education and Resources on the adequacy of budget recovery plans, progress against agreed actions and whether any further support, challenge or intervention is required to secure financial recovery.

KEY ISSUES:

4.1 Context

- 4.2 The 2026/27 budget was developed within a continuing period of financial constraint and uncertainty for local government. The approved budget provided additional investment in services experiencing the greatest demand and cost pressures, particularly social care, education and infrastructure. This included a further £1 million recurrent investment in school budgets for the second consecutive year, alongside increased provision for preventative children's services, adults and children with complex needs, additional learning needs and social, emotional and mental health provision.
- 4.3 The budget set by Council in March addressed an estimated £16.8 million increase in the annual cost of delivering services, equivalent to around 8% of the Council's budget. This was funded through a 4.4% increase in Welsh Government support, generating approximately £6.15 million of additional funding; a 5.95% increase in Council Tax; increased fees and charges; and £3.5 million of service efficiencies and reforms. The final budget was balanced without using the Council Fund reserve to support recurrent expenditure and included a £1 million budget risk contingency.

- 4.4 Since the budget was approved, the wider operating environment has continued to present both cost and demand risks. Although inflation remains significantly below the peaks experienced in recent years, the latest ONS release shows CPI inflation rising to 2.9% in the 12 months to July 2026, from 2.6% in June, and remaining above the Bank of England's 2% target. This underlines the need for continued caution, particularly where commissioned services, contractual uplifts, utilities, supplies and construction-related costs are exposed to in-year price movements. Inflationary pressure, alongside subdued growth expectations and the prospect of borrowing costs remaining higher for longer, will continue to require close monitoring through future budget updates.
- 4.5 There is now greater certainty over national pay developments. The 2026/27 NJC pay award has been agreed at 3.3%, backdated to 1 April 2026. The Welsh Government has also announced consultation on a 3.5% pay award for teachers and school leaders from September 2026, together with a 5% increase for unqualified teachers, and has indicated that additional funding will be provided to local authorities and schools. The financial implications of these settlements, including the timing and adequacy of any associated funding, will need to be reflected through in-year monitoring.
- 4.6 Alongside these national developments, the Council continues to face uncertainty around service demand, annually allocated specific grants, income collection and debt recovery, the delivery of planned service reforms, recruitment and retention in specialist areas, and the financial position of schools. These risks are most acute within social care, education and housing and will require close monitoring and continued financial discipline throughout 2026/27.

4.7 Revenue budget forecast

- 4.8 Full Council approved a total revenue expenditure budget of £253,702,000 for the 2026/27 financial year. This is inclusive of £30,551,000 of precepts for Police and Community Council, and levies for Fire, Drainage and National parks which are paid directly to these organisations. The Council's net revenue budget that is spent on delivering Council services is therefore £223,151,000.

Table 1: Revenue budget forecast by directorate

Service Area	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 1	% Variance
	£000's	£000's	£000's	%
Social Care & Health	81,936	81,967	31	0.0%
Learning, Skills & Economy	76,172	76,451	279	0.4%

Infrastructure	26,273	26,238	(35)	-0.1%
Place & Community Wellbeing	5,788	5,712	(76)	-1.3%
People, Performance & Partnership	7,104	7,207	102	1.4%
Law & Governance	3,247	3,313	66	2.0%
Resources	9,794	10,073	278	2.8%
Corporate Costs and insurances	4,264	4,399	135	3.2%
Borrowing & Reserves	8,572	8,236	(336)	-3.9%
Service budgets	223,151	223,596	444	0.2%
Precepts & Levies	30,551	30,551	0	0.0%
Financing	(253,702)	(253,682)	20	0.0%
Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	0	464	464	0.2%

- Page 4
- 4.9 The Update 1 forecast is a net revenue budget overspend of £464,000, representing 0.2% of the approved revenue budget. The position is made up of a £444,000 net overspend across service budgets, inclusive of Borrowing and Reserves, and a £20,000 overspend within Financing.
- 4.10 Within Social Care, Health and Safeguarding, the overall forecast is close to budget, with a £31,000 overspend against a revised budget of £81.936m. Adult Services is forecasting a £665,000 underspend, supported by demand management, grant funding and vacancies, but this continues to mask underlying care at home and complexity pressures. Children's Services is forecasting a £594,000 overspend, reflecting pressures in fostering, respite care, legal costs and family time, alongside an increase in looked after children and delayed opening of new in-house facilities. Housing and Homelessness is forecasting a £257,000 overspend, reflecting property hand-back costs and Careline 2G to 4G migration costs.
- 4.11 Learning, Skills and Economy is forecasting a £279,000 overspend, mainly due to the £116,000 increase in rates for the new King Henry VIII 3-19 School building, £19,000 of schools-related legal costs and pressures within Standards. These include a £150,000 overspend against the Expansion of Early Years Grant, where strong take-up and more families using non-maintained settings mean the Welsh Government grant allocation is insufficient to meet the Council's statutory duty to provide early education. Breakfast Clubs are also forecasting a £40,000 overspend, with broadly stable pupil numbers but higher staffing and food costs from inflation, pay awards, long-term sickness cover and additional support for pupils with additional learning needs. Before-school care income has increased slightly but not enough to offset the budget pressure. These pressures are partly mitigated by grant income used to offset staff costs.

- 4.12 Infrastructure is forecasting a net underspend of £35,000. Infrastructure Management is forecast to underspend by £56,000, mainly from managed staffing savings and increased Universal Free School Meals income within Schools Catering. Within Transport Services, Passenger Transport is forecasting a £268,000 underspend, primarily due to reduced external contract costs, lower pupil numbers and contract rationalisation. This is partly offset by a £255,000 overspend in Fleet Maintenance, driven by additional vehicle hire, fuel, maintenance and repair costs, alongside smaller pressures within the Corporate Pool Car Scheme.
- 4.13 Place and Community Wellbeing is forecasting a £76,000 underspend, mainly due to underspends within Performance, Finance and Resources, Countryside, Destination and Environment and Culture and Community Learning. These are partly offset by a £34,000 overspend within Placemaking, Regeneration and Car Parks, while Leisure and Wellbeing is currently forecasting a balanced position but remains exposed to income target risk across the leisure centre portfolio.
- 4.14 People, Performance and Partnerships is forecasting a £102,000 overspend. This is mainly due to pressures within the Chief Executive's Office, including staffing pressures across Community Hubs and Communications, the inability to meet vacancy factor savings and shortfalls against income targets. These pressures are partly offset by a forecast underspend within People, most notably from vacant posts in Payroll and System Support.
- 4.15 Law and Governance is forecasting a £66,000 overspend. This reflects the inability to achieve budgeted staff vacancy savings within Democratic Services and Legal and Land Charges. Other areas of the directorate are currently forecast to remain on budget, with mitigating actions continuing to be explored ahead of the next monitoring update.
- 4.16 Resources is forecasting a £278,000 overspend. The principal pressure relates to Commercial, Corporate and Landlord Services, particularly Castlegate Business Park, where anticipated changes in occupancy and increased rates, electricity and service charge costs are creating a significant pressure. Further pressures are forecast within Finance, ICT and Corporate Health and Safety, linked to system and licence costs, income shortfalls and vacancy factor savings. Management action will focus on vacancy management, limiting non-essential spend, maximising income and improving the financial performance of investment assets.
- 4.17 The NJC pay award for 2026/27 was agreed in August at 3.3% which is marginally above the budgeted assumption of 3.0%. The resultant additional cost pressure of £0.3m will need to be met from within existing service budgets, with an increase in base budget pressure considered for 2027/28.

4.18 **Appendix 1** to this report outlines the summary reasons for the service budget variances, with a more detailed explanation outlined in **Appendix 2**. The headline position is supported by a £336,000 favourable variance within Borrowing and Reserves, mainly through reduced net borrowing costs payable.

4.19 Budgeted service savings

4.20 As part of the approved revenue budget, services were required to bring forward and deliver savings totalling £4,291,000. The current forecast indicates that £3,677,000 of savings will be delivered, leaving a projected shortfall of £614,000, with 85.7% of savings forecast to be met.

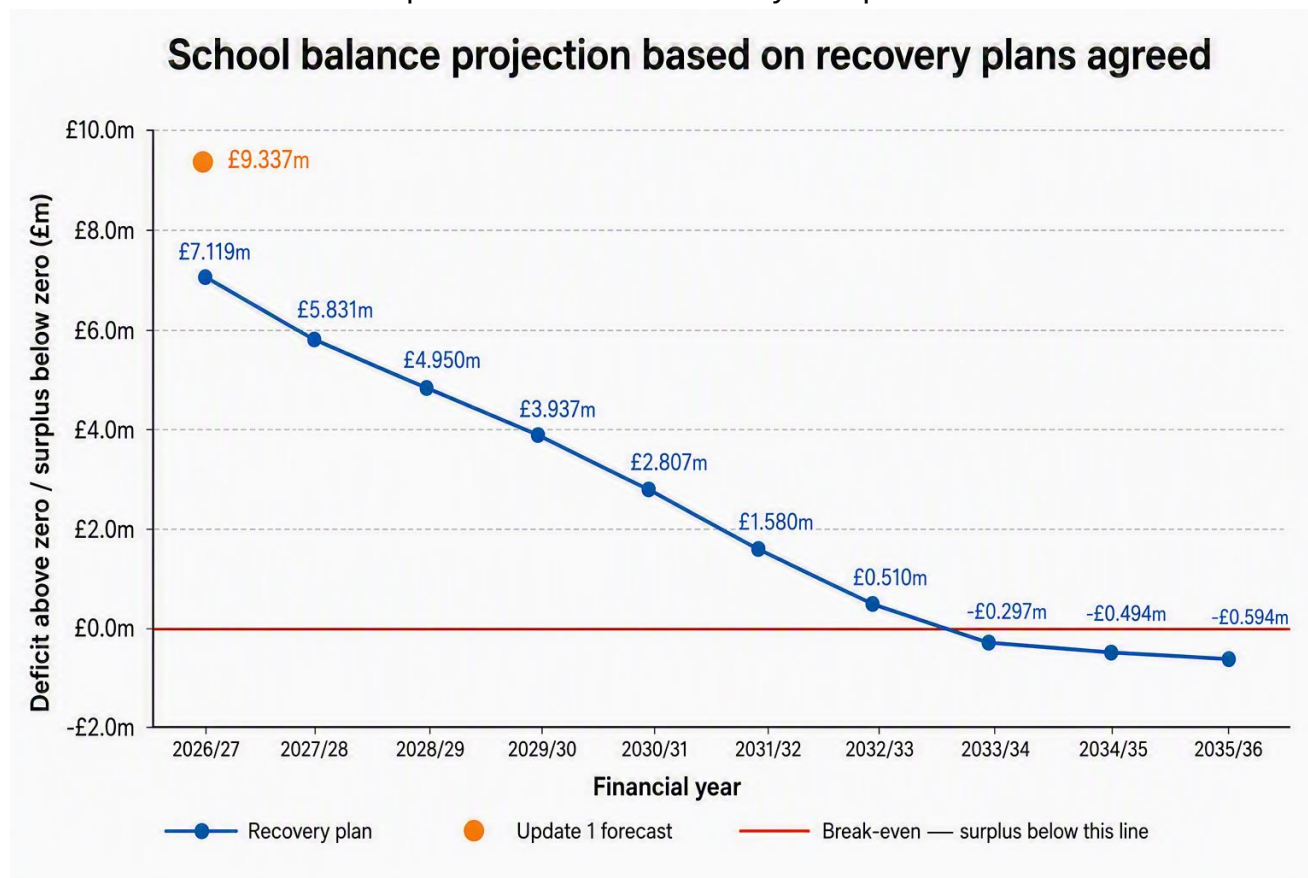
4.21 Full details of progress against individual savings targets can be found at **Appendix 3** to this report. The main shortfalls relate to the delayed opening of children's facilities, fleet savings not yet implemented, delayed implementation of the Place and Community Wellbeing area management restructure, and the corporate energy saving which is no longer forecast to be achieved in year.

4.22 Schools' budgets and reserves

4.23 The overall level of school reserves is currently forecast to move further into deficit by £2,457,000 by the end of the 2026/27 financial year, to a collective deficit balance of £9,337,000. This forecast draw is £17,000 above the budgeted draw on reserves that schools have set of £2,440,000.

Cluster	Opening Deficit / (Surplus)	Draw / (Contribution) Update 1	Forecast closing Deficit / (Surplus)
	£000	£000	£000
Abergavenny	2,393	299	2,692
Caldicot	647	653	1,300
Chepstow	758	(124)	634
Monmouth	270	134	404
Special	2,813	1,494	4,307
Total	6,880	2,457	9,337

- 4.24 The chart below compares the Update 1 forecast with the agreed recovery plan trajectory, illustrating both the scale of the current adverse movement and the period over which recovery is expected to be delivered.



- 4.25 The forecast movement in school balances represents a material deterioration in an already challenging position. The cumulative deficit is forecast to increase from £6.880m at the start of the year to £9.337m by 31 March 2027, with eighteen schools forecast to be in deficit. This is £2.218m worse than the recovery plan trajectory for 2026/27, which currently shows an expected deficit of £7.119m before gradually reducing to £0.510m by 2032/33 and moving into a modest surplus from 2033/34. This means that, while recovery plans provide an agreed forward trajectory, the latest forecast indicates a materially weaker starting point and reinforces the need for renewed review, support and challenge.

- 4.26 The principal drivers continue to be the sustained impact of attendance, behaviour and additional learning needs, together with the staffing and specialist resource required to maintain appropriate provision. While these pressures are not unique to Monmouthshire, the scale and pace of the projected movement mean that the position cannot be viewed as a short-term timing issue and will require sustained corrective action over more than one financial year. Financial recovery should therefore be regarded as a core leadership and governance responsibility alongside educational standards and pupil outcomes.
- 4.27 The focus must now move beyond the existence of recovery plans to the credibility, delivery and impact of those plans. Plans will need to be tested against the latest forecast position, including whether assumptions around staffing structures, pupil numbers, grant funding, expenditure control and planned actions remain realistic. Where schools are not progressing agreed actions, or where the forecast position has moved materially away from the recovery trajectory, further challenge will be required to identify what additional corrective action is needed.
- 4.28 During 2026/27, the Authority will focus its review activity on those schools presenting the highest financial risk, with particular emphasis on the delivery and impact of agreed recovery actions. This will include direct challenge where actions have slipped, where planned savings or staffing changes are not being implemented, or where updated forecasts indicate that existing plans will not secure recovery within the agreed timescale. Where necessary, the Authority will consider proportionate escalation through established school finance, governance and accountability arrangements. This will ensure that Cabinet Members are sighted on the highest-risk schools, the adequacy of recovery actions and any further support, challenge or intervention required.
- 4.29 Financial implications and future focus**
- 4.30 The budget planning framework for 2026/27 reaffirmed the need to move the Council towards a more financially sustainable position, while maintaining an appropriate and prudent level of financial resilience. The approved budget was set without using the Council Fund reserve to support recurrent revenue expenditure, reflecting the continued discipline applied through recent budget rounds.
- 4.31 At Update 1 the Council is forecasting a £464,000 overspend, equivalent to 0.2% of the approved revenue budget. This is a relatively small variance in the context of the overall budget and indicates that the budget remains broadly on track at this early stage of the year, notwithstanding the range of demand, inflationary and delivery risks that continue to be managed.
- 4.32 The position also reflects the benefit of service reform and changes in delivery that have been progressed over recent years. These include stronger demand management, greater use of grant funding where conditions allow, continued vacancy and non-pay control, income maximisation and service-specific redesign. This work is helping to stabilise both budget and service delivery, even where services continue to experience significant operational pressures.

- 4.33 There remain, however, areas that will need close management through the remainder of the year. One-off and annually allocated grant funding streams continue to present a risk where they are supporting core activity, particularly if grant conditions, allocations or continuation arrangements change. School balances also remain a material issue, with further recovery planning needed to reduce the cumulative deficit over time.
- 4.34 The focus for the remainder of the financial year will therefore be to maintain close financial discipline, continue to deliver approved savings and reforms, and take timely management action where pressures are recurrent or could affect the 2027/28 budget. This approach is intended to contain the current forecast position while ensuring that the underlying medium-term financial challenge remains visible and is addressed through future budget planning.
- 4.35 Management action will continue to be targeted and proportionate, with emphasis on maximising eligible grant and income opportunities, careful vacancy management, limiting non-essential expenditure and supporting services to embed the changes already underway. This will be balanced against the need to protect service resilience and avoid short-term actions that simply defer costs or create pressures in future years.

4.36 **Remaining budgetary risks**

- 4.37 Whilst the overall forecast remains broadly on track, there remain specific budgetary risks that could affect the revenue position during 2026/27 and will continue to be monitored through future budget updates:
- **Demand volatility in high-cost services**, particularly adults' and children's social care, homelessness and additional learning needs, where relatively small changes in client numbers, complexity or placement requirements can have a material impact on the forecast outturn during the remainder of the financial year.
 - **Further non-delivery of budget savings targets**, especially where these involve income generation, changes to structures, alternative delivery models, reliance on one-off or annually allocated grant funding, 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 Council's objectives.

- **CPI inflation** remains above the Bank of England's 2% target. The latest ONS release shows CPI inflation at 2.9% in the 12 months to July 2026, up from 2.6% in June 2026. While this is significantly lower than the levels experienced during the recent inflationary peak, it remains relevant for budgets where contracts, supplies, utilities or commissioned services are exposed to in-year price movements.
- **Schools reserve balances** – the further forecast draw on balances for 2026/27 of £2.457m would significantly increase the cumulative schools reserve deficit being carried on the Council's balance sheet to £9.337m. 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.

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 explanation of service variances forecast

Directorate	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	31	0.0%	Children's Services £594k – pressures in fostering, legal, respite care and family time, with looked after children increasing and delayed opening of new facilities reducing planned placement savings.	Adult Services £665k – underspend from managed demand, grant support and vacancies, partly offset by care at home and complexity pressures.
			Housing & Homelessness £257k – insufficient budget provision, property hand-back costs and Careline 2G to 4G migration costs.	Public Protection £49k – vacant posts and additional income ahead of service review outcomes.
				SCH Support £106k – finance team vacancies.
Earning, Skills & Economy	279	0.4%	Individual Schools Budget £135k – legal costs met centrally, and new King Henry VIII 3-19 School business rates higher than budgeted.	Resources £39k – grant income used to offset staffing costs.
			Standards £182k – Early Years programme grant shortfall, and Breakfast Club cost pressures.	
Infrastructure	(35)	-0.1%	Fleet maintenance £255k – vehicle hire, fuel and maintenance cost pressures, partly offset by vacancy, borrowing cost and vehicle sale income savings.	Infrastructure Management £56k – schools catering staffing savings and UFSM income.
			Corporate Pool Car Scheme £34k – lower than anticipated early usage limiting planned savings, with increased promotion and vehicle location review expected to improve utilisation.	Passenger Transport £268k – reduced external contract costs, lower pupil numbers and contract rationalisation, partly offset by in-house PTU income pressures.

Directorate	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
Place & Community Wellbeing	(76)	-1.3%	Placemaking, Regeneration & Car Parks £34k – car parking costs and employee efficiency savings pressures, partly offset by income.	Performance, Finance & Resources £68k – delayed business support structure implementation.
				Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery £31k – additional grant-funding
People, Performance & Partnerships	102	1.4%	Chief Executive's Office £157k – staffing, vacancy factor and income target pressures across Community Hubs, Communications and Strategic change programme.	Payroll and System Support £153k - vacant posts being held while staffing requirements are reviewed following the implementation of new software.
			People Management £46k - unachievable staff savings, unbudgeted staffing changes, photography costs and reduced schools SLA income.	Community Education £64k – long-term sickness and additional funding.
Law & Governance	66	2.0%	Democratic services, Legal & Land charges - Inability to achieve staff vacancy savings	
Resources	278	2.8%	Commercial, Corporate & Landlord Services £207k – Castlegate occupancy, rates, electricity and service charge pressures.	
			Finance £27k – Civica system implementation and licence costs, reduced Council Tax summons income and vacancy factor pressures, partly offset by grant funding, vacancy savings and lower software inflation.	

Directorate	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) (£000s)	% Variance to budget	Overspend	Underspend
			ICT £40k - increases in software and licence costs.	
Corporate Costs & Insurances	135	3.2%	Corporate energy saving £135k – late unit price and standing charge increases following budget set.	
Borrowing & Reserves	(336)	-3.9%		Net borrowing costs – capital programme slippage in prior year, alongside reduced cash requirement in early part of the year.
Financing	20	0.0%	Council Tax £250k - increasing discounts and exemptions, alongside the continuing impact of flood-related relief extending into 2026/27.	Council Tax Reduction Scheme £230k – based on current level of awards.
Total	464	0.2%		

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

Section 1 - Overall Revenue Position

Table 1: 2026/27 Revenue budget forecast by directorate

Service Area	Original Budget 2026/27	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	81,670	266	81,936	81,967	31
Learning, Skills & Economy	76,200	(28)	76,172	76,451	279
Infrastructure & Place	25,781	492	26,273	26,238	(35)
Place & Community Wellbeing	5,801	(13)	5,788	5,712	(76)
People, Performance & Partnership	6,893	211	7,104	7,207	102
Law & Governance	3,248	(1)	3,247	3,313	66
Resources	9,004	791	9,794	10,073	278
Corporate Costs and Insurances	5,264	(1,000)	4,264	4,399	135
Borrowing & Reserves	9,289	(717)	8,572	8,236	(336)
Service budgets	223,151	0	223,152	223,596	444
Precepts & Levies	30,551	0	30,551	30,551	0
Financing	(253,702)	0	(253,702)	(253,682)	20
Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	464	464

Table 2: 2026/27 Revenue budget forecast by service

Service Area	Original Budget 2026/27	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ Update 1
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Adult Services	49,417	(148)	49,269	48,604	(665)
Children Services	25,698	220	25,918	26,512	594
Housing & Homelessness	2,846	200	3,046	3,304	257
Public Protection	1,949	18	1,967	1,918	(49)
SCH Support	1,760	(24)	1,735	1,630	(106)
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	81,670	266	81,936	81,967	31
Economy, Employment & Skills	943	0	943	943	0
Emergency Planning	223	0	223	223	0
Individual Schools Budget	62,453	(28)	62,426	62,561	135
Resources	1,307	0	1,307	1,268	(39)
Standards	11,274	0	11,274	11,456	182
Learning, Skills & Economy	76,200	(28)	76,172	76,451	279
Infrastructure Management	1,304	(2)	1,302	1,245	(56)
Neighbourhood Services	3,152	(104)	3,049	3,049	0
Transport Services	12,618	234	12,852	12,872	20
Waste & Decarbonisation	8,707	364	9,071	9,072	1
Infrastructure	25,781	492	26,273	26,238	(35)
Culture and Community Learning	954	0	954	941	(13)
Countryside, Destination and Environment	1,300	0	1,300	1,271	(29)
Leisure and Wellbeing	1,536	0	1,536	1,536	0
Performance, Finance and Resources	1,760	(13)	1,747	1,679	(68)
Planning, Regeneration & Car parks	250	0	250	285	34
Place & Community Wellbeing	5,801	(13)	5,788	5,712	(76)
Chief Executives Office	3,236	29	3,265	3,422	157
People	2,076	141	2,217	2,148	(69)
Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service	1,581	41	1,622	1,636	14
People, Performance & Partnerships	6,893	211	7,104	7,207	102

Democratic Services	2,097	0	2,097	2,140	43
Legal and Land Charges	1,151	(1)	1,150	1,173	23
Law & Governance	3,248	(1)	3,247	3,313	66
Commercial, Corporate & Landlord Services	2,242	(3)	2,239	2,445	207
Corporate Health & Safety	165	0	165	169	5
Finance	3,536	77	3,613	3,640	27
Information Communication Technology	3,061	717	3,778	3,818	40
Resources	9,004	791	9,794	10,073	278
Coroners	343	0	343	343	0
Archives	238	0	238	238	0
Corporate Management	462	0	462	462	0
Non Distributed Costs (NDC)	338	0	338	338	0
Strategic Initiatives	1,865	(1,000)	865	1,000	135
Insurance	2,018	0	2,018	2,018	0
Corporate Costs & Insurances	5,264	(1,000)	4,264	4,399	135
Interest and Investment Income	(804)	0	(804)	(779)	25
Interest Payable & Similar Charges	7,853	0	7,853	7,820	(33)
Charges Required under Regulation	6,273	0	6,273	6,129	(144)
Other Investment Income	0	0	0	(1)	(1)
Borrowing Cost Recoupment	(3,821)	0	(3,821)	(4,004)	(183)
Contributions to Reserves	735	0	735	735	0
Contributions from Reserves	(947)	(717)	(1,664)	(1,664)	0
Contribution from Council Fund	0	0	0	0	0
Borrowing & Reserves	9,289	(717)	8,572	8,236	(336)
Service budgets	223,151	0	223,152	223,596	444
Precepts & Levies	30,551	0	30,551	30,551	0
General Government Grants	(111,348)	0	(111,348)	(111,348)	0
Non Domestic Rates	(33,374)	0	(33,374)	(33,374)	0
Council tax	(118,335)	0	(118,335)	(118,085)	250
Council Tax Benefit Support	9,356	0	9,356	9,126	(230)
Financing	(253,702)	0	(253,702)	(253,682)	20

Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	464	464
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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	31	0	0	0

With the first forecast of this new financial year, the overspend of £31k against the backdrop of a total budget allocation of £82m is a manageable position moving forward.

Even though Adults is showing an underspend of £665k, demand pressures remain mainly within care at home provision. Pressures are being continually masked year on year by various grant and external funding streams, such as £2.1m from both the Social Care Workforce Sustainability and Pathways for Care grants, which continue to support core costs. An additional ongoing concern is the RIF funding, for which we have £2.5m allocated this year, being the final year of current agreement. Of this RIF allocation, £2.2m funds staff that support core services and should the funding not materialise next year, this will result in the need to review and determine requirements to mitigate the possible financial pressure and calls on redundancies, while trying to maintain service provision.

Children's is predicting a £594k overspend mainly due to pressures within fostering, legal, respite care and the family time service, with looked after numbers increasing from 192 at the start of the year to 211 at the end of July. A delay in opening the new Children's facilities has reduced the projected savings in external placement costs. However, the delayed opening of facilities has helped to mitigate the extent of the overspend in this division.

From a budget perspective, Housing remains a relatively new addition to the directorate, and work is ongoing to better understand the underlying cost base. Pressures are arising from a combination of insufficient budget provision; costs associated with property hand-backs and Careline moving from 2G to 4G.

Adult Services

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(665)	0	0	0

The current underspend position demonstrates that demand is being proactively managed, with increased oversight of eligibility and investment in assessment and reablement capacity. Whilst this is delivering greater efficiency and responsiveness, service demand and greater complexity of need present an ongoing budgetary risk with unpredictable impact. This can be seen across the three integrated teams and the community learning disability team.

This reporting period has seen pressure arising within care at home, with both the number of weekly hours being provided and the cost of care increasing. Residential placements have remained stable during this period, but the overall trend remains upward. Key drivers include care and support requirements associated with hospital discharge, as well as the underlying ageing demographic and corresponding increase in the complexity of care needs people are experiencing.

Additional funding, with a combined total of £2.1m from the Delayed Pathways of Care and Social Care Workforce grants, and £2.5m of RIF funding, supports the 2026/27 adult services budget. Despite the risks associated with grant funding, it is being used to greatest effect across the workforce to support service priorities.

Some of the service pressures are being offset by vacancies within the operational teams, particularly social work posts within the integrated teams and in direct care. The service is currently managing to maintain service levels and is not

currently showing significant increases in waiting lists. However, there is ongoing recruitment activity, and the impact of vacancies is being closely monitored to ensure that emerging longer-term service needs are met and to ensure a sustainable workforce.

Children's Services				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	594	0	0	0

Within Children's Services, pressures are being felt within our in-house fostering service. On a positive note, this correlates with our efforts to ensure that in-house foster placements are fully utilised through increased support and with our drive to recruit more carers. Increasing fostering activity, however, does come at an increased cost to the service, with in-house fortnightly fostering payments increasing by £12.5k. Using in-house foster care secures better outcomes for children and avoids using more costly external providers.

The family time service is showing cost pressures; however, a recently approved report considers recruiting permanent staff on suitable contracts to alleviate the need to use agencies and pay additional enhancements. As recruitment will not take place until the second half of the year, any cost benefits will not materialise until the latter part of the year, or not fully until next financial year.

The children with disability budget is overspending by £200k, which relates to a small number of children with very high needs being supported to remain at home.

In general, increased pressure is being experienced within family support services which is indicative of the increased numbers of children who are being supported to remain with their families, rather than enter into children's placements.

The commitment to bolster the in-house legal team by two additional staff members has added to the overspend position, as budget must be released to the legal team to fund the posts. It is expected that once the posts have been appointed, there will be compensating savings through reduced need to send legal work to external solicitors, but this has yet to be quantified.

The service is currently developing two new residential facilities to increase the in-house provision of children's placements. These are predicated on a full-year annual budget. However, a delay in opening dates has led to slippage and the resultant underspend is being used to help mitigate service pressures. Once these facilities are operational, with target dates of October and November 2026, there will be increased opportunity to provide children with in-county placements and to offset current high-cost external placement costs.

After holding stable for a significant period, the number of children being looked after is currently showing an increase. Since this reporting period, numbers have increased to 218, from 211 at the end of July and from 192 at year-end March 2026. This is indicative of the current level of need within families and communities and represents some additional risk for the next period.

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	257	0	0	0

Housing remains a relatively new addition to the directorate, and work is ongoing to better understand the underlying budget pressures. There are a few cost centres where, historically, budget provision has been insufficient, leading to overspends. This is coupled with a strategic move to hand back properties, leading to repairs and void rent costs, which are contributing to the overall deficit position.

There is also an unexpected pressure in Careline from the move from 2G to 4G, which is a total pressure of £168k over two years, with £74k falling into this year as year one.

Public Protection

Outturn Forecast		Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s		(49)	0	0	0
Vacant posts and additional income have led to the projected underspend within this section. However, a service-wide review is in progress to evaluate current structures, workloads and future service requirements. Early indications have identified that targeted restructuring within key areas of Public Protection will be necessary to address recruitment, retention and workload challenges. Once this work develops, additional spend will look to utilise the allocated budget in future.					
SCH Support					
Outturn Forecast		Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s		(106)	0	0	0
Vacant posts within the finance team have been the main issue leading to the underspend.					
Learning, Skills & Economy Directorate		Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s		279	0	0	0
CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY The directorate's current position is an overspend of £279k. This is largely due to an increase in the rates for the new King Henry VIII 3-19 School building, which exceeded the budget by £116k, and a pressure of £185k in Early Years. Despite increasing the Early Years budget by £55k for 2026/27, the take-up of places is still exceeding the grant funding, resulting in a forecast overspend of £150k against the Expansion of Early Years Grant. Breakfast Club also continues to be a pressure, due to increasing staff and food costs and a decrease in income, resulting in an overspend of £40k. We have been able to mitigate the overspends by using a grant to offset staff costs.					
Economy, Employment & Skills					
Outturn Forecast		Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s		0	0	0	0
EES is currently reporting that it will meet budget at Update 1.					
Emergency Planning					
Outturn Forecast		Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s		0	0	0	0
Emergency Planning is currently reporting that it will meet budget at Update 1.					
Individual Schools Budget					
Outturn Forecast		Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s		135	0	0	0
The ISB is overspent by £135k at Update 1 due to the following: £116k increase in rates regarding the new King Henry VIII 3-19 School build					

- £19k of legal costs relating to schools

Resources

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(39)	0	0	0

Resources is underspent by £39k, as a grant has been received and used to offset staff costs.

Standards

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	182	0	0	0

Standards is overspent by £182k at Update 1 due to the following:

- **£150k overspend re Expansion of Early Years Grant** – the Council continues to see excellent take-up rates for early education, with an increasing number of families choosing non-maintained childcare settings rather than local authority-maintained nursery provision. The Council has a statutory duty to secure a minimum of 10 hours of early education per week for eligible three- and four-year-olds. The funding rate payable to non-maintained settings is set nationally by Welsh Government; however, the grant allocation received is insufficient to meet the full cost of current take-up. The Council does not set the rate and does not top up providers where their normal fee-paying rate is higher, meaning settings absorb any difference. Given the statutory nature of the entitlement, parental choice of setting and the nationally set funding arrangements, the Council has limited ability to reduce this expenditure locally.
- **£40k overspend re Breakfast Club** – the number of children accessing Breakfast Clubs has remained fairly consistent over the last few years. However, staff and food costs have increased due to inflation and pay awards. Additional staff have also been required to cover long-term sickness and to support pupils with additional learning needs. In addition to the rise in costs, there has been a decrease in income. Although the number of pupils accessing the before-school care element of Breakfast Clubs has increased slightly since the previous financial year, the increase is not sufficient to cover the shortfall between actual expenditure and budget.

We have been able to reduce the overspend slightly by utilising grant income to offset staff costs.

INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTORATE	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(35)	0	0	0

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

At Update 1, the directorate is forecasting a net underspend of £35k, reflecting a generally stable financial position across services.

Infrastructure Management is forecasting a £56k underspend, driven by managed staffing savings and increased Universal Free School Meals income within Schools Catering.

Neighbourhood Services is reporting a balanced position across all service areas.

Transport Services is forecasting a £20k overspend. Significant pressures within Fleet Maintenance, arising from increased vehicle hire, fuel and maintenance costs, are being substantially offset by savings and additional income. The overspend is further mitigated by a significant underspend within Passenger Transport, reflecting lower external contract

costs following service changes, reduced pupil numbers and contract rationalisation. The position remains subject to change following the start of the new academic year.

Waste & Decarbonisation is forecasting a marginal £1k overspend. Waste Services and Grounds Maintenance are currently reporting balanced positions, although Grounds Maintenance continues to face longer-term pressure from declining commuted sums income as historic developer agreements reach expiry. Increased Solar Farm income and staffing savings have helped offset pressures within Decarbonisation.

Overall, the directorate's financial position remains positive at this early stage of the year, although key risks relating to fleet costs, transport contract demand, waste contract costs and the reduction in commuted sums income will continue to be closely monitored and reported through future budget updates.

Infrastructure Management

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(56)	0	0	0

Infrastructure Management is forecasting a £56k underspend, due to:

- **Schools Catering** – £56k underspend – Schools Catering is reporting a £56k underspend, primarily driven by managed staffing savings and increased Universal Free School Meals income.
- **Infrastructure Management** – on budget.

Neighbourhood Services

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

Neighbourhood Services is forecasting a break-even budget at Update 1:

- **Highways Operations & External Clients** – on budget.
- **Streetlighting** – on budget.
- **Highways Design, Flooding & Road Safety** – on budget.

Transport Services

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	20	0	0	0

Transport Services is forecasting a £20k overspend due to:

- **Fleet Maintenance** – £255k overspend – the main drivers are vehicle hire costs, which are forecast to be £230k above budget due to increased service demand and accident damage cover, and fuel costs, which are expected to exceed budget by £110k due to increases in fuel prices over recent months. Maintenance, repairs and spare parts are forecast to overspend by £97k due to increased vehicle parts prices and higher levels of accident damage. In addition, there are unbudgeted costs of £33k relating to CENEX consultancy support to produce a fleet transition plan and £26k for the JAAMA Fleet Management System. These additional costs are partially offset by a number

of underspends, including a £42k saving from a vacant post, a £50k underspend on borrowing costs, £104k income from the sale of vehicles and a £46k increase in rechargeable income. Officers will continue to review fleet utilisation to mitigate the overspend and will provide an update at Update 2.

- **Corporate Pool Car Scheme** – £34k overspend – The scheme commenced in mid-April and initial uptake during the first quarter was lower than anticipated, resulting in expected savings not being achieved. Since July, usage has increased, and officers are undertaking a further promotional campaign to encourage additional users, alongside a review of vehicle locations to ensure they are sited in the most accessible and appropriate areas. It is anticipated that these actions will increase utilisation and help reduce the projected overspend by the end of the financial year.
- **Passenger Transport** – £268k underspend – This is primarily due to a forecast underspend of £409k on external transport contracts. External contract costs have reduced significantly over recent years, and the service is now seeing the full-year impact of the changes to eligibility distances that were implemented in September 2025. The number of contracts has reduced from 168 in September 2023 to 131 in September 2026, reflecting the successful transfer of some pupils onto public service bus routes and the consolidation of contracts where appropriate. In addition, pupil numbers have reduced by 116 over the same period.

The underspend on external contracts is partially offset by forecast overspends within the in-house PTU team of £140k. These include a £55k shortfall in private hire income and a £205k reduction in contract income resulting from the lower number of contracts from September 2026, offset by £120k of BNG administration grant income. There remains potential for the forecast position to change over the coming weeks as a result of contract amendments or hand-backs following the commencement of new contracts in September. Officers will continue to review staffing levels and vehicle requirements to ensure sufficient resources are available to accommodate any changes and will provide an update at Update 2.

Waste & Decarbonisation

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

Waste & Decarbonisation is forecasting a £1k overspend at Update 1:

- **Waste Services** – on budget – Early-year projections indicate that waste will be within budget, although recycling rates and contract charges can fluctuate during the year, which could impact outturn. Officers will provide an update at Update 2.
- **Grounds Maintenance** – on budget – Grounds Maintenance is currently forecasting a balanced budget position. The service is experiencing a reduction in income as annual payments from commuted sums, or developer contributions, continue to decline, with a number of agreements reaching the end of their typical 25-year term. This creates a budget pressure, as the service remains responsible for maintaining sites that have been adopted. Officers are currently identifying and implementing mitigating actions to offset this pressure and are therefore reporting a break-even position at this stage. However, the forecast remains subject to change as the year progresses, and a further update will be provided at Update 2.
- **Decarbonisation** – £1k overspend – Underspends arising from increased income generated by the Solar Farm and part-year staffing savings within the Decarbonisation Team have helped offset pressures relating to the non-achievement of corporate mileage savings.

PLACE & COMMUNITY WELLBEING	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(76)	0	0	0

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

Place and Community Wellbeing is forecasting a **net underspend of £76k** at Update 1.

The forecast position is primarily driven by underspends within Performance, Finance and Resources, Countryside, Destination and Environment, and Culture and Community Learning, partly offset by a forecast overspend within Placemaking, Regeneration and Car Parks. Leisure and Wellbeing is currently forecasting a balanced position. However, the service continues to carry substantial income targets across the leisure centre portfolio and, as this is an early monitoring update, income trends will continue to be reviewed closely throughout the year.

The directorate will continue to improve facilities and identify opportunities to increase participation, usage and footfall, supporting delivery of the current forecast position. There remains, however, a level of financial risk across the portfolio, particularly within front-line services where sickness absence must be covered to maintain service availability, alongside the requirement to deliver significant income targets.

In addition, the directorate is managing a significant programme of project delivery, including the refurbishment of the first-floor fitness suite at Caldicot Leisure Centre, the replacement skate park, the new accessible and visitor-focused Shire Hall development, regeneration projects including Transforming Towns and Pride in Place, and work associated with the adoption of the RLDP. These projects are central to improving facilities, supporting place-based regeneration and delivering wider community benefits, but they require continued oversight to ensure delivery remains on track alongside existing operational and financial pressures.

Culture and Community Learning

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

Culture and Community Learning is forecasting a **£13k underspend** at Update 1. This is driven by a number of offsetting variances across the Culture service, with underspends in Markets and Tourist Information Centres partly offset by pressures within museums, attractions and Shire Hall.

- **Borough Theatre General** is forecasting a **balanced position**. This represents an improved position compared with the previous year's outturn, supported by changes to the staffing structure, increased marketing and sales support, and stronger income generation from a more diverse events programme.
- **Markets** are forecasting a **£30k underspend**. This is mainly due to staffing vacancies and the delayed implementation of the restructure, which are reducing forecast employee costs in-year. The position will need to be kept under review as the restructure progresses and staffing arrangements are confirmed.
- **Museums** are forecasting a **£29k overspend**, with service-level pressures largely offset by underspends elsewhere within the museums budget. The position reflects a small number of operational and staffing pressures, which will continue to be monitored as the year progresses, alongside the inability to deliver income expectations during the closure of Shire Hall.
- **Attractions** are broadly close to budget overall, with Old Station Tintern forecasting a **£2k pressure** and Caldicot Castle and Country Park forecasting a **£3k underspend**. The Old Station position reflects staffing being slightly above budget despite the 50% site lead arrangement. At Caldicot Castle, additional tree surveys and works are required due to the impact of weather over the last 18 months, but these costs are currently more than offset by the 50% site lead saving.
- **Tourist Information Centres** are forecasting a **£20k underspend**, with income currently ahead of budget. This is a positive contribution to the overall Culture position and helps offset pressures elsewhere in the service.
- **Learning and Volunteering** is forecasting a **£7k overspend**. This is due to staffing costs being slightly above budget, partly offset by income and other minor underspends within the service.

Countryside, Destination and Environment

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(29)	0	0	0
Countryside, Destination and Environment is forecasting a £29k underspend at Update 1. Countryside Access is forecasting a balanced position overall. Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery is forecasting a £31k underspend. This reflects additional grant-funded activity, including Nature Networks and the Local Nature Partnership, partly offset by a pressure within Green Infrastructure from higher than anticipated supplies and services, vehicle-related costs and staffing where ERS income is not expected. Tourism is forecasting a small £2k overspend.				
Leisure and Wellbeing				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
Leisure and Wellbeing is forecasting a balanced position at Update 1. The service continues to monitor income across the leisure centre portfolio closely, as delivery of income targets remains a key area of financial risk. The refurbishment of Caldicot Leisure Centre is expected to create additional in-year costs, while the delayed opening of outdoor facilities at Abergavenny is placing pressure on income targets. These areas will continue to be reviewed as the year progresses.				
Performance, Finance and Resources				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(68)	0	0	0
Performance, Finance and Resources is forecasting a £68k underspend at Update 1. This is mainly related to the delayed implementation of the Business Support central support structure to the area management teams, which has created partial-year savings.				
Planning, Regeneration & Car Parks				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	34	0	0	0
Placemaking, Regeneration and Car Parks is forecasting a £34k overspend at Update 1. Development Management and Building Control is forecasting a £9k overspend. Building Control and Regulations is currently forecasting a balanced position, with income performing better than expected, although this may reduce over the winter months. Development Management is forecasting a small pressure, with income currently forecast in line with budget setting assumptions until the outcome of the RLDP hearing sessions is known. Planning Policy is forecasting a balanced position. Reserve funding has not been included in the current forecast but is expected to cover additional LDP-related costs arising during the year. Car Parks is forecasting a £26k overspend. This reflects increased costs, including higher fees, software costs, machine maintenance, car park maintenance and the inability to achieve employee efficiency savings. These				

pressures are partly offset by increased Penalty Charge Notice and pay and display income and most of which are outside of the sections control.

Regeneration is forecasting a **balanced position**. There is a potential pressure linked to employee-related savings, but this may be covered by additional income streams.

PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE & PARTNERSHIPS	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	102	0	0	0

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

People, Performance & Partnerships is forecasting a **net overspend of £102k** at Update 1. The position is mainly driven by pressures within the Chief Executives Office and Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service, partly offset by an underspend within People.

The key issues driving the position within the Chief Executives Office are higher than budgeted staffing costs across both the Community Hubs and Communications teams, the overall inability to meet staff vacancy factors across all services, and the inability to achieve budgeted income targets.

Chief Executives Office

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	157	0	0	0

The Chief Executives Office is forecasting a **£157k overspend** at Update 1. The main pressures are:

- **Community Hubs – £117k overspend**, mainly linked to the service's inability to achieve staff vacancy factors, higher than budgeted staffing levels, increased premises costs and failure to achieve income targets.
- **Communications – £58k overspend**, due to higher than budgeted staffing costs, the inability to achieve employee-related savings and failure to achieve income targets.
- **Strategic Change and Programme Assurance – £44k overspend**, including a potential £27k Marches Forward contribution, subject to confirmation, alongside staffing cost pressures.
- **Procurement – £6k overspend**, due to increased corporate procurement agreement costs.
- **Community Education – £64k underspend**, reflecting long-term sickness and available engagement funding, with the position to be reviewed further as funding assumptions are confirmed.

People

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit /(Surplus) £'000s	(69)	0	0	0

People is forecasting a **£69k underspend** at Update 1. The main areas contributing to the position are:

- **Payroll and System Support – £153k underspend**, due to vacant posts being held while staffing requirements are reviewed following the implementation of new software.
- **People Management – £46k overspend**, linked to unachievable staff savings, unbudgeted staffing changes, photography costs and reduced schools SLA income.
- **Occupational Health – £24k overspend**, due to increased service demand.
- **Organisational Development – £13k overspend**, reflecting unachievable employee-related savings and non-pay efficiency savings.
- **Corporate Training – £2k overspend**.

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	14	0	0	0
Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service is forecasting a £14k overspend at Update 1. The main pressures and offsets are: • Corporate Costs – £39k overspend, due to insufficient budget to support previous management structure changes and copyright licence costs. • Equalities and Welsh Language – £41k overspend, reflecting maternity leave cover and the delayed start of the planned Torfaen SLA arrangement. • CCTV – £30k overspend, due to the required wireless infrastructure upgrade in Monmouth Town Centre, with potential for capitalisation if capital budget becomes available. • Levies and Subscriptions – £13k overspend, due to the renewal of the New Local subscription. • Performance and Data – £35k underspend, due to an unfilled vacancy. • ASBO Co-ordinator – £31k underspend, due to vacant and part-time posts. • Partnerships Management – £28k underspend, due to savings from reduced hours for phased retirement. • Complaints – £16k underspend, due to an increased staffing budget being partly offset by professional and specialist fee commitments.				
LAW & GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	66	0	0	0
CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY Law & Governance is forecasting a £66k overspend at Update 1. This is primarily due to the inability to achieve the budgeted staff vacancy savings within Legal and Member Services. All other service areas are currently forecasting a break-even position. Officers will continue to explore mitigating actions to reduce the projected overspend and will provide a further update at Update 2.				
Democratic Services				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	43	0	0	0
Democratic services is forecasting a £43k overspend against budget, this is due to: • Members - £43k overspent – due to the inability to achieve staff vacancy factor savings. • Committee & Election services – On budget.				
Legal and Land Charges				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	23	0	0	0
Legal & Land Charges is forecasting a £23k overspend, due to: • Legal - £23k overspend – mainly due to the inability to achieve staff vacancy factor savings. • Land Charges – On Budget.				
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	278	0	0	0

CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTARY

The Resources Directorate is forecasting an overspend of £278k at Update 1. Whilst this represents an early-year pressure, the position remains manageable and is not unexpected given a number of known cost and income risks across the directorate. The principal pressure relates to the Council's commercial property portfolio, particularly Castlegate Business Park, alongside a small number of service-specific budget pressures within ICT, Finance and Corporate Health & Safety.

As highlighted in the final outturn reporting for 2025/26, the directorate continues to face a challenging operating environment characterised by inflationary pressures, increasing technology costs and the need to maximise income from commercial assets whilst maintaining essential corporate services. Early intervention will therefore be critical.

During the remainder of the year, management action will be targeted at recovery planning within services reporting adverse variances, with particular focus on vacancy management, restriction on non-essential spending, maximising income opportunities, and mitigating risks within the commercial property portfolio.

Particular attention will be given to improving the financial performance of investment assets and ensuring that any emerging pressures are addressed at the earliest opportunity. Whilst risks remain, it is expected that proactive management action throughout the year will improve the forecast position and support delivery of a balanced outturn.

Commercial, Corporate & landlord Services

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	207	0	0	0

Commercial, Corporate & Landlord services is forecasting to overspend by £207k, this is due to:

Investment Properties - £227k overspend, due to:

- **Newport Leisure Park** – On Budget – Newport Leisure Park is currently forecast to remain on budget, with no significant issues identified at this early stage. Performance will continue to be closely monitored.
- **Castlegate Business Park** - £227k overspend – Castlegate is forecast to overspend by £227k due to anticipated changes in occupancy and increases in business rates, electricity costs and service charges. Negotiations also continue with a significant tenant to address rent and service charges, with an anticipated reduction in the tenant's occupation being seen as a necessary step to ensure payment obligations are met and the recovery of arrears. Further update will be provided at the next reporting period.

Landlord Services – £5k net overspend – Landlord Services is forecasting a net overspend of £5k across the department. Due to vacant units, we are projecting a rental income shortfall, together with associated unbudgeted void costs, across both the County Farms and Industrial Units portfolios, totalling £52k. These primarily relate to an isolated legal case and eviction at one MCC farm holding, and the re-letting of a vacant industrial unit. Both are projected to be reoccupied in late 26/27. This pressure has been largely offset by managed staffing savings as the service continues to implement its staffing restructure, with Phase 1 now underway. There remains potential for the projected outturn to change should vacant units be re-let during the remainder of the financial year, which would improve rental income performance and reduce ongoing void-related costs.

Building Cleaning & Public Conveniences - £25k under spend – Income is projected to increase as more sites have come back in-house.

Property Services – On Budget – a shortfall in external fee income has been offset by a managed underspend on employee costs.

Corporate Health & Safety

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
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Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	5	0	0	0
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Corporate Health & Safety is forecasting a £5k overspend due to the inability to make staff vacancy savings.

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

The Finance Division is forecasting £27k overspend, this is due to:

- **Revenues, Systems & Exchequer** - £34k net overspend:
 - **Benefits** – £19k underspend - The under spend is a mix of additional subsidy costs, offset by a reduction in penalty cell costs for Homeless B&B placements and additional one off grant income. As it is still early in the financial year, forecasting with certainty remains challenging, as Housing Benefit placements can fluctuate and may impact the reported outturn position. Officers will provide a further update at Update 2.
 - **Council Tax** - £37k overspend – This is largely attributable to an anticipated £70k reduction in summons income, following changes Welsh Government have made to council tax recovery legislation. Offset by £33k one off Welsh Government grant funding.
 - **Debtors** - £10k underspend – Due to part year staff vacancy savings (post has now been filled) and an underspend in supplies & services.
 - **Cashiers** - £58k overspend - over spend is attributable to one off implementation and licence costs for the Civica system, resulting from a new contract.
 - **Revenues System Administration** - £19k underspend - The annual inflationary uplift in system software costs is lower than the percentage anticipated when setting the budget releasing an in-year underspend.
 - **Financial Systems Support & VAT** - £12k underspend – primarily as a result of part-year staff vacancies.
- **Finance & Audit** - £7k underspend – mainly due to part year staff savings in Finance regarding two vacant posts, that are currently in the recruitment phase.

Information, Communication & Technology				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	40	0	0	0

The ICT division is forecasting a £40k overspend, due to:-

- **SRS & Digital Programme Office** – £34k overspend – Currently forecasting a net overspend due to increases in software and licence costs.
- **Digital, Design & Innovation** – On budget.
- **Cyber Security Partnership** - £6k overspend – due to the unbudgeted cost of cyber security training software not included as part of partnership contribution.
- **Telephony** – On Budget.

CORPORATE COSTS & INSURANCES DIRECTORATE	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	135	0	0	0
Coroners				

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
No variance forecast				
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	0	0	0	0
No variance forecast				
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	135	0	0	0
Current projections indicate that, because of late increases in unit prices and standing charges, the £135k corporate energy saving is not forecast to be achieved in 2026/27. Price and usage forecasts will continue to be reviewed and an updated position reported at Update 2.				
Insurance				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
No variance forecast				
BORROWING & RESERVES	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(336)	0	0	0
Interest & Investment Income				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	24	0	0	0
The weaker performance of liquid investments due to lower than budgeted rates has been partially offset by the stronger returns on pooled investment funds due to improvements in equities markets.				
Interest Payable & Similar Charges				
Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(32)	0	0	0

Lower than anticipated expenditure in the early part of the year has reduced short-term borrowing requirements, reducing interest spend. This underspend is reduced by the increased cost of taking borrowing due to higher than anticipated rates.

Charges Required Under Regulation (Minimum Revenue Provision)

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(144)	0	0	0

Largely due to slippage of capital expenditure budget from 2025/26 to 2026/27 reducing the requirement to make as much MRP as previously anticipated.

Borrowing Cost Recoupment

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(183)	0	0	0

The underspend is due to additional borrowing recoupment from services following finalisation of the purchasing financing mechanism for vehicles procured during 2025/26, that was not known about at the time of budget setting.

Contributions to / from Reserves

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

No variance

FINANCING	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	20	0	0	0

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Outturn Forecast	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(230)	0	0	0

The current level of awards remain steady indicating that there will likely be an underspend in this area.

Council Tax	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	250	0	0	0

The number of discounts and exemptions continues to increase. Also, seeing the continued impact of last year's floods, as the 12 month relief awarded runs into 2026/27.

General Government Grants

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

No Variance forecast

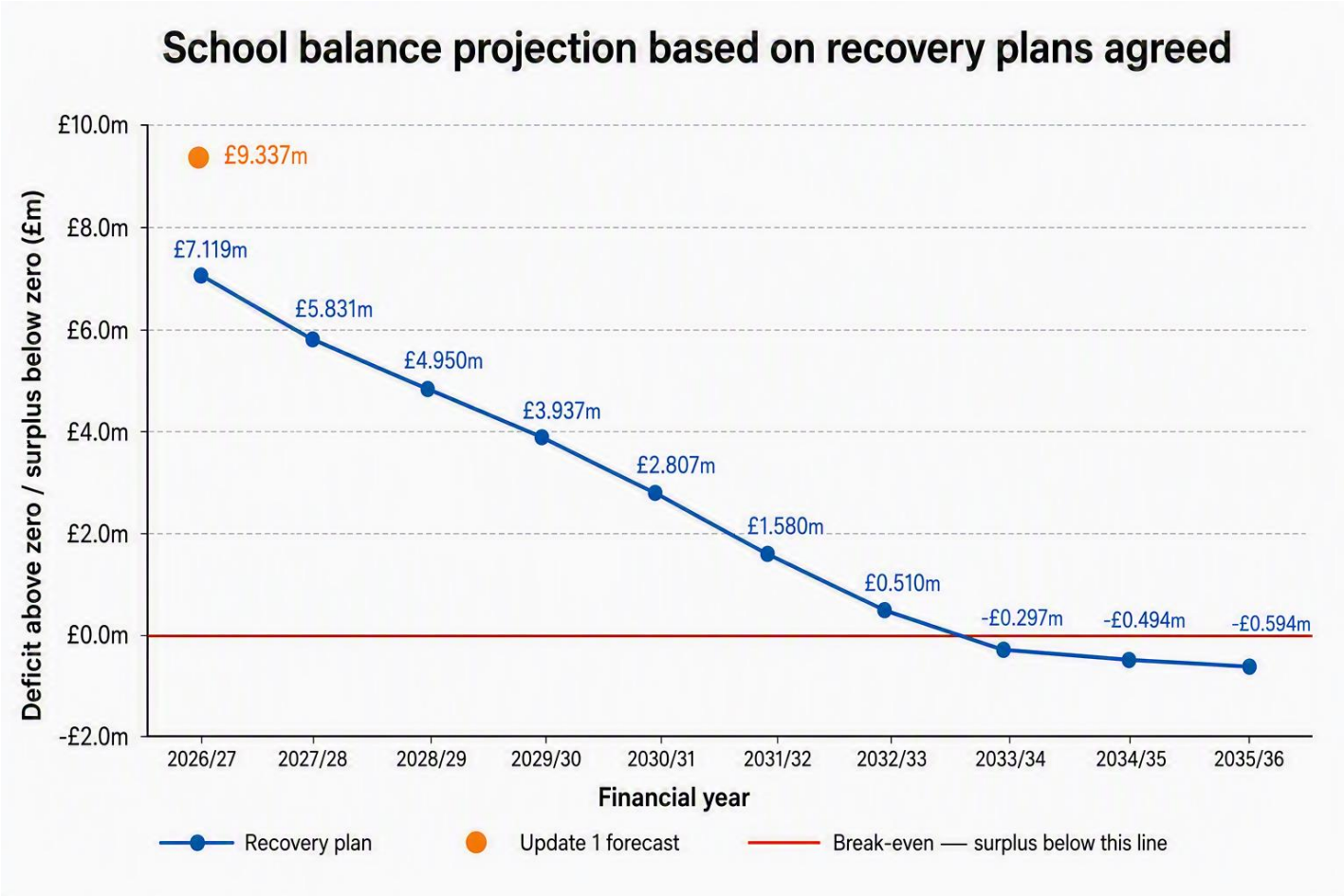
3. Section 3 – School Balances

- 3.1. A Board of Governors is responsible for managing each school's finances. The Authority also has a key responsibility for monitoring the collective financial position of schools and ensuring that schools in financial difficulty have credible and deliverable recovery plans. The table below shows the forecast schools' balances position by educational cluster at Update 1.

School Reserves	(A) Opening Balances (Surplus) / Deficit Position 2026/27	(B) Draw / (Contribution) on School Balances @ Update 1	(C) Draw / (Contribution) on School Balances @ Update 2	(D) Draw / (Contribution) on School Balances @ Update 3	(E) Draw/ (Contribution) on School Balances @ Update 4	(A+B) Forecast 2026/27 Balances
Cluster	£000's	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Abergavenny	2,393	299				2,692
Caldicot	647	653				1,300
Chepstow	758	(124)				634
Monmouth	270	134				404
Special	2,813	1,494				4,307
Total	6,880	2,457				9,337

- 3.2. Collective school balances at the beginning of the financial year amounted to a deficit of £6,880,227. Schools are forecasting a further draw on reserves of £2,456,946 during 2026/27, compared with a budgeted draw on reserves of £2,439,914. This results in a forecast cumulative deficit balance of £9,337,173 by year-end, with eighteen schools forecast to be in deficit.
- 3.3. This represents a material deterioration in an already challenging position. The principal drivers continue to be the sustained impact of attendance, behaviour and additional learning needs, together with the staffing and specialist resource required to maintain appropriate provision. While these pressures are not unique to Monmouthshire, the scale and pace of the projected movement mean that the position cannot be viewed as a short-term timing issue and will require sustained corrective action over more than one financial year.
- 3.4. Recovery plans are now in place for schools forecasting a deficit balance. These plans show a gradual improvement in the collective position over the medium term, with the recovery-plan trajectory reducing the

cumulative deficit from £7.119m in 2026/27 to £0.510m by 2032/33, before moving into a modest surplus position from 2033/34 onwards. However, the Update 1 forecast deficit of £9.337m is £2.218m worse than the recovery-plan starting point for 2026/27. This means that, while the recovery plans provide an agreed forward trajectory, the latest forecast indicates a materially weaker starting position and reinforces the need for renewed review, support and challenge.



3.5. The following table shows the movement in the number of schools forecast to be in deficit during the year:

Start of year	Update 1	Update 2	Update 3	Update 4
Total: 19	Total: 18	Total:	Total:	Total: 0
King Henry VIII 3-19 School	King Henry VIII 3-19 School			
Gilwern Primary	Gilwern Primary			
Llantilio Pertholey CiW Primary				
Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary	Our Lady & St Michael's RC Primary			
Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni	Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni			
Caldicot School	Caldicot School			

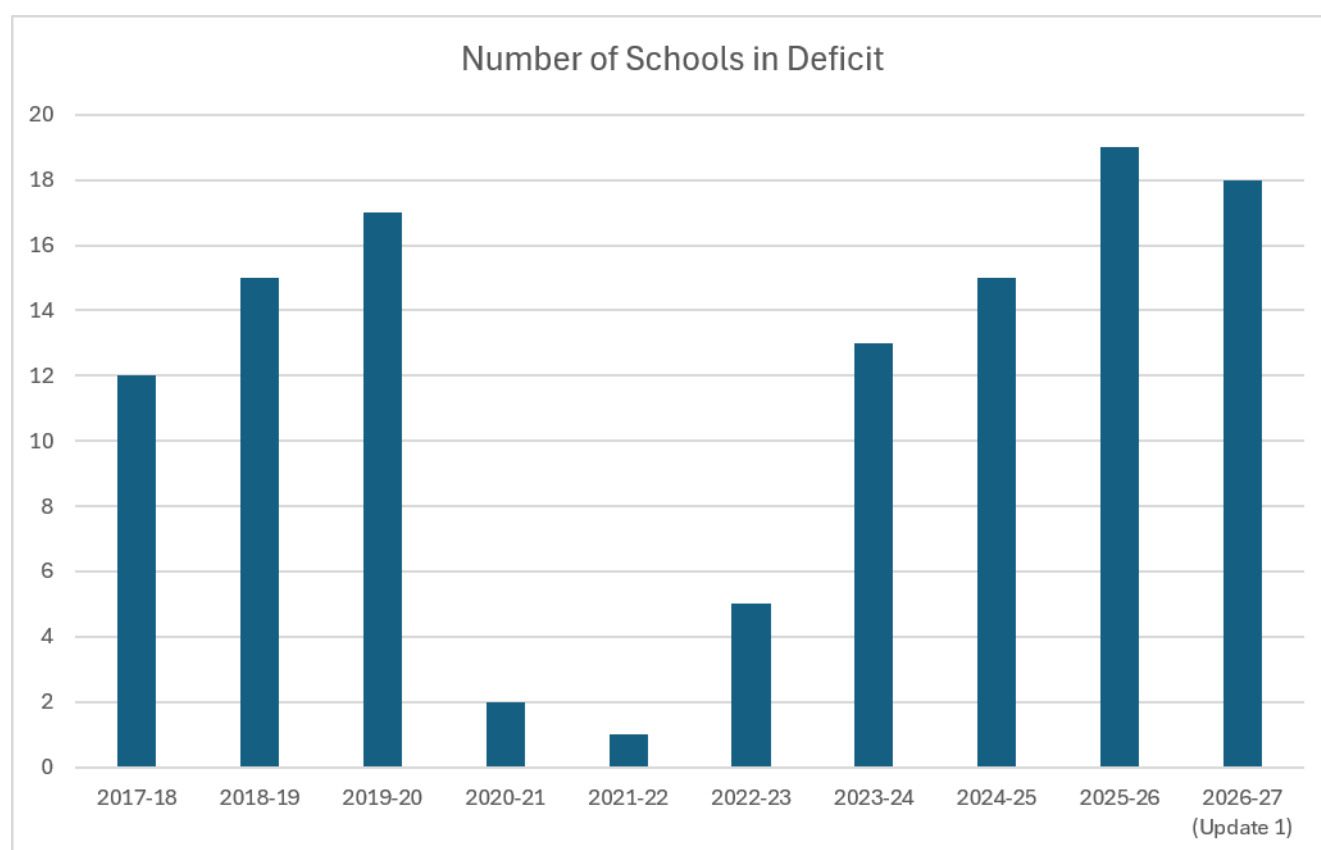
Castle Park Primary	Castle Park Primary			
Rogiet Primary	Rogiet Primary			
Ysgol Gymraeg y Ffin	Ysgol Gymraeg y Ffin			
Chepstow School	Chepstow School			
The Dell Primary	The Dell Primary			
Thornwell Primary	Thornwell Primary			
Monmouth Comprehensive	Monmouth Comprehensive			
Cross Ash Primary	Cross Ash Primary			
Kymin View Primary				
Osbaston CiW Primary	Osbaston Primary			
Overmonnow Primary	Overmonnow			
Ysgol Gymraeg y Trefynwy	Ysgol Gymraeg y Trefynwy			
Pupil Referral Service	Pupil Referral Service			
	Goytre Primary			

- 3.6. Attendance, behaviour and increased additional learning needs continue to impact schools. These pressures have required increased staffing and specialist resources to maintain appropriate provision, increasing the overall cost base. The Authority will therefore need to be satisfied not only that recovery plans are technically robust, but that they are being actively implemented and are capable of delivering the planned reduction in cumulative deficit over time.
- 3.7. The Authority will now undertake a targeted review of schools assessed as presenting the highest financial risk. This will test whether agreed recovery plans remain credible in light of the Update 1 position, whether planned actions are being implemented at pace, and whether assumptions around staffing, pupil numbers, grant funding and expenditure control remain robust. Where plans are not considered deliverable, or where financial performance continues to deteriorate, the Authority will consider proportionate support, challenge or intervention through its established school finance, governance and accountability arrangements.

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	6,880
2026-27 (Forecast)	9,337

- 3.8. The recent movement in overall schools in deficit is shown below. The position should be viewed in the context of one-off additional funding provided to schools during the pandemic and its immediate aftermath, which temporarily strengthened school balances and alleviated underlying budget pressures. As that temporary funding has fallen away, those underlying pressures have re-emerged. This underlines the importance of credible recovery plans being delivered over the medium term.



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Appendix 3 - Performance against budgeted service savings 2026/27

	Savings proposals by Directorate 2026/27	Budgeted Saving	Forecast Savings	Variance	% Met	
		£000	£000	£000		
	Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	(2,117)	(1,675)	442	79.1%	
	Learning, Skills and Economy	(893)	(893)	0	100.0%	
	Infrastructure	(485)	(468)	17	96.5%	
	Place & Community Wellbeing	(220)	(200)	20	90.9%	
	People, Performance and Partnerships	(17)	(17)	0	100.0%	
	Law & Governance	(16)	(16)	0	100.0%	
	Resources	(409)	(409)	0	100.0%	
	Corporate Costs & Insurances	(135)	0	135	0.0%	
	Totals	(4,291)	(3,677)	614	85.7%	
Page 37 Ref	Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	Budgeted Saving	Forecast Savings	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
	SCH1	Fees & Charges	(365)	(365)	0	
	SCH2	Children's care planning & placement strategy	(1,002)	(560)	442	Delayed savings due to delayed opening of Children's facilities and need to revisit original placements identified
	SCH3	Consolidation of vacancies within in-house domiciliary care	(250)	(250)	0	
	SCH4	Maximising the ability to charge core budget to external grant streams	(500)	(500)	0	
	Total	Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	(2,117)	(1,675)	442	
Ref	Learning, Skills and Economy	Budgeted Saving	Forecast Savings	Variance		Comment

		£000	£000	£000		
CLSE1	Fees & Charges	(6)	(6)	0		
CLSE2	Maximising the ability to charge core budget to external grant streams	(644)	(644)	0		
CLSE4	One-off interest release from grant funding	(243)	(243)	0		
Total	Learning, Skills and Economy	(893)	(893)	0		
Ref	Infrastructure	Budgeted Saving	Forecast Savings	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
INF1	Highways Ops - increase Fee Income	(30)	(30)	0		Prices increased to cover inflationary uplift, achieved.
INF2	Highways Fees & Charges Increase	(20)	(20)	0		Prices uplifted as per F&C report, assume achieved.
INF3	Fees & Charges Increase	(213)	(213)	0		Prices uplifted as per F&C report, assume achieved.
INF4	Fleet savings	(17)	0	17		Schemes not yet implemented so savings will not be achieved.
INF5	Maximising the ability to charge core budget to external grant streams	(205)	(205)	0		Achieved
Total	Infrastructure	(485)	(468)	17		
Ref	Place & Community Wellbeing	Budgeted Saving	Forecast Savings	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
PCW1	Utilising the New Area Management Structure	(40)	(20)	20		Delayed implementation of restructure 27-28 will achieve full amount.
PCW2	Leisure centre demand growth	(44)	(44)	0		

PCW3	Implementing New Welsh Government Fee Charges for Planning	(65)	(65)	0		
PCW4	Fees and Charges - Leisure	(40)	(40)	0		
PCW5	Fees and Charges - Building Control	(15)	(15)	0		
PCW6	Fees and Charges - Culture, Heritage and Arts	(16)	(16)	0		
Total	Place & Community Wellbeing	(220)	(200)	20		
Ref	People, Performance and Partnerships	Budgeted Saving	Forecast Savings	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
PPP1	Reduction in software costs within the contact centre	(17)	(17)	0		
Total	People, Performance and Partnerships	(17)	(17)	0		
Ref	Law & Governance	Budgeted Saving	Forecast Savings	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
LG1	Part time vacancy freeze in Land Charges	(16)	(16)	0		Post frozen - Achieved
Total	Law & Governance	(16)	(16)	0		
Ref	Resources	Budgeted Saving	Forecast Savings	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
RES1	Fees and charges	(64)	(64)	0		Fees have been increased, assume achieved
RES2	Efficiencies captured across non-pay budgets	(27)	(27)	0		Achieved

RES3	Release of non-pay inflation or headroom in capitalisation from under utilisation of redundancy allocation	(118)	(118)	0		Achieved
RES4	Housing benefit penalty reduction from reduced B&B usage	(200)	(200)	0		B&B numbers are below 10 so assume saving will be achieved.
Total	Resources	(409)	(409)	0		
Ref	Corporate Costs & Insurances	Budgeted Saving	Forecast Savings	Variance		Comment
		£000	£000	£000		
CORP1	Corporate Energy Saving (Non-Schools)	(135)	0	135		Current projections indicate due to late unit price and standing charge increases that this saving will now not be made this year.
Total	Corporate Costs & Insurances	(135)	0	135		

Appendix 4 - Individual School balance forecasts

FINANCIAL RISK CATEGORY KEY	
GREEN	Existing or projected surplus. Planned and explained use of surplus reserves for one-off investment does not, by itself, increase the risk category.
AMBER	Small projected deficit or emerging financial pressure; also used where an agreed recovery plan is reducing a deficit through a budgeted in-year surplus.
RED	Existing or projected deficit of £100,000 or more, or an unexplained in-year deficit that increases an existing deficit and creates material exposure for the Council.

School	Opening Reserves 2026-27 (Surplus)/Deficit	In Year position at Update 1 (Surplus)/Deficit	Projected carry forward at year end 2026-27 (Surplus)/Deficit	Financial Risk Category
Abergavenny cluster				
King Henry VIII 3-19 School	2,241,434	348,054	2,589,488	RED
Cantref Primary School	(152,388)	24,258	(128,130)	GREEN
Gilwern Primary School	68,985	(11,760)	57,225	AMBER
Goytre Fawr Primary School	(5,207)	9,853	4,646	AMBER
Llanfoist Fawr Primary School	(20,463)	(39,207)	(59,670)	GREEN
Llantillio Pertholey CiW Primary School (VC)	9,716	(16,535)	(6,819)	GREEN

School	Opening Reserves 2026-27 (Surplus)/Deficit	In Year position at Update 1 (Surplus)/Deficit	Projected carry forward at year end 2026-27 (Surplus)/Deficit	Financial Risk Category
Llanvihangel Crucorney Primary School	(61,257)	47,445	(13,812)	GREEN
Our Lady and St Michael ´s RC Primary School (VA)	72,904	(68,271)	4,633	AMBER
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni	239,620	5,076	244,696	RED
Caldicot cluster				
Caldicot School	745,401	413,587	1,158,988	RED
Archbishop Rowan Williams CiW Primary School (VA)	(92,812)	20,211	(72,601)	GREEN
Castle Park Primary School	17,914	56,164	74,078	RED
Dewstow Primary School	(103,796)	(17,143)	(120,939)	GREEN
Durand Primary School	(109,367)	(8,528)	(117,895)	GREEN
Magor CiW Primary School (VA)	(190,603)	166,238	(24,365)	GREEN
Rogiet Primary School	243,759	(14,996)	228,763	RED
Undy Primary School	(55,315)	(33,864)	(89,179)	GREEN
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin	191,779	71,600	263,379	RED
Chepstow cluster				
Chepstow School	888,453	10,294	898,747	RED
Pembroke Primary School	(298,774)	42,263	(256,511)	GREEN
Shirenewton Primary School	(162,675)	36,371	(126,304)	GREEN
St Mary ´s Chepstow RC Primary School (VA)	(44,094)	5,052	(39,042)	GREEN
The Dell Primary School	177,299	(159,783)	17,516	AMBER
Thornwell Primary School	197,386	(58,155)	139,231	RED
Monmouth cluster				

School	Opening Reserves 2026-27 (Surplus)/Deficit	In Year position at Update 1 (Surplus)/Deficit	Projected carry forward at year end 2026-27 (Surplus)/Deficit	Financial Risk Category
Monmouth Comprehensive	37,291	122,323	159,614	RED
Cross Ash Primary School	44,891	0	44,891	RED
Kymin View Primary School	22,461	(70,005)	(47,544)	GREEN
Llandogo Primary School	(23,201)	(35,374)	(58,575)	GREEN
Osbaston CiW Primary School (VC)	49,530	(8,087)	41,443	AMBER
Overmonnow Primary School	352,910	(23,600)	329,310	RED
Raglan CiW Primary School (VC)	(108,666)	62,060	(46,606)	GREEN
Trellech Primary School	(112,538)	39,112	(73,426)	GREEN
Usk CiW Primary School (VC)	(8,327)	(3,781)	(12,108)	GREEN
Ysgol Gymraeg y Trefynwy	15,300	51,704	67,004	RED
	4,067,550	962,576	5,030,126	
Special School				
Pupil Referral Unit	2,812,677	1,494,370	4,307,047	RED
Total	6,880,227	2,456,946	9,337,173	

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SUBJECT:	Annual Director's Report 2025 / 2026, Social Care Safeguarding and Health
MEETING:	Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	29th September 2026
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

To present the Annual Report 2025/26 from the Strategic Director for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health to Performance & Overview Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

For the Committee Members to scrutinise the report prior to its presentation at full Council in November 2026 and provide comment and feedback.

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. The Welsh Government template and guidance for completing the report is here:

<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 fifth Director's Report from the current Director and reflects activity within the financial year April 2025 – March 2026.

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 people's 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 2026 – 2027.

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

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

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 2025/26. 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. REASONS:

7.1 It is a legal requirement for the Statutory Director to publish an annual report.

7.2 To ensure that elected members, colleagues, and members of the public have the opportunity to scrutinise the Director's evaluation of the performance and impact of Social Services in 2025/26.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 None specific to this report.

8.2 The Annual Report sets out the financial context of social care and health and the outturn positions for 2025/26 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.

9. CONSULTEES:

- Cllr Ian Chandler, Lead Member for Social Care and Health Directorate
- Jenny Jenkins, Head of Adult Services
- Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

11. AUTHOR:

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ANNUAL REPORT
Director of Social Services
2025 - 2026



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Directors Summary

This year has seen the service build on the strategic, whole system changes we have instigated across both Children's and Adults' Services. These changes are leading to better outcomes for individual people and having a positive impact on the sustainability of services. We have worked at a systems level to ensure that the changes we are making are deep-rooted and provide a solid platform for continued service development aimed at delivering high-quality social care over the longer term in the face of increasing demand, risk and complexity. Stability within the social care leadership team has been important in maintaining this direction, allowing programmes of change to develop over several years whilst at the same time responding to immediate operational pressures.

Within Adult Services, we have continued the development of our approach to reablement through the START pathway. START is a reablement focussed, short-term assessment team which brings senior carers, therapists and social workers together through an integrated model and supports more people to retain or maximise their independence. We have enhanced our front-door service and revised pathways to ensure people have timelier access to the right support. Alongside this, implementation of the Domiciliary Care Commissioning Strategy has continued, with the new arrangements in the south of the county becoming established. The learning from this first phase is now helping to shape the next stage of our commissioning approach. In Children's Services, our Placement Development Strategy has continued to increase and reshape in-house provision, with the overarching intention of providing high-quality placements closer to children's homes and communities in ways which better support individual care planning. We have increased the number of children placed with in-house foster carers and continue to develop effective family support services to enable children to stay safely at home.

These are significant programmes of change, which span across departments and call for collective efforts across practice change and service implementation; procurement and commissioning, workforce development and planning; digital and systems development; partnership and engagement; project management and leadership skills. Over this coming year we will continue to consolidate and embed the changes already underway alongside a renewed focus on supporting consistently excellent practice.

Our work within the Directorate exists within a changing organisational context. *For Purpose, On Purpose* (FPOP) now provides a focused development framework for the whole authority to respond and adapt to changing demographics, technology, and environmental challenges. FPOP emphasises the need to *think and act differently*. For us, this means remaining open to modernisation - collaborating more, ensuring a skilled and flexible workforce, building resilience, and making responsible use of digital capability, data and AI.

The imperative for change is reinforced by the financial environment in which the Council and Social Care will operate over the coming years. Although the Directorate's year-end position benefited significantly from effective use of grant funding, the underlying pressures within both children's and adults' services linked to demand and complexity are very real. Our challenge is to use our resources more intelligently, focusing them where they can make the greatest difference and ensuring that change delivers both better outcomes and greater sustainability.

In response to these challenges, we have developed the Living Well Strategy to provide a coordinated approach to targeted prevention with the emphasis on supporting individual wellbeing and resilience within strong communities. We have established the governance and workstreams needed to move the strategy into delivery. Living Well is intended to benefit people, communities and the council by helping people live well and independently for longer and preventing or delaying the need for statutory services.

In 2025, Housing Services were incorporated into the Directorate. This represents a great opportunity to bring together key people-facing services, where teams are frequently working with the same individuals, families and communities, so that we can better align practice, share intelligence, strengthen pathways and make the greatest collective contribution to improving people's wellbeing.

Overall, performance in the service this year has held steady and, in many areas, presents an improving picture. We should, however, be realistic about the risks within our system. Monmouthshire's ageing population continues to create pressures for Adult Social Care, particularly as people present with increasingly complex care and support needs. Within Children's Services, relatively stable numbers mask a highly dynamic and challenging operational environment. The needs of children and families are becoming increasingly more complex set against changing societal and economic pressures, exacerbated at times by limited resources and services. Nevertheless, we have laid strong foundations on which to build and continue to respond to changing need.

By and large, everything within social care rests on working together and the centrality of human relationships. None of the progress described in this report would be possible without our workforce. Social care staff work with people at some of the most difficult and important points in their lives, often while managing significant demand, complexity and professional responsibility. I remain enormously grateful for the skill, compassion, resilience and dedication of colleagues across the Directorate. As we enter the next phase of our development, our task is clear - to elevate practice to its best, equip people with the skills and technology they will need for the future, and retain a relentless focus on what matters most: helping people to live safe, independent and fulfilling lives and ensuring that sustainable, high-quality support is there when people need it.

Review of Priority Actions for 2025 – 2026

Priority Set	Progress
Work with partners to ensure that people have access to preventative community wellbeing services that help to promote better health and wellbeing outcomes.	In October 2025, Cabinet endorsed the 'Living Well' strategy. Since then, we have established a cross-directorate delivery group and programme board to support implementation across a number of workstreams. We have aligned the programme delivery with the Place Based Care initiative within Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB). Joint working is now in place regarding a more targeted use of resources based on population needs, improved access to wellbeing information and developing good practice in targeted prevention.
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.	We have established new Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) workers in the Adult Social Care Service. Using 'what matters' conversations the IAA workers are helping to provide more consistent and timely responses to people who contact the service. We have reviewed and strengthened our internal referral pathways so that the IAA workers can direct people to the support and services they need in a more organized and efficient way. We have improved our recording of outcomes from IAA work which is allowing us to shape front-door services around what people need. Over the year, we have reduced our assessment waiting lists and increased the number of people receiving IAA. This means that people are better informed of their options at the earliest opportunity and have more timely access to the support and services that they need. We have undertaken an initial review of <i>community conversations</i>. The findings will support further work with our partner agencies to develop a more consistent practice model and increase the focus on achieving outcomes for people.
Improve the provision of information regarding financial assessments and charging.	Following the roll out of the financial training module, we have continued to build understanding of financial assessments, fees and charging to enable practitioners to ensure families are well-informed. We use the Quality Assurance and Learning Group (QUALG) to support practice in this

	area. We have improved the joint working between the social work and finance teams.
Continue to increase in-house reablement capacity and pilot the START pathway.	This year we have implemented the START pilot in the South Integrated Team. The START model has been developed through an integrated approach involving senior carers, therapists and social workers. The model uses multi-disciplinary triage processes to achieve quicker access to reablement supported by functional assessments undertaken by senior carers. We have implemented enhanced training for our in-house domiciliary cares in reablement techniques. Over the year we have continued to increase the number of people accessing reablement, supporting better outcomes by allowing more people to retain or maximise their level of independence
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.	The implementation of the new block contracts was completed in August 2025. The delay from the original timetable of April / May 2025 arose predominantly because of the procurement process. During implementation some people's care transferred from one provider to another, which needed to be carefully managed. However, at the end of the year arrangements were in a settled state with early benefits being drawn in line with the strategic intentions including stream-lined brokerage; improved payment processes and better coverage of provision across the area.
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.	Working closely with Primary Care health colleagues, additional money (Further, Faster Fund) was used to develop frailty services in the North and Central areas of the county. Health posts included a frailty consultant and additional District Nurses, with additional frailty carers being employed within Social Care. Frailty provides specialist advice and support to professionals working with older people, and provides a 'rapid response' to residents living with frailty. Frailty services are aimed at safely reducing hospital admissions and supporting timely discharge from hospital. Over the year our ability to support timely hospital discharge and reduce lengths of stay for older people continued to improve.
Take forward the outcomes from the Adult Services inspection	An action plan was put in place to address the issues raised within the improvement check. Over

undertaken in April 2025 particularly the work to support good outcomes for carers.	the year there has been an uptick in the numbers of carers registered with the carers team; more carers have received IAA and there has been an increase in the number of carer's assessments undertaken.
Open an Assistive Technology room in Monnow Vale hospital	The assistive technology room in Monnow Vale was successfully opened in September 2025. Unfortunately, soon after, the room had to be re-purposed following the flooding event. With Chippenham Surgery now back in action, the Assistive Tech room is once again available for people to visit and good levels of footfall are reported. At the same time the assistive tech room in Chepstow had to be re-located to Caldicot Medical Centre to allow for expanding ward space in the hospital. We are liaising with health colleagues to try and move this back to Chepstow (in keeping with where there was more opportunity to support people to explore the equipment).
Ensure that the optimal workforce structures are in place within direct care services to deliver good quality services and ensure staff wellbeing	Over the year we have re-structured some elements of direct care to ensure sufficient management cover and introduced new roles such as planners and senior carers. We continue to work closely with People Services to consolidate people's contracts and improve payroll functions for shift workers.
Continue to deliver the placement development strategy for children including completing the current pipeline projects	The new residential children's home, Ty Tudur became operational in July 2025 providing placements for 4 children. We have re-purposed our two smaller homes, which are now both able to accommodate two children. Ty Castell continues to support 5 young people. The placement development strategy is continuing to deliver better outcomes for children through child-focussed, high quality placements that support individual care planning and are closer to children's homes and communities.
Increase the number of in-house foster placements	A council tax subsidy for in-house carers was introduced in 2024, and in April 2025 the Cabinet Member agreed an uplift to foster carer fees and allowances. Alongside these improvements, the Children's Service has continuing to develop the non-financial support offer to carers. At year end. the number of children placed with in-house foster

	carers increased from 46 in 2022 to 50 in 2026 (lowest point 40 in 2024).
Maintain effective family support and mitigate against the risks associated with grant funding	In 2025/26 the budget for children's services allowed family support services to be maintained at the same level, despite a reduction in grant funding. Linked to the placement development strategy the service has been able to partially off-set increased pressures through savings arising from being able to place more children in in-house provision.
Maintain improvements in adherence to statutory timescales for child protection.	2024/25 saw the implementation of targeted practice improvement to secure better compliance against statutory timescales. This year we have been able to maintain that improvement. Although there has been a marginal dip in the timeliness of statutory visits, the timeliness of child protection core groups has further improved.
Implement new Case Management System to replace Flo and Plant	Due to challenges largely outside of Monmouthshire's immediate control there have been significant delays to this project. These challenges relate to the over-stretch of the provider and the move to a '5 in 1' tenancy arrangement. A new Go Live date of August 2027 has been established. At a local level, work towards implementing the new Case Management System is well-underway, although the operational impact on time and resources is considerable. National, regional and local programme oversight boards are in place. Successful implementation of the new system will be one of the foremost priorities for the service next year.
Ensure the supervision policy is fully embedded across the service	The supervision policy for social care has been implemented in practice. For children's services implementation has been more successful with evidence of supervision being recorded on children's files. In adults there is further work required to ensure that the connection between supervision and case work is evidenced.
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	A bespoke training programme was implemented for the START programme using a competency framework for reablement carers. A bespoke team training programme was implemented for the newly appointed children's residential workforce, which the team completed to opening, before the children arrived.

	5 additional people received Best Interest Assessor Training which is 1 more than last year.
Work in partnership across the council to progress recommendations regarding the delivery of anti-racist social care	The service continues to work in partnership with the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS Cymru) to take forward the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan within social care. We have established a cultural ambassador to link in with the national programme, increased training and awareness raising particularly at senior levels, and completed our self-assessment which will help us set some specific targets for next year.

‘At A Glance’ Metrics for 2025/26

Metric Number	Metric – Adults Social Services	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
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	8806	8085	8119	8769
AD/001b	The number of new contacts	6437	5951	5945	6373
AD/002	The number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	3808	3635	3626	3912
Assessments					
AD/004	The number of new assessments completed for adults during the year	2205	1929	2340	2388
AD/005	Of which:				
AD/005a	Needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan	671	486	689	1219
AD/005b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	583	482	557	467
AD/005c	There were no eligible needs to meet	553	573	522	692
Plans					
AD/012a	The number of adults with a care and support plans at 31 March	1651	1580	1378	1368
AD/013	The total number of adults with a care and support plan where needs a met through a Direct Payment at 31 March	149	140	120	117

Social Care for Adults

2025-26

About Adult Services



The budget for adult services is **£48** million



We employ **395** people in adults' social care



And completed **2,388** assessments for adults

Who we Support



452 adults received care in their own homes



369 adults were supported in care home placements



We received reports on **595** adults at risk

Supporting People Earlier



We provided advice or assistance to **3,912** contacts



71% of adults feel they had the right information or advice when needed



445 packages of reablement completed

How we Work



76% of adults felt involved in decisions about their care



92% of adult safeguarding enquires completed within 7 days



73% of adult's care plan were reviewed during the year

What Difference Did we Make?



46% of adults felt able to do things they consider important



53% of people need no ongoing support following reablement



83% of people were happy with their care and support



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Metric Number

Metric – Children's Social Services

2022/23

2023/24

2024/25

2025/26

Front Door					
CH/001	The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year	5825	7071	5819	5327
CH/002	The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	3508	3879	3223	3395
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	5698	7065	5818	5324
Assessments					
CH/006	The total number of new assessments completed for children during the year	907	1088	872	811
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	253	374	290	380
CH/007b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	493	522	435	408
CH/007c	There were no eligible needs to meet	16	35	34	22
Plans					
CH/015a	The number of children with a care and support plan at 31st March	542	502	585	627
CH/016	The total number of children with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment at 31st March	51	55	57	61

Social Care for Children

2025-26

About Adult Services



The budget for Children's services is **£24** million



We employ **260** people in children's social care



We received **5,327** contacts about **2,500** children

Who we Support



91 children on the child protection register



192 children in the care of the local authority



40 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 **3,395** contacts for children



99.9% of contacts had a decision within one day

How we Work



91% of children's assessments were completed on time



92% 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?



69% of children were supported to remain with their families



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



57% of care leavers were in education, training or employment



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Summary of Priority Actions for 2026 – 2027

1. Work with others to build on the work of Living Well Strategy and Place Based Care, moving to the delivery of outcomes and impacts arising from targeted prevention activity.
2. Evaluate the impact of the IAA services and use this to determine next steps.
3. Develop a model for community conversations through partnership engagement.
4. Take the required actions to respond to the CIW improvement check (June 2026).
5. Re-new the focus on supporting excellent social care practice with particular attention to outcome focused assessments and care planning.
6. Further embed key elements of the supervision policy across the service, with an emphasis on recording.
7. Review Day Opportunity Services in the south to inform procurement activity.
8. Implement the strategic objectives of the Domiciliary Care Commissioning Strategy in the north and central teams, building on the learning outcomes of the first phase. Maximise the benefits of the new partnership arrangements in the south.
9. Consolidate the START (reablement) pathway and roll this out across the other teams.
10. Increase young people's meaningful engagement with corporate parenting and wider service development.
11. Open a further residential children's home and a further supported accommodation provision.
12. Review and revise placement sufficiency plans to inform next steps, including building on the progress that has been achieved within in-house fostering.
13. Implement the recommendations from the self-assessment under the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan.
14. Implement the new Social Care Case Management System, ensuring appropriate system admin function post implementation and increase responsible use of digital and AI capability across the service.

Governance & 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. The statutory director for social care is a member of the Senior Leadership Team which meets on a weekly basis. 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 the Strategic Director for Social Care, Housing and Public Protection, who holds Statutory Responsibility and is responsible for the strategic direction and operational management of the service. The Strategic Director 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 Directorate leadership is benefiting from the appointment of a new joint Head of Service for Housing and Public Protection (appointed January 2026). The current stability of the core 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 Director decisions are not taken in isolation and are assessed for impact across the directorate.

The Strategic Director 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 and weaknesses – allowing constructive challenge and driving the focus on outcomes for people.

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 Report 2025/26 and Annual Safeguarding Report 2025/2026 (Performance & Overview Committee, September 2025)
- Update on the Placement Development Strategy for Children (Performance & Overview Committee, September 2025);
- The development of MonMeals (People Committee, September 2025),
- Outcome of CIW Adult Services' Services Performance Evaluation Review (People Committee, July 2025) and
- Monmouthshire Living Well Strategy (People Committee, September 2025).

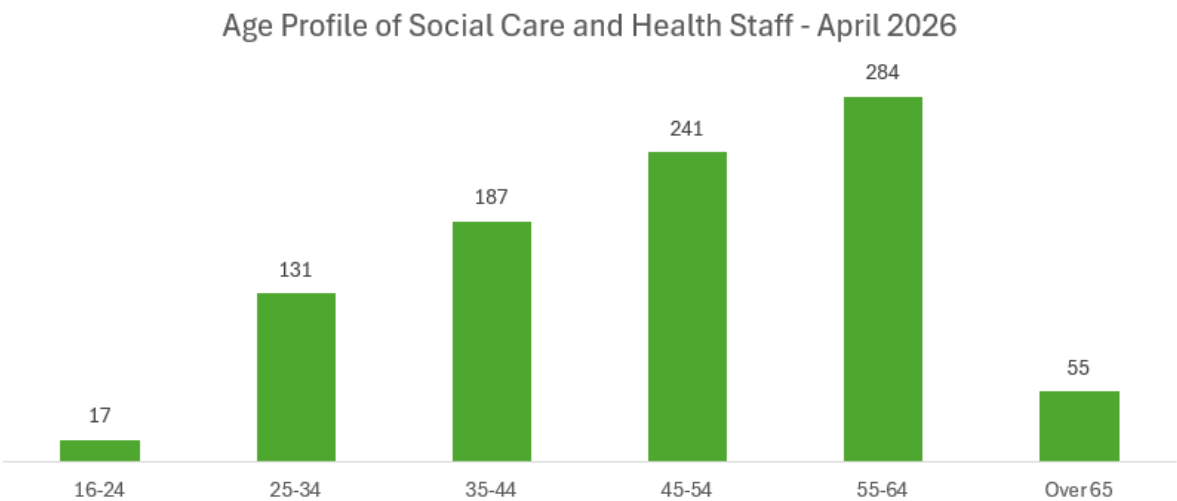
Workforce

The number of people employed within the social care workforce has decreased slightly from last year from on average 933 colleagues to on average 913 colleagues this year (2025/26). This equates to 605 Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs).

Adult Services has on average 440 colleagues across all teams, which is a decrease on last year’s figures due partly to an increasing people’s contracted hours across direct care (thereby reducing headcount). There have been on average 30 vacancies throughout the period, including social work posts, social work assistants and social care assessors, occupational therapists and direct care posts. The service has employed on average 6 colleagues through agencies during the year where critical cover was required. The labour turnover for Adult Services is 14.77%.

Children Services has an average of 301 colleagues working across multiple teams, a slight increase on last year, due to further expansion within family support services. There has also been an average number of 30 vacancies across the range of posts. The Memorandum of Understanding between all the Welsh Local Authorities, regarding how agency workers are deployed, continues to make a positive difference in achieving a more stable workforce with regards to social workers, although it remains challenging to recruit social workers for the core child protection teams. There have been on average 6 agency workers during this period to cover critical posts. The labour turnover for Children Services is 10.96%.

To ensure sufficiency and enable succession planning, the older demography of the workforce indicates that encouraging people to enter the care sector remains a priority. In partnership with Social Care Wales, we are starting to apply a more strategic approach to workforce planning so that we can be well placed to respond to changing population needs and service requirements. We have now collated key data and metrics as a baseline. This will allow us to improve how we use workforce trends and patterns to support higher level decisions.



We want people to see social care as a career of choice, with clear progression and professional development pathways. The Social Care Workforce Development Team (MONWDT) continues to work in

partnership with local colleges, universities and others to provide a range of routes into social care including 'growing our own' social workers and practitioners.

Over this next year, the workforce development team will continue to facilitate the well-established work experience and student placement offer, expecting to host an estimated 34 School, College and University students across front line social care teams with placements ranging from 20 to 100 days. This will include 27 modern apprentices undertaking their social care level 2-5 qualifications and 6 new and continuing Social Work degree traineeships. The team ensures that social care / social work placements provide a positive experience to students and that post qualification professional studies are properly supported.

Training programmes for managers and aspiring leaders are encouraged via a number of routes. On the whole, management and leadership posts have been successfully covered from within the service reflecting the emphasis that remains on supporting people's professional development.

Social Care & Health Workforce Development

2025-26

Student Hosting



7
Coleg Gwent
Health & Social
Care Work
Experience
Students



6
Social Work
Student
Secondments



13
Student Social
Workers



1
Level 4
Therapy
Assistant
Practitioner

Leadership



2 Team
Manager
Development
Programme



1 Mental Health
Manager
Development
Programme

Continuous Professional Development



5 First Year in
Social Work
Practice
Programme



7 First Year in
Social Work
Consolidation
Programme



3 Social Work
Practice
Educator

Specialist Operational



5
Best Interests
Assessor



4
Approved
Mental Health
Professionals



18
Manual Handling
Key Handlers



4
CUBAS
Parenting
Assessors

Health & Social Care Qualifications



17
Level 2
Qualifications



12
Level 3
Qualifications



5
Level 4
Qualifications



monmouthshire
sir fynwy



Wellbeing of the 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. We continue to place high value on individual supervision and support through line-management arrangements as well as opportunities for wider networking, specific team-based training and learning and celebratory events.

The workforce development team continue to deliver the *Connect 5* wellbeing training endorsed by ABUHB. *Connect 5* training helps managers and the wider social care workforce recognise how to support themselves and others to stay well. There are several pathways in place to support colleagues with their welfare including Occupational Health, Counselling and financial advice as well as the Melo website and Canopi offer through health.

We encourage social care staff to be part of wider council events such as colleague networks, colleague conferences and to take part in the council's workforce surveys. Peer networks are in place for people affected by specific issues including menopause, neurodiversity and physical disability. These networks continue to grow and develop with more planned for the future. Under the All-Wales Anti-Racist action plan, we have raised awareness of anti-racist practice within social care and continue to work with others to take this forward.

Nevertheless, absenteeism across the directorate remains higher than we would wish it to be with psychological illnesses, stress and mental ill-health remaining the highest reasons. We review cases related to work related stress and use a case management approach to absenteeism under the Wellbeing & Attendance policy and framework.



Financial Resources

For this year the net total revenue budget delegated to the Social Care, Safeguarding and Health directorate was £78,198,000, representing just over one third of the Council's overall budget. The largest part of the Directorate budget, £47,821,000, went to Adult Social Care. Children's Service was allocated £24,307,000 with the remaining £6,070,000 distributed among Housing, Public Protection and Support Services

There was an underspend of £2,125,000 at year end, mainly due to the utilisation of grant funding into Adults services which helped to alleviate the pressures of increased care home placements supporting timely discharge from hospital. The allocation of some grant funding later in the year masked some of the underlying pressures across the service.

Adults:

At year end adult's services showed an underspend of £2,617,000. Maximisation of external grant funding, such as the allocation of £914K via the Pathways of Care Transformation Grant, and through ensuring full spend against the Regional Integration Fund revenue grant were the main factors in contributing to the underspend. Continuation of the £1.1M Social Care Workforce Sustainability grant, with an additional £52K awarded in the last month of the financial year, also assisted to underpin costs and contribute toward the overall underspend.

Underlying pressures remain which include the full year effect of care provision and adult placements made at the end of the previous financial year and the ongoing rise in residential placements. There have been an additional 10 external residential placements during the year [this does not include our own in house provision of Severn View Park]. At the end of the year there are a total of 369 residential placements, a rise of 52 placements over 2 years, showing increased demand over the year and an underlying upward trend. This is in keeping with the aging demographic of the county together with the complexity of needs experienced by our older residents. Residential placements for people living with later stage dementia are generating a particular budgetary pressure.

We are still experiencing difficulties in progressing referrals for Continuing Health Care particularly for younger people with mental health and learning disabilities. This is impacting on our ability to move potentially eligible adults into health service budgets, an issue for all Welsh Local Authorities

Debt due to unpaid Adult social care charges remains a challenge, increasing in the last quarter to its closing position of £2.8M. We are continuing to take actions both preventatively and in ensuring appropriate recovery action, with the introduction of a Senior Debt Review panel.

Children's:

Stability within the overall numbers of children requiring looked after placements enabled Children's Services to remain broadly within its allocated budget this year. Although the surface numbers are stable, this does not reflect the dynamic operational environment with 55 children entering and 56 children leaving care over the course of the year.

There continues to be a significant pressure related to the use of external counsel / barrister costs for children who are in a public law process in 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. Court costs were inflated this year because of 2 specific complex cases. 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.

Another pressure within the service area arose through a reduction in the Welsh Government grant that supports our Family Support services. 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 Welsh Government grant.

Savings:

Within the budget the directorate was tasked to deliver savings of £2,950,000 and achieved £2,845,000, a 96.4% success rate. This was mainly achieved (£1.8M) through the work within children's service in respect of utilising family support to progress care plans for children within the looked after system, as well as maximising the use of in-house provision linked to the placement development strategy. Adult services were able to contribute savings of £350K (against a target of £250K) through the increased emphasis on undertaking timely care and support reviews. The Directorate savings shortfall was due to a 4-month delay in the completion of Severn View homeless provision.

National Framework for Commissioning Care and Support

We have continued to embed the principles of the National Commissioning Framework within our strategic commissioning and procurement activity. Many of the principles of the Framework were already reflected in our commissioning practice, with recent activity further strengthening alignment with national requirements.

The Council's Domiciliary Care Strategy is closely aligned with the Framework's objectives, particularly in relation to quality and outcomes, workforce sustainability and data-informed commissioning. Social value considerations are integral to the procurement process, with tender evaluations including requirements relating to fair work principles, community benefit and wider social value outcomes. Recent commissioning and procurement activity has seen quality given greater weighting than cost within major tender exercises, including domiciliary care and supported housing contracts.

Workforce sustainability continues to be a key consideration. Recent approaches have sought to support workforce wellbeing and stability and improved terms and conditions, including more consistent working patterns and enhanced mileage arrangements. These measures contribute to recruitment, retention and the long-term sustainability of the local care market.

Active Offer principles and Welsh language requirements have also been incorporated into recent procurement activity through contract and performance measures.

Further development is planned to strengthen the commissioning, monitoring and evidencing of outcomes across services, particularly within domiciliary care.

Proactive market engagement remains central to our commissioning approach. Established regional provider forums, market engagement and feedback from people receiving services are used to help shape service design, procurement activity and future delivery models. Population needs assessments, service performance information, provider intelligence and people's feedback are routinely used to inform commissioning decisions. A range of preventative services are currently commissioned and under review to ensure they remain sustainable and continue to deliver positive outcomes.

Strengths-based approaches are applied within commissioning decisions and service delivery. This approach is increasingly being utilised to support younger adults and individuals with more complex needs helping people to identify appropriate care and support solutions and exercise greater choice. Further development will focus on embedding strengths-based commissioning principles and strengthening the evidence of outcomes achieved through this approach.

We have strengthened our approach to fee setting and market sustainability. Through the annual fee-setting process, fair rates are informed by robust evidence and an understanding of the actual costs of delivering care, including material cost pressures, increases in the National Living Wage, Real Living Wage and wider inflationary pressures. We have recently commissioned Care Cubed to help ensure fees are reflective of assessed need and sustainable from the outset, as well as providing transparent and relevant benchmarking information to support discussions with providers. Full and transparent budget

matrices are used within procurement exercises to ensure cost assumptions are understood from the outset and commissioned services remain financially sustainable.

The Council will continue to develop its approach to evidencing outcomes through contract monitoring, quality assurance activity, people's feedback and provider intelligence. Future development will focus on strengthening co-production, moving towards outcome-focused care in domiciliary care, demonstrating impact and continuing to support a sustainable, high-quality care market that delivers positive outcomes for the people of Monmouthshire.

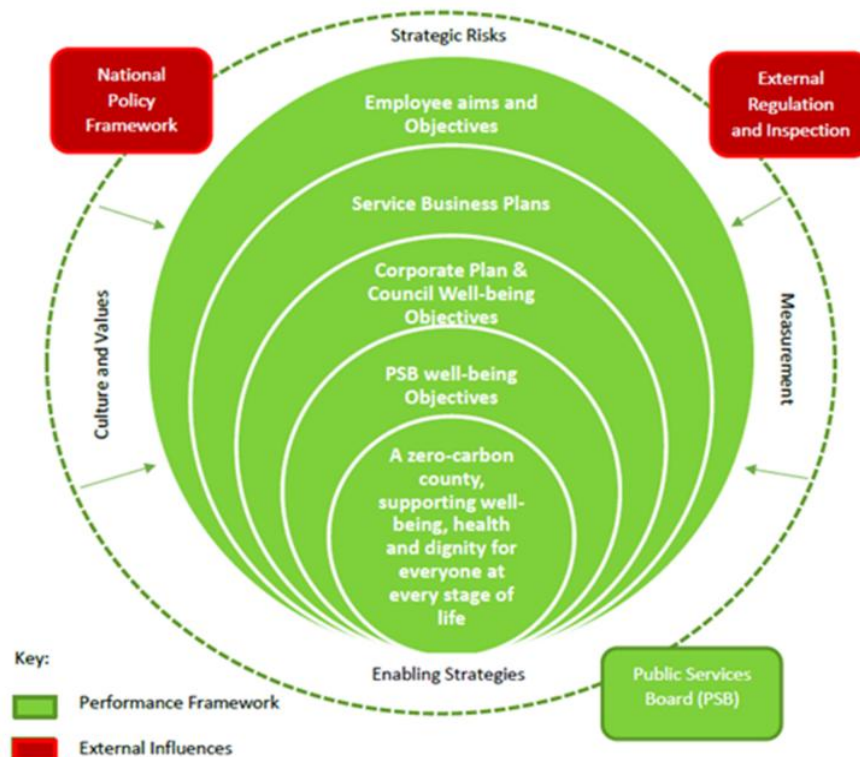
Performance Framework and Quality Standards

The Director's report is undertaken in the context of the Council's Community and Corporate plan and aligns with the Council's annual whole authority self-assessment process, as set out in the diagram below. The assessment evaluates progress and performance in 2025/26 with the Council's A Connected Place Where People Care objective set in the Community and Corporate Plan 2022/28 which 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 report is available here [Council Performance - Monmouthshire](#)

Monmouthshire Council Performance Management Framework



The data tables used within the report provide an overview of some of our core metrics across social services. How we evidence progress and performance is guided by the revised Code of Practice for the

performance and improvement of social services in Wales, established under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The framework brings together three complementary elements: measuring activity and performance, understanding experience and outcomes, and using evidence to inform improvement.

2025/26 is the sixth year in which we have reported metrics through the '*Measuring Activity and Performance*' framework. As this evidence base has developed, trend information has become increasingly valuable, helping us to understand patterns of demand and activity, identify areas where action may be needed, and assess the impact of changes to services from a performance perspective.

The tables within this report provide an overview of selected core metrics across social services, from over one hundred measures contained within the framework. We have included those most relevant to understanding our activity and performance during 2025/26. These are supplemented by locally developed measures which help us explore particular aspects of service performance in greater depth.

Metrics alone cannot tell the full story. Throughout the report we have included quantitative information together with a wider range of evidence, including case studies, service user feedback and information about people's experiences and outcomes. Taken together, this provides a richer understanding of both the demands on our services and the difference our support makes to people's lives, as well as helping us identify opportunities for learning and continuous improvement.

Guidance for the production of the report was issued in the previous year and can be found [here](#).

The Performance section asks local authorities to address eight quality standards under four sections: - People, Prevention, Partnership and Integration and Wellbeing, using 2 prompt statements for each section. The assessment is completed for both children's and adults' services and describes how the local authority has aimed to achieve the standards.

The self-assessment approach asks local authorities to address the following four questions:

- What do we know about the quality and impact of what we are doing?
- How do we know? e.g. what evidence from research, engagement and the metrics are we using to inform this assessment?
- What are we doing well and how can we do better? What are our priorities for improvement, particularly over the coming year
- What progress did we make on the areas for improvement identified in last year's report? What difference did we make?

1. People

2025-26



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



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



Performance Assessment

People

Within Children and Adult services alike, we adopt a strengths-based approach that starts with listening to people's stories, understanding their experiences and focusing on what matters most to them. Through person-centred conversations, we work alongside people to identify and build upon their strengths, assets, relationships and community connections, supported where necessary by formal care and support services. All staff are trained in collaborative communication techniques to support these discussions and ensure people are actively involved in decisions about their lives. Our aim is to promote independence, choice and control, enabling people to achieve their personal outcomes while ensuring that their voices help shape and influence the services we provide.

Children's

Children's Services Practitioners use core skills to establish relationships with children independently from their parents / carers wherever possible, including seeing them alone. This provides children with the opportunity to talk openly about anything that is worrying them. Seeing children alone as part of an assessment was achieved in 99.4% of cases.

Gaining insight into a child's lived experience often requires time, persistence and skilled relationship-based practice, particularly when children communicate their feelings and experiences in different ways. We place a strong emphasis on communication skills, direct work techniques and understanding child development so that practitioners can engage meaningfully with children and see the world from their perspective.

Social workers must remain alert to the risk that a child's voice can be overshadowed when attention becomes focused on the needs, views or circumstances of the adults around them. Reflective supervision, professional support and challenge play a critical role in helping practitioners maintain a clear focus on the child's lived experience, ensuring that children's views, wishes and feelings remain at the heart of assessment, planning and decision-making. We work hard to ensure that each child is supported to achieve what matters to them.

Case Study

My Support Service

K is a school aged young person with disabilities. K wants to increase their independence and access more of their community.

Support workers engage with K and their family to improve K's confidence and skillsets so that they can become more independent.

K has autonomy to choose where they want to go and what activities they would like to engage in.

Through working with the support workers K is has increased in confidence, particularly in making decisions, and has started taking initiative. The number of prompts that they require by support staff has decreased.

In one example, K was able to go shopping with support and purchase gifts they had chosen for family members. Budgeting, decision making and communication skills all showed improvement.

K's Support Worker – "For me, it's important that K progresses, that one day they may be able to go into a shop, buy what they want, identify that they have enough money and can budget themselves.

This shop, K chose all presents themselves, paid for and packed independently, even planned where to hide the plant they bought for mum!"

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.

Case Study

Family Therapy

A family self-referred into the SPACE Wellbeing Panel. The family had recently moved into the area. The children were struggling to settle into school and there were high levels of family conflict linked to neurodiversity. Based on the referral information they were allocated to the Creative Therapies Team for Family Therapy.

The parents had differing parenting styles. Both were under pressure at work and there was a lack of wider family support. The children were not attending school, which further challenged the family dynamics and the parents became overwhelmed with their situation.

A period of family therapy sessions ensued involving both parents. The sessions helped to address the conflict within the home, understand the differing parenting styles and develop solutions.

Parent feedback: *"We have hugely benefited from our family therapy sessions. As parents neurodivergent children, navigating parenting and family life has been challenging. The sessions have been immensely valuable in helping us process the difficulties we have faced, as well as the progress and setbacks in our parenting journey. The approach was guided by our needs, which is exactly what we needed. Through therapy we have a safer and more peaceful environment at home. We better understand and manage our own emotions, rather than focusing solely on behaviour. Family therapy has not removed the challenging circumstances we face - however, it has enabled us to navigate them in a far more constructive and supported way."*

Children's Participation and Engagement

Over recent years we have placed increasing emphasis on actively encouraging children's participation in their own care at an individual level, and as part of wider services developments as well.

This year, the Children with Disabilities Team launched **VoiceMates**, an innovative Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) application designed to support non-verbal children and young people. The device-independent app enables children to communicate through symbol-based sentence building and audio playback, helping to ensure their views, wishes and feelings can be heard and understood. The app has the potential to support safeguarding, where capturing the child's voice is central to assessment and decision-making. Early feedback has been encouraging, with children showing enthusiasm and curiosity when using the technology and demonstrating an ability to navigate the app independently. While further work is needed to embed its use consistently across practice and gather feedback to inform ongoing development, VoiceMates represents an important step in using digital innovation to strengthen participation and give children with communication difficulties a stronger voice.

The involvement of young people within the corporate parenting panel continues to play a central role in amplifying the voices of care experienced young people. Care experienced young people are supported to attend board and there a wider engagement event is held each year. This year discussions resulted in an organised trip to London and a visit to the Houses of Parliament. Subsequently, the young people had a meeting with their local MP to discuss issues regarding benefits and housing. Young people have been involved in staff interviews at a leadership level, in commissioning processes (for support accommodation providers) and in deciding how grant funds are spent. The young people are generating some fantastic ideas about how they want their engagement with the service to develop. This year, we would like to support young people take an increasingly active role in coming together to shape and influence the service as well as the panel itself.

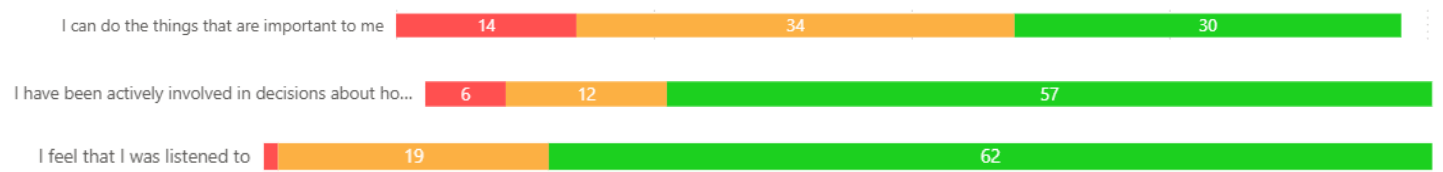
At an individual level we work hard to promote the aspirations of the children we work with. One young person had a long-term ambition of becoming a sports journalist. We were able to use grant funding for a laptop and supported him to attend and review national sporting events and to foster his passion and skills. We have supported other young people into a range of learning opportunities and experiences with a significant proportion ultimately entering care related work.

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. Feedback from the adult questionnaire provides us with insight into how well this is being achieved.

In the last year, 2025/26, 46.1% of people told us they feel able to do the things that are important to them. This has declined slightly over recent years, from 49.5% in 2023/24. Whilst we are not entirely sure why this is, the decline potentially relates to the increasingly older population who present to the service.

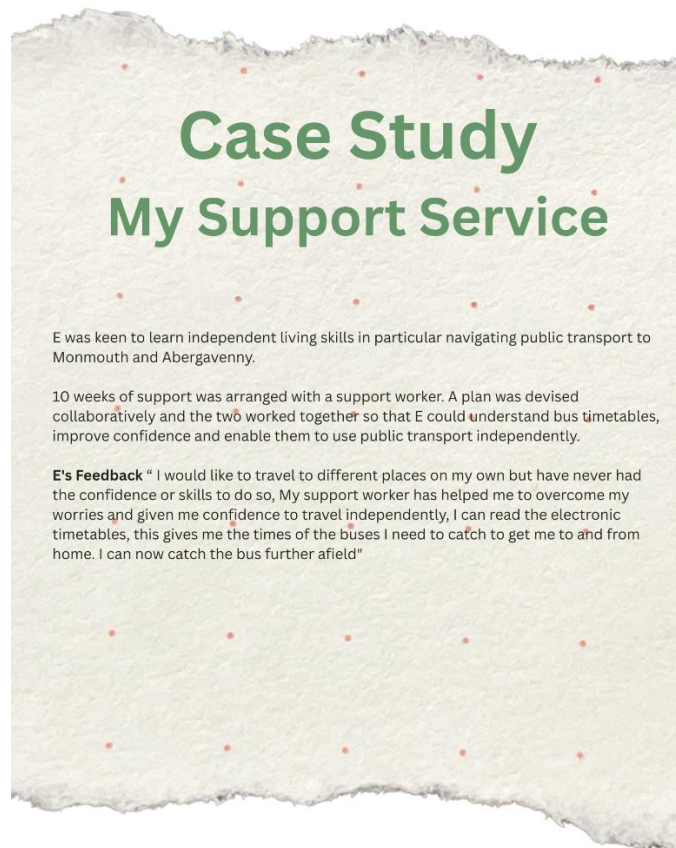
Over three quarters, 76.1%, of people told us they feel actively involved in decisions about their care, which has remained consistent over recent years. The proportion of people who feel listened to has remained consistently high and has slightly increased in the most recent year to 80.5%. This demonstrates that engagement with adult social care users overall remains strong. We need to continue to focus on ensuring meaningful outcomes through supporting service users to do what matters to them.



Adults Questionnaire	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
I can do the things that are important to me	48.7%	49.5%	47.9%	46.1%
I have been actively involved in decisions about how my care and support was provided	76.6%	78.1%	76.1%	76.1%
I feel that I was listened to	79.9%	80.4%	79.7%	80.5%

Doing the Things that Matter

Over this last year, the development of My Support Service (Day Opportunities Service for the North and Central parts of the County) has gone from strength to strength. The service is completely orientated to support people to achieve the things that matter to them. This year we are planning to undertake a commissioning review and procurement process for the Day Opportunities Service in the South.



Micro Care

Since its launch in 2022, the Microcare Project has entered its fourth year and continues to demonstrate its value as an important additional method of delivering care and support within the community.

The scheme supports individuals across the county to establish themselves as self-employed care workers, offering a diverse range of services. These include personal care and support, companionship, assistance with shopping, gardening, and other day-to-day activities. This approach provides residents with greater flexibility and choice - accessing care services tailored to their individual needs. As at March 2026, micro-carers were providing over 1,000 hours of care and support across Monmouthshire.

Date	No of Microcarers	No of clients	No of hours of care per week
March 2026	61	198	1050

Feedback from microcarers:

'I love being a micro carer, it's flexible and I can fit the work around my family. Working for an agency or the local authority is not for me. If there was no micro carer scheme I would not be working in care'.

'I retired from teaching and wanted to carry out part time work in my community, I wanted a rewarding role where I could support someone and make a real difference but still have time for me – being a micro carer does just that'.

Feedback from Microcare clients:

"Excellent! Our carer is very flexible and outgoing and has enabled our daughter to access lots of activities and helps her out with day-to-day tasks."

"Our daughter is very happy and has continuity of care."

All microcarers receive ongoing advice and guidance to help develop and sustain their businesses. They have access to free training provided by the Workforce Development Team, covering areas such as Manual Handling, Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW), Medication Administration, Safeguarding, and GDPR. Once registered on the Dewis Wales directory, Microcarers are connected with local people seeking care and support.



Direct Payments

Direct Payments are a key mechanism for enabling choice and control. Direct Payments, empower families to design and manage support arrangements that best meet their individual needs and circumstances.

The number of children with a care and support plan we support through a Direct Payment has steadily increased to 61 from 51 over the past four years.

The number of adults using Direct Payments has declined over the four-year period, from 149 in 2022/23 to 117 in 2025/26. Although we don't know for sure, the decrease appears to relate to some of the challenges people face in managing the Direct Payment process. A Direct Payment puts the onus on the recipient who becomes the employer / commissioner for their own care and support. For some people, particularly those who may be older or more frail, this can be a barrier.

We continue to promote Direct Payments as an option and ensure that support is in place to support people who chose to go down this route.

Advocacy

Independent advocacy is another important mechanism for ensuring that people's voices are heard and reflected in decision-making, particularly those in more complex situations, or where there are specific complaints.

In Children's Services, the number of "Active Offers" of advocacy has fluctuated over recent years. In the last year, 94 active offers of advocacy were made. The number of cases where an Independent Advocate was provided has increased in the most recent year, from 29 in 2024/25 to 41 in 2025/26.

The number of adults identified as requiring an independent professional advocate is largely similar to last year, as is the number of people who were provided with an advocate. While overall number of adults needing advocacy has decreased over a four-year period, advocacy support remains critical and targeted where it is most required.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
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	51	55	57	61
CH/056	The total number of "Active Offers" of advocacy for children during the year	98	98	69	94
CH/057	The total number "Active Offers" of advocacy for children during the year where an Independent Advocate was provided	42	24	29	41

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Advocacy and Direct Payments					
AD/013	The total number of adults with a care and support plan where needs a met through a Direct Payment at 31 March	149	140	120	117
AD/032	The total number of adults during the year where the need for an independent professional advocate was identified	39	29	21	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	19

Workforce

All teams and service areas within the directorate are expected to hold regular team meetings which provide the opportunity to discuss wider service developments as well as address specific practice or procedural issues. Given the implementation of agile and remote working, managers need to be *accessible* and *available*. The outcomes of staff surveys indicate that in general people report feeling supported by their line managers, as well as by peers.

We want practitioners to feel supporting in their practice and decision-making with individuals and families, particularly where there are levels of risk, issues of contention or where there are safeguarding concerns. System 'sign-off' for key decision points around assessment and care planning is in-built into the case management system. From a practice development perspective, quality assurance forums are in place, such as the Quality Assurance and Learning Group in Adults and Child Protection Panel in children's. Similarly, the integrated nature of the teams allow for Multi-Disciplinary case discussions.

Ensuring regular one-to-one supervision is a central element to supporting the workforce. This year we have aimed to improve consistency of practice aligned to the Service's supervision policy. The next step is to improve recording the outcomes from supervision so that management oversight is clearly visible within individual case records.

We know that there is still more to do in achieving consistently good practice at a whole system level. This is something that has been discussed within recent Care Inspection Wales improvement checks, particularly regarding the analysis of risk; contingency planning and outcome-focused planning. We want to place increased focus on social care practice this year and are looking to recruit quality assurance leads in both children and adult's services to help us achieve our aspirations.

The Social Care Workforce Development Team

The Social Care Workforce Development Team (MONWDT) is pivotal in ensuring that relevant training programs are in place to support the priorities of the service. To ensure the learning offer is tailored to service requirements, MONWDT works shoulder-to-shoulder with the operational teams to understand training needs, plan, design training modules and commission training. The training extends to external and internal partners, foster carers and direct care providers.

The main face-to-face learning offer continues to be delivered from the temporary base in Innovation House Magor, with the team continuing to facilitate online, blended and place-based opportunities based on service needs. Over the year 6,780 on-line training courses were awarded and just under 4,000 people were trained in a face-to-face setting.

MONWDT works closely with the other workforce development teams within the region. Each of the teams have a largely similar core offer defined under the terms of the workforce development grant. Early thought has been given as to the potential benefits of creating a regional team.

Alongside of core training MONWDT priorities for 25-26 included:

- Implementation of the short term reablement and assessment team (START) project including mapping the reablement competency framework and delivering the programme in partnership with occupational therapists, physiotherapists, assistive tech and sensory impairment colleagues from our integrated teams. So far feedback has been very positive:

"I enjoyed how involved the group got. Everyone was able to speak up and discuss anything they felt relevant to the topic... We shared different techniques, worked collaboratively to problem solve reablement issues with lots of new aids and assistive tech...."

- Inducting the new children's residential workforce delivered in partnership with the residential leadership team and enabled the entire staff team to be trained before their residential settings opened for the first time. This helps to ensure the children and young people of Monmouthshire have staff fully equipped to support them with their physical, psychological and intellectual needs whilst promoting independent living skills.
- Facilitating staff to qualify as Best Interest Assessors enabling them to undertake assessments for people living in residential homes under a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard (DoLS).

- Working alongside children's services and legal experts to facilitate a rolling programme of court skills workshops to ensure the practitioners and foster carers have the most up to date knowledge and experience in court matters.

Workforce development priorities for 26/27 include:

- Continuing to embed START including the rolling out to North and Central areas and including external providers during 26/27.
- Continue to lead the induction programmes for the Children's Residential workforce.
- Support further training in Mental Capacity Act assessment skills following legislation changes. This will ensure that the people of Monmouthshire requiring care and support in a range of setting have their rights upheld, their voices heard and decisions made in their Best Interests where needed.
- Continue to work in partnership to implement and enhance safeguarding training across the council.
- Implement the General Practitioner (GP) work placements in September 2026. This is an exciting pilot project which, for the first time ever, will facilitate doctors experiencing social care, public protection and housing case work, as part of their medical studies. This will provide valuable insights they can take forward into their careers.

2. Prevention

2025-26



a. “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”



b. “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”



Prevention

Living Well Strategy

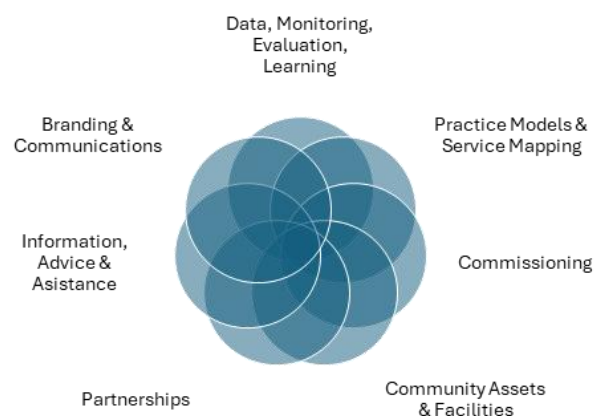
Providing early support and helping to promote individual and community resilience remains a central ethos of the service within both children's and adults' services.

The Council's approach to prevention is being shaped by the *Living Well* Strategy, which offers a whole-authority framework for improving wellbeing, reducing inequalities and helping people to remain healthy, independent and connected for longer.

“Residents, especially our more vulnerable and deprived residents, are enabled to live healthier and independently for longer – boosting their wellbeing as well as delaying or reducing their call on statutory services.”

The strategy promotes a shift towards coordinated earlier intervention, targeted support and the strengthening of individual and community resilience. It recognises that good outcomes are influenced by a wide range of social, environmental and economic factors and therefore emphasises collaboration across directorates, services, communities and partner organisations. Through a focus on healthier lifestyles, individual resilience and stronger community networks, the strategy seeks to reduce escalating need for statutory services while enabling residents, particularly those most vulnerable to poor health and wellbeing outcomes, to live well and maintain their independence. The Living Well Strategy was endorsed by Cabinet in October 2025.

Over the last 12 months, significant progress has been made in establishing the foundations and key workstreams required to deliver the ambitions of the Living Well Strategy. Focus has centred on developing the governance arrangements, including the establishment of a Delivery and Programme Board to provide strategic oversight, coordinate activity and drive implementation across the Council and partner organisations.

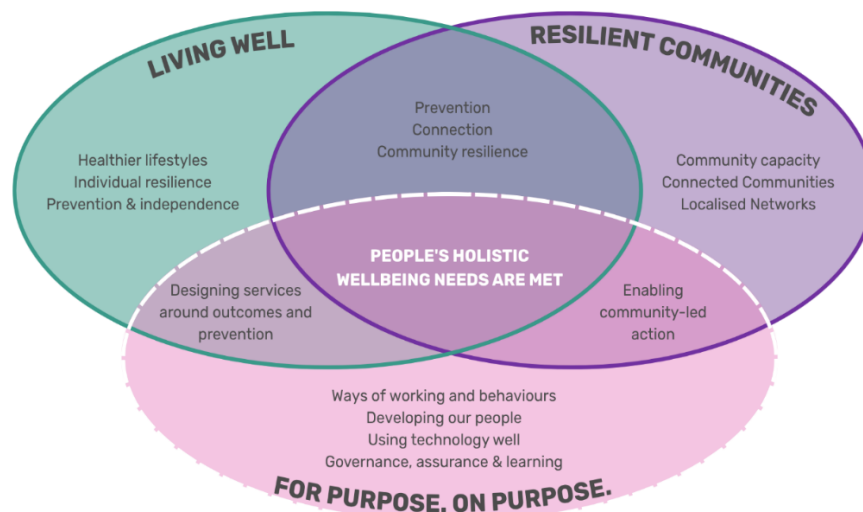


The programme is anchored within 'place-based' models of care being developed within health. This collaborative approach has helped to create stronger alignment between community wellbeing, prevention, early intervention and integrated care, providing a platform for future delivery and long-term system change.

The emerging work around prevention was recognised as a strength within the Council’s Peer Panel Assessment which was undertaken in February 2026. The assessment found that used a person-centred approach with a ‘*strong commitment to prevention and early intervention, aligned with regional partners*’.

‘The Council’s Living Well Strategy provides a well-articulated framework that recognises prevention as a long-term continuum and as a “point in time” document there is commitment to ensure this strategic intent continues to evolve, reflecting emerging learning and community insight.’

The Living Well strategy is aligned to *For Purpose On Purpose* the Local Authority’s future-focused change framework. There is now a clear imperative and expectation that the work delivered under the Living Well strategy starts to make a tangible contribution to longer-term sustainability and resilience.



Children’s Services

Early help and prevention within Children’s Social Care is central to minimising the escalation of need and ensuring the best possible outcomes for families. A coordinated approach to early intervention and prevention enables families to access the right level of support at the right time, helping parents provide safe, stable and nurturing environments for their children. Early help services form the foundation of our long-term strategy to prevent and reduce the need for children requiring care.

The SPACE Panel continues to play a key role in promoting partnership working, acting as a hub for early identification, coordinated support, and timely intervention for children, young people and their families across a range of agencies, third sector partners and provider services

Referrals into panel remain high (1099 referrals during the year) and there has been an increase in waiting times for all services. The highest referral source was from parents at 55.79% and with GP referrals at second highest at 25.52%. Referrals relating to issues around neurodivergence, psychological and mental health, general social withdrawal and school avoidance are notably high. 34% of allocations went to more than one service which suggests that families are requiring multi-faceted interventions and are seeking support at a child, parent, and family / systemic level.

These arrangements contribute to building family resilience and supporting participation, enabling families to develop the skills and confidence needed to sustain positive outcomes and reduce reliance on statutory services. However, the service is starting to monitor the number of repeat referrals to panel, suggesting that some interventions are not having the long-term impact needed, or not having an impact that makes families more resilient and self-determining over time. We want to explore the needs of families who are re-referred in more depth to help shape the type of service / community intervention that might be required.

Feedback and evaluation we receive demonstrate the effectiveness of early help services from a family perspective. The percentage of families supported through early help services who report being helped with what matters to them has remained at 100% for the last three years. 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.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
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)	87.5 %	100%	100%	100%

Case Study

Building Stronger Families

B was referred into BSF with concerns regarding emotional regulation and behaviour within the family home. The pressure this was creating in the home created heightened family conflict, and emotional distress for the mother. The requirements were to increase parental confidence, improve emotional safety and communication within the family, reduce conflict and strengthen joint working between parents.

NVR (Non-Violent Resistance) was recommended. The NVR programme was delivered on a one-to-one basis within the family home over a number of weeks. NVR principles include self-care, de-escalation, and strengthening parental presence.

The intervention resulted in clear, sustained positive outcomes across the family. Mum described improved communication and reduced conflict: "Our relationship has improved. Communication feels safer and there is less conflict." She reported that B was "calmer, less aggressive, and recovers more quickly from difficult moments." The family have demonstrated proactive engagement with support services and now feel confident in their ability to manage future challenges, including as their younger child approaches adolescence.

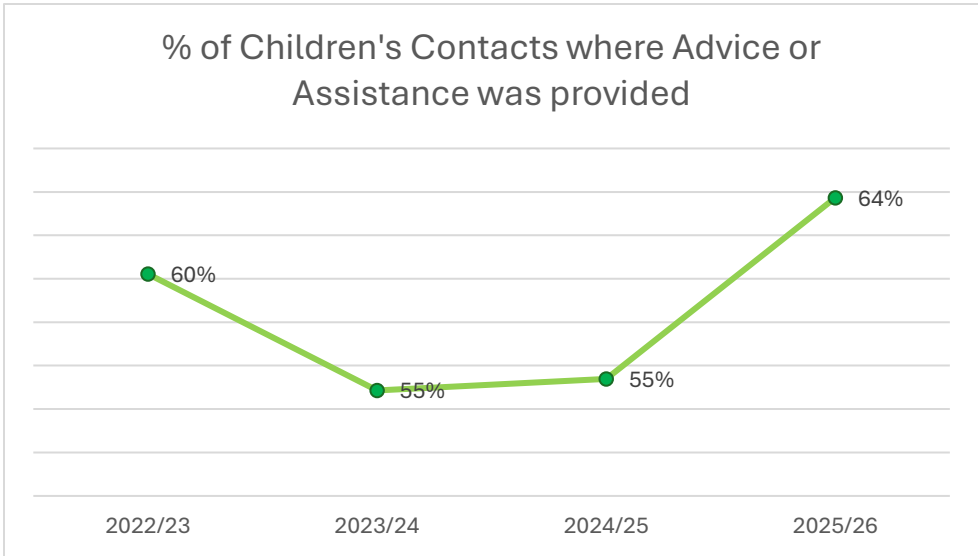
The Front Door

Following our efforts to review and strengthen threshold guidance and referral activity into Children's services we have seen a reduction in the number of contacts received by Children's Services for a second consecutive year. This indicates improved understanding among partners and ensures that children's services resources are focused on situations of concern that may require statutory intervention. In total, we received 5,327 contacts for children over the course of the year, in contrast to 7,071 during 2023/24. Less volume means that we have more opportunity to apply strengths-based practice and risk management early on, ensuring that each referral is responded to in the best way.

Over two thirds of contacts continue to be received from key safeguarding partners, including police (35.6%), education (23.3%) and health (12.9%), demonstrating sustained multi-agency engagement and shared responsibility for identifying need and following correct referral pathways.

A key aspect of preventing escalation is ensuring that contacts are responded to promptly and proportionately. Performance remains exceptionally strong, with 99.9% of contacts receiving a decision by the end of the next working day in 2025/26, maintaining consistently high performance over recent years. This ensures that children and families receive timely support and that risk is appropriately managed.

The provision of advice and assistance remains a critical component of early intervention. In 2025/26, advice or assistance was provided in 64% of cases [3,395 out of 5,327 cases], reflecting a continued focus on supporting families at the earliest stage, diverting need away from statutory intervention where it is safe and possible to do so.



Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24		2025/26
Front Door (Children)					
CH/001	The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year	5825	7071	5819	5327
CH/002	The number of contacts for children received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	3508	3879	3223	3395
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	5698	7065	5818	5324
Local	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	97.8%	99.9%	100.0%	99.9%

Assessments

In line with the reduction in contacts received at the front door, there has been a corresponding decrease in the number of completed assessments this year, reflecting a more targeted and proportionate response to need.

However, following assessment, proportionately more children require statutory support. In 2025/26, 46.9% (380) of assessments concluded that needs could only be met through a care and support plan, a notable increase from 33.3% (290) in the previous year. While this increase is partly attributable to our continued focus on improving data recording, it also suggests that children reaching assessment are

more likely to have higher levels of need and indicates that lower-level concerns are increasingly likely to be supported earlier through preventative pathways.

50.3% (408) of assessments identified that needs could be met through other means. This demonstrates that social workers are effectively using the assessment period to identify and build on family strengths enabling families to safely step down from statutory support where possible.

We continue to complete assessments within timescales with 91.2% completed within statutory timescales of 42 working days in 2025/26, ensuring that children and families receive timely interventions to prevent escalation of need. This decreased from 97.1% in the previous year.

Importantly our practice remains firmly child centred. Evidence shows that children were seen as part of the assessment process in 99.4% of cases, ensuring that their voice and lived experience inform both assessment and planning.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Assessments (Children)					
CH/006	The total number of new assessments completed for children during the year	907	1088	872	811
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>	27.9%	34.4%	33.3%	46.9%
Local	<i>Needs were able to be met by any other means</i>	54.4%	48.0%	49.9%	50.3%
Local	<i>There were no eligible needs to meet</i>	1.8%	3.2%	3.9%	2.7%
Local	<i>The percentage of assessments for children completed during the year where there is evidence that the child has been seen</i>	98.3%	98.3%	98.8%	99.4%
Local	<i>The percentage of new assessments completed for children during the year that were completed within statutory timescales</i>	92.3%	95.9%	97.1%	91.2%

Young Carers

Young carers need access to the right help, advice and support to maintain their wellbeing, development and participation in everyday life. Contacts relating to young carers increased to 289 in 2025/26, following a decline in the previous year. This correlates with our work to improve the early identification of young carers across partners with the majority of schools now actively engaged in this work. The Young Carers Assessment Worker remains an integral member of the SPACE panel.

Of the young carers who were referred to the service, 136 received advice and assistance.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24		2025/26
Front Door (Young Carers)					
CA/011	The total number of contacts to statutory social services by young carers or professionals contacting the service on their behalf received during the year	259	282	224	289
CA/012	Of those identified, the number where advice and assistance was provided	106	157	124	136

We have undertaken more young carers need assessment, with 67 undertaken in the last year, representing increased awareness of the specific needs and challenges faced by young carers. Of these, the majority (54 out of 67) had identified needs, with a combination of support plans (21) and other forms of assistance (33) provided. The Young Carers Service continues to deliver regular in-school sessions, providing group-based activities such as cooking, which enable informal engagement and wellbeing check-ins in a supportive environment.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Assessments (Young Carers)					
CA/014	The total number of young carers needs assessments undertaken during the year	29	16	25	67
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	10	12	10	21
CA/015b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	11	4	11	33
CA/015c	There were no eligible needs to meet	1	0	0	8

Case Study Young Carers

A child in year 8 was referred for 1:1 support to the Young Carers Service due to a requirement for practical support, and emotional wellbeing.

An assessment was performed with goals being defined which included:

- Support for the child to talk more openly about feelings and emotions
- Support with grant applications so the child could start kickboxing to enhance their social life outside of their caring role.
- Engagement with group sessions and respite activities to meet other young carers and build new friendships
- Tailored cooking lessons

Child-led support was provided to explore emotions and feelings. The child was able to start at a kickboxing club with help from the Bridging the Gap Fund and a cooking session was provided. The child now regularly attends school group sessions and young carer activities. Additionally, a Cost of Living grant was granted to help purchase some bedroom furniture.

"Hi, I just wanted to send a quick email to say thank you. [Child] has really enjoyed his young carers sessions and we also wanted to say a huge thank you for the grant. [Child] was able to get a bed, desk, and bedside table, which has made such a positive difference for him. Thank you from us as well – we're incredibly grateful for the support."

Adults

The Front Door

We aim to support people to live independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible, minimising the escalation of need and focusing on promoting resilience and personal well-being outcomes. This is increasingly important within the context of a growing ageing population. By 2047, the number of residents aged 65 and over in Monmouthshire is projected to increase by 38.6%, and those aged 85 and over by 114.7%, significantly exceeding the projected growth in these age groups across Wales. This demographic shift is a key driver of rising demand and increasing complexity of need across health and social care systems.

In response, we continue to strengthen our front door arrangements in adult social care to ensure people receive timely, appropriate information, advice and assistance, helping to prevent or delay the need for more intensive statutory support. Professionals are available at the first point of contact, supporting a consistent and proportionate response.

Demand at the front door remains high. In 2025/26, 8,769 contacts were received, an increase from 8,119 in 2024/25. The majority of these (6,373) were new contacts, indicating the continued increase of people seeking support. Health partners remain the primary source of referrals (40.8%), reflecting strong integration and shared responsibility for early identification.

Over the year we have put measures in place to strengthen the front-door of adult services to help improve the quality of the information, advice and assistance we provide when people contact us. We successfully recruited a small team of specialist IAA workers and have developed a bespoke training package to support the development of the role. The team works at the interface between community-based support and statutory assessment processes. Our aim is to provide clear and consistent advice to residents following clearly defined pathways both into and away from the service. IAA is a critical element in ensuring residents have the right support at the right time to reduce escalation and ensure that people aren't waiting unnecessarily for information / services they need. Having a specialist team in place provides greater insights into demand, trends and service gaps / potential service development. Once the service is established, we will undertake an evaluation of its impact and over the next year will be looking at how we can build on the benefits and skills of this specialist team.

In 2025/26, 3,912 people were supported in this way, an increase from 3,626 in the previous year, although the percentage of people supported through IAA remains consistent at around 45%.

Feedback from the adults' service user questionnaire indicates a decline in the proportion of people who felt they received the right information or advice when needed, falling from 78.0% in 2024/25 to 71.2% in 2025/26 [although this metric does not relate solely to people using front-door services]. We would like to see an uptick within 26/27.

Case Study

IAA

C contacted the service regarding concerns about Mother (J) not eating well and becoming anxious about aspects of personal care. What mattered to the family was that J could remain living at home and to avoid multiple people visiting the property. The priority was ensuring she received the right support rather than focusing on cost. The conversation focused on listening to the C's concerns and exploring strengths-based support options. A Carer's Assessment for C and a reablement assessment for J were discussed to identify support needs and maximise independence. Community-based opportunities were explored, including a local day centre, a village knit-and-natter group and informal support available through the local pub. C felt he could accompany J initially to help her build confidence in attending. To address concerns about personal care, information was provided about micro-carers, enabling J to choose a support worker she felt comfortable with. C was also signposted to the Carers Team for further advice and information.

Outcome: C felt reassured that there were flexible support options available which could help maintain J's independence. C agreed to consider the options and explore them further with his mother.

Case Study

Providing IAA

A daughter contacted Social Services concerned that her mother had been discharged from hospital without support following a broken arm and fractured clavicle. She felt care was needed immediately to keep her mother safe. Using a listen to understand approach, I explored both the daughter's concerns and her mother's strengths. Although unable to wash or dress her upper body due to her injuries, her mother could still mobilise independently and make herself drinks. This strengths-based discussion helped identify that a reablement intervention would be beneficial.

We agreed that the daughter would stay with her mother for two days while an assessment was arranged and reablement commenced. I also discussed future options, including micro-carers, assistive technology, and the potential charges associated with ongoing care should support still be needed after reablement.

A senior carer later visited and helped adapt the kitchen layout to make access to food and drinks easier. Following a short period of reablement, the daughter was able to return home and her mother regained her independence, with physiotherapy continuing once her cast was removed.

Reflections from the IAA worker: This case highlights the value of taking time to listen and understand a family's concerns. By focusing on strengths and resilience rather than deficits, families can feel reassured while ensuring the person's voice, choice and independence remain at the centre of decision-making. As an IAA worker we are an integral part of the service ensuring good information is shared and supporting good access to resources available both in the community and through formal support. A good conversation ensures the right support is provided at the right time with the best outcome for the person.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Front Door (Adults)					
AD/001a	The total number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year	8806	8085	8119	8769
AD/001b	The number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year which were new contacts	6437	5951	5945	6373
AD/002	The number of contacts for adults received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	3808	3635	3626	3912

Adults Questionnaire	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Actual
I have had the right information or advice when I needed it	75.1%	77.6%	78.0%	71.2%

Assessments

Undertaking assessments under the SSWBA is a key opportunity to talk to people about their wellbeing and what matters to them, as well as ensuring that they have the right information and advice to help them make informed choices about their care and support needs. We are making good use of quality assurance processes to support practitioners in their assessment practice and intend to develop that further this year. Our recent CIW assurance check recognized the improvements we have made in assessments but would like to develop this further through using assessments as an opportunity to better support understanding the people’s care and support needs over time and contingency planning.

The number of adult assessments completed has increased slightly in 2025/26 to 2,388, continuing an upward trend from 2,340 in the previous year. This reflects sustained demand at the front door and an ongoing focus on ensuring people’s needs are fully understood at the earliest stage.

With the changes that we have made in our IAA function and assessment pathways, together with on-going oversight and prioritization, we have continued to ensure that fewer people are waiting for an assessment. As at 31st March 2026 there were 73 people waiting for an assessment compared to 194 at the same point in 2024.

	2024	2025	2026
Number of people waiting for an SSWBA assessment	194	128	73

The outcome of assessments over the year indicates a higher proportion of individuals presenting with more complex needs. In 2025/26 just over half identified that needs could only be met through a care and support plan, representing a significant increase compared to just under a third in 2024/25. While this increase is partly attributable to our continued focus on improving data recording, it also reflects that people requiring assessments are more likely to require formal support.

Of the remaining assessment 467 individuals were supported through other means and 692 assessments identified no eligible needs. This correlates to the increased emphasis on strengths-based, outcome focused practice including pathways into community-based support and interventions that promote independence where it is safe to do so.

The total number of adults with a care and support plan has remained broadly stable this year.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Assessments (Adults)					
AD/004	The number of new assessments completed for adults during the year	2205	1929	2340	2388
AD/005	Of which:				
AD/005a	Needs were only able to be met with a care and support plan	671	486	689	1219
AD/005b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	583	482	557	467
AD/005c	There were no eligible needs to meet	553	573	522	692
AD/012a	The number of adults with a care and support plans at 31 March	1651	1580	1378	1368

REABLEMENT

The mainstay of prevention within adult services is reablement. A key objective within the service has been to increase access to reablement. Reablement supports good outcomes for people, helps people to regain independence after periods of ill-health or incapacity and allows people to remain in their own homes for longer. From an organisational perspective, reablement reduces the call on long-term domiciliary care, thereby helping to manage demand pressure across the system. This year we are looking to enhance and expand our reablement provision in Mardy Park, particularly for people who require intermediate care.

We have increased the capacity and number of people accessing reablement. We completed 445 packages of reablement in 2025/26 compared to 309 in 2024/25, demonstrating a sustained and proactive shift towards preventative support.

Outcomes from reablement remain strong. In 2025/26 53.3% of people had no ongoing need for support following reablement and a further 13.5% experienced a reduced need for support.

This year we have completed the re-design of the therapy led reablement pathway which is being successfully piloted in the Chepstow (South) Integrated Team. Senior carers now undertake functional assessments for people in their own environments, and we are supporting our in-house carers in developing skills in using reablement approaches. Because of the way that we now commission long-term care in the South, we can pass-port care requests directly to our providers once a reablement programme is completed. The system re-design is contributing to decreased waiting times for people and quicker access to a specialist service. Over the next year we want to recruit more reablement carers, continue to learn from the pilot, and achieve roll out across the other areas.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
AD/010	The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year	184	331	309	445
AD/011	Of which:				
AD/011a	Reduced the need for support	32	47	41	60
AD/011b	Maintained the need for the same level of support	35	74	69	74
AD/011c	Mitigated the need for support	106	183	172	237
AD/011d	Neither reduced, maintained nor mitigated the need for support	11	27	27	74
<i>Local</i>	<i>The percentage of packages of reablement completed during the year that mitigated the need for support</i>	<i>57.6%</i>	<i>55.3%</i>	<i>55.7%</i>	<i>53.3%</i>

Case Study

Reablement

M was in hospital for 3 months after having a fall which resulted in a fractured hip. M also suffers from a number of other health conditions, all affecting mobility and day to day living. Whilst in hospital, M sadly suffered some very close bereavements which caused a lot of emotional distress alongside managing the physical health conditions and loss of independence.

When M returned home, reablement was put in place with 4 calls daily to support with regaining independence in personal care and building his confidence and emotional wellbeing.

We worked together to identify goals that were important including returning to church and going out and socialising with friends again. We used a person-centred approach throughout and involved M in all decisions, taking time to listen and understand what was important rather than just focusing on tasks.

Equipment such as a shower seat was provided to help M feel safer and more confident, and we worked alongside other health professionals within the integrated team to encourage physio exercises to help with confidence and mobility.

We gradually encouraged M to take more responsibility with medication and together, found ways to help M remember his medication by linking prompts into daily routines. We gradually supported M to feel confident to manage catheter care independently too.

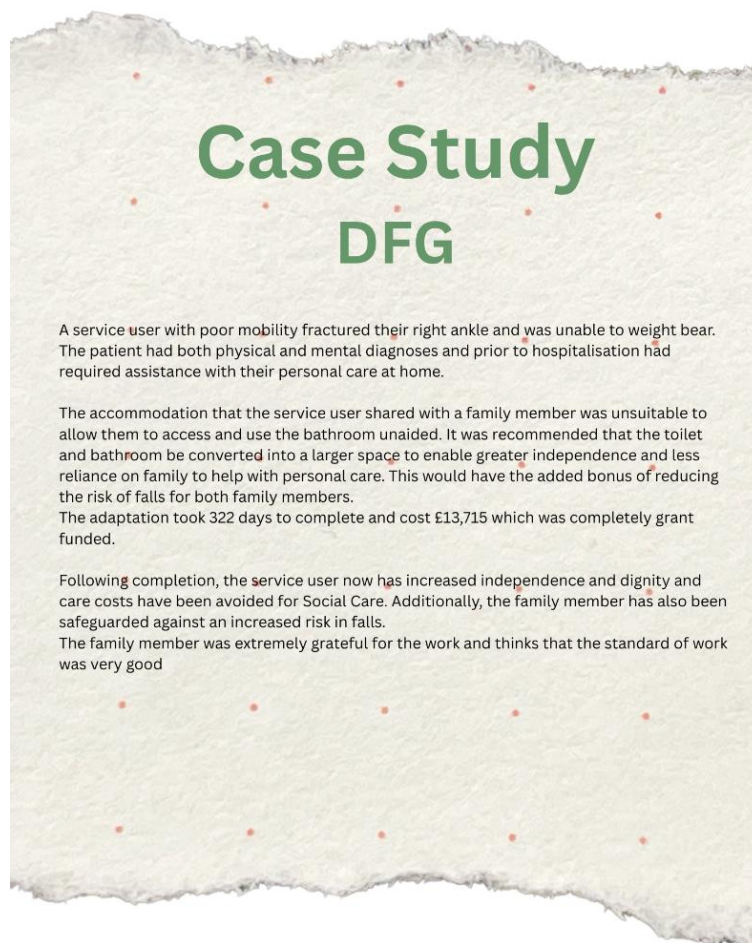
We supported M to rebuild confidence in the community through graduated physical support as well as plenty of reassurance and encouragement.

Over the course of reablement, M made real progress and became much more confident in managing daily tasks independently including personal care, medical needs and meal preparation. More importantly M regained confidence in going out, returned to church services and began socialising with friends again, which had a positive impact on his emotional wellbeing. Support was gradually reduced from 4 calls a day, to fewer calls during the week, before reablement ended successfully with M managing independently at home with no long-term care needs.

Assistive Technology and Home Adaptations

Assistive technology and housing adaptations are becoming increasingly central to our preventative approach, helping people to achieve what matters most to them by improving wellbeing outcomes, maximising independence, and reducing or delaying the need for ongoing care and support, significantly improve people's quality of life and sense of agency and control. By providing timely, proportionate interventions, we can support people to live safely and independently in their own homes for longer. Our ambition is to continue strengthening the integration of housing services within the wider preventative offer, while developing a deeper understanding of where housing solutions and assistive technology can deliver the greatest benefit for individuals, communities, and the organisation, ensuring resources are targeted where they have the most positive impact.

The Assistive Tech service now supports 1085 clients - an increase of 89 from last year, with an upward trend. There were 595 referrals received from both professionals (237) and people themselves (358) showing that more people are becoming aware of the benefits of using assistive technology. The main call remains for pendant lifelines and telecare. Regarding housing adaptations 203 referrals were received and 110 adaptations were completed.





Carers

Supporting carers is a key element of prevention and building community resilience. We want to ensure that carers have access to timely information, support and resources to sustain their caring role. Carer contacts increased significantly from 288 in 2024/25 to **448** in 2025/26, reflecting both the level of demand and aligning with our aim to improve earlier identification of carers across the service. We have raised the profile of carers and ensured that our new IAA workers have the knowledge and skills to undertake *what matters* conversations with carers. Consequently, we saw a substantial increase in the number of carers receiving advice and assistance, rising from 84 to **248**.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
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	351	352	288	448
CA/002	The number of contacts by adult carers received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided	128	129	84	248

The number of carers' assessments undertaken remains high at **288** in 2025/26, following a significant increase in the previous year. Of these, over half (156) resulted in a need for support, reflecting the increasing recognition of the needs of carers in their own right. In addition, 94 carers were supported through other means, demonstrating a flexible and preventative approach to meeting carers' needs. The number of carers awaiting a needs assessment has increased due to increased demand and reduced capacity due to a staff vacancy in the carers team.

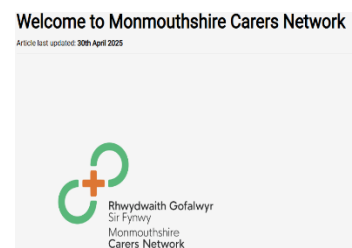
Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
CA/004	The total number of carers needs assessments for adults undertaken during the year	192	147	299	288
CA/005	Of which:				
CA/005a	Needs could be met with a carer's support plan or care and support plan	58	34	83	156
CA/005b	Needs were able to be met by any other means	63	24	30	94
CA/005c	There were no eligible needs to meet	27	44	40	36

Whilst we have made positive progress; we know that there remains a large number of people providing care to loved ones without accessing support. The nature of caring roles has become increasingly complex. There has been a rise in dual caring responsibilities, alongside carers managing their own health needs. Families can often reach points of crisis which may have been avoided if we had been able to support and plan earlier. We want to address 'hidden demand' and prioritise preventative care over reactive or crisis-led intervention, ensuring that early on carers are aware of what support is available.

Services for Carers

Feedback from carers and the Carers Strategy Group is informing improvements to information provision, including a redesigned website, updated carers handbook, and enhanced signposting to specialist organisations. 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 we are working collaboratively with parent carers and third sector organisations to develop a new guidance booklet aimed at supporting parents of children with Neurodiversity and a further resource to support parent carers of children with mental health needs, with particular emphasis on understanding relevant legislation and parental rights.

[Welcome to Monmouthshire Carers Network -
Monmouthshire](#)



Having good respite arrangements in place is the mainstay for many carers. For overnight respite we continue to use our in-house provision in Mardy Park and Severn View Parc as well as commissioning respite with providers, particularly for children with disabilities and adults with learning disabilities and

mental illness. Bridging the Gap provides flexible support for carers and has been used in lots of innovative and person-centred ways. This service is vulnerable because of its grant-funded nature, and we are currently advocating for a continuation of the funding.

Informal support and belonging to carers' networks can be extremely beneficial to help people develop connections and resilience. This year the numbers of carers registered with the carers team increased to **1,166** a further from 900 (23/24) and 1,100 in (24/25). The Carers' Service continues to hold events and activities for adult and young carers to support carers to stay connected. This year 161 young carers attended (over 7 events) and 402 adult carers attended (over 13 events). This approach reflects a commitment to working with carers as equal partners, offering support that is responsive to their needs and preferences.

Feedback from Events

Adult Carers New Year Lunch

"Thank you all for a lovely meal at Monmouthshire GC .This was first time and good to meet other people in similar situations to ourselves. This was good for my wife to dress up and go out and meet new people. Thank you all again."

Young Carers – Wake the Tiger Trip

X says it was amazing and she got to see new things. X enjoyed the socialising and having fun with everybody and is very grateful for Young Carers and the trips that they provide.

Porthcawl Seaside Coach Trip

Feedback from our carers

'Just a quick email to say thanks so much for today's carers day out to Porthcawl.

It was our first time there, we had a great time, lots to see and do, and look forward to visiting again either with the Carers Team or under our own steam'



Many thanks for organising such a lovely seaside event. It was fabulous and very much appreciated'.



3. Partnership and Integration

2025-26



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



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



Partnership and Integration

Children's

During 2025/26, partnership working within Children's Services underpinned the delivery of integrated care and support for children, young people and their families. Key partners include education, schools, health services, police and probation; CAFCASS, carers, neighbouring local authorities, care providers and voluntary sector organisations. Bringing partners together around the needs of children and families is fundamental to ensure joined-up approaches and achieving positive outcomes. Several agencies can be involved in a child's life, particularly where there are additional learning needs or safeguarding concerns - working collaboratively ensures services are coordinated and coherent, particularly from a family or child perspective.

In Monmouthshire, partnership working is shaped through the Children and Families Strategic Partnership, which sits within the Regional Partnership Board governance arrangements. The partnership provides opportunities to strengthen relationships at both strategic and operational levels; jointly understand population needs; and share resources. Over time the partnership has developed integrated services across the spectrum of need from universal provision, targeted early help, to highly specialist provision. Where this has worked well, partners have been able to agree shared priorities and outcomes while retaining flexibility to respond to local needs. Good examples of this include the suite of Edge of Care services. Equally, the partnership has enabled the commissioning of joint services in partnership with voluntary organisations – Plattform, the Family Intervention Team (FIT) and Skills for Living to enhance regional consistency and equality of resource.

At the end of the year, 627 children in Monmouthshire were supported by a care and support plan, an increase from 585 in the previous years, representing an increase of 125 children in 2 years. This growth reflects both rising demand and continued identification of need through multi-agency partnership working.

Integrated Working

Targeted family support is deeply embedded within the service founded on an integrated approach between therapists, psychologists, foster carers, family support practitioners and social workers. Integration is built on a shared value base around relationships, trauma informed approaches, being child-focused and strengths based. As far as possible parents, carers, children and young people are encouraged to be involved in care planning as equal partners. Our aim is to be open and transparent regarding the nature of service involvement as well as promoting individual choice and control. All 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 Mediation

The relationship between a parent and young person had broken down. Conflict in the home had escalated and there were concerns that the young person might not be able to remain living there. There were multiple pressures on the family. Both described feeling overwhelmed and stuck and were unable to see the other's perspective. The focus of the work was to try and reduce the level of conflict and create a safer, more manageable environment at home.

Because of the relationship and communication difficulties individual sessions were offered to explore what was sitting underneath the conflict. The young person was able to talk more openly about how alcohol use in the home affected her and the parent was supported to look at how her current stress, health concerns and caring responsibilities were impacting on her. We helped both identify patterns in how conflict escalated. Eventually joint sessions were reintroduced. Family therapy was brought in alongside the mediation work, so there was space to look at some of the longer-term and more complex dynamics, while mediation could stay focused on improving day-to-day communication.

Progress was far from linear, however, the family continued with the work and over time, things began to settle again.

Arguments still happen, but they are less intense and less likely to escalate in the same way as before. The young person has said she feels more understood, particularly around their emotional responses and past experiences. The parent has said they feel more supported and better able to manage the different pressures they are under. The risk of family breakdown has been reduced and both have continued to engage with the support being offered. There is more understanding between them, communication has improved, and there is a stronger sense that they can work through difficulties rather than feeling stuck in them.

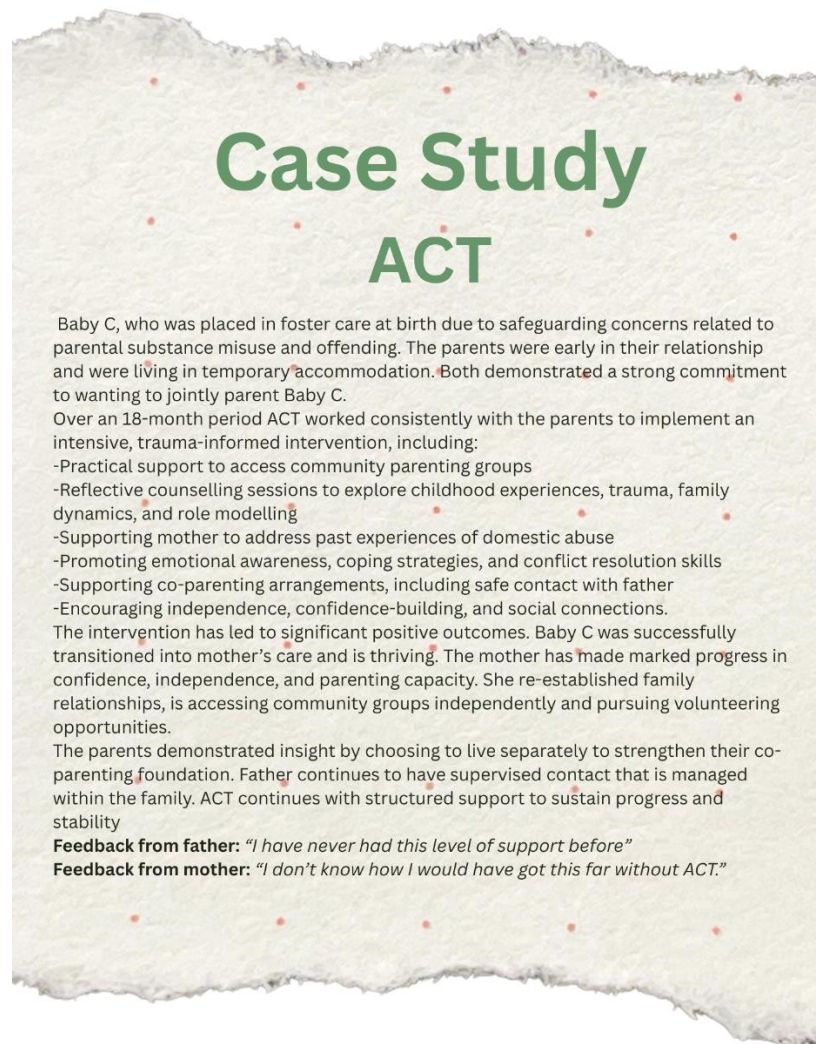
Parent Feedback: *"We still have disagreements, but they don't turn into arguments like before, which is an improvement."*

Young Person Feedback: *"I feel listened to. It's easier to talk and things don't feel as bad at home anymore."*

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 or a court process; if a child needs additional support because of their disability or if a child is looked after.

Some of our more intensive support services are aimed at diverting children away from care and helping children safely exit care and return to their families and communities. This will almost always require multi-agency involvement and careful care planning and risk management to ensure that the right outcome is achieved.

This year we supported **69.3%** 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. Supporting children to live safely within their homes and communities remains the central objective of the service.



An Effective Partnership

On the 1st April 2020, the Families Together service was developed by Monmouthshire County Council, in partnership with Barnardos, to work with families where children are on care orders placed with family members (their parents, or another family member). This service delivers bespoke, targeted support to families in line with a child's care plan. The team quickly evolved to include Monmouthshire's SGO support service. This included undertaking assessments for the purposes of supporting applications to Court to prevent or discharge Care Orders and providing on-going SGO and networking opportunities for Special Guardians. The team comprises of social workers and support workers with close access to psychology, play therapy and family therapy. Over time, the team has helped the service to successfully reduce the numbers of children looked after placed with parents; increase the number of children living

successfully with Special Guardians rather than in foster care and supported a growing network of Special Guardians accessing informal and peer support. Special Guardianships allow children to remain within the families and communities without being children looked after or having an allocated social worker. This can help children feel an increased sense of belonging, security and stability. Families and carers like support being delivered through Barnardos rather than the statutory authority, particularly for families who may have previously been through court proceedings.

Case Study

Families Together

E had been living within a Special Guardianship arrangement (SGO) for 7 years together with their sibling due to previous concerns over parental substance misuse and neglect. E was referred to children's services because of concerns about her safety and the stability of her SGO placement. E's Special Guardian was becoming increasingly concerned over E's truancy and behaviour in school. Support was required to prevent the breakdown of the SGO.

E was supported by Family's Together to access a course on how to keep safe in relationships and online. The team helped E explore their life experiences, wishes and feelings.

Weekly sessions were undertaken in partnership with the school to complete direct work.

- A Pastoral Support Plan was created and put in place.
- Self-harm coping strategies were developed.
- Arrangements were made to allow E to move classes where she felt more connected and supported.

E has made progress in attending lessons particularly those in Math and Science. The Pastoral Support Plan is still active and has helped to improve the Special Guardians confidence. E now has the support and tools in place needed to succeed at school and to feel like their voice can be heard. This intervention has been key in improving E's behaviour and life choices to avoid the breakdown of the Special Guardianship Order.

Working with Risk in the Community

Supporting more children to remain at home, together with challenges in finding appropriate placements for children, has meant that the service is working with increased levels of risk. In response, this year we have further developed the 'Safe and Well Service' providing intensive supervision and support to families, including overnight and out-of-hours, in situations where risks are not yet fully assessed or mitigated. The increasing numbers of children being referred into this service is indicative of some of the deep-rooted challenges encountered within our work with families. Whilst figures are holding steady this year, there are clear indicators that complexity and demand within families and communities is not receding.

Family support services rely heavily on grant funding which makes them vulnerable to service continuity and an area of financial risk for the service. This year, the council was able to mitigate a reduction in grant funding to ensure that services were maintained at the same level. However, uncertainty over funding and the potential impact of this on service continuity remains an area of risk for the service. Without effective family support, less children could be supported safely at home, and more children would need to come into care, resulting in poorer outcomes and considerably increased costs for the council.

REVIEWS

Timely reviews are critical in ensuring that care remains appropriate, responsive, and effective. In 2025/26, strong performance was maintained in key statutory areas. 100% of looked after children reviews were completed within statutory timescales, maintaining high performance of recent years. 91.8% of child protection reviews were completed on time, maintaining improved performance of recent years, although lower than last year. Performance has improved over recent years for reviews of children in need of care and support. The number of reviews undertaken has increased and 85.2% of reviews were completed within statutory timescales.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Plans (Children)					
CH/015a	The number of children with a care and support plan at 31st March	542	502	585	627
Local	<i>The percentage of children supported to remain living within their family</i>	61.1%	60.2%	67.5%	69.3%
CH/016	The total number of children with a care and support plan where needs are met through a Direct Payment at 31st March	51	55	57	61
CA/017b	The number of children or young people with a care and support plan who also have carer responsibilities	32	28	35	20
Local	<i>The percentage of reviews due during the year that were completed within statutory timescales, which were:</i>				

/Local	Child protection reviews	84.0%	81.7%	97.9%	91.8%
Local	Looked after reviews (including pathway plan reviews and pre-adoption reviews)	99.0%	99.6%	100.0%	100.0%
Local	Reviews of children in need of care and support (including children supported by a direct payment)	65.4%	77.1%	88.7%	85.2%

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, Public Health and Adult Social Care under the Local Authority. The County's Neighborhood Care Networks are represented via the 2 GP leads (north and south) and the voluntary sector has a strong presence represented through GAVO.

At a strategic level the partnership works from 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.

Place-Based Care

Last year, a central objective for the partnership was to focus on designing and implementing services aligned with Place Based Care. Place based care is described as '*organising health, social care, wellbeing services, community resources and voluntary sector support around the needs of a specific population living in a defined place, rather than around organisational boundaries*'.

The main principles include:

- Building resilient and connected communities
- Focusing on prevention and earlier intervention
- Reducing health inequalities
- Creating effective multidisciplinary teams
- Providing care closer to home
- Supporting a Home First approach
- Breaking down organisational barriers between health, social care and communities.

Place Based Care seeks to provide residents with enhanced community-based services which are increasingly focused on holistic well-being outcomes and prevention, moving away from the pull into hospitals.

The first tier of Place Based Care builds on the established work of the Integrated Wellbeing Networks and is well aligned with Monmouthshire's Living Well strategy and more latterly Resilient Communities work.

Working model for Place Based Care (Health)

Partnership working with ABuHB – 'Place Based Care'



As part of implementing Place Based Care this year, we want to focus our efforts on improving outcomes for people, particularly those who face additional social, physical or economic barriers by achieving:

- Better join up within community connector roles and IAA functions
- Easier access to information about community case wellbeing services
- Integrated proactive reviews for high-risk patients
- Targeted community conversations designed around individuals
- Enhanced pathways into community-based support following reablement
- Improved evidence of return on investment in respect of preventative funding to support future decision making.

Community Conversations

In 25/26 we wanted to ensure that community conversations structured around the wellbeing goals of individuals were fully fledged across north and central teams. We undertook an initial review across the locality areas of Abergavenny, Chepstow, Monmouth and Usk, with the aim of identifying strengths, opportunities for improvement, and areas where greater consistency could be achieved. The review found strong partnership engagement across all localities, with forums providing a valued space for networking, information sharing, community intelligence and early intervention. Whilst each locality has evolved to meet local needs, there is now an opportunity to establish a clearer countywide purpose, shared operating principles and proportionate monitoring arrangements, whilst retaining the flexibility that makes local models effective. Over the next year we want to develop the resource so that we can strengthen the links between community connectors, community conversations and our IAA functions such that will allow us to provide targeted support aligned with the objectives of the Living Well Strategy. We remain committed to Community Conversations as central to promote well-being and resilience, helping people connect with community-based activities that prevent, delay, or reduce the need for formal care.

HOSPITAL DISCHARGE

This year the Integrated Partnership has continued to build on previous learning to support timely hospital discharge. Weekly multi-disciplinary meetings are held to identify and address delays, supporting a coordinated response across the system. While pressures in the hospital system remain, discharge delays stabilised during 2025/26, reflecting improvements in joint working and integrated practice.

Our performance is closely monitored and measured on the basis of the number of delays (people) and the total number of days delayed (length of stay). The number of patients awaiting discharge varies during the year. Throughout 2025/26 our performance demonstrated that the number of Monmouthshire residents delaying in hospital ranged from **34 to 53 per month** (compared to 49 to 63 per month last year). At year end March 2026 it had reduced to **35** (41 in 2025) patients, **15** (26 in 2025) of whom were awaiting discharge for social care reasons. More significantly, at year end the total number of bed days taken up with medically fit Monmouthshire residents had reduced from its highest at **1179** in March 2025 (41 people delayed) to **924** (35 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.

Supporting hospital system flow and ensuring well-coordinated, timely discharges for people is now felt as an all-year-round pressure, albeit exacerbated during at spike periods predominantly associated with adverse weather conditions, viral outbreaks or staffing challenges. Despite the challenges the teams remain committed to maintaining effective working relationships, building good practice and a culture of shared learning, so that improved outcomes for people leaving hospital can be achieved.

Aligned to hospital discharge, this year saw the expansion of 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. There is now better consistency and equity of the provision over all parts of the County. We will continue to monitor the impact of this development over the next year.

Care and Support Plans

We continue to provide care and support to those who need it in the County. We supported 1,368 adults with a care and support plan in the last year. While the overall number of adults we support has reduced, we have seen a notable increase in the complexity of individuals' needs, requiring more coordinated, multi-agency involvement to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Care and Support Plans (Adults)					
AD/012a	The number of adults with a care and support plans at 31 March	1651	1580	1378	1368
Care and Support Plans (Carers)					
CA/008a	The number of adult carers with a support plan at 31 March	86	70	32	34
CA/008b	The number of adults with a care and support plan who also have carer responsibilities	50	50	30	25

Provision of Services

We want to ensure care and support is available for adults who require it without unnecessary delay. We support adults via a range of services and interventions including support with independent living, access to specialist / bespoke support, reablement, family support, personal care at home, assistive technology, overnight and day respite and residential care as well as support to access to a range of community-based organisations. Broadly speaking, following assessments we are able to provide care and support to adults and carers without undue delays, although this is not the case for all services.

Residential Care

The number of adults receiving residential care has increased from 317 in March 2024 to 369 in March 2026. This is in line with national trends and is contributed to by an ageing population and increasing complexity of need, requiring more intensive support. On the whole when placements are required they are available, although choice can be limited. The care people require in residential placements is increasingly more intensive because people are being supported to remain in their own homes for longer. There is an emerging gap in care for people living with later stages of dementia or more complex medical conditions.

As well as with our beautiful care home Severn View Parc, we work closely with residential care providers to ensure the delivery of good quality care. We set our fees to ensure external providers pay the Real Living Wage. Within the next couple of years we would like to undertake a review of our residential commissioning needs.

Domiciliary Care

As numbers of residential placements have increased, the number of adults receiving **home care** has reduced from 636 in March 2023 to **452** in March 2026. This partly reflects changes in assessment practice and the increased use of reablement and preventative approaches along with a range of other factors that influence care needs.

We have increased capacity across home care and significantly reduced the number of unmet care hours from 804 hours per week in March 2023 to an average of around 271 hours a week over the last year. This means that over the year, on average, we were able to fulfill 96.4% of the domiciliary care

hours needed. We also reduced the number of people who needed to wait longer than 30 days for their care at home to commence. Improving access to care at home is vital in enabling people to remain living in or returning to their own home.

The Domiciliary Care Commission Strategy

Last year we committing to taking forward the Domiciliary Care Commissioning Strategy that had been approved by Cabinet in May 2024. This remained a key operational priority during 2025/26. During the year we completed the first phase of delivery in the South of the county (including Chepstow, Caldicot and surrounds). The South was chosen first as this area experienced greater difficulties in securing domiciliary care capacity, particularly into more rural parts, and a higher reliance on a limited number of higher-cost providers. We conducted an in-depth procurement exercise to introduce 3 new block contracts over a 10-year period with the successful bidders. We revised the process for (limited) spot purchasing and strengthened brokerage to align with the block contract approach.

These changes were designed to respond to the market conditions in the South, create a more sustainable and resilient domiciliary care market, improved job security for the workforce, improved value for money and the opportunity to strengthen partnership working with providers.

Implementation of the new contracts took place in August 2025. The implementation process was not without challenge. Managing the transition to new contractual arrangements required careful engagement with providers, workforce considerations and detailed planning to ensure continuity of care for people receiving support. Some people felt concerned about the changes and were worried about establishing relationships with a new provider. A year on, things are settled.

Despite these challenges, the new commissioning arrangements have enabled a clearer distinction between the roles of in-house services and commissioned provision. We have increasingly been able to utilise our in-house workforce to provide specialist reablement support. At the same time, our provider partners have been better positioned to take on long-term care packages through the new contractual arrangements. This more effective balance of provision is supporting our strengths-based (reablement) approach to care. By ensuring that specialist reablement capacity is available to support people in maximising their independence we have been able to consistently determine the most appropriate long-term care package aligned with individual outcomes. This has helped to appropriately control how long-term care is allocated, reducing delays and increasing sustainability of services in the face of rising population need. By aligning commissioning arrangements with place-based care principles and making better use of both in-house and independent sector capacity, we are improving access to care at home services and creating a stronger foundation to meet future demand for support across Monmouthshire.

Our aim for 2026/27 is to undertake a review of the process in order to inform how we approach implementation in the north and central areas of the county.

REVIEWS

We aim to ensure that care remains appropriate and responsive by being regularly reviewed. In 2025/26, 73.1% of adult care and support plans due for review were completed, an improvement on previous years.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Provision of Services and Reviews					
AD/012a	The number of adults with a care and support plans at 31 March	1651	1580	1378	1368
AD/016	The number of care and support plans for adults that were due to be reviewed during the year	1717	1580	1296	1261
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	987	856	914	922
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>	57.5%	54.2%	70.5%	73.1%
AD/030	The total volume of services provided on 31 March	1380	1368	1163	1137

Feedback from people receiving care highlights generally positive experiences, with 83% of adults reporting they were happy with their care and support in 2025/26.

Adults Questionnaire	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Actual
I am happy with the care and support I have had	83.5%	84.6%	84.7%	83.0%
The service I get is reliable and I'm told about any changes in good time	79.1%	78.4%	73.5%	76.8%
I usually get assistance from the same staff	71.3%	70.3%	65.3%	63.8%
Do you think that the care and support you get still meet your needs?	87.0%	89.4%	86.4%	90.1%

4. Wellbeing

2025-26



a. “People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other types of harm”



b. “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”

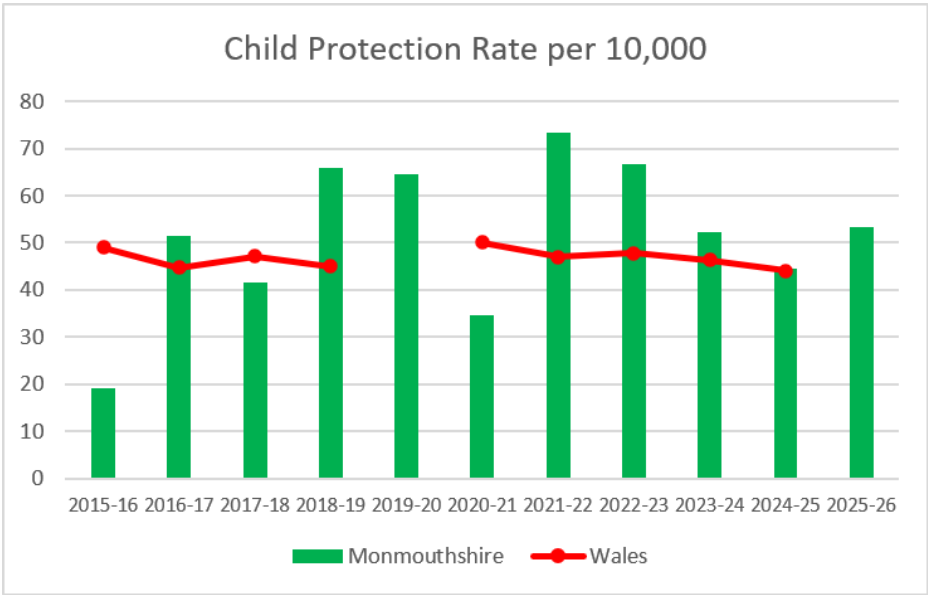


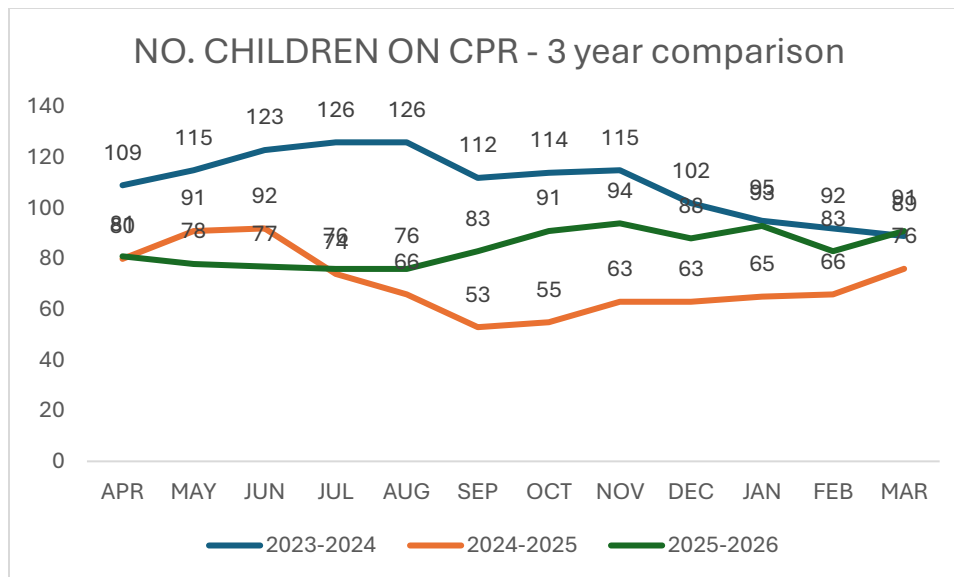
Wellbeing

Children’s

During 2025/26, multi-agency safeguarding arrangements have continued to support the protection of children through coordinated and timely interventions. There were 672 Section 47 enquiries undertaken during the year, a slight reduction from 2024/25, correlating with a continued decrease in overall contacts to children’s services and reflective of the increased emphasis on promoting strength-based practice and active risk management from first point of contact.

The number of cases progressing to an initial multi-agency child protection conference has increased to 136 in 2025/26. A child protection conference is only convened in situations where initial assessments indicate that a child is at on-going risk of significant harm. The increase in numbers of conferences is an indicator that proportionately more families with complex needs are becoming known to the service. The number of children on the child protection register at the end of the year was 91. Over the year the numbers were generally higher than the year before, although registration numbers do fluctuate. The rate of 53 children on the child protection register per 10,000 child population in Monmouthshire is higher than the most recently published Welsh rate from the previous year, 2024/25 (44).





Last year (2024/25) we implemented some practice improvement work related to the timeliness of statutory requirements for children on the child protection register. Our aim this year was to maintain the improved compliance that we had achieved.

Under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, Statutory visits are undertaken to ensure that all children on the child protection register are seen as frequently as required to monitor risk and progress plans effectively. During 2025/26 97.0% of required visits were completed and 78.7% were completed within timescales, showing a slight reduction from 81.4% in the previous year. Statutory compliance related to the timeliness of core groups (multi-agency planning meetings for children on the child protection register) has, however, continued to improve. A total of 125 initial core group meetings held during the year 120 (94.5%) were held within statutory timescales.

Over the year 130 children were registered and 118 Children were deregistered from the child protection register. Of these 118 children, 29 were de-registered because they became Children Looked After indicating that the risks had escalated during the period of registration. Conversely, the other 89 children were de-registered because the risks had been reduced and the child was no longer deemed to be at risk of significant harm. This shows that the majority of families are able to engage with the support provided and that the support is effective. Many families will continue to work with the services on a care and support plan following a period of registration to help ensure that the changes made are sustainable.

The average length of time children remain on the child protection register has reduced to 229 days, indicating more timely progression through plans, whether to step down or exit from statutory intervention. However, the rate of re-registration has increased to 6.2% from 4.7% the year before, suggesting that, for a small number of children, risks may re-emerge after plans end. This highlights the importance of effective step-down arrangements and continued support through preventative and community-based support.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Safeguarding Children					
CH/021	The number of Strategy Meetings held during the year that progressed to Section 47 enquiries	641	729	697	672
CH/022	The total number of Section 47 enquiries completed during the year that progressed to Initial Child Protection Conference	145	153	116	136
<i>Local</i>	<i>The percentage of initial child protection conferences held during the collection year that were held within statutory timescales</i>	79.3%	79.7%	83.6%	91.9%
CH/026a	The total number of children on the child protection register at 31 st March	113	89	76	91
CH/027	The total number of initial core group meetings held during the year	127	134	103	125
CH/028	The total number of initial core group meetings held during the year that were held within statutory timescales	112	120	98	120
<i>Local</i>	<i>The percentage of initial core group meetings due during the year that were held within statutory timescales</i>	86.8%	87.6%	92.5%	94.5%
CH/029	The total number of visits to children placed on the child protection register that were due during the year	2566	2533	1940	2428
<i>Local</i>	<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%	97.0%
<i>Local</i>	<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>	37.5%	63.6%	81.4%	78.7%
<i>Local</i>	<i>The percentage of re-registrations of children on local authority Child Protection Registers (CPR)</i>	4.7%	0.7%	4.7%	6.2%
<i>Local</i>	The average length of time for all children who were on the CPR during the year	263	283	255	229

A period of child protection triggers intensive family support work and monitoring 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.

Case Study

ACT

A was pregnant with her partner, D. A child protection assessment highlighted a number of safeguarding concerns and following a multi-agency conference, it was determined that the baby would be placed on the Child Protection Register.

Family Support, through the Achieving Change Together (ACT) service, was commissioned to provide intensive support to the family. The intervention focused on strengthening parenting capacity, building protective factors, and reducing risk. ACT worked with the family over an 18 month period. Initially, engagement was low, with both parents expressing distrust of services, so early work focused on developing rapport and building a trusting relationship.

The intervention went on to include guidance on child development, bonding, and navigating key stages of baby's development. Targeted programmes included Circle of Security, alongside sessions exploring healthy relationships, emotional wellbeing, and communication. A and D were supporting to develop practical skills in maintaining the home, managing finances and establishing routines. Both parents were encouraged and supported to attend local baby groups independently, helping them build confidence, strengthen social connections, and reduce isolation.

The intervention resulted in significant positive change. Both parents demonstrated improved parenting capacity, and a greater understanding of their child's developmental and emotional needs. A developed stronger insight into the impact of her past experiences and D made important progress towards establishing wellbeing goals around gaining employment.

Most importantly, the level of risk reduced substantially. Case conference determined that risks had reduced sufficiently for de-registration, with the child remaining safely in the care of both parents. The parents themselves recognised the positive impact of the support they had received and expressed pride in the progress they had made, along with optimism for their future as a family.

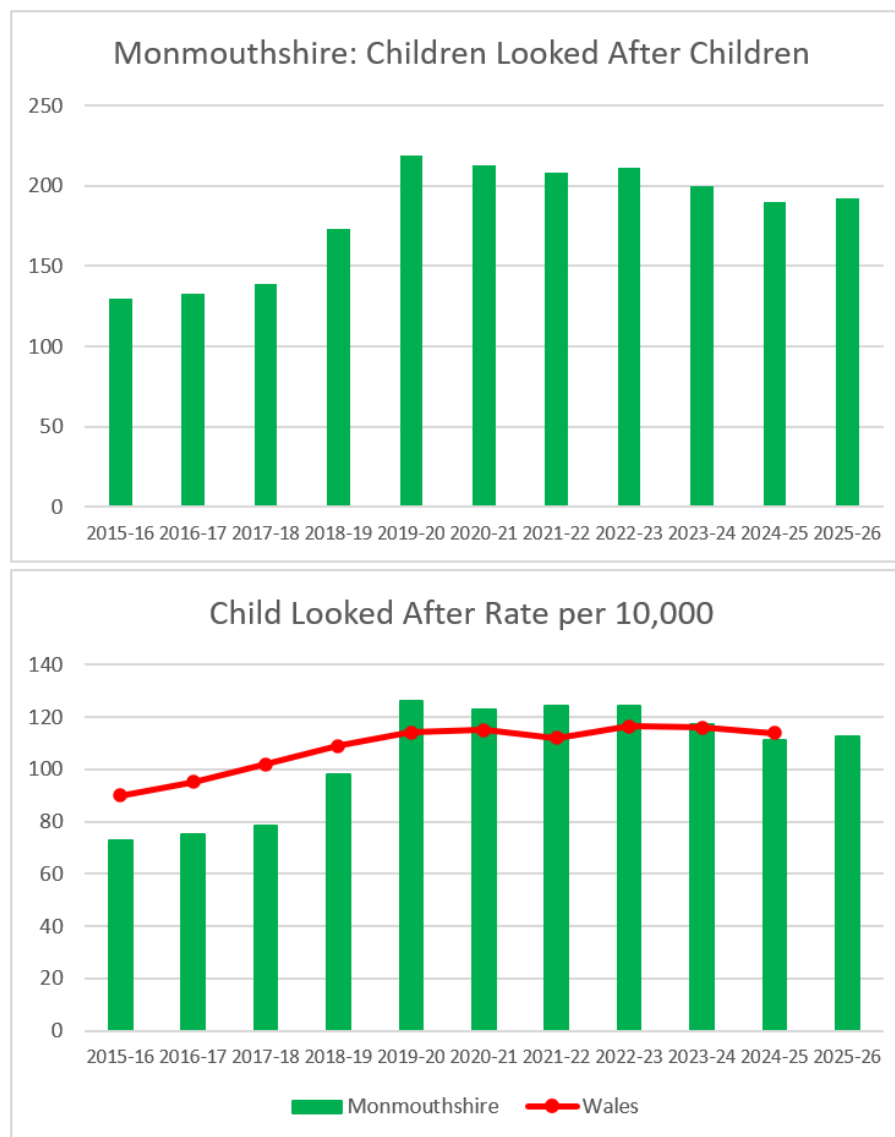
Children Looked After

Some children need to come into the care of the Local Authority to ensure their safety. We always look to place with family first. If this is not possible a looked after placement is sought via fostering or residential care, depending on the needs of the child and placement availability.

During 2025/26, we have continued to work in partnership to provide stable, high-quality care for children who are looked after, while strengthening local provision and improving outcomes for care-experienced young people.

We have achieved stability in the number of children looked after, with a gradual reduction in recent years. As at 31 March 2026, Monmouthshire was supporting 192 children looked after, 16 of whom were Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. The rate of 112 per 10,000 child population is below the most recently published Welsh rate (114, 2024/25). Although the numbers of children looked after have held steady, the service is aware that the apparent increase in families with complex needs may well see a future rise in the numbers of children who need to be looked after. We will continue to monitor this

situation and work with others to ensure that we are bolstering the availability and effectiveness of early help and preventative support.



Entrants and Leavers

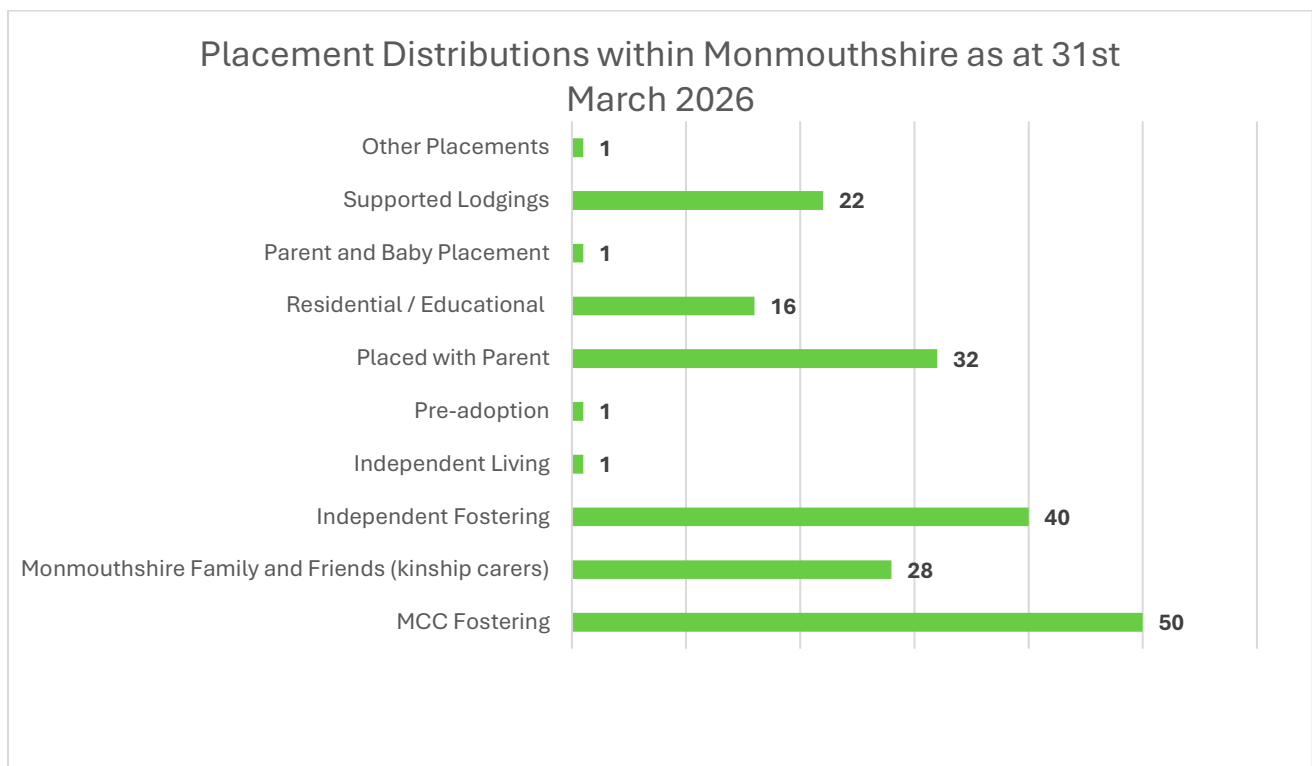
During the year 55 children entered care and 56 children ceased care. Of these 56 children, 15 left care by virtue of turning 18, although 3 of these young people transitioned to ‘When I’m Ready’ placements. When I’m Ready placements provide a mechanism for care leavers to remain with their previous foster carers beyond their 18th birthday which ensures continuity of care and allows more time to develop independence. The other 41 children left care because they were able to return safely to parental care (20), transition to Special Guardianships (15), or to be legally adopted (6). These figures reflect the effectiveness of care planning and family support. This commitment to providing integrated family support within the service has greatly contributed to being able to stabilise the numbers of children being looked after by the Local Authority.

Reason for Leaving Care	Number of Children
When I'm Ready	3
Adopted	6
Returned home to live with parents	20
SGO	15
Ceased for other reason	12

Children's Placements

We have continued to work in partnership to provide stable, high-quality care for children who are looked after, strengthening local provision and improving outcomes for care-experienced young people.

The distribution graph of where children are placed is gradually changing in keeping with our strategic intentions.



Placement Types	31.03.22	31.03.23	31.03.24	31.03.25	31.03.26
MCC Fostering	46	43	40	46	50
Monmouthshire Family and Friends (kinship carers)	38	46	34	22	28
Independent Fostering	55	48	46	48	40
Independent Living	0	0	0	0	1
Pre-adoption	7	5	4	4	1
Placed with Parent	40	36	32	29	32
Residential / Educational	15	18	21	17	16
Parent and Baby Placement	1	1	0	3	1
Secure Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Child in Hospital	0	0	1	0	0
Supported Lodgings	4	9	16	17	22
Other Placements	2	5	6	4	1
Total	208	211	200	190	192

Placement Development Strategy

In April 2026 the new Health & Social Care Act comes into effect. The Act will require Local Authorities to set out placement sufficiency strategies in line with the transition to an entirely ‘not-for-profit’ landscape by 2030. The new legislation has contributed to increased uncertainty with placement providers and an overall shortage of both foster and residential placements. Shortage of placements, lack of choice and local availability is having an on-going impact on the service and represents an on-going risk into next year both financially (because of the increasing costs of placements) and in respect of being able to achieve best outcomes for children. At year end, 6 children were placed within an in-house registered residential children’s home, and 5 young people were placed within an in-house 16+ Supported Accommodation provision. We expect to see these numbers increase next year and are working hard to develop sufficient in-house provision.

Foster Carer Recruitment and Retention

Significant efforts have been made in recent years to increase provision of in-house foster care to enable Monmouthshire children to remain close to the people and places that matter to them. Increased investment in fostering fees, allowances and subsidies implemented in April 2025 resulted in a significant increase in the number of enquiries into becoming a foster carer for Monmouthshire and in 2025-2026 the Placement and Support Team met or exceeded the targets set for enquiries, initial home visits and foster carer approvals.

During 2025/26 the recruitment team undertook 137 recruitment events during the year including attendance at events like the Usk Show, community events, information stands across the county, colleague engagement events and other promotional activities.

Whilst enquiries have increased and the number of initial home visits has fluctuated, approvals have remained stable at the highest level achieved by the service, with 10 new fostering families joining our fostering community in 2025/26.

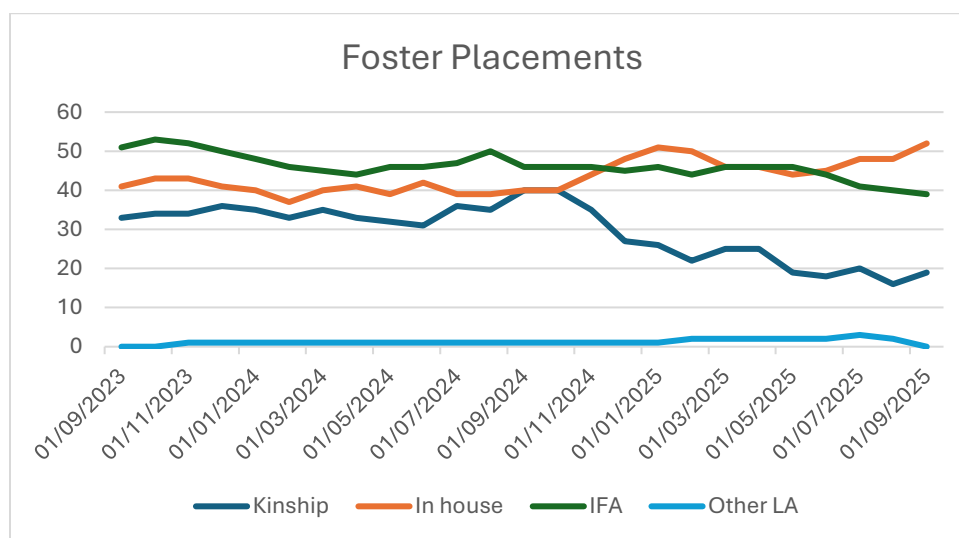
	2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Enquiries	75	53	84	75	92	96	80	138
Initial Home Visits	25	20	28	13	31	17	27	38
Approvals	9	1	10	7	11	10	10	10

Over the past six years there have been 23 foster carer de-registrations. 26% were due to retirement showing the impact of an aging foster carer population, however 26% left fostering because it did not meet their expectations showing the importance of preparing potential foster carers well during assessment and supporting them appropriately once they are approved.

Foster Carer Support

We have continued to seek ways to improve the support provided to foster carers. 2025/26 saw 23 informal support groups run by the team as well as 6 formal support and information sessions. We held our annual foster carer appreciation event in June to celebrate our foster carers, as well as social events across the year to enable fostering households and the children they care for to come together and socialise. Five consultation events were held across the county to allow foster carers to raise any concerns or issues they had directly with the Head of Service and Service Managers. Although there is always more to do, foster carers have told us that they are getting better support and recognition from the local authority. This improved sense of partnership has allowed us to maximise placements with our in-house carers.

At the end of 2025/26 there were 117 children living in foster care. Of these 65.8% were either living with kinship foster carers (27) or MCC in-house foster carers (50) and 34% (40) were living with Independent Fostering Agency foster carers. The placement distribution graph (above) shows there are more children placed with our in-house foster carers than children who are fostered through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). This is a significant achievement for the service and is reflective of the efforts to improve both financial and non-financial support we provide to in-house carers.



Nevertheless, we continue to face challenges recruiting and retaining sufficient foster carers, a challenge seen across Wales and the rest of the UK. It is unlikely that the total number of Local Authority foster carers will have increased sufficiently to meet our needs in the future, particularly in light of the new legislation.

Residential Development

Although we have encountered some delays, we are making progress with developing our own residential and 16+ supported accommodation provision. This is helping to address the shortage of suitable placements, particularly for children with more complex needs or those unable to live in foster care. Developing our own in-house placements is securing better outcomes for children by helping them remain close to their homes and communities and improving overall financial sustainability for the Council (because of the cost of external provision).

As at the end of March 2026, two projects have been completed, one project is awaiting registration through Care Inspectorate Wales and a further two projects are in progress. Our goal is to complete these projects within the next financial year.

Following the successful opening of Ty Castell in November 2024, July 2025 saw the opening of our first children's residential home, Ty Tudur. Following purchase, the property was re-designed to create a warm, welcoming, and family orientated environment where young people could feel safe, cared for, and supported. Considerable time and effort went into establishing and training the workforce, as well as matching and planning the transition arrangements. The transition plan was personalised to each child dependent on their individual needs and the children were encouraged to choose their own bedroom design and décor. The team provided information about themselves and the home in a very child-focused way.



The children who moved into Ty Tudur were returning to Monmouthshire after having been placed elsewhere. The transition required a carefully managed and multi-agency approach.

Ty Tudur is now providing placements for 4 children. Although it is early days the home feels very much integrated into the local neighbourhood. The children are well-settled, each having an allocated key worker and their own individual goals and weekly timetable aligned to their overall care plan.

Case Study

MyST

MyST provides multi-agency interventions to support children maintain stable placements. W was referred to MyST to support a transition from an out of county residential placement.

Concerns included aggressive behaviour and going missing. There was concern about how W would cope with the transition.

MyST co-facilitated joint visits with W's social worker in sensitively introduce a step-down placement change to the new residential home. Therapeutic support was provided, alongside direct work to familiarise W with their new community. W was successfully moved to the in-house residential home and is now closer to their school and family. This will help support their transition into independent living when the time comes.

MyST continued to work with W within the home in weekly sessions which reduced in frequency as they became more settled. W now remains settled in placement and there has been no escalation in behaviour or support needs that have required further intervention.

Developing our own in-house placements is securing better outcomes for children by helping them remain close to their homes and communities and improving overall financial sustainability for the Council (because of the cost of external provision).

Care Leavers

Young people leaving care in Monmouthshire continue to receive dedicated support as they move towards adulthood and independence. Care leavers are supported by Personal Advisors who work alongside them to develop and review their Pathway Plans, helping them access suitable accommodation, education, employment, training, health services and financial support. Within the cohort of care leavers in Monmouthshire, there are increasing numbers of young people who were previously looked after as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children. We ensure that these young people are provided with suitable accommodation that supports their individual needs. Over time personal advisors have developed the knowledge and skills required to support asylum seekers who are care leavers, for example with access to community groups, peer support and legal advice.

A care leavers peer support group provides opportunities for young people to build friendships, share experiences, develop confidence and strengthen independent living skills. The service remains committed to ensuring that care leavers have practical assistance, emotional support and positive relationships that help them to achieve their aspirations and make a successful transition to adult life.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Children Looked After and Care Leavers					
Children Looked After					
CH/039	The number of children looked after at 31 March	211	200	190	192
Local	<i>Number of Children Adopted during the Year</i>	10	7	8	6
Local	<i>Number of Children Leaving Care with Special Guardianship Orders during the Year</i>	9	23	25	15
Local	<i>Number of Generic Foster Carers at 31 March</i>	39	38	39	40
Local	<i>Percentage of Looked After Children placed with MCC generic or kinship foster carers at 31 March</i>	42.2%	36.5%	35.8%	40.6%
CH/043	The total number of children looked after at 31 March who have experienced three or more placements during the year	16	22	27	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)	17	11	18	8
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	5	8	8	5
CH/053	The total number of care experienced young people in categories 1 to 6 at the 31 March	73	77	88	104

Metric Number	Metric	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
CH/054	The total number of care leavers, as of 31 March, who have completed at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education, or training in the collection year, who were:						
CH/054a	Category 2	-	-	-	0	2	0
CH/054b	Category 3	-	-	-	21	37	34
CH/054c	Category 4	-	-	-	0	0	0
Local	<i>The percentage of care leavers, as of 31 March, who have completed at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education, or training in the collection year, who were:</i>				52.5%	73.6%	56.7%

Adults

Adults are referred into safeguarding where they are vulnerable or lack capacity, and where there are concerns about potential abuse, neglect or exploitation. Adult safeguarding has seen an increase in the

volume of reports received during the year. A total of 830 safeguarding reports were received relating to 595 adults, representing a continued upward trend from previous years. The majority of safeguarding concerns continue to be raised by care providers (353 reports), demonstrating the important role of providers as key partners in identifying and reporting safeguarding issues. The most common category of concern is neglect (470 reports) including self-neglect. The number of people where there are concerns in respect of financial abuse has notably increased.

The number of safeguarding reports progressing to formal enquiries has increased to 427, indicating that proportionate action is taken where risks are identified. Performance in completing enquiries has increased, with 92.3% completed within 7 working days, an improvement on previous years.

Over the year, there were 142 adults who were deemed to be an '*adult at risk*' where further action to protect was required. A further 210 adults were not deemed to be an '*at risk*' but had identified care and support needs.

In adult services, the capacity of the person to make their own decisions needs to be established in the first instance. The rights of individuals to make their own decisions and choices must be maintained, even if they are deemed by others to be unwise or potentially harmful. This is not always a straightforward process: where people are vulnerable, but have capacity, the team will often try to support in other ways and ensure they have the information available to access support and make informed decisions.

Case Study

Adults Safeguarding

P was an elderly woman living with Parkinsons.

A referral was received with concerns relating to domestic abuse from the primary carer (husband) as well as financial, psychological, emotional abuse and coercive control.

An urgent same day strategy discussion was held along and a joint visit with a social worker and police officer was undertaken. Despite visible facial injuries, P initially refused to engage.

The GP and a social worker completed a further home visit to assess P's capacity around decisions about her own health, wellbeing and care and support. Full capacity was determined.

A Care and Support Protection Plan was instigated and initially it was agreed that an OT would attend three times a week. This helped to build trust with an outside professional.

However, 2 further referrals came in resulting in an urgent joint visit with police to be made. Upon attendance at the house, the female victim had new injuries which she disclosed were sustained by her husband.

P is now in a place of safety where she is protected and can access daily care and support. Her Parkinsons medication has been stabilised and she now has an independent advocate and support from a specialist Older Adult domestic abuse advisor.

A Police investigation continues in the background but regardless of the outcome, P, an adult at risk, has been safeguarded against further abuse and neglect. She will continue to be supported by Professionals from a variety of specialisms, ensuring that her voice and sense of control remains paramount and that any on-going risk management can be accurately assessed and achieved.

In 2025/26, 80.6% of adults reported that they feel safe. Where individuals report feeling unsafe, feedback often relates to concerns about mobility and fear of falling, highlighting the importance of preventative services, adaptations in living arrangements and integrated support from health and community partners.

Metric Number	Metric	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Adult Safeguarding					
AS/001	Number of adults suspected of being at risk of abuse or neglect reported during the year	438	441	490	595
AD/020	The total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk received during the year	577	586	640	830
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	242	286	337	470
AD/022b	Physical abuse	229	210	225	200
AD/022c	Sexual abuse	27	41	38	46
AD/022d	Emotional or Psychological abuse	145	160	158	198
AD/022e	Financial abuse	114	102	87	141
AD/023	The total number of reports of an adult suspected of being at risk where it is necessary for enquires to be made	418	396	347	427
AD/024	The total number of enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse	361	334	300	394
<i>Local</i>	<i>The percentage of enquiries completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse</i>	<i>86.4%</i>	<i>84.3%</i>	<i>86.5%</i>	<i>92.3%</i>

Adults Questionnaire	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Actual
I feel safe	81.3%	80.6%	80.3%	80.6%

Other Information Section

Inspections and reviews

We work closely with our regulators and inspectors to quality-assure our activities as this is vital to ensuring improvement. Their feedback is valued, and we use their assessments to help us focus on the things we need to improve across the council.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

CIW carried out an improvement check of Monmouthshire County Council's adult services in April 2025, following up on 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 outcomes from the inspection were taken into People Scrutiny in July 2025 [Template \(with notes\) - Cabinet Report and exempt certificate](#) and the service developed a detailed set of actions, cross-referenced against existing business and project plans in the service.

Over the year improvement activity has focused on:

- Quality assurance processes, particularly to support practice development in outcome focused assessments and care plans
- Raising the profile of carers and better alignment between the carers service and the core teams
- Workforce engagement
- Recording and system development including the Welsh Active Offer
- Addressing system pressure, including waiting lists, access to services and hospital discharge
- Further development of service changes including START (reablement and IAA)
- Improved evidence of individual outcomes and impact.

CIW undertook a further Improvement Check in June 2026. At the time of writing the outcome letter has not been received. Verbal feedback indicated that, whilst there remained more to be done - particularly in outcome focused assessment, analysis and care planning - the inspectorate found clear evidence of improvement in key areas and that the overall direction of travel for the service was positive.

The updated assurance check will continue to inform service planning during 2026/27.

Audit Wales

In May 2025, Audit Wales undertook 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 in the report. The service has responded to this audit, working in partnership with health under Regional Partnership Board and with the benefit of some additional funding streams. The last two years have shown a significant improvement in performance related to hospital discharge.

Estyn

Estyn conducted an Inspection of education services in Monmouthshire County Council in November 2025. The report includes positive finds related to safeguarding and wider partnership working between social care, health and education. The report states '*Leaders promote a strong safeguarding culture. Schools receive timely and highly beneficial support and advice. In addition, the local authority is proactive in identifying emerging trends and risks in safeguarding. Officers respond effectively to these trends. These factors collectively enhance pupils' safety, well-being and learning experiences.*' The full report is available here [A report on education services in Monmouthshire County Council 2026](#)

Complaints and Representations

Children

46 complaints were received about Children's Services in the year ending 31 March 2026 compared with 28 in 2024-2025. NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) assisted a young person to raise their complaint about Children's Services and MIND Monmouthshire assisted a parent to raise their complaint. No complaints were linked to a protected characteristic.

Stage 1

45 stage 1 complaints were registered, 36 of which were resolved at Stage 1, the local resolution stage. 1 Stage 1 complaint from 2024-2025 was also started in this period.

Stage 1 complaints were received from parents concerning a lack of communication and failure to inform of outcomes. Parents and relatives complained about staff conduct, safeguarding issues; reduction of care packages and lack of support.

Stage 2

10 complaints were dealt with at the formal investigation stage. 9 complaints escalated from stage 1 and there was 1 complaint that proceeded directly to Stage 2.

2 Stage 2 complaints from 2024-2025 were also started in this period.

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 1 from NYAS Advocacy service who advocated on behalf of 1 young person.

Stage 2 Complaint	Concern	Outcome
1	Failure to take appropriate action to safeguard son	1 element partially upheld 3 elements not upheld 1 element upheld
2	Failings by social services - data protection, mishandling of sensitive information, and a disregard for privacy and rights	Investigation Discontinued
3	Issues with Planned placement move	3 elements partially upheld
4	Inaccurate presentation of information Inappropriate information contained in the Conference Report	1. Upheld / Not upheld / Not upheld 2. Not upheld /Upheld

	Lack of professionalism Lack of transparent practice Lack of awareness regarding forms of domestic abuse	3. Partially upheld 4. Upheld / Upheld 5. No finding 6. Not upheld 7. No finding 8. No other comment
5	Process and handling of matters, in respect of the lack of independent evidence to substantiate allegations, communication and report by workers	1. Upheld 2. Not upheld 3. Upheld 4. Not upheld, Inconclusive
6	Contact arrangements with child	1 element partially upheld 1 element upheld 3 elements not upheld
7	Issues regarding S47 investigation and communication regarding outcome Issues with Care and Support Plan Staff conduct	1. Upheld / Not upheld / Not upheld 2. Not upheld / Upheld 3. Partially upheld 4. Upheld / Upheld 5. No finding 6. Not upheld 7. No finding 8. No other comment
8	Concerns regarding social worker / Lack of support, service received, communication issues	1. Insufficient evidence to make a determination / Not upheld 2. Upheld 3. Not upheld 4. Not Considered 5. Upheld

9	Alleged repeated and serious failures by Monmouthshire Children's Services to protect confidentiality and safety as a victim of domestic abuse	13 elements – not upheld
10	Communication and staff conduct	5 elements not upheld 1 Not considered 1 N/A
11	Failure to provide contact information and to assist her daughter with diagnosis	3 elements partially Upheld 4 elements not Upheld

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 processes. Themes that arise include skills in working with conflicting parents; working on the accuracy and timeliness of reports and maintaining clear communication about the child protection framework / process.

Adults

36 complaints were received regarding Adult Services in the year ending 31 March 2026 compared with 22 in 2024-25. Llais Advocacy service assisted 3 people to raise their complaints about Adult Services.

Stage 1

34 complaints were received at Stage 1. 26 of the complaints were resolved at Stage 1 (the local resolution stage).

The topics of stage 1 complaints included issues with direct payments, staff conduct, reduction in services, issues with Dol's assessments, inaccurate and incomplete assessments; care and future planning arrangements for relatives, financial assessments.

Stage 2

8 complaints were dealt with via the formal investigation (stage 2). 7 complaints escalated from Stage 1 and there were 2 complaints that proceeded directly to Stage 2.

2 Stage 2 complaints from 2024-2025 were also investigated in this period.

Stage 2 Complaint	Concern	Outcome
1	Finance and Integrated Service – Issues regarding admission to care home and financial assessment	1: Not upheld /Upheld 2: Not upheld / Inconclusive /Not Upheld 3: Upheld 4: No comment 5: Upheld 6: Not Upheld 7: No Finding
2	Issues with social worker	3 elements - upheld
3	Changes to Provision of Service and changes to Care plan	Upheld
4	Alleged incompetence of workers, and feelings that concerns were allegedly dismissed	1 element not upheld 2 elements partially upheld
5	Alleged failure to meet Eligible Needs via Direct Payments	6 elements – not upheld
6	Dissatisfaction with Care home’s actions and decisions made	7 elements not upheld 1 Partially upheld
7	Care home placement and funding	1. Partially upheld 2. Not upheld
8	Dissatisfaction with handling of son's care and support	3 elements partially upheld 5 elements upheld

Within Adult social care, complaints are also becoming increasingly complicated. Consistent themes relate to the financial assessments and charging, and dissatisfaction with services that a provided or the outcomes of care and support assessments. Some of the complaints relate to breakdown in communication.

Other Sources of Information

Equality and Diversity

The council has a long-standing commitment to equality and diversity. Our fourth Strategic Equality Plan (2024 – 2028), 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 withing 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 second. 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 actions and themes within the Anti-Racist Wales work remains a key priority.

The Welsh Language

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and the accompanying Welsh Language Standards, place a legal duty on councils to treat Welsh and English equally, to promote the Welsh language, and to provide services to the public through the medium of Welsh. The Council's Welsh Language Strategy 2022–2027 sets out a clear vision for the development of the language in Monmouthshire, supported by a series of targets to be delivered over a five-year period. Annual monitoring reports are produced to assess progress against these commitments and demonstrate compliance with the Standards. These documents can be found [here](#).

The Welsh Language Officer plays a key role in supporting workforce planning within Social Care. Welsh language courses at all levels are promoted throughout the year, supported by a targeted campaign during June and July to encourage enrolment on courses commencing in September 2025. These courses typically involve approximately two hours of weekly learning over a 32-week period and are fully funded by the Welsh Language department. During the reporting year, 42 members of staff across the authority completed Welsh language courses, including 9 within the Social Care Directorate.

The Camau scheme, designed specifically for Social Care staff, also continues to be promoted. This is a self-study online course involving approximately 60 hours of independent learning, aimed at enabling staff to use Welsh in care settings. The range of Welsh language training has been further expanded during the year, including Welsh language awareness training hosted on the Thinqi learning platform. Staff also continue to have access to the Social Care Wales (SCW) Welsh Language Awareness course, which forms part of the Council's corporate induction programme.

The Welsh Language Officer and Equalities and Welsh Language Manager also contribute to the Council's corporate induction process. This includes a combination of pre-learning videos and in-person sessions, providing staff with an opportunity to ask questions and receive guidance. Topics covered include Welsh Language Awareness, the Welsh Language Standards, and practical support to use Welsh in the workplace.

Progress has been made in strengthening the use of the Thinqi platform to record and monitor Welsh language training and induction activity. Welsh language learning opportunities continue to be promoted through both the Thinqi newsletter and the Compass staff newsletter to encourage participation.

In terms of recruitment, all posts continue to be assessed to determine the appropriate level of Welsh language skills required. As a minimum, roles are advertised as Welsh Language Desirable, in line with the Council's commitment to delivering bilingual services. During the reporting year, 717 posts were advertised, of which 28 were identified as Welsh Language Essential and 689 as Welsh Language Desirable. Recruitment processes remain fully bilingual, with all job advertisements incorporating the Welsh Language Skills Framework and being published in both Welsh and English to ensure accessibility and compliance.

Social Care career events continue to be coordinated at a regional level, including engagement with Welsh-medium schools across Gwent to promote careers in the sector and highlight the importance of Welsh language skills.

A range of practical measures remain in place to support the day-to-day use of Welsh in the workplace. The dedicated Microsoft Teams channel for Welsh-speaking and Welsh-learning staff continues to provide a supportive space to practise the language and access advice. Visual identifiers, including Iaith Gwaith and 'Dysgwyr' lanyards, Teams backgrounds, and email signature logos, are promoted to help staff indicate their language ability and encourage the use of Welsh in interactions. The "More Than Just Words" branding also continues to support the visibility of Welsh language provision within Social Care.

Welsh language skills data continues to be collected through the Council's HR systems, with ongoing work to explore more effective methods of collation and reporting.

Glossary of Terms

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 activity and performance data	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.
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 Assistance (IAA)	Refer to contacts and referrals – consent and level of information recorded – link to proportionate assessment.
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	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.

(Wales) Act

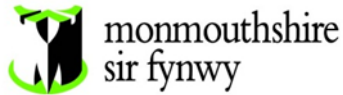
2014

FGC Family Group Conference

BSF Building Stronger Families

FSPT Family Support and Protection Team

OT Occupational Therapy



SUBJECT:	Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report 2025/26 (Self-Assessment)
MEETING:	Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	29th September 2026
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

- To inform members of the effectiveness of safeguarding in Monmouthshire via a self-assessment process, including the work that the Council undertakes to protect children and adults at risk from harm, abuse and exploitation.
- 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, January 2024 and November 2025.
- To update on progress related to Monmouthshire County Council's key safeguarding priorities during 2025 / 2026 highlighting progress, identifying risks and setting out actions and priorities for 2026 – 2027.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

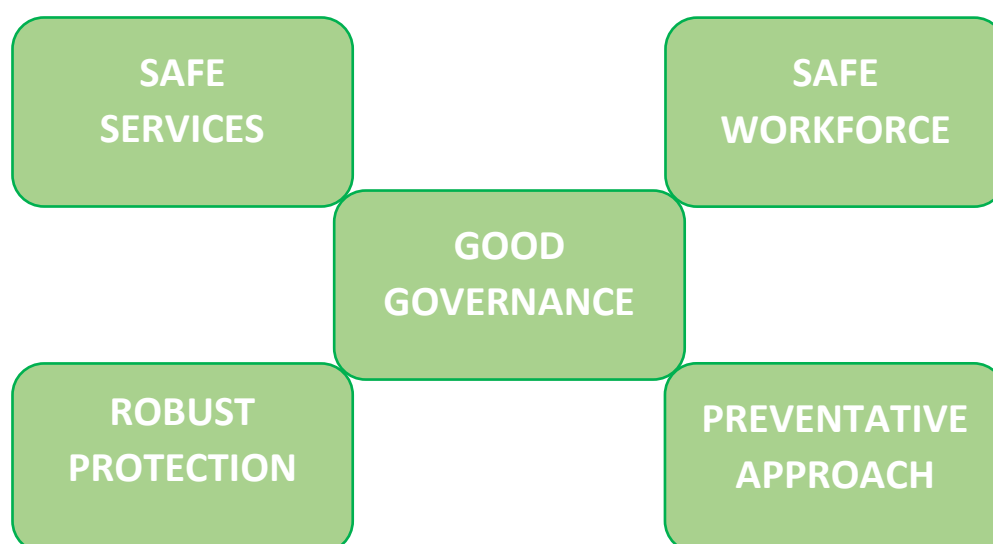
- For members to scrutinise the Annual Safeguarding Evaluation Report and activity prior to its presentation at Council in November 2026.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Monmouthshire County Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy underpins this evaluation report. The Policy covers duties for both children and adults at risk and is in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing [Wales] Act [2014] and the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. The evaluation reflects progress against priority areas set out within the policy and the previous year's action plan. The report forms an integral part of the continual development of Safeguarding practice across the Council.
- 3.2 This period (April 2025- March 2026) has seen ongoing demand pressures across services and within partner agencies. Nevertheless, safeguarding has

remained a foremost priority. The Council's commitment to safeguarding is evident through its reviews of policies, updated training, the preventative and proactive approach to emerging issues and effective collaboration across the Council and with regional partners.

- 3.3 Safeguarding practice across the Council continues to evolve in response to changing services, emerging risks and national developments. The 2025–2027 SAFE programme is underway, supported by a new digital platform, with a review of designated safeguarding leads for each area and quarterly review of directorate action plans to strengthen oversight and assurance. This report provides updated evidence of strong governance, robust protection arrangements for children and adults, safe workforce practice, and the wide range of preventative activity delivered across Council services and partnerships to promote wellbeing and reduce safeguarding risk.
- 3.4 The year ahead will prioritise embedding developments already underway, whilst continuing to respond to increasing complexity and demand across safeguarding services. We will be looking to make progress with implementing the National Training Standards across the Council and ensuring compliance; digital and system developments including Mosaic and the SAFE platform; and implementing the All-Wales referral form.
- 3.5 The North Wales Extended Child Practice Review - *‘Our Bravery Brought Justice’*, has prompted national changes to safeguarding practice, particularly around those in positions of trust. Monmouthshire is reviewing local arrangements to ensure compliance with revised guidance, while continuing to work through Gwent Safeguarding Board networks to monitor data, thresholds and Section 5 practice regionally. Priority actions are continued within the Action Plan which is implemented by the Safeguarding Unit and overseen by the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group (WASG).
- 3.6 As in previous years, the report is constructed around 5 pillars of safeguarding. Each section offers a statement of “what good looks like” which is agreed within the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG] based on experience, professional judgement, and recognised good practice.



- 3.7 The corporate scoring framework is used to provide an overall judgement of effectiveness between 1 [major weaknesses] and 6 [excellent / outstanding]. The self-assessment score is agreed by the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG] through critical challenge and on the basis of evidence reviewed to date. This year, the self-assessed scores remained the same as the previous year.
- 3.8 To help moderate the self-assessment process, WASG triangulates data and evidence through drawing on a number of sources of information including:
- (1) National checkpoint data and local dashboard data.
 - (2) Specific Inspections including Monmouthshire County Council Improvement Check visit to Monmouthshire County Council Adult Safeguarding (April 2025) and Estyn Inspection – *A Report of Education Services in Monmouthshire* [November 2025.]
 - (3) Progress against the Action Plan set following Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection of Adult Safeguarding April 25.
 - (4) Service led performance data within Children and Adults Safeguarding Teams
 - (5) Regional safeguarding data via the Gwent Safeguarding Board (which helps to track trends and highlight issues / benchmark against regional data)
 - (6) Quarterly Safeguarding reports produced by Independent Reviewing Officers.
 - (7) Information arising from Internal Audit

3.9 The current self-assessment is set out below:

SELF ASSESSMENT SCORES:

CORNERSTONE	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	April 2025 – March 2026
GOOD GOVERNANCE	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
SAFE WORKFORCE	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
PREVENTATIVE APPROACH	4	4	4	5	4	4	4/5	5	5
ROBUST PROTECTION	4	4	3	3	4	4	5	5	5
SAFE SERVICES	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4

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

This report provides assurance that children and adults at risk are safeguarded and protected from the harm related to abuse, exploitation and neglect. The approach recognises that some people with protected characteristics such as children with disabilities and those at risk because of their gender are more vulnerable to abuse. Through its emphasis on preventative approaches and partnership working the Council's approach to safeguarding aligns with the ways of working set out in the

Future Generations Act. The approach supports a healthier Wales and the maintenance of cohesive communities.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

Not applicable to this report

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Safeguarding progress is evaluated against the 5 pillars of safeguarding.

7. 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.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no new resource implications to this report.

9. CONSULTEES:

- Members of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG]
- Strategic Director, Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- Corporate Safeguarding Policy
- Estyn Inspection – *A Report of Education Services in Monmouthshire [November 2025]*

11. AUTHOR:

Head of Children's Services – Diane Corrister

Safeguarding and Early Help Service Manager – Jess Scarisbrick

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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”. There is strong leadership and 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 Strategic Director ensures that ‘live’ safeguarding issues are raised with leaders in the Council via the Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet. There are weekly meetings between the Strategic Director and the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services. The Strategic Director 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 commenced for the 2025-2027 cycle. This ensures that, within this period, all directorates will conduct a structured assessment of safeguarding practice within individual service areas.
- A new digital platform is in place to support access to and safe storage of the SAFEs to provide wider oversight and ensure compliance by Senior Managers and the Safeguarding Unit. This platform went live on 01 April 2026 and Designated Safeguarding Leads [DSLs] for each area have been ratified. The expectation is that SAFE action plans will be reviewed quarterly.

SAFEGUARDING CORPORATE POLICY:

- The Safeguarding Corporate Policy was updated in November 2025 to reflect the further updated guidance around Safeguarding training and the updated Suicide Prevention and Self-Harm Strategy and delivery plan 2025 – 2028. The Safeguarding Corporate Policy will continue to be reviewed on a biennial basis, or as required.

GWENT SAFEGUARDING BOARD [GSB]:

- There remain strong links between the Gwent Safeguarding Board (GSB) and the Safeguarding Unit, with key members representing Monmouthshire on all Subgroups. The Strategic Director, Jane Rodgers, co-chairs the Board and Heads of Service, Diane Corrister and Jenny Jenkins, represent Monmouthshire on the Board and on the Case Review Group.
- The GSB 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.
- Following the publication of the North Wales Extended Child Practice Review (Our Bravery Brought Justice), the GSB is facilitating discussions around the recommendations from the review to ensure Local Authorities, Education and partner agencies are compliant.

WHOLE AUTHORITY SAFEGUARDING GROUP [WASG]:

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

SINGLE UNIFIED SAFEGUARDING REVIEWS [SUSRs]:

The Local Authority continues to participate in the Single Unified Safeguarding Review process through the Gwent Safeguarding Board. This ensures that timely and relevant learning from reviews across the region (and in some instances from across Wales / UK) informs safeguarding practice in Monmouthshire.

ESTYN INSPECTION:

In November 2025 Estyn undertook a Local Government Education Services (LGES) inspection which reported in Jan 2026. The feedback highlights that *“the Local Authority promotes a strong culture of safeguarding. Each directorate has a designated safeguarding person and a deputy, and each central team complete an annual safeguarding audit. These processes ensure that safeguarding is a high priority across all teams. There is a detailed and evaluative annual safeguarding report which is presented to the performance and overview scrutiny committee and full Council. Elected members ask appropriate questions to seek clarification, request further information and to challenge the report presented to them.”*

ANALYSIS:

Monmouthshire County Council continues to have strong safeguarding governance arrangements in place. Safeguarding issues are regularly escalated where required through senior leadership and Council Members for appropriate oversight and accountability.

The Corporate Safeguarding Policy is regularly updated by the Safeguarding Unit and Lead Officers who are Monmouthshire's representatives on the GSB. This allows the Policy to remain dynamic, reflecting ongoing national, regional and local changes in legislation and guidance. The Whole Authority SAFE audits are supported by robust quality assurance mechanisms to ensure they reflect the Safeguarding activity across the Council allowing a measurement against other Gwent Authorities, and compliance statute and guidance.

The Estyn inspection feedback provides strong assurance that safeguarding governance arrangements are embedded across the Council. It demonstrates that safeguarding is visible at both operational and strategic levels, supported by directorate safeguarding leads, annual audit activity, scrutiny through elected Members, and clear reporting to both the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee and Full Council. This reinforces the self-assessment score of 5 - that safeguarding is well-led, subject to effective oversight, and maintained as a corporate priority.

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

OUR BRAVERY BROUGHT JUSTICE REPORT (Gwynedd Review):

2025/26 saw the publication of a significant Extended Child Practice Review report commissioned by the North Wales Safeguarding Board relating to long term historic abuse of children by a Head Teacher. This has led to significant changes in National Safeguarding processes within Wales, particularly in relation to the management of those in a position of trust. As a result the Safeguarding Unit is reviewing current practice and processes to ensure we are compliant with changes in guidance and the recommendations arising from the review.

Officers from across the Local Authority continue to engage with the GSB networks and sub-groups to review data, trends and themes to support the analysis of practice within Gwent. The data shows that Monmouthshire has a consistent application of threshold in line with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. Similarly, Monmouthshire is already working in line with recommendations made within the North Wales Extended Review in respect of capturing data-sets that help to identify areas of concern and map out safeguarding actions within the Section 5 process. Data-sets will continue to be reviewed on a regional basis

particularly given that the new social care case management system, Mosaic, is scheduled to go live next year.

SAFE RECRUITMENT:

- Safe recruitment practice remains embedded across Monmouthshire County Council and applies to both established services and areas of new service development. Recruitment activity continues to be underpinned by clear safer recruitment processes, including appropriate checks, training requirements and assurance mechanisms, to ensure that individuals working with children and adults at risk are suitable for their roles and understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Following review, in line with the 24/25 Action Plan, it is confirmed that safe recruitment practice is embedded within the Micro Care service, where in order for individuals to register they need to provide DBS checks, undertake training and provide personal liability insurance.
- Monmouthshire Children's Service continues to develop a children's residential workforce, both for residential children's homes and supported accommodation. The ongoing recruitment process and training program that has been developed to support the children's residential workforce is fully compliant with the Safer Recruitment Process.
- The Corporate Disclosure and Barring Policy was reviewed, updated and disseminated in October 2025 to remain compliant with legislation.

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING:

The Corporate Training Team, working in partnership with the Safeguarding Unit and the Workforce Development Team for Social Care, have finalised the level of safeguarding training for all roles across the Council and have assigned the roles to the training standards groups A-F. Compliance to mandatory training is monitored by both Corporate Training and Workforce Development team and is part of the Authority's Induction programme.

- Group A – Current compliance for Social Care staff stands at 88% with Corporate Group A training at 87%. The remaining workforce either on long term ill health or maternity leave will be supported to achieve training on their return to work.
- Group B - Social Care, Housing and PPU staff that require the completion of Group B is undertaken by Social Care Workforce Development team and current compliance rate stands at 64%, which is a reduction from last year. This is due to the expansion of the Directorate to incorporate PPU and Housing and is being addressed through additional training.
- WASG has agreed (ratified by the GSB) that non-social care employees can undertake a blended delivery of Group B safeguarding training. The training package has been devised by the Social Care Workforce Development Team and is awaiting approval. Once authorised this will be rolled out to all employees outside of the social care directorate.

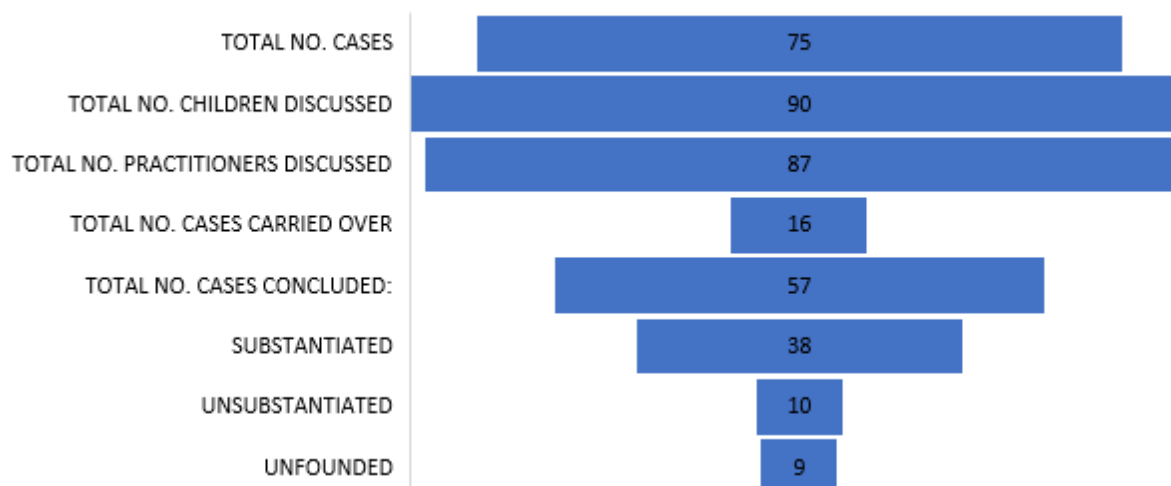
- Group C training is currently being offered via GSB. 88% of Children's workforce and 78.5% of Adults workforce have completed this training. Regular discussions are held with the Safeguarding Service Manager to ensure outstanding staff, some of whom are absent from work, complete the training as soon as possible.
- All Head Teachers have received appropriate level of safeguarding training and all Designated Safeguarding Persons within Education have received Group C training.
- It has been confirmed that Welsh Government will not be providing a standardised training package for Groups D, E and F (senior leaders). There are ongoing discussions with the Gwent Safeguarding Board to identify how this need is going to be met.
- As per the paid workforce, all volunteers are expected to undertake group A training with additional levels of training dependant on role.
- Elected Members are expected to undertake group A training and there is the intention to implement Group F training for elected members over the next year. once the content is agreed.

SECTION 5 WALES SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES: PRACITITONER CONCERNS / ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THOSE IN A POSITION OF TRUST (PCM):

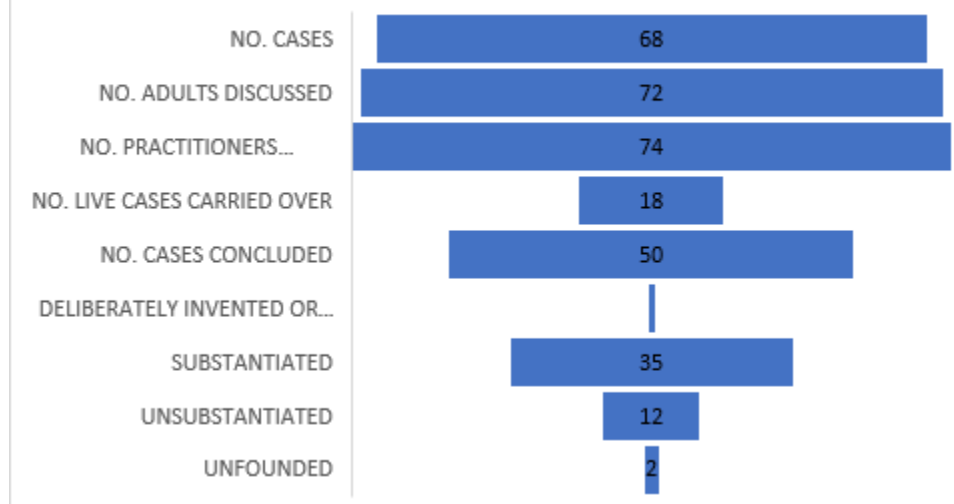
- The Safeguarding Unit retains overall responsibility for the management of the Section 5 process in line with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.
- Cases coming into the Section 5 arena continue to increase but referrals with a particular spike observed during December 2025 and January 202 (something that was mirrored across Gwent). Positively, the overall rate of cases being concluded is increasing; this is due to concluding some long running criminal investigations which then enabled the Section 5 process to end.
- Where safeguarding concerns are substantiated the employing organisation is then expected to use internal HR processes to manage / mitigate the transferrable risk, including referral to relevant governing bodies.
- Cases that involve criminal investigations rarely conclude within six months due to delays in Police processes. This has a wider impact on the subject, practitioner, the victim and the employer from an emotional wellbeing, operational and a financial perspective. These are addressed on a case-by-case basis by members of the Safeguarding Unit and Human Resources. Patterns of and reasons for delays are also escalated via the GSB.
- There is no change within the primary professional setting for referrals to Section 5 with the majority of concerns relating to children linked to educational staff and within Adult Safeguarding, health and care staff.
- The Safeguarding Unit works closely with the other Gwent Local Authorities to ensure consistent thresholds and case management. The GSB Quality Assurance sub-group continue to quality assure the Section 5 process across Gwent which also ensures that regional trends are raised earlier and so that inconsistencies can be reduced. In line with the North Wales extended Child Practice Review, a separate task and finish group has been set up with Safeguarding Leads across Gwent to consider thresholds and what information should be recorded, particularly in regard to 'low level concerns'.

- Revised guidance of the Section 5 procedures was launched on 01 July 2026. The changes have included a greater focus on “transferable risk”, which has been a standard approach in Monmouthshire for the last 5 years. Welsh Government will be providing training and resource packages, and implementation will be supported via the GSB.
- Care Inspectorate Wales [CIW] will be undertaking audits with each Local Authority six months after implementation.

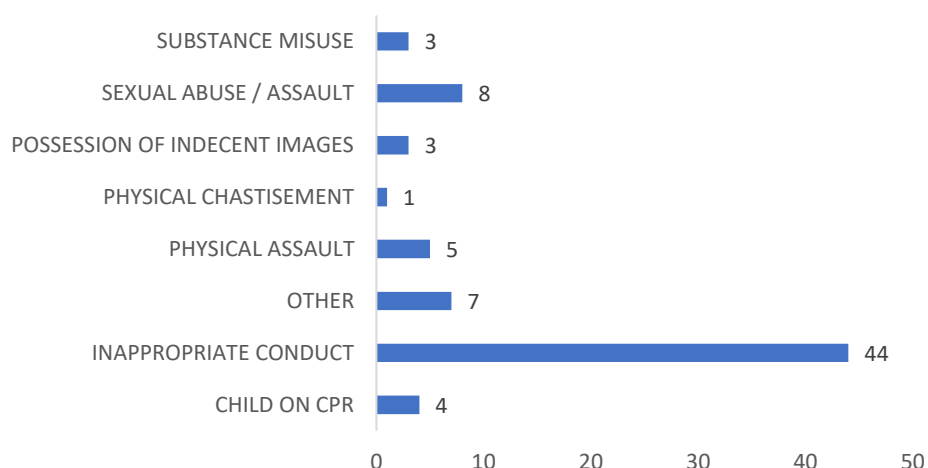
PCM - CHILDREN'S SUMMARY



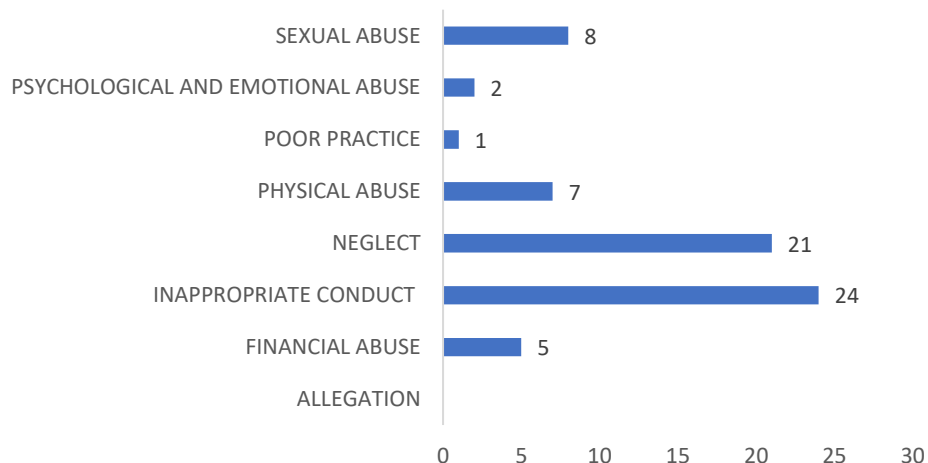
PCM - ADULTS SUMMARY



PCM - CHILDREN'S ALLEGATIONS



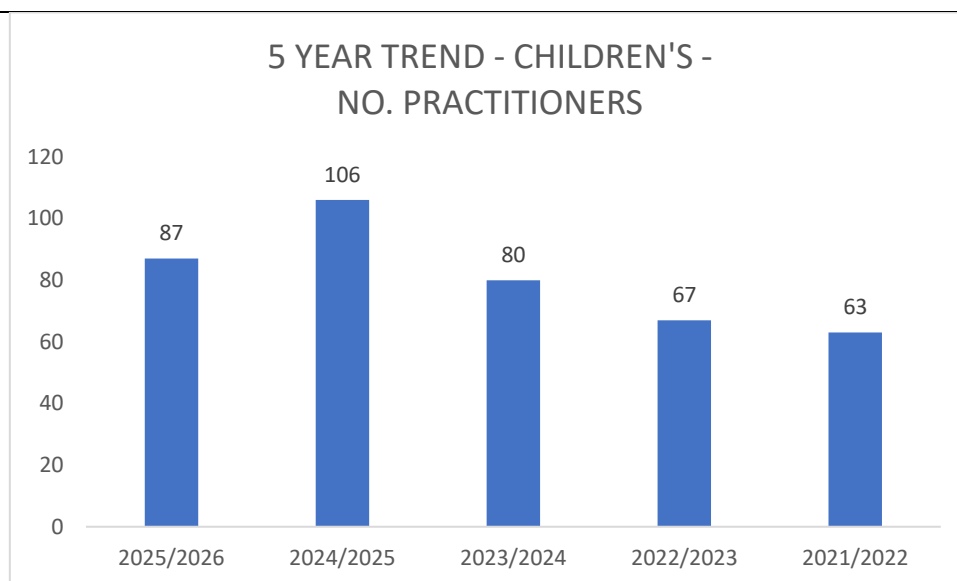
PCM - ADULTS ALLEGATIONS



[Categories of 'Inappropriate Conduct' and 'Other' are where concerns have been raised around the individuals' personal life/circumstances which calls into question their suitability to work with children and/or vulnerable people; these are based on individual circumstances and therefore do not fit into other reporting categories. Examples of such are domestic abuse cases, criminal offences such as theft, being under the influence of substances, and mental health difficulties.]

5 year trend – Children's:

2021/2022 – 57 cases comprising 63 practitioners
 2022/2023 – 61 cases comprising 67 practitioners
 2023/2024 – 70 cases comprising 80 practitioners
 2024/2025 – 91 cases comprising 106 practitioners
 2025/2026 – 68 cases comprising 74 practitioners



5 year trend – Adult's:

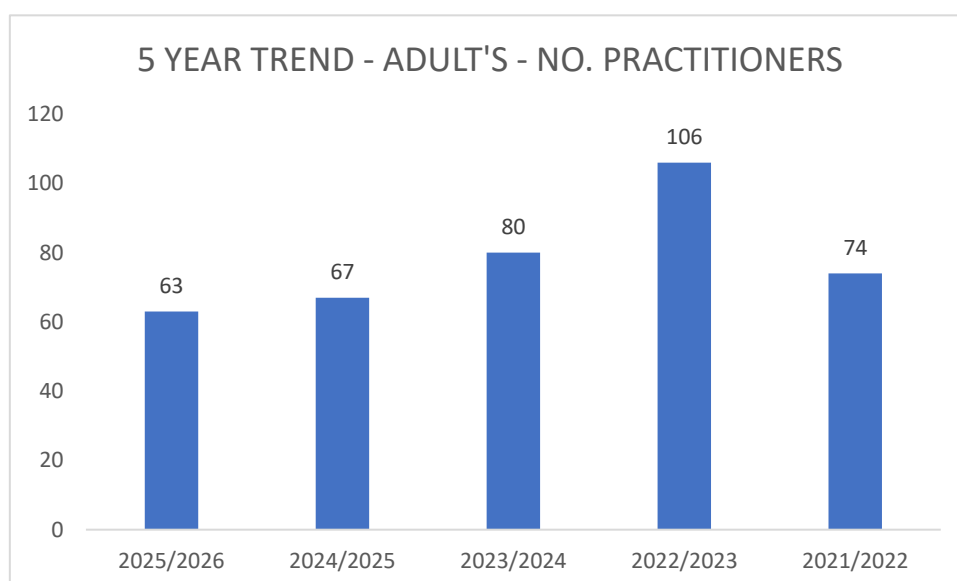
2021/2022 – 67 cases comprising 71 practitioners

2022/2023 – 80 cases comprising 84 practitioners

2023/2024 – 71 cases comprising 76 practitioners

2024/2025 – 85 cases comprising 94 practitioners

2025/2026 – 75 cases comprising 87 practitioners



Inappropriate Conduct has consistently been the main concern throughout the five years.

VOLUNTEERS:

Place and Community Wellbeing ensure that safe recruitment practice underpins the recruitment of volunteers within the council, and there is designated part-time volunteer coordinator in place. As per the paid workforce there is a clear recruitment process, including application form and interview, transparent role descriptions, references and

effective induction, so that volunteers, staff and service users are protected. Kinetic is the management system used to hold information on each volunteer. This is monitored to ensuring that individuals remain in date with safeguarding training. There is on-going development of processes to ensure consistency in the management of volunteers across the council.

ANALYSIS:

Monmouthshire Safe Recruitment processes for both paid and unpaid staff continue to be applied robustly, with new services being compliant with the process. There is significant progress in the embedding of the National Safeguarding Training Standards with a clear progression pathway supported by the Thinqi Platform and the SAFE process.

Monmouthshire is well represented in the Working Groups managing the changes to the Practitioner Concerns process (Section 5 process) and we are well placed to implement changes and recommendations arising from the North Wales Extended Review. The Safeguarding Unit continues to oversee the Section 5 process in Monmouthshire and are actively monitoring issues of welfare and impact involved in the process, escalating concerns and delays appropriately.

The further work being undertaken to develop training material across all groups, and ensuring that developments regarding the section 5 process in line with the Gwynedd review are embedded, have retained our self-assessed score at 4 for this year.

3. PREVENTATIVE APPROACH

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5

WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?

We work with partners to identify emerging issues, risks and challenges to our communities. We demonstrate clear multi-agency 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 people from experiencing harm and supporting the development of parental understanding and skills so that people can safely exit statutory systems and access universal services for support.

PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE [VAWDASV]:

The Gwent VAWDASV Partnership Board is a multi-agency collaboration across Gwent to prevent VAWDASV and to improve the outcomes for individuals and their families.

The Partnership is made up of statutory agencies including Police, Health, Probation and the five Gwent Local Authorities. Monmouthshire has strong representation of MCC Officers across a number of Directorates.

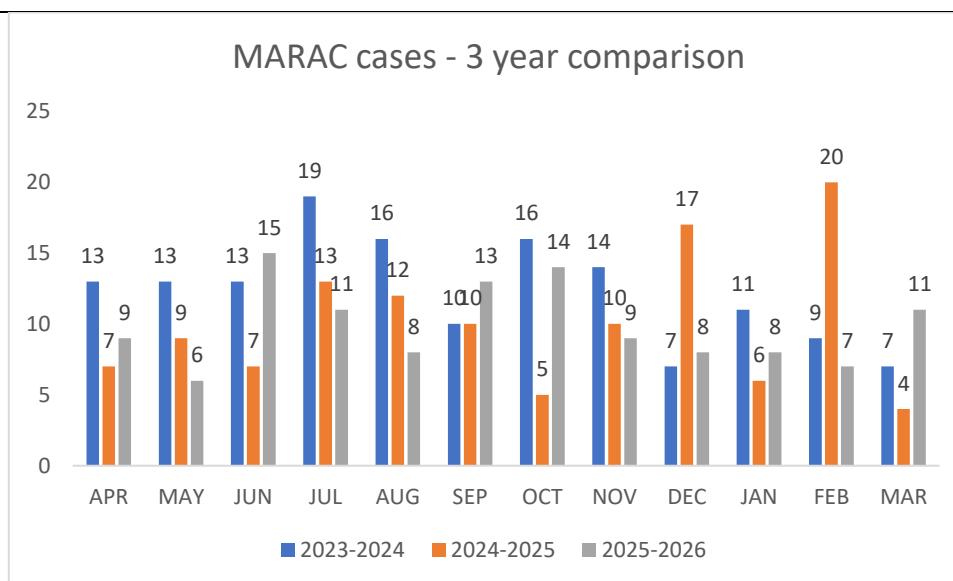
As part of statutory requirements placed on Local Authorities and Local Health Boards under Section 5 of the VAWDASV [Wales] Act 2015, the Gwent Partnership Board has remained committed to the 5 year Strategy.

- This year, there has been positive progress within the VAWDASV board in respect of undertaking a domestic abuse needs assessment, which is currently being finalised and which will support service commissioning and development.
- There has been a further increase in completion of VAWDASV training this year with 76.2% compliance with VAWDASV Group 1 [previously 61%] and there is ongoing work around VAWDASV Group 2 training (Ask and Act) going onto the Thingi platform and training dates to be identified.

DOMESTIC ABUSE & HIGH RISK MANAGEMENT [MARAC - MULTI-AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE]:

MARAC continues to be chaired by members of the Safeguarding Unit and Heddlu Gwent Police, with increased training to support consistency, application of thresholds and focus on outcomes. There is some national development work taking place in 2026 aiming at increasing consistency of practice within MARAC structures across Wales.

- In 25-26 Monmouthshire's referrals discussed within the MARAC arena have remained at between 8 and 11 cases per fortnight which is consistent with data from previous years. Scrutiny of referrals has continued with the involvement of the Safeguarding Unit despite the Police MARAC Co-ordinator post remaining vacant. [Subsequently recruited in June 2026.]
- For cases which do not meet the high-risk threshold for MARAC, Monmouthshire applies a Section 115 process under the Crime and Disorder Act to support victims of domestic abuse. This is recognised as good practice by the GSB and has been identified as a piece of work for replication across the other Gwent Local Authorities.



MONMOUTHSHIRE EXPLOITATION GROUP [MEG]:

The Monmouthshire Exploitation Group [MEG] is a strategic multi-agency partnership that supports the Council and Public Service Board's responsibilities for safeguarding, modern slavery and exploitation. MEG identifies emerging risks and themes across criminal, sexual, financial, online and other forms of exploitation, including transitional safeguarding to support co-ordinated partnership action with strategic oversight. The group meets quarterly, is chaired by the Safeguarding Service Manager, and reports to the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group [WASG]

- Monmouthshire Exploitation Group [MEG] continues to meet quarterly with ongoing positive attendance from operational staff and managers as well as appropriate partner agencies. This supports consistency of thresholds, agency responses and allows for greater capacity to analyse trends, locations and perpetrators
- Over the year, MEG has included case discussions around ensuring the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable young people subject to sexual and criminal exploitation as they transition from childhood to adulthood (transitional safeguarding).
- This year, we want to establish a specific multi-agency 'Transitional Safeguarding Panel'. The purpose of this is to consider the circumstances of those individuals who do not "fit" into standard services threshold for support - to identify their strengths but equally where they require safeguards and which agency is best placed to meet those needs.

SEXUAL & CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN:

- Over the last year, 20 children have been discussed in the Exploitation arena, including 11 new cases, with only three cases remaining open at year end. This represents a significant decrease and reflects a wider trend across the Gwent region of reducing numbers. The majority of children within the cohort were aged

between 14 and 17, were living at home, and were supported under Care and Support Plans.

- During this period, the other 4 Local Authorities have adopted Monmouthshire's approach to managing the Exploitation process, although this has had implications for Police resourcing and decision-making processes, which continue to be regularly challenged and reviewed by the Safeguarding Unit.
- As a result, work is ongoing to review and update the associated Toolkit documents, with this development being led by the Safeguarding Service Manager, reflecting a continued commitment to strengthening practice and guidance.

HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR [HSB]:

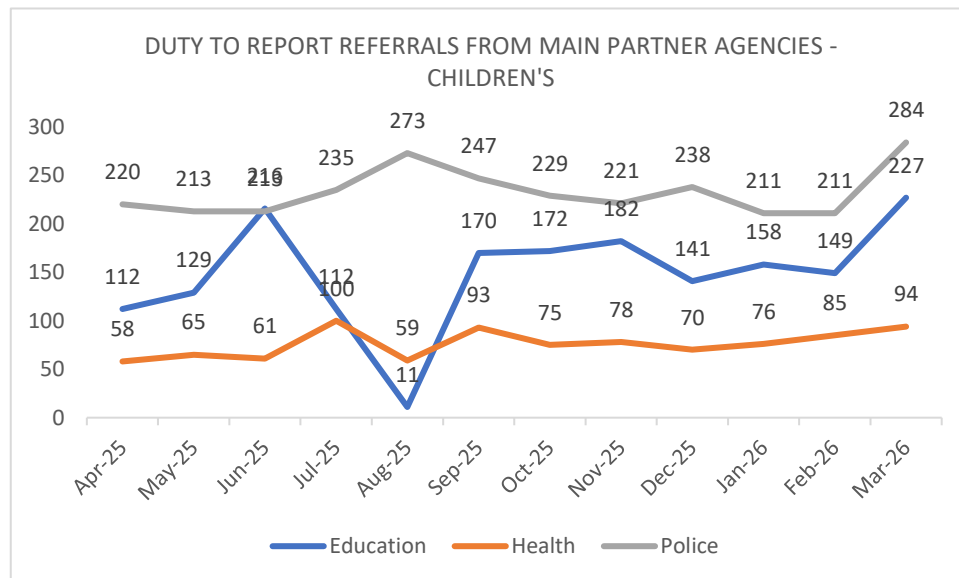
In 25/26 there has been an overall decline, particularly towards the end of the period, in referrals to the HSB process. This aligns with the referral pattern within the other Gwent Authorities. It is, however, notable that many cases involve young males (aged between 13 and 17 years) with increasing levels of severity of assault to victims. In other words whilst there has been a reduced volume of referrals, the cases that are referred have seen an increase in severity and complexity.

This reduction in the number of referrals is being closely monitored by the Safeguarding Unit to understand the ongoing reason. This may relate to early identification within education environment, ongoing training offered by the GSB and the Safeguarding Unit (regarding prevention), and potentially changes within communities.

Within the process there are clear areas of strength, including multi-agency engagement, cases of concern being referred in early, improved rates of case closure due to appropriate interventions and positive outcomes, and continued development of procedures and training.

SAFEGUARDING IN SCHOOLS:

- Engagement in Child Protection processes remains strong, with consistent attendance at Initial Child Protection Conferences and improved participation at Review Conferences.
- During the reporting period, Education services submitted 22% [1,779] of the total number of DTR's [8,099] received by Children's Services indicating a significant level of involvement in identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns.
- This represents a decrease from last year, when Education submitted 27% [517] of referrals, and reflects work undertaken to distinguish inappropriate referrals from cases involving information sharing only.
- Training uptake across Education services is strong, supported by positive feedback and accessible resources, contributing to increased confidence and competence among staff. Key strengths include well-established multi-agency relationships, high levels of engagement, positive inspection outcomes, and effective quality assurance processes.



YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE [YOS]:

Monmouthshire and Torfaen YOS's strategic approach remains firmly focused on prevention, early intervention and diversion, underpinned by Child First and trauma-informed practice and delivered through strong partnership working. During 2025-26, this continued focus contributed to maintaining low "First Time Entrant" levels and strengthening diversionary opportunities across the youth justice system.

The service identified increasing complexity in children's needs, particularly in relation to emotional wellbeing, exploitation, school disengagement and disproportionality. In response the prevention offer was strengthened through improved assessment, screening, quality assurance and data-informed practice, whilst working with partners to enhance access to early intervention and diversionary support. Going forward, to ensure the Service remain responsive to the needs of children, families and the community the service will continue to build on these strengths by developing outcome measurement, disproportionality monitoring and the evaluation of the impact of intervention.

SAFE AND WELL SERVICE [previously OUT of HOURS]:

The Out of Hours (OOH) Supervision and Support Service was introduced in 2023 as an extension of the Family Time Service. Its initial purpose was to provide a flexible and responsive safeguarding function outside of standard working hours, complementing the work of the Gwent Emergency Duty Team and enabling children to remain safely within their family networks while assessments and decision-making processes were undertaken.

Since its introduction, the OOH service has evolved substantially in both scope and importance. What began as a relatively small and reactive provision has developed into a core safeguarding service, supporting a wide range of interventions across Children's Services which work across a number of strategic priorities in Children Services.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION:

Preventing homelessness at the earliest possible opportunity continues to be a key priority, recognising the strong links between housing instability, vulnerability and safeguarding risk. The general situation is an improved homeless position compared to 2024-25. There has been a positive reduction in homeless applications and a duty to accommodate, a fall in temporary accommodation use and a fall in caseloads for Housing Options Team officers facilitating more proactive case work.

Dedicated Homelessness Prevention staff within the Housing Options Team work with households threatened with homelessness, providing practical interventions including affordability assessments, landlord negotiation, family mediation, housing options advice and support to access alternative accommodation. During 2025-26 the service achieved a homelessness prevention success rate of 69%, broadly maintaining performance of 71% from 2024-2025, helping many households avoid the significant risks associated with homelessness and temporary accommodation. Financial assistance through the Discretionary Homelessness Prevention Fund continues to help remove barriers for vulnerable households securing and sustaining accommodation.

Analysis of Housing Support referrals highlights the increasing complexity of need amongst those seeking support. Mental health support needs represented the largest referral category during 2025-2026, accounting for over 40% of referrals, whilst domestic abuse remained a significant area of demand. Frontline services report increasing levels of multiple and overlapping needs, often requiring coordinated responses across housing, health, social care and criminal justice partners. This mirrors the trend of increased complexity seen in Children Services.

A Housing Support Grant priority for 2026-27 is starting to recommission the programme of housing support. This includes Generic Services, Rough Sleeping, Temporary Accommodation and Domestic Abuse. Specifications will be reviewed and strengthened, including safeguarding arrangements.

Since the closure of The George Hotel in July 2025 for B&B use by MCC Housing Options, Severn View has accommodated 17 residents, many of whom present with high and complex needs. Outcomes to date reflect both the significant challenges of supporting this cohort and the positive progress that has been achieved in a short-term setting.

CONTEST: (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.
- Panel continues to diarise a monthly meeting to discuss referrals; this year there were two referrals. One referral related to an adult in a secure hospital setting who had transferred from a London Borough and remained in MCC for a short period of time before returning; the other referral was in relation to a young adult from Monmouthshire. In both situations the risks were safely managed.

- There has been a review of the training for attendees at Channel Panel so that all members have access to it. The training is now available on Thinqi.
- This year the Safeguarding Service Manager has become a standard attendee at Channel Panel along with YOS. Any training that is shared from the Home Office via that forum is now further disseminated across partner agencies.
- There is effective multi-agency work through the various corporate safeguarding groups, sharing of important information and attendance at key meetings. Schools and other education settings can access important information to track actions undertaken by other agencies when they have reported a concern about children and young people. This is a strength of the Local Authority's work.

COMMUNITY SAFETY:

The Anti-Social Behaviour [ASB] Strike process continues to operate effectively when applied to young people. Its success is largely due to lower case volumes and the absence of competing formal intervention frameworks across partner agencies when dealing with children. This allows for a coordinated, structured, and consistent approach. In contrast, the application of a similar Strike process for adult cases presents a number of challenges. Adult antisocial behaviour is managed by a range of partner agencies, each operating within their own established policies, procedures, and legislative frameworks. As a result, cases are often addressed within existing organisational processes rather than through a unified Strike model.

Despite this, there remains strong partnership working in relation to adult ASB. Complex or high-risk cases are regularly discussed at the monthly Crime and ASB Partnership Meeting, where appropriate interventions such as Community Protection Warnings (CPWs), Community Protection Notices (CPNs), and Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) are considered.

- Additionally, adult ASB cases are referred into the Problem-Solving Group under Section 115, which is well established and utilised forum.
- Whilst there is a clear role for a more structured approach to adult ASB, the existing partnership framework is currently providing a proportionate response.

ANALYSIS

Monmouthshire continues to demonstrate a strong preventative safeguarding approach through effective multi-agency working, early intervention and partnership forums. Progress has been made in forums across the Council to ensure that officers are able to identify early trends and areas of rising safeguarding issues, and that the ongoing development of services to meet the need of vulnerable children, adults and families are on target.

There is evidence that the increasing presentation of complexity of needs, noted across services and forums, is being responded to at an early stage with clear engagement of partners to ensure that there is either appropriate escalation to statutory processes, or that strategic and operational approaches meet the Council's preventative agenda.

MEG remains a key forum for managing exploitation and emerging safeguarding concerns. Whilst there are many external drivers for the exploitation and risk-taking behaviours of both adults and children there is evidence that the services and structures are supporting risk reduction in key areas.

Safeguarding in schools remains strong, with high engagement in Child Protection processes, good training uptake and effective multi-agency relationships. It is noted that the retirement of the experienced LOSIE in July 2026 will require careful planning to ensure consistency of support.

4. ROBUST PROTECTION

SELF-ASSESSED SCORE = 5

WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE?

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.

PROGRESS AND KEY STRENGTHS:

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK:

- The Safeguarding Hub continues to have a strong multi-agency presence for Child and Adult Safeguarding meetings which is supported by digital platforms. Unfortunately, the absence of Police within the Hub has an impact on time-scales for meetings. Despite regular discussion at strategic forums, and reassurance from the Chief Superintendent of a return to the Hub, this has not yet happened. 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 Monmouthshire Children's Risk Assessment Framework 'Keeping Children Safe' continues to be implemented and a mandatory whole service training programme was completed, with a rolling refresher programme for staff and an induction. The work has been supported by continuing workshops led by the Safeguarding Unit for both Children and Adult Services, where attendance is monitored.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES:

- The work undertaken with partner agencies last year to address inappropriate and repeat 'Duty to Reports' [DTRs] submitted to Children's Services has stabilised the numbers received. 100% of DTRs had a management decision made by the end of the next working day which is compliant with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures;

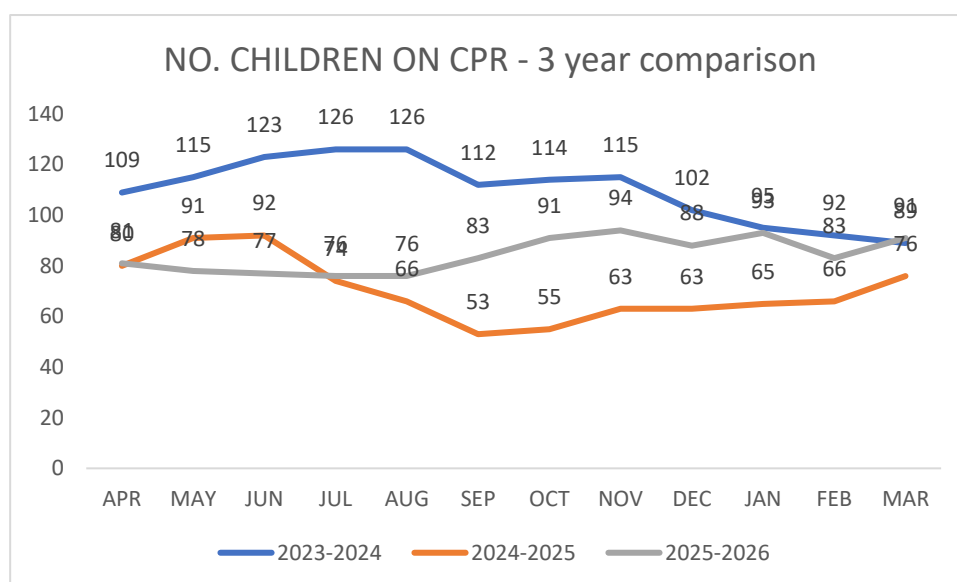
- A review of the threshold and appropriateness of Strategy Meetings and Section 47 enquiries was undertaken due to the post Covid increase in the numbers. These increased numbers now appear to be the new norm and have remained stable in the years following the pandemic. The review highlighted the proportion of cases requiring further Child Protection intervention has remained relatively stable, but that there is increased complexity with the presenting needs.
- Leads across Wales have established a National Working Group to develop an Integrated Referral Programme [AWIR], which is a national digital initiative to establish a single, standardised, multi-agency referral mechanism for safeguarding and wellbeing across Wales. There is a live pilot underway within Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Cardiff and Carmarthenshire who are using the AWIR, with positive feedback being received. Next steps include a wider public roll out, advanced integration to the Mosaic platform and then a national roll out. Monmouthshire is represented on the Working Group by the Safeguarding Service Manager.

CHILD PROTECTION REGISTRATION:

- The number of children whose names were added to the Child Protection Register peaked at 94 during the year. Throughout the year there was limited movement in the number of children on the Child Protection Register. Temporary registrations peaked at 13, while registrations relating to unborn children remained stable, fluctuating between three and six cases throughout the year.
- From 2022 the number of Initial and Review Conferences being held throughout the year has remained consistent [between the 230 – 250 mark], however, there was a reduction in 2024-2025 and this year we have then seen a 20% increase in the number of Conferences being held [193 to 232]. This correlates with the view of the Child Protection Co-ordinator who reports increased early identification of complex risk, increase in single or dual child families, robust assessment of progress against the Child Protection Plan and thoroughness of multiagency intervention prior to de-registration, which is also reflected in the low levels of re-registration of children in a 12-month period.
- In terms of the risk categories, emotional abuse remains the most prevalent category, with neglect also remaining consistently high, often linked to domestic abuse and parental risk factors inclusive of parental mental health and substance misuse. Ongoing discussion within the GSB of the rise in complex factors, and the under reporting of some types of abuse (specifically familial sexual abuse) will result in the use of dual categorisation of abuse being implemented across the region in July 2026. This will be regularly reviewed internally via Data Management Clinic [DMC] and the Quality Improvement Group [QIG] but also on a regional footing via the GSB's Quality Assurance sub-group.
- Initial Child Protection Conference have met full compliance with the National Safeguarding Procedures timescales in most months; however, Review Conference timescales remaining vulnerable to quoracy issues, and workforce capacity due to

Court demands. The increase in complexity and the number of Conference also are impacted by the capacity of the available Chairs.

- NYAS advocacy service remain unable to meet the needs of the number of children requiring advocacy in timescales for Conferences. However, a major strength noted by chairs is the increase in direct face to face work with children.

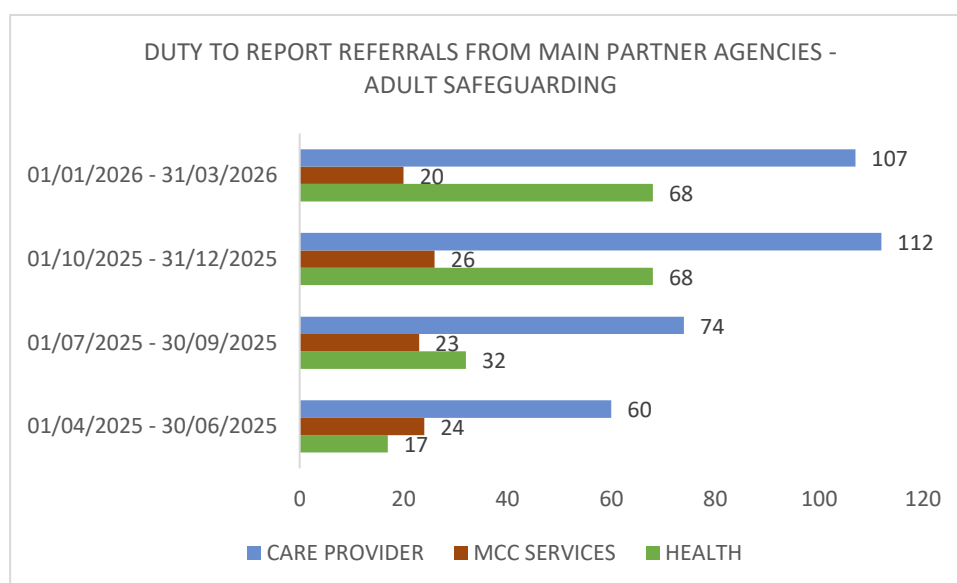
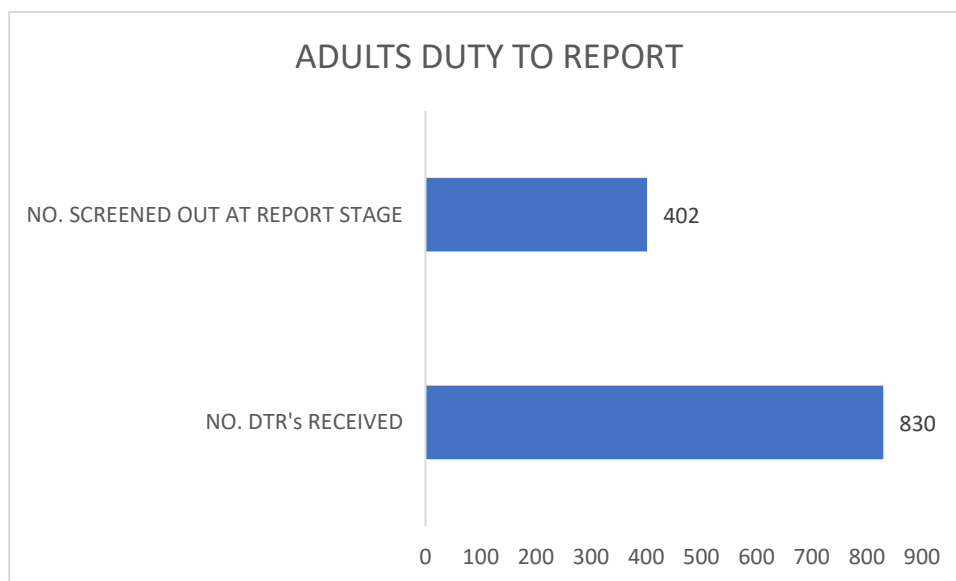


These numbers are end of month figures; there are obviously fluctuations of numbers throughout each month.

ADULT SAFEGUARDING:

- During this year the appointment of a permanent Team Manager has given a stable base on which to develop the Safeguarding service. Changes to how the operational work is recorded and increased digital support has given a greater accuracy in reporting operational activity. This is highlighting the increased demand and complexity of cases and is allowing more effective future planning.
- 52% of referrals have progressed to formal enquiry, with 92% of those cases having been completed within the 7 working day statutory timeframe, demonstrating increased compliance rates [5% increase from last year], which has been consistent throughout the year.
- The nature of safeguarding concerns is led predominantly by neglect, which accounts for 55% of cases, alongside a growing number of self-neglect presentations. The risk profile indicates that the majority of individuals are aged 65 and over, with most incidents of abuse occurring within the individual's own home.
- In terms of outcomes, 39.4% of cases required formal safeguarding intervention, while the majority of individuals required some level of support or intervention.

- Practitioner concerns were also a feature of activity, with 68 cases managed, the majority of which were Substantiated following assessment.



ANALYSIS:

Monmouthshire continues to demonstrate robust safeguarding protection for children and adults, supported by strong multi-agency working, with ongoing discussions around digital arrangements to further support practice and continued implementation of the Keeping Children Safe framework. Although the absence of Police in the Safeguarding Hub continues to affect timescales, positive operational relationships remain in place in order to address this.

Children's Services are experiencing increasing complexity and demand, reflecting wider Gwent trends. Work with partners has improved threshold understanding.

Child Protection activity remains high, with increased registrations and conference demand, but practice quality, compliance, reporting and case progression remain strong. Pressures include chairing capacity, review conference timeliness and low advocacy involvement. From

April 2026, Gwent will introduce dual registration categories where evidenced, to better reflect complex and co-occurring risks.

Adult Safeguarding has strengthened workforce stability and continues to manage increased and more complex referrals. Compliance has improved, with most formal enquiries completed within statutory timescales. Neglect remains the main concern, alongside rising cases of self-neglect.

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

WHOLE AUTHORITY COMMISSIONING AND PROCUREMENT:

At a whole authority level, there is an expectation that when tender specifications are being developed, consideration is given to safeguarding matters. Commissioned organisations are in general expected to have an awareness of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy including the duty to report any concerns and ensure that staff are suitably trained. Where relevant, safeguarding is included as an essential element of the specification, with tendering organisations being required to set out their safeguarding process and provide evidence of their safeguarding policies and procedures. Guidance for procurement process within the Council are currently being reviewed and strengthened which will allow for a further opportunity to ensure that safeguarding is built into procurement and commissioning processes.

REGISTRARS:

All registration staff undertake the mandatory corporate Safeguarding and VAWDASV training. Registration staff also have a duty to report criminal activity such as benefit fraud or immigration breaches when identified or if concerns are raised. Additionally, staff have received training to help consider and identify risk factors when considering marriage and civil partnership registration to include concerns such as Forced Marriage.

Public awareness raising posters relating to the signs of forced marriage are also displayed in the Register Office and the other offices that we use to register.

LICENSING:

Taxi Licensing follows a stringent process that includes multiple safeguarding related checks before a licence is granted; Conditions of an operator's licence also requires DBS checks on all staff employed as call handlers. Licensing also works closely with Passenger Transport Unit and takes part in school transport checks; this can include participating in multi-agency strategy meetings as and when required.

During 2025/26 1 Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Driver licence was revoked following a safeguarding concern raised in a Police disclosure.

Licensing work in partnership with Immigration Services and the Police anti-slavery teams conducting multi-agency operations within the hospitality sector. In 2025/6, four licensed premises received a face-to-face intervention by Licensing as part of a multiagency visit. This operation resulted in three arrests, and the issue by partner services of one civil penalty notice for relevant immigration offences. There continues to be premises licence reviews, however, none have required a revocation of their licence.

PASSENGER TRANSPORT [PTU]:

- An external provider regularly provides safeguarding training for the PTU to ensure 100% compliance for drivers receiving safeguarding training.
- 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.

SOCIAL CARE COMMISSIONING:

During the period 01.04.2025 and 31.03.2026 quality assurance processes continued as normal; with in-county providers receiving an annual monitoring visit, and in the case of larger providers, 1-2 monitoring visits a year. For Children's Services much of the monitoring is done at desktop level due to services being commissioned on an individual basis or are out of county, however, in-person visits are made as necessary and where placements are in county. During this period Children's Services had one provider service under an improvement plan due to the lack of management oversight, team culture, staffing, communication, and relationships. These were successfully addressed.

Commissioned care and support services for our North Children's home and our South 16+ supported accommodation continue to be monitored quarterly by Children Services Commissioning Officer and the Residential Service Manager with input from the Team Managers who are responsible for the care of the children and young people residing in the home.

MONMOUTHSHIRE RESIDENTIAL SERVICE:

Progress across residential developments for 2025/26 has been strong and our Children's homes in the South and Central successfully achieved CIW registration and are now operating at full capacity, providing residential placements with all young people settled and actively engaging in education, community activities, and extra-curricular opportunities.

Further developments are also progressing positively, with an additional residential home and supported living accommodation scheduled to become operational in October 2026. Exploratory work is ongoing to assess future sufficiency needs, including the development of a further three-bed supported accommodation service.

ANALYSIS:

There continues to be clear processes in place to ensure a robust monitoring for all social care commissioned services for children and adults. These have expanded with the development of the Children Services Residential and Supported Living accommodation which has a mix of inhouse staff and commissioned providers.

There is evidence that safeguarding is embedded within all areas of the Council working directly with children and adults at risk, with evidence that that safe commissioning and good safeguarding practice with contractors is in place within schools and other services within the Council.

The current review of the guidance for the procurement and commissioning processes will further strengthen these safeguards and demonstrates the commitment of the Council to ensure that services and staff are appropriately supported in their safeguarding knowledge and practice.

SAFEGUARDING ACTIVITY PLAN [2025 – 2026]:

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME	RAG RATING
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	Quality Assurance sub-group GSB	March 2026	

will incorporate any amendments to the Section 5 PCM 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	
Safe recruitment of volunteers' process to be strengthened corporately to ensure consistency and good practice.	Safeguarding Unit WASG	March 2027	
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	Safeguarding Unit YOS	March 2026	

themes. This to include data from partner agencies including YOS			
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 Partner Agencies	Ongoing	
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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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	07-Mar-28	Strategic Equality Plan	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To To seek Council approval of the Strategic Equality Plan 2028-2033 in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty	Pennie Walker	
Council	31-Mar-27	Welsh Language Strategy	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To approve the publication of the Welsh Language Strategy 2027 - 2032 in line with the Welsh Language Standards.	Pennie Walker	19-Feb-26
Council	05-Mar-27	COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION AND REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR 2027/28	Ben Callard - Resources	To agree the Council tax resolution and Revenue and Capital budgets for 2027/28	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Council	04-Mar-27	COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION AND REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR 2027/28	Ben Callard - Resources	To agree the Council tax resolution and Revenue a	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Council	04-Mar-27	2027/28 Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources	To approve the Council's 2027/28 Capital and Treasury Management Strategies, including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy'	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Council	04-Mar-27	Adoption of Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP)2018-2033	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To consider adoption of RLDP following the public examination by PEDW	Craig O Connor	19-Feb-26
Cabinet	03-Mar-27	2027/28 Welsh Church Fund / Monmouthshire Farm treasury strategy & funding allocations	Ben Callard - Resources	To approve the 2027/28 Investment and Fund strategy for Trust Funds for which the Authority acts as sole or custodian trustee. To approve the 2027/28 grant allocation to Local Authority beneficiaries of the Welsh Church Fund.	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Cabinet	03-Mar-27	2027/28 Final Revenue & Capital budget proposals	Ben Callard - Resources	To update Cabinet with the consultation responses to the draft budget proposals issued by them in January 2027 in respect of the Capital and Revenue budgets for 2027/28. To make recommendations to Council on the Capital and Revenue budgets including the level of Council Tax for 2027/28. To receive the statutory report of the Responsible Financial Officer on the budget process and the adequacy of reserves. To receive the Responsible Financial Officer's Prudential Indicator calculations for capital financing.	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Cabinet	03-Mar-27	'Financial update report	Ben Callard - Resources	To provide Cabinet with an update of the progress against the Councils revenue and capital budgets for the 2026/27 financial year	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Cabinet	10-Feb-27	Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2027'	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To approve and adopt the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment	Ian Bakewell	30-Jul-26
Council	21-Jan-27	COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2027/28	Ben Callard - Resources	Present arrangements for the implementation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and approve it for 2027/28.	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Cabinet	20-Jan-27	2027/28 Draft Revenue & Capital budget proposals	Ben Callard - Resources	To set out draft revenue and capital budget proposals for financial year 2027/28. To commence a period of consultation on draft budget proposals for a four-week period.	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Cabinet	20-Jan-27	Caldicot Placemaking Plan	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To consider adoption of the Caldicot Place making Plan	Craig O Connor	19-Feb-26

ICMD	13-Jan-27	LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) ACT 1994 THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES (PRECEPTS) (WALES) REGULATIONS 1995 – Determination of Payment Schedule'	Ben Callard - Resources	To determine the schedule of precept payments to precepting authorities for 2027/28 as required by statute and following the results of the consultation process.'	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
ICMD	16-Dec-26	COUNCIL TAX BASE 2027/28 AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS	Ben Callard - Resources	To agree the Council Tax base figure for submission to Welsh Government, together with the collection rate to be applied for 2027/28 and to make other necessary related statutory decisions.	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Cabinet	09-Dec-26	Financial update report	Ben Callard - Resources	To provide Cabinet with an update of the progress against the Councils revenue and capital budgets for the 2026/27 financial year	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Cabinet	09-Dec-26	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Annual letter	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To fulfil the expectation of the PSOW that their report is brought to the attention of Cabinet.	Annette Evans	2-Mar-26
Cabinet	09-Dec-26	Strategic Risk Assessment	Ben Callard - Resources	To provide Cabinet with an overview of the current strategic risks facing the authority.	Hannah Carter	19-Feb-26
ICMD	18-Nov-26	LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) ACT 1994 THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES (PRECEPTS) (WALES) REGULATIONS 1995 – Proposed Payment Schedule	Ben Callard - Resources	To seek approval of the proposals for consultation purposes regarding payments to precepting authorities during the 2027/28 financial year as required by statute.	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Council	12-Nov-26	Annual Director's Report for Social Care	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding	Present the annual report to Council	Jane Rodgers	3-Mar-26
Council	12-Nov-26	Safeguarding Annual Evaluation Report	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding	Present the annual evaluation of safeguarding across Council services	Jane Rodgers	3-Mar-26
Cabinet	11-Nov-26	Council of Sanctuary: Ukraine Support	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To confirm the future support arrangements for Ukrainian families living in Monmouthshire and local groups and families who continue to welcome and assist them.	Matt Gatehouse	16-Sep-26
Cabinet	11-Nov-26	Children Looked After Sufficiency Plan	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding	To set out the steps the Local Authority will take in pursuance of its duties to secure accommodation for Children Looked After	Jane Rodgers	26-Aug-26
Cabinet	11-Nov-26	2027/28 Revenue & Capital MTFP update and process	Ben Callard - Resources	To provide the latest six-monthly update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), reflecting updated assumptions, risks, and strategic context	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Cabinet	11-Nov-26	Monmouthshire Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) 2026 Submission	Sara Burch - Rural, Tourism & Housing	To seek Cabinet Approval for the 2026 submission of the ATNM in line with the Active Travel Act duties	Nick Tulp	3-Sep-26
Cabinet	11-Nov-26	Monmouth Wye AT Bridge Land	Ben Callard - Resources	To seek Cabinet permission to purchase land for the proposed Monmouth Wye Active Travel Bridge.	Nick Tulp	3-Jun-26
ICMD	21-Oct-26	Planning Annual Performance Review (APR) 2025/26	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To provide the Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Development with a report on the performance of the Council's Planning Service for the financial year period 2025-26.	Andrew Jones	4-Sep-26
Cabinet	14-Oct-26	Abergavenny Active Travel - Llanfoist Links Construction award	Sara Burch	To seek Cabinet approval to enter into a construction contract for the Llanfoist Links element of the Abergavenny bridge AT project.	Nick Tulp	1-Sep-26
Cabinet	14-Oct-26	Monmouthshire STEM Skills Centre	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To approve the training provider/college to deliver the STEM Skills Centre	Hannah Jones	30-Jul-26

Cabinet	14-Oct-26	Scrutiny Self Evaluation 2025-2026 and Mid Term Reports of the Scrutiny Committees	Angela Sandles	To report to Cabinet the findings of the Scrutiny Self-Evaluation to continue improvement of the scrutiny function and to report the workings of the four Scrutiny Committees over 2025-Summer 2026.	Hazel Ilett	26-Aug-26
Cabinet	14-Oct-26	Adoption of a Protocol for the Award of Freedom of the County	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	This report proposes the adoption of a protocol which will clarify the nomination process and the way in which the Freedom of the County will be awarded in future.	Joe Skidmore	7-Sep-26
Cabinet	14-Oct-26	Community Asset Transfer - Raglan MUGA	Ben Callard - Resources	To consider the Community Asset Transfer of the Raglan MUGA and adjacent field to Raglan Community Council	Nick Keyse	10-Sep-26
Cabinet	14-Oct-26	Financial update report	Ben Callard - Resources	To provide Cabinet with an update of the progress against the Councils revenue budget for the 2026/27 financial year.	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Council	24-Sep-26	Highways Reactive Maintenance	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	To respond to a motion from Cllr Kear to consider opportunities to improve existing highways reactive repairs methodology	Deb Hill Howells	25-Jun-26
Council	24-Sep-26	Self-Assessment Report 2025/26	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To seek Council approval of the self-assessment report 2025/26 to ensure that members have a clear and transparent assessment of the authority's performance during the year ending 31 March 2026 in line with requirements outlined in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.	Hannah Carter	10-Feb-26
Council	24-Sep-26	Appointment to the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority	Angela Sandles	To appoint a member of the executive to represent the council on the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority in line with The Fire and Rescue Services (National Framework and Variation of Combination Schemes) (Wales) Order 2026	James Williams	17-Jul-26
Cabinet	16-Sep-26	Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To approve the undertaking of the statutory Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment for completion by 24th February 2027.	Ian Bakewell	30-Jul-26
Cabinet	16-Sep-26	A Gwent Regional Workforce Development Team for Social care	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding	To seek approval to move into a Gwent Regional Workforce Development Team	Jane Rodgers	12-Aug-26
Cabinet	16-Sep-26	Local Flood Risk Management Strategy	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	To seek Cabinet approval of the new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.	Ross Price	2-Jun-26
ICMD	09-Sep-26	Transfer of Archive	Sara Burch - Rural, Tourism & Housing	Consideration of archive material from Monmouth Museum Collections to be transferred to Gwent Archives.	Lowri Jenkins / Rachael Rogers	7-Aug-26

ICMD	12-Aug-26	Highways Traffic Amendment Order 19 ICMD Report	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	To seek Cabinet Member approval to make and implement Amendment Order No. 19 to The Monmouthshire County Council Traffic Regulation, Speed Limits and Parking Regulations Consolidation Order 2019, comprising a proposed 7.5 tonne structural weight restriction on the A4077 Gilwern Viaduct, the revocation of the prohibition of motor vehicles on Glynwood Road, Pontyseison, Tintern, and a proposed term-time School Street (Prohibition of Driving) restriction on Harold Road, Abergavenny, following completion of the statutory consultation process.	Gareth Freeman	17-Jul-26
Council	16-Jul-26	Response to Council motion: Review of Council and Pension Fund Investments	Ben Callard - Resources	To provide Council with an update on progress made in response to the motion agreed at Full Council on 18th September 2025 concerning the review of Monmouthshire County Council's own treasury investments and the request that the Greater Gwent (Torfaen) Pension Fund reviews relevant pension fund investments.	Peter Davies	8-Jul-26
Cabinet	08-Jul-26	Disposal of land to rear of 40 Leechpool Holdings	Ben Callard - Resources	To seek approval for the disposal of land adjacent to number 40 Leechpool Holdings, Portskewett.	Nick Keyse	22-Jun-26
Cabinet	08-Jul-26	Adoption of the Charter for the Rights of the Rivers	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	To seek Cabinet approval for the adoption of the Charter for the Rights of Rivers in Monmouthshire, following the motion agreed by Council on 25 June 2026.	Craig O Connor	29-Jun-26
Cabinet	08-Jul-26	Development of Supported Accommodation Provision (Updated Business Case)	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding	To acquire and refurbish a property in Monmouth for the purposes of developing a supported accommodation provision for care experienced young people.	Jane Rodgers	19-Jun-26
Cabinet	08-Jul-26	Financial update report	Ben Callard - Resources	To provide Cabinet with information on the Authority's final financial results for the 2025/26 financial year in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme, and associated reserves position. To update Cabinet on the early indicative progress against the 2026/27 revenue budget.	Jon Davies	15-Jun-26
Cabinet	08-Jul-26	Statutory consultation regarding Durand Nursery	Laura Wright - Education	Following the Statutory Objection Period, this report seeks to provide Cabinet with final feedback on the Statutory consultation process concerning the nursery at Durand Primary School, and asks Cabinet Members for a decision on whether proposals should proceed to implementation	Matthew Jones	5-May-26
Cabinet	08-Jul-26	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 2026, setting out how the authority will build on existing practice and work collaboratively with trade unions to ensure compliance with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.	Philippa Green	9-Feb-26

Cabinet	08-Jul-26	Chief Officer decision for acquisition of plots of land for the Undy to Rogiet Severn Tunnel Junction (STJ) Links active travel route'	Ben Callard - Resources	To seek authorisation to proceed with the purchase of a defined number of parcels of land for provision for an active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) path alongside the B4245 between Undy and Rogiet, and to request authority to agree terms to be delegated to the Chief Officer for Infrastructure and the Cabinet Member for Resources, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing and Tourism. '	Madeleine Boase	
Council	25-Jun-26	Chepstow Transport Update		Cllr Pavia submitted a motion to Council requesting: 1. An update on the current status of previous commitments made by the Council in the Chepstow Transport Study 2. Available options for progressing WeITAG Stage 3 3. A clear timetable for engagement and decision-making with Gloucestershire County Council, Welsh Government and UK Government Partners. This report seeks to respond to the motion by providing the requested information.	Deb Hill Howells	5-Jun-26
Council	25-Jun-26	Code of Corporate Governance	Ben Callard - Resources	For Full Council to approve the revised Code of Corporate Governance and it's inclusion into the Councils Constitution following it's endorsement by the Governance & Audit Committee on 16/04/26.	Jan Furtek	7-May-26
Council	25-Jun-26	Re:fit Phase 2	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	To seek approval to submit a Salix loan application to enable MCC to progress with the next programme of energy efficiency works.	Deb Hill Howells	9-Apr-26
Council	25-Jun-26	Panel Performance Assessment	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To receive the Panel Performance Assessment report and the authority's response to the recommendations.	Matt Gatehouse	17-Mar-26
Cabinet	10-Jun-26	Llanfoist to Abergavenny Active Travel Bridge	Sara Burch - Rural, Tourism & Housing	To update cabinet on the progress of the Llanfoist to Abergavenny active travel bridge project and to seek approval to enter into the stage 2 contract with updated cost figures	Nick Tulp	10-May-26
Cabinet	10-Jun-26	Building the Foundations for Data and AI Enabled Public Services	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To present the business case for foundational investment in data and AI infrastructure necessary to secure programme funding and deliver sustainable service benefits and outcomes.	Peter Davies	27-Apr-26
Cabinet	10-Jun-26	Investment Package for Caldicot Leisure Centre	Angela Sandles - Engagement	Consideration of proposed investment to improve facilities at Caldicot Leisure Centre	Craig O Connor	19-Feb-26
Cabinet	10-Jun-26	Strategic Risk Assessment	Ben Callard - Resources	To provide Cabinet with an overview of the current strategic risks facing the authority.	Hannah Carter	19-Feb-26
Cabinet	10-Jun-26	Allocation of Crick Road S106 Offsite Recreation Funding - Portskewett Recreation Hall and Caldicot Skatepark	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To seek Cabinet approval for the allocation of Section 106 offsite recreation funding received from the Crick Road development towards Portskewett Recreation Hall and Caldicot Skatepark	Mike Moran	
Cabinet	20-May-26	S106 Affordbale Housing Contributions	Sara Burch	To recommend options to commit and spend some of the contributions	Louise Corbett	#

Cabinet	20-May-26	Self Assessment	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To enable Cabinet to input to the development of the authority's Self Assessment at an early stage. The assessment will subsequently be considered by scrutiny committees before being subject to a decision of full Council in September	Matt Gatehouse	20-Apr-26
Cabinet	20-May-26	Panel Performance Assessment	Mary Ann Brocklesby - Whole Authority Strategy	To consider the Panel Performance Assessment report and the council's response to the recommendations	Matt Gatehouse	20-Apr-26
ICMD	20-May-26	REVOKING THE USK AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA ORDER 2005	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To request the Cabinet Member (Cllr Angela Sandles) to agree to the revocation of the Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005.	Huw Owen	9-Apr-26
Council	14/05/26	Local Resolution Protocol	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To seek Council's approval and adoption of a new Local Resolution Protocol to deal with low level member on member complaints in accordance with the guidance of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales'	James Williams	15-Apr-26
Council	14/05/26	Appointments to Outside Bodies	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To appoint representatives to serve on outside bodies.'	John Pearson	15-Apr-26
Council	14/05/26	Appointment of Committees	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To appoint representatives to serve on outside bodies.'	John Pearson	15-Apr-26
Council	14-May-26	Representation of Political Groups	Angela Sandles - Engagement	To review the representation of different political groups on the bodies to which the Council makes appointments pursuant to Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.	James Williams	15-Apr-26
Cabinet	15-Apr-26	Consultation concerning the provision of Early Education at Durand Primary School	Laura Wright - Education	To provide Members with feedback following the statutory consultation process concerning proposals to replace the Local Authority Nursery with a non maintained setting at Durand Primary School	Matthew Jones	4-Mar-26
ICMD	08-Apr-26	Goldwire Lane ICMD - Prohibition of Driving Except for Access, Goldwire Lane, Monmouth	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	To seek Cabinet Member approval to proceed to make permanent the MCC Goldwire Lane prohibition of driving (except for access) traffic order	Graham Kinsella	26-Mar-26
ICMD	08-Apr-26	Welsh Church Fund Working Group	Ben Callard - Resources	The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet on the Schedule of Applications for the Welsh Church Fund Working Group Meeting 4 held on Thursday 05th March 2026.	Dave Jarrett	6-Mar-26
Cabinet	30-Mar-26	Proposed acquisition of land to construct a road diversion at Llanthony Valley	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	To seek Cabinet approval to the acquisition of land to enable the Highway Authority to construct a road realignment away from the land slip at Llanthony Valley.	Deb Hill Howells	19-Feb-26
Council	05-Mar-26	PUBLICATION OF PAY POLICY STATEMENT AS REQUIRED BY THE LOCALISM ACT	Ben Callard - Resources	To approve the publication of Monmouthshire County Council's Pay Policy, in compliance with the Localism Act.	Philippa Green	14-Jan-26
Council	05-Mar-26	2026/27 Capital Strategy and 2026/27 Treasury Management Strategy	Ben Callard - Resources	To approve the Council's 2026/27 Capital and Treasury Management Strategies, including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy.	Jon Davies	3-Dec-25
Council	05-Mar-26	COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION and REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR 2026/27	Ben Callard - Resources		Jon Davies	3-Dec-25
Council	05-Mar-26	Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025 - 2028	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding	Reason is to endorse a new Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2025 - 2028	Jane Rodgers	24-Oct-25

Cabinet	04-Mar-26	To agree funding options for additional work at the former Deri View Primary School Site	Ben Callard - Resources	To review and agree funding options for additional work at the former Deri View Primary school site, this needs to be completed prior to the relocation of Ysgol Y Fenni to the site.	Nikki Wellington	16-Feb-26
Cabinet	04-Mar-26	Monmouthshire Draft Local Growth Fund Investment Plan	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To present to elected members UK Government's new Local Growth Fund and Monmouthshire Draft Fund Investment Plan.	Hannah Jones	12-Feb-26
Cabinet	04-Mar-26	Property Acquisition for use as Temporary Accommodation - withdrawn 11/02/26	Sara Burch	To seek authorisation to proceed with the purchase of a residential 3 bed property and continue to use it as a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) to support pressures linked to the availability of temporary accommodation.	Louise Corbett	2-Feb-26
Cabinet	04-Mar-26	To consider the purchase of a Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) property Castlewood	Sara Burch	To consider the purchase of a Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) property Castlewood, Usk following receipt of the owner's intent to sell	Louise Corbett	2-Feb-26
Cabinet	04-Mar-26	Revenue and Capital Budget 2026-27 – Final proposals following scrutiny and public consultation	Ben Callard - Resources	To update Cabinet with the consultation responses to the draft budget proposals issued in respect of the Capital and Revenue budgets for 2026/27. To make recommendations to Council on the Capital and Revenue budgets including the level of Council Tax for 2026/27. To receive the statutory report of the Responsible Financial Officer on the budget process and the adequacy of reserves. To receive the Responsible Financial Officer's Prudential Indicator calculations for capital financing.	Jon Davies	3-Dec-25
Cabinet	04-Mar-26	2026-27 WCF/Mon Farm treasury strategy	Ben Callard - Resources	To present to Cabinet for approval the 2026/27 Investment and Fund strategy for Trust Funds for which the Authority acts as sole or custodian trustee. To approve the 2026/27 grant allocation to Local Authority beneficiaries of the Welsh Church Fund.	Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
ICMD	25-Feb-26	Submission of Section 6 Biodiversity duty report to WG	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	To submit report outlining how the Council maintains and enhances biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems	Craig O Connor	7-Jan-26
Cabinet	11-Feb-26	Development of a Supported Accommodation Provision for Care Experienced Young People	Ian Chandler - Social Care & Safeguarding	To provide details and seek approval for the acquisition and refurbishing of a residential property in Monmouth for the purpose of developing a supported accommodation provision for care experienced children.	Jane Rodgers	16-Jan-26
Cabinet	11-Feb-26	26/27 Placemaking Delivery	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To agree funding allocations for Welsh Government Transforming Towns and Pride in Place. Impact Fund.	Craig O Connor	19-Dec-25
Cabinet	11-Feb-26	2025/26 Budget - Financial update 3	Ben Callard - Resources	To provide the third update of the financial year of the Councils progress against the 2025/26 revenue and capita budget	Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
Cabinet	11-Feb-26	Cultural Strategy	Sara Burch		Tracey Thomas	20-May-25

ICMD	28-Jan-26	Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 The Local Authorities (PRECEPTS) (WALES) Regulations 1995 - Determination of Payment Schedule	Ben Callard - Resources	To determine the schedule of precept payments to precepting authorities for 2026/27 as required by statute and following the results of the consultation process.	Ruth Donovan	28-Jan-26
Council	22-Jan-26	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026/27	Ben Callard - Resources	The purpose of this report is to: • present arrangements for the implementation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and to approve it for 2026/27. • agree to adopt the amendments to the Regulations, proposed by Welsh Government, • affirm that annual uprating amendments will be carried out each year without a requirement to adopt the whole Council Tax Reduction Scheme.	Ruth Donovan	28-Nov-25
Cabinet	21-Jan-26	Review of Nursery provision at Durand Primary School	Laura Wright - Education	To seek permission to enter into statutory consultation processes regarding proposals to replace the Local Authority Nursery at Durand Primary School with a non maintained setting.	Matthew Jones	23/12/25
Cabinet	21-Jan-26	Disposal of two farm cottages at Leechpool Holdings	Ben Callard - Resources	To seek approval for the disposal of two vacant farm cottages located in Leechpool Holdings, Portskewett, identified as surplus to requirements following internal review with services that no longer have an identified need.	Nick Keyse	26-Nov-25
Cabinet	21-Jan-26	Agree S106 Funding for Caldicot Multi-User Route that connects the newly constructed Caldicot Links/Greenway Active Travel route with the Country Park	Sara Burch	To agree additional funding for the Caldicot Multi-User Route	Colette Bosley	15-Oct-25
Cabinet	21-Jan-26	2026/27 Draft Revenue & Capital budget proposals	Ben Callard - Resources	To seek the cabinet members approval of the 2024/25 Annual Health and Safety Report including priorities for 2025/26	Jon Davies	12-Jun-25
ICMD	14-Jan-26	Annual Health and Safety Report 2024/25	Ben Callard - Resources		Kate Thompson	19-Dec-25
ICMD	14-Jan-26	Revoking the Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005	Angela Sandles - Engagement		Huw Owen	17-Dec-25
ICMD	14-Jan-26	Welsh Church Fund Working Group	Ben Callard - Resources		Dave Jarrett	10-Dec-25
ICMD	14-Jan-26	Museum Service - Collections Rationalisation	Sara Burch - Rural Affairs, Housing and Tourism	To agree the removal of 2 collections - one of newspapers and one of books from the museum collections, to offer to more appropriate homes. (This is part of a series of similar decisions)	Rachael Rogers	2-Dec-25
ICMD	17-Dec-25	Council Tax Base 2026/27 and associated matters	Ben Callard - Resources	To agree the Council Tax base figure for submission to Welsh Government, together with the collection rate to be applied for 2026/27 and to make other necessary related statutory decisions.	Ruth Donovan	28-Nov-25

ICMD	17-Dec-25	Various Traffic Regulation Orders - Amendment Order No 18	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	The report seeks Cabinet Member approval to proceed with the making and implementation of the MCC Traffic Regulation, speed limit and parking regulations Consolidation Order 2019 (Amendment Order No.18) 2025	Gareth Freeman	26-Nov-25
ICMD	17-Dec-25	Annual Performance Report - Planning	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	Report the Annual Performance Report to Welsh Government	Andrew Jones	15-Oct-25

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Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
29th September 2026 (Invited People Scrutiny Members for Social Care and Safeguarding)	2026/27 Financial Update	To scrutinise progress against the Council's revenue budget for the 2026/27 financial year.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
	Annual Director's Report for Social Care	To scrutinise the progress and strategic direction for the service area.	Jane Rodgers Diane Corrister Jenny Jenkins Cllr Chandler	Performance Reporting
	Safeguarding Annual Evaluation Report	To scrutinise the performance of safeguarding arrangements.	Jane Rodgers Jessica Scarisbrick Cllr Chandler	Performance Reporting
13th October (Special)	2027/28 Revenue & Capital MTFP update and process	To scrutinise the latest six-monthly update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), reflecting updated assumptions, risks, and strategic context.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
	Planning APR	To scrutinise the annual performance report prior to submission to Welsh Government.	Andrew Jones Craig O'Connor Cllr Griffiths	Performance Reporting
	Task & Finish Group draft report	<i>To scrutinise the findings and recommendations of the committee's Task & Finish Group.</i>	<i>Nicola Wellington Will McLean Cllr Wright?</i>	<i>Performance Reporting</i>
To Note 17th November 2026	Day Opportunities Service	Scrutiny of proposed services.	Jane Rodgers Jenny Jenkins Councillor Chandler	Pre-decision Scrutiny

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
People Scrutiny Committee ~ Invite to P&O Members	Domiciliary Care Update	To scrutinise an update on service provision.	Jane Rodgers Jenny Jenkins Councillor Chandler	Service Review
	Care Inspectorate Wales Report (Invite P&O)	To scrutinise the outcomes of a Care Inspectorate Wales audit into Adult Services (Assurance Check)	Jenny Jenkins Ceri York Counillor Chandler	External Audit
24th November 2026	2026/27 Financial Update	To scrutinise progress against the Council's revenue and capital budgets for the 2026/27 financial year.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
	Infrastructure Project Management	To scrutinise project management arrangements in Infrastructure.	Nick Tulp Deb Hill-Howells	Performance Reporting
	NEET Reduction Strategy	To scrutinise the strategy's performance. [1 page summary – see previous minutes]	Hannah Jones Louise Wilce Cllr Griffiths	Performance Monitoring
27th January 2027	2027/28 draft Budget proposals (invite other members?)	Draft Revenue & Capital budget proposals – To scrutinise the 2025/26 Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Budget Monitoring
	Strategic Risk Assessment (Additional Business?)	To scrutinise the overview of the current strategic risks facing the authority and suggest any further topics for scrutiny.	Hannah Carter Richard Jones Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting
23rd February 2027	2026/27 Financial Update Report	To scrutinise the budgetary position (revenue and capital) for services falling within the committee's remit.	Jonathan Davies Peter Davies Cllr Callard	Performance Reporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
23 rd March 2027				
To be confirmed	Procurement Annual report	To scrutinise the performance and working arrangements.	Peter Davies Gemma Ellis Rhys James Cath Fallon	Performance Reporting
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	Grants item – with People members?* +	To scrutinise the Council's use of grant money, to assure that it is fit for purpose.	Jonathan Davies	Performance Monitoring
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	Curriculum Impact	<i>To scrutinise the impact of the new curriculum on learners and results.</i>	<i>Will McLean Sharon Randall-Smith Ed Pryce Cllr Wright</i>	<i>Performance Reporting</i>
To be confirmed	Recruitment and retention	<i>Effect on the Council's performance and ability to deliver.</i>		

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2025-26

Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
<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>	
<i>To be confirmed Spring 2027 (23rd March?)</i>	Development of Children's Placements – 12mth update	<i>To update the committee following scrutiny in April 26.</i>	<i>Jane Rodgers Scott Hereford Diane Corrister Cllr Chandler</i>	<i>Performance Reporting</i>

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

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk on Tuesday, 30th June, 2026 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Alistair Neill (Chair)

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

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Peter Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources
Jonathan Davies, Head of Finance/Section 151
Matthew Gatehouse, Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.
Richard Jones, Performance and Data Insight Manager
Will McLean, Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Dave Loder, Finance Manager - Directorate Management Accountant
Tyrone Stokes, Finance Manager
Nikki Wellington, Finance and Support Services Manager
Deb Hill-Howells, Chief Officer Infrastructure
Stacey Jones, Performance/Finance and Resources Manager
Craig O'Connor, Chief Officer, Place and Community Well-being

APOLOGIES: Councillors John Crook and C. Werrett

1. Apologies for Absence

John Crook and Clare Werrett.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Public Open Forum

None.

4. 2025/26 Financial Outturn Report - To scrutinise the budgetary position (revenue and capital) for services falling within the committee's remit

Cabinet Member Ben Callard introduced the report with Jonathan Davies, and they answered the members' questions with Will Mclean and Deb Hill-Howells.

Questions:

Six primary schools have deficits of more than £100,000 and only one appears to have reduced its deficit during the year. Are the school recovery plans proving effective, and why are some schools continuing to struggle while others hold significant surpluses?

School deficits have been recognised as a significant financial risk for several years and recovery plans were always expected to take a number of years to achieve results. The largest factor affecting school budgets is staffing costs, which make up the majority of school expenditure. Where pupil numbers are lower, schools receive less funding, but many staffing costs remain fixed because classes still require teaching staff regardless of whether there are 20, 25 or 30 pupils. Education and finance officers are working with schools to support the delivery of recovery plans. However, it is disappointing that some deficits are continuing to increase rather than showing a clear downward trend. Schools, governing bodies, education officers and finance teams all have a role in ensuring that spending decisions are prudent and contribute to financial recovery.

The financial position is also being affected by wider pressures. Additional Learning Needs (ALN) are creating significant costs across schools, with schools often providing support beyond what can be funded centrally by the local authority. Staffing pressures and workforce volatility are adding further costs, while a small number of schools have experienced exceptional circumstances, including prolonged absences of senior staff, which have generated additional expenditure. In some cases, recovery plans may involve an initial increase in deficits before improvements are realised because of the timing of staffing changes.

Are school deficits largely explained by common pressures such as ALN, or are there school-specific factors that explain why some schools are performing differently from others?

Additional Learning Needs pressures are a significant common factor affecting many schools and are contributing to rising expenditure. Staffing pressures are also being experienced across the school system and are placing budgets under increasing strain. However, common pressures do not explain all of the variation between schools. Some schools are facing particular local circumstances, including exceptional staffing issues and other factors that have increased costs. As a result, there is no single explanation for the differences in financial performance between schools.

Further detailed examination is therefore needed to understand why some schools facing similar pressures are managing to maintain balanced budgets or surpluses while others are experiencing significant and growing deficits. Identifying the relative importance of county-wide pressures and school-specific factors will be an important part of understanding the causes of the largest deficits and the effectiveness of recovery plans.

What are the current council tax and business rates collection rates compared with last year, and how are these expected to progress in the coming year?

Council tax collection remains a live financial risk for 2026/27. The issue is not solely about collection performance, but also the combined impact of affordability pressures on households, increasing levels of discounts and exemptions, and growing arrears. During 2025/26, the council experienced a pressure of approximately £345,000 in relation to council tax collection, although this was offset by favourable movements elsewhere within the service.

It cannot be assumed that these favourable offsets will continue into 2026/27, and even relatively small changes in collection rates can have a significant impact on council finances because council tax is such an important source of funding. Collection performance and arrears trends will therefore require close monitoring throughout the year. At the same time, recovery action will need to be proportionate and sensitive to the cost-of-living pressures being experienced by residents, particularly in light of new regulations governing debt recovery processes.

Are there any budget pressures or services that are currently being sustained by one-off grants or reserves that could create problems in future years?

The positive financial position achieved in 2025/26 was supported in part by year-end funding and grant financing. While this has helped the council adapt to a challenging financial environment, underlying service pressures remain and will not disappear when one-off funding ends. There is a need to continue finding ways to address these pressures either through ongoing grant support or through organisational change and transformation programmes. The financial outturn should therefore be viewed in the context of continuing pressures that still need to be managed over the longer term.

Are there any emerging financial risks or concerns that are not fully reflected in the report?

Social care remains one of the council's most significant areas of financial risk. Demand-led services can experience substantial fluctuations in expenditure, and relatively small changes in the number or complexity of cases can create major budget pressures. The cost of supporting individuals with high levels of need can be particularly significant. In addition to social care, the council continues to monitor risks associated with council tax collection, inflation, pay awards and other demand pressures. Early identification and management of emerging trends will be essential, and financial monitoring reports throughout 2026/27 will be used to assess whether any developing pressures require corrective action.

Demand for the Pupil Referral Service (PRS) continues to increase. What proportion of this increase is due to worsening pupil needs, and what proportion reflects mainstream schools being unable to cope?

The nature of the PRS has changed significantly since the pandemic. Before the pandemic, the service supported only a small number of pupils, mainly those in Years 10 and 11 who were at risk of permanent exclusion, together with a small number of children unable to attend school because of serious illness or injury. Since the

pandemic, demand has increased substantially. One major factor has been a significant rise in the number of pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion and require alternative provision. The service is also supporting children whose placements in independent specialist schools have broken down because of the complexity of their needs. However, the largest area of growth has been children who are educated other than at school because they are medically unable to attend, particularly those experiencing anxiety and other social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

The increase in demand therefore reflects both growing levels of need among pupils and the requirement to provide appropriate education for children whose needs cannot currently be met through existing arrangements.

What is the average length of time that a pupil spends in the Pupil Referral Service before successfully returning to mainstream education, and is this improving?

The average length of time spent in the PRS was not available at the meeting and officers committed to providing this information subsequently. – **ACTION: to provide information on the average length of time pupils spend in the PRS before returning to mainstream education.** However, there has been a noticeable improvement over the last two years in returning pupils who are at risk of exclusion back into mainstream education. The service is increasingly operating as a turnaround provision, helping learners re-engage with education before returning to school. Despite this progress, some pupils may remain in the service for extended periods. In certain cases, pupils may enter the provision in Years 7 or 8 and remain there until the end of their compulsory education. This is not the intended purpose of the service, which seeks wherever possible to support children to return to mainstream education.

If demand continues to rise over the next two years, what is the service's capacity limit before standards or statutory duties are put at risk?

No specific capacity limit was identified during the discussion. However, the service was described as being under significant pressure due to increasing demand and the complexity of pupil needs. The PRS budget is challenging, and work is underway between education officers and finance colleagues to develop a more sustainable model for the future. The service must continue to respond to a wide range of individual circumstances, including pupils at risk of exclusion, children with highly complex needs and those unable to attend school because of physical or mental health issues. Managing this growing demand while maintaining appropriate provision remains a significant challenge.

What are the wider implications of the rise in anxiety and mental health issues among young people, and how are schools responding?

Schools are increasingly investing in early intervention and support to help children manage anxiety and other emotional wellbeing issues. This includes nurture provision, small-group support and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs), who are specially trained to support pupils' emotional needs. Mainstream schools are working to become more inclusive so that a wider range of pupils can be supported within ordinary school settings. However, there is often a tension between providing the intensive

support some children need and the financial costs associated with smaller groups and additional staff.

Particular challenges arise when pupils move from primary to secondary education. The transition from a familiar primary environment to a much larger and more complex secondary setting can be difficult for some learners. Schools are therefore working more closely together across the primary-secondary transition to minimise disruption and ensure pupils receive appropriate support. The focus is on creating inclusive learning environments that support all pupils, recognising that anxiety and emotional difficulties can affect any child at different points in their education. Officers indicated that providing this support within mainstream schools is a key priority, although it is increasingly challenging in the current financial climate.

Appendix 7 shows a surplus balance of approximately £2.668 million for the Welsh-medium school and nursery project. Is this money still available for development of the school or a future site, or is it no longer under local control?

The surplus relates to funding that had originally been allocated to support the planned development work involving Ysgol Gymraeg Trefynwy and the provision in Usk. However, following the discovery of significant issues on the proposed site, that particular programme of work will not proceed in its original form. The funding has not been identified as lost; instead, discussions are ongoing with the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium education division regarding how future support for the school can be provided. Any future development proposals will be subject to a further capital funding bid to Welsh Government. As a result, the balance reflects funding associated with the original project, but the next steps for investment will depend on future proposals and discussions with Welsh Government.

When a pupil is permanently excluded and moves into the Pupil Referral Service (PRS), does the funding allocated for that pupil follow them into the service?

Yes. When a pupil is permanently excluded and moves into the PRS, a proportion of the funding associated with that pupil transfers from the original school. Specifically, the remaining proportion of the pupil's funding for that academic year is allocated either to the new school in the case of a managed move or to the PRS where appropriate. However, this transfer only recovers a relatively small proportion of the actual cost of provision. For example, the funding associated with a secondary school pupil may be around £5,000 per year, but the level of support required by a pupil entering the PRS can be significantly higher than the funding transferred. As a result, the funding that follows the pupil does not cover the full cost of providing.

To what extent does the council's reported surplus rely on one-off funding, treasury movements and capital receipts, and what level of dependence does this create on funding that may not be available in future years?

The council's positive financial outturn was supported by a combination of one-off grants, grant funding received later in the financial year, favourable treasury management outcomes and corporate budget movements. It is difficult to produce a single figure showing the overall value of this support because grant funding often affects multiple budgets simultaneously. For example, additional late-year funding for

Additional Learning Needs was distributed across schools, the PRS and central education budgets rather than benefiting a single service area. The council has sought to maximise the use of grant funding where possible by aligning eligible expenditure with available grants, which has helped protect the core revenue budget. In addition, the council benefited from not having to draw on a contingency budget of just under £900,000 that had been set aside to manage financial risks during the year.

While the outturn reflects prudent financial management, it is recognised that some elements of the position were supported by one-off factors. The council therefore continues to work with Welsh Government and other partners to secure greater certainty around funding streams and reduce reliance on short-term or annually allocated grants. The budget for 2026/27 has not been built on the assumption that additional unbudgeted grants will be received during the year. It has been based on known funding allocations. Support from capital receipts continues within the budget, but this is planned to reduce over time. Approximately £2.7 million of capital receipts are being used in 2026/27 to support organisational change, with this funding expected to taper down to zero over the following two to three years. – **ACTION: to provide further information quantifying the contribution made by grants, treasury movements, capital receipts and other non-recurring measures to the final outturn position.**

The report shows an overspend on fleet maintenance of approximately £325,000, while there is also an underspend in the capital budget for vehicle replacement. Why is the council continuing to incur higher maintenance costs on an ageing fleet while not spending all of the available capital funding for fleet replacement?

The position reflects the challenges of transitioning the fleet to ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs) in line with Welsh Government requirements. The council is replacing vehicles where possible, but for some vehicle types, particularly refuse collection vehicles, leasing arrangements are currently being used rather than purchasing replacements. This is because suitable ULEV alternatives that can operate effectively within Monmouthshire's geography and service requirements are not yet readily available.

The transition to low-emission vehicles also involves higher costs, with replacement ULEV vehicles often costing significantly more than conventional vehicles. Delays to the depot redevelopment programme, linked to the Replacement Local Development Plan process, have also affected the timing of some capital expenditure. The maintenance overspend is not solely due to an ageing fleet. Additional costs arise when vehicles are involved in accidents and temporary replacement vehicles need to be hired. There have also been instances where newly purchased vehicles have developed faults and had to be returned to manufacturers, requiring the council to hire replacement vehicles. To address these issues, a Fleet Management Board has been established to examine maintenance costs, vehicle utilisation, fleet size and driver behaviour, with the aim of reducing future expenditure.

Is the main issue with introducing ultra-low emission vehicles a lack of vehicle availability, with councils competing for a limited supply of suitable vehicles?

The issue is not primarily one of vehicle availability. The main challenge is that the available electric refuse collection vehicles do not currently provide the operational

range required to serve Monmouthshire's geography and routes effectively. Welsh Government guidance sets deadlines for transitioning fleets to low-emission vehicles, including a target of replacing heavy goods vehicles by 2030. However, the council's current assessment is that existing electric refuse collection vehicles cannot yet meet operational requirements. Work is therefore being undertaken with specialist consultants to review collection routes and service operations to identify how the council can transition to ULEV-equivalent vehicles in the future.

Following the recent Welsh Government supplementary budget, is there any indication of how much additional funding the council is likely to receive?

At the time of the meeting, the only clear additional funding identified for local authorities from the supplementary budget related to school maintenance and education capital investment. No further allocations had yet been confirmed. Officers indicated that they were continuing to review the information available and would provide updates should further details emerge about funding that may benefit the council.

What is meant by the £45 million of capital slippage reported in the outturn, why has it occurred, and does it indicate that planned projects are not being delivered as expected?

The majority of the reported capital slippage reflects the rephasing of approved schemes rather than the loss of funding or failure to deliver projects. Many capital projects are multi-year in nature, and expenditure does not always occur in the year originally profiled. A variety of factors have contributed to the slippage, including grant conditions, external approvals, design and feasibility work, procurement processes, contractor availability and internal capacity constraints. In some cases, budgets were initially phased into a single year and subsequently needed to be carried forward when projects took longer than anticipated.

A review was undertaken of the schemes proposed for slippage to ensure they remained realistic, affordable and deliverable. Some proposed carry-forwards, particularly in property maintenance and infrastructure, were not supported because there were concerns about affordability or deliverability, and these schemes will require further assessment before future funding is approved. The focus for 2026/27 will be on improving project delivery, profiling and management to ensure that schemes progress in line with expectations.

What is the rationale for using £3.55 million of capital receipts to support revenue expenditure?

The £3.55 million has been used under the capitalisation directive to fund organisational change and service transformation activity that would otherwise have needed to be financed from the council's limited revenue reserves. This approach has been used for around six or seven years and supports programmes that are intended to improve service efficiency, transform service delivery and reduce longer-term costs. The expenditure funded in this way is detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

The use of capital receipts is considered an important tool in supporting organisational change. It has allowed investment in transformation activity while preserving revenue

reserves, which are relatively low compared with many other authorities. Officers indicated that evidence of success should be seen through more efficient service delivery and reduced costs arising from these transformation programmes.

Previous discussions highlighted concerns that major capital projects were not always benefiting from dedicated project management. What progress has been made in introducing project management arrangements for major capital schemes?

The council has appointed three dedicated project managers within the Infrastructure service and they are expected to take up their posts during the summer. These officers will lead the delivery of major infrastructure projects, including schemes such as Llanfoist Bridge, Old Dixon Bridge and other significant structures projects. Previously, project management responsibilities were often undertaken by consultants, in-house designers or lead engineers alongside their existing duties. Given the scale and complexity of the capital programme, this was not considered sustainable. The introduction of dedicated project managers is intended to improve project delivery, oversight and communication with members, residents and businesses. Officers advised that an update on the new arrangements is expected to be brought to scrutiny later in the year.

You mentioned that the pool of capital receipts is becoming restricted. What does that mean and what are the implications?

The council's available capital receipts are projected to reduce significantly over the medium term. As a result, the amount of capital receipts available to support the revenue budget and fund organisational change is becoming more limited. This is why support from capital receipts is being tapered down over the coming years. While additional receipts may become available once the Replacement Local Development Plan is agreed and generates future opportunities, planning assumptions currently rely only on receipts that can already be reasonably anticipated.

The declining balance means capital receipts cannot continue to be relied upon indefinitely to support either capital investment or revenue-funded transformation programmes. Consequently, the council is reducing its dependence on this funding source as it plans for future years.

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to the Cabinet Member and officers for the report and their responses. Noting the recommendations in the report, the committee has undertaken detailed scrutiny of the key financial issues arising from the report and received significant clarification through the questions and answers provided.

5. Self-Assessment - To scrutinise and be updated on the 2025/26 performance of the Council's Community & Corporate Plan objectives as part of the Self-Assessment process (Self Assessment report to follow)

Richard Jones delivered a presentation, introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Matthew Gatehouse, Will Mclean, Craig O'Connor, Deb Hill-Howells and Jane Rodgers.

Questions:

The Community and Corporate Plan involves a significant amount of work and reporting. To what extent does the plan actually shape the council's activities and decision-making, rather than simply describing what is already happening across Monmouthshire?

The Community and Corporate Plan is intended to set the strategic direction of the council rather than simply record activity. It is developed at the beginning of the council term and approved by Council, translating the ambitions and priorities of elected members into objectives and actions that guide the organisation's work. The plan provides the framework that shapes the council's priorities, its areas of focus and the activities that are undertaken to deliver those priorities. It therefore acts as a key mechanism for directing the organisation's work and resources.

However, the council does not operate in a static environment. New opportunities, challenges, risks and funding streams emerge during the life of the plan, while others may disappear. As a result, the plan is not followed rigidly and is supplemented by further decisions and reports that are brought to Council, Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members when new priorities or actions need to be introduced. The plan therefore provides the overall direction of travel for the organisation, while allowing flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and emerging issues over the course of the council term.

The report describes performance as being “on track”, showing “good progress” or containing “important strengths”. What objective evidence is there that residents would actually recognise improvements in the services they receive, particularly in the areas that residents most commonly raise, such as roads, waste services, schools and getting issues resolved? Is there a risk that the council's self-assessment is more positive than residents' experience?

The assessment draws on a wide range of evidence, not just the council's own performance information. It includes feedback from residents and service users, findings from the National Resident Survey, service-specific feedback mechanisms and evidence from external assessments and inspections. The report also seeks to reflect challenges as well as successes. For example, while it highlights strong recycling performance and rates that exceed national targets, it also acknowledges continuing difficulties in areas such as highway maintenance and identifies these as areas requiring further improvement.

A key aim of the current year's approach is to strengthen the use of resident feedback in the assessment process. The draft report will be shared with the Let's Talk resident forum to obtain further views and challenge the findings. This is intended to help ensure that the assessment reflects residents' experiences as well as internal performance measures. In terms of overall performance, none of the strategic objectives have deteriorated compared with the previous year. Each objective has either maintained its previous assessment level or improved. However, the report recognises that progress is mixed within each objective and identifies specific areas where improvement is still required. One area highlighted for further development is community resilience and how

the council works with and supports communities. This reflects findings from the recent Panel Performance Assessment and has been identified as a priority area for improvement.

Which objective has performed least well this year, and what lessons has the council learned from that?

No single objective was identified as having performed least well. The assessment concluded that all objectives showed either maintained or improved performance overall, although each contained a mixture of strengths and areas requiring further development. Rather than focusing on one objective as the weakest performer, the assessment highlights specific areas where progress remains challenging and where further improvement is required. Among these is the council's approach to supporting community resilience and community capacity, which has been identified both through the self-assessment process and through external review. The assessment process is intended to identify both successes and shortcomings so that services can learn from them and incorporate those findings into future planning and improvement activity.

Is the self-assessment process itself valuable, and how could it be improved to achieve better outcomes?

The self-assessment process is considered valuable because it provides a structured way for the council to review its performance, identify strengths and weaknesses, and inform future improvement. The process involves gathering evidence from multiple sources, undertaking detailed directorate workshops and challenging performance findings before reaching conclusions. These discussions help services to identify areas that need attention and use those findings to shape future service plans. The process also supports greater organisational self-awareness and helps embed a culture of continuous improvement.

The council recognises, however, that there is scope to improve the process further. Key areas for future development include strengthening the focus on outcomes and impact rather than activity, increasing the use of resident and service-user feedback, and ensuring that findings are communicated more clearly and accessibly. While the report must contain sufficient evidence to satisfy statutory requirements and enable effective scrutiny, there is a continued effort to make the conclusions easier for residents to understand and engage with, while still providing detailed evidence for those wishing to examine performance in greater depth.

There can be a gap between how the council assesses its own performance and how residents perceive that performance. How is the council addressing this risk?

The council recognises the importance of understanding and addressing any gap between organisational self-assessment and residents' experiences. To help bridge that gap, the draft self-assessment will be shared with the Let's Talk resident forum and the council will continue to undertake resident surveys to gather views on services and performance. However, it is also important to recognise the nature of local government services. The council often works in areas where market solutions do not exist and where residents are experiencing some of the most complex and challenging

circumstances in their lives. These are not straightforward services where outcomes can always be easily measured or achieved.

The council does not always get everything right, and it must continually work alongside residents to understand what good service looks like from their perspective. Resident feedback, lived experience and ongoing engagement are therefore essential to ensuring that the council's self-assessment remains grounded in the experiences of those who use its services, while also helping to shape future improvements.

Flying Start is an important tool for tackling inequality, but eligibility is determined by postcode and can result in some families receiving support while others with similar or greater needs do not. What can be done to encourage Welsh Government to expand Flying Start and make it more flexible?

Flying Start is entirely grant-funded and the council must operate within the requirements of that grant funding. While there is flexibility in how the programme is delivered, eligibility criteria are determined through the Welsh Government framework and must be complied with. The service provides a wide range of support to families beyond childcare alone, and officers recognised the value of extending its reach. The issue is likely to become increasingly important as childcare policies develop further. The council will continue to work through its Flying Start team and maintain dialogue with Welsh Government to make the case for broader access and to maximise the level of support that can be provided within Monmouthshire.

Given the recent hot weather, should the council be encouraging Welsh Government to support "cool spaces" in the same way that it has supported "warm spaces", recognising their role in addressing heat, social isolation and community resilience?

Officers noted that discussions with the new Welsh Government administration will be important in shaping future funding opportunities and policy development. As new ministers take up their roles, the council will need to establish relationships and use evidence of local need to inform lobbying and funding discussions. The council's approach is to gather robust local evidence and use this to make the case for initiatives that would benefit residents. The principle applies equally to areas such as warm spaces, community resilience and any future approaches to cooling spaces during periods of extreme heat.

As part of the Food and Farming Strategy, could more be done to connect children with food production through school visits to farms, and to encourage Welsh Government support for this activity?

Work is already taking place to strengthen links between schools, local food production and farming. Several schools have participated in initiatives such as Food Stories and the Welsh Veg in Schools programme, which aim to help pupils understand where food comes from and connect them with local producers. Further work is being undertaken through the Food and Farming Strategy, and an update is expected to be brought to the relevant member working group. In addition, Monmouthshire has recently secured approximately £1.4 million of funding through the Marches Partnership for a four-year programme that will support local food initiatives and help strengthen links between local producers and public sector procurement, including schools.

The report shows that the percentage of pupils taking up Universal Free School Meals has fallen significantly from 75% to 68.6%, against a target of 77%. Why has take-up reduced and why are so many pupils not accessing a benefit that is available to them?

The figure reflects the average across all schools in the county, and there is considerable variation between individual schools. Some schools have take-up rates well above the target, while others are significantly lower. In some of the areas where take-up is lowest, there is particular concern because those are areas where pupils would be expected to benefit most from the provision. Understanding the reasons for lower take-up is complex. The Corporate Catering Manager has been working with pupils and parents to understand the factors influencing uptake. The council recently introduced a revised menu and has since been gathering feedback from parents on what they like and dislike about the current offer. A reduction in take-up was observed following the introduction of the new menu.

Some of the changes to menus have resulted from Welsh Government requirements, including requirements around healthy eating and meat-free provision. Feedback has also been received about portion sizes, with some parents considering portions too large and others believing they are too small. Current policy requires a standard meal size for all primary-aged pupils, although planned changes are expected to allow more age-appropriate portion sizes in future. The council is undertaking further work to improve take-up, including reviewing menu options, surveying parents and examining food waste. However, any changes must comply with Welsh Government healthy eating requirements. Alternative options such as jacket potatoes and salads are available, but some traditional menu items and sweet desserts can no longer be offered as frequently because of nutritional standards that schools are required to meet.

The overall aim is to understand the reasons for declining take-up and adapt the service where possible while remaining compliant with national policy requirements.

Why has the council decided not to have a specific Poverty and Inequality Action Plan, and how can it ensure that all relevant groups and inequalities are being addressed, including those identified through equality impact assessments?

The decision not to develop a separate Poverty and Inequality Action Plan does not reduce the council's commitment to tackling poverty and inequality. Instead, the approach is to mainstream these issues throughout all areas of the council's work rather than treating them as a standalone programme. The council continues to operate under its Strategic Equality Plan and monitors progress through its annual equality reporting processes. Poverty and inequality are intended to be embedded across services, policies and programmes, with resources targeted towards those parts of the community where disadvantage is greatest. Examples include targeted initiatives such as Food and Fun, preventative approaches within social care and wider work to reduce inequalities through community wellbeing and support services. The aim is to ensure that addressing poverty and inequality becomes part of everyday service delivery rather than being confined to a separate strategy.

On veterans and armed forces communities, officers acknowledged that there was little or no reference within the self-assessment report itself. However, the council remains

committed to supporting veterans, including maintaining its Gold Armed Forces Covenant Award, guaranteeing interviews for eligible veteran job applicants, and supporting Armed Forces Day and other veteran-related initiatives.

The report shows that only 60% of care-experienced young people were in education, employment or training for at least three months. Is this level of performance good enough, and what is the context behind the figure?

The number behind the percentage is relatively small, which means that changes affecting only a few young people can have a significant impact on the headline percentage. Officers agreed that it would be helpful for future reports to include the actual numbers alongside percentages. The 60% target has remained relatively stable over recent years. While the council has high aspirations for all care-experienced young people, there are a variety of reasons why some may not move immediately into education, employment or training.

These include health issues, caring responsibilities, parenthood, immigration and asylum-related restrictions, or personal circumstances that mean an individual is not yet ready to engage with employment or education. All care-experienced young people have a personal adviser and pathway plan to support them towards independent and fulfilling lives, but progress may occur at different times for different individuals.

Why has participation in free or subsidised play provision reduced, and what impact is this having?

The reduction relates primarily to the Food and Fun programme delivered during the summer holidays. The programme remains available and free to attend, providing meals and activities for children during school breaks. However, officers explained that the fact that the provision is free creates an unintended challenge. Families can register places without commitment and may later decide not to attend, meaning registration figures do not always translate into participation. As a result, attendance rates have been affected despite the continued availability of the service. The programme itself is highly valued and well delivered, with strong benefits for participating children and families.

The report refers to Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) and support for pupils experiencing emotionally based school avoidance. Is the council being too reactive and focusing only on pupils once problems have emerged, rather than helping young people develop resilience and coping skills before difficulties arise?

Schools are already expected to build resilience, emotional wellbeing and coping skills through the Curriculum for Wales. Health and Wellbeing is one of the six Areas of Learning and Experience and includes teaching around emotional wellbeing, resilience, mental health, personal development and independence. These themes are embedded in everyday teaching and learning rather than being delivered solely through specialist interventions. Teachers and support staff work with pupils throughout their education to help them develop the skills needed to cope with challenges and transitions.

The focus on ELSA, emotionally based school avoidance and other targeted interventions reflects the fact that demand for specialist support has increased significantly in recent years. These interventions are therefore additional support for

pupils who require it, rather than the sole means by which resilience is developed. The intention is that all pupils receive preventative support as part of their normal school experience, while those facing greater challenges receive more intensive assistance.

The proportion of school leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) remains above target despite improvements. Why is this measure still shown as a concern?

Performance has improved, with the proportion of young people who are NEET falling from 3.1% to 2.5%. However, this remains above the target level of 1.5%, which is why it continues to be flagged as an area requiring attention. The issue is not unique to Monmouthshire and reflects wider national challenges affecting the youth labour market. Nevertheless, substantial work is underway to support young people at risk of becoming NEET. Funding has been secured to continue support programmes, and services such as Inspire, which place workers directly in schools to support vulnerable learners, have now been transferred into the core budget. These programmes are intended to help young people remain engaged in education, training or employment and further improve future performance.

The self-assessment process has developed since 2022 and now uses more evidence from residents and service users. Are there further opportunities to strengthen resident feedback and make the assessment more robust and representative of public views?

The council recognises the importance of continuing to increase the use of resident and service-user feedback within the self-assessment process. Existing sources already include the National Resident Survey, the Let's Talk resident forum, service-specific feedback arrangements in areas such as adult and children's social care, library user surveys and a range of other engagement mechanisms. There is also potential to make greater use of feedback gathered through routine interactions with residents, including through the contact centre and other customer-facing services. Officers indicated that opportunities are being explored to use these systems more effectively to gather service feedback and monitor resident satisfaction.

The key challenge is not simply collecting information but ensuring it is used meaningfully in assessments and decision-making. The council's aim is to ensure that self-assessment findings accurately reflect the experiences and views of residents and service users and are not developed solely from internal performance information.

There are many examples of engagement and consultation taking place across the county, including activities involving young people such as the recent Climate Innovation Camp. How can the council make better use of the information and insight generated through these activities when assessing its performance?

A wide range of engagement activities already generate valuable views and evidence that can contribute to self-assessment. Examples include youth engagement work, consultation exercises, resident surveys, service-user feedback and community engagement events. We acknowledge the importance of identifying and making better use of information that is already being gathered through these activities. Feedback from young people, residents and service users can provide an important perspective on how policies and services are experienced in practice and can help strengthen the

evidence base for self-assessment. The intention is therefore to continue broadening the range of evidence used, ensuring that assessments are informed not only by performance measures and internal data but also by the lived experiences and views of those affected by council services.

Matt Gatehouse welcomed the challenge around resident feedback and emphasised that there is a wide variety of existing mechanisms through which residents provide views on council services. These include social care user surveys, children's services feedback, library user surveys, the annual resident survey and youth engagement work such as the Make Your Mark survey.

He stressed that the important issue is not simply gathering more information but ensuring that the information collected is used effectively to shape conclusions about performance. The self-assessment process must reflect the experiences of residents and avoid becoming detached from the people the council serves. The council therefore continues to look for opportunities to strengthen how resident and service-user feedback is incorporated into self-assessment and service improvement processes.

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to the officers for the report and their responses today. The report was moved.

6. ADDITIONAL BUSINESS: Strategic Risk Assessment

To note and refer any questions arising – to be sent to officers for a response.

- *How is information about the risks associated with extreme heat and high temperatures being communicated and managed across council services?*
- *What are the implications of the delay to the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP)?*
- *Are the council's contingency arrangements sufficiently robust to deal with cyber-attacks or hostile action affecting critical infrastructure?*
- *Is the council becoming too comfortable with carrying high levels of strategic risk?*

The Chair noted that these questions would be recorded and passed to officers for responses outside the meeting.

7. Council & Cabinet Work Planner

Noted.

8. Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee Work Programme & Action List

Members were reminded that a Special meeting has been added on 13th October. On the Action List the cost of out of county placements has been sent to members.

9. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were confirmed.

10. Next Meeting

8th September 2026 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at **12.39 pm**.

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Tuesday, 8th September, 2026 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Alistair Neill, (Chair)

County Councillors: Rachel Buckler, John Crook, Steven Garratt, Meirion Howells, M. Newell, Peter Strong, A. Blackmore, Jill Bond, Ben Callard, Phil Murphy, R. Guest and Thomas

Officers in Attendance

Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Paul Matthews, Chief Executive
Peter Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Resources
Matthew Gatehouse, Chief Officer People, Performance and Partnerships.
Cath Fallon, Head of Economy and Enterprise
Richard Jones, Performance and Data Insight Manager
Carly Rogers, Personal Assistant to Chief Executive
Hannah Carter, Performance Analyst
Rhys James, Strategic Procurement Lead
Jonathan Davies, Head of Finance/Section 151
Sian Hayward, Head of Information Technology and Security and SIRO (Senior Information Risk Owner)
Nicholas Keyse, Head of Landlord Services
Gemma Ellis, Ardal Interim Head of Procurement
James Vale, Head of Customer, ICT and Digital (Torfaen County Borough Council)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Paul Pavia
C. Werrett

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Enablers Update - To scrutinise the performance of the Council's Enabling Strategies 2025/26

Cabinet Member Ben Callard and Richard Jones introduced the report and answered the members' questions with Matt Gatehouse, Nick Keyse, Peter Davies and James Vale:

How robust is the Council's measurement and scoring system, and how does it compare with other local authorities?

The scoring framework is the same approach used within the Council's self-assessment process and is intended to provide an overall indication of progress against each enabling strategy. It draws on a range of evidence, including performance measures, targets, actions, customer feedback, staff surveys, resident surveys and audit findings.

The ratings are based on progress against agreed objectives rather than simply completion of actions.

There is no standard assessment framework used by local authorities across Wales or the UK for evaluating enabling strategies, so direct comparison with other councils is difficult. Benchmarking tends to take place within individual service areas rather than through an overarching scoring system. The framework is designed to be transparent and is subject to challenge through the Council's governance arrangements, including scrutiny by the Governance and Audit Committee and oversight by external regulators. The assessment process also includes evidence review, challenge and moderation through performance management processes, with the intention of ensuring that judgements are supported by evidence and are not simply self-generated scores.

The report is intended both as an accountability mechanism and as a way of demonstrating progress against published strategies. While some enabling strategies directly affect residents, others support the systems, workforce and infrastructure that enable frontline services to operate effectively. Work is continuing to strengthen the measurement of outcomes and impact, particularly in demonstrating benefits to residents.

The scoring process is moderated and challenged through the Council's performance management arrangements. The Performance Team reviews the supporting evidence and data before reaching an initial assessment, rather than relying solely on the judgement of the service responsible for delivering the strategy. Scores are then discussed with relevant officers and the Strategic Leadership Team to ensure that ratings are supported by the available evidence and applied consistently across the organisation.

How should residents view the assessment when the Council is effectively evaluating its own performance?

The assessment measures performance against objectives, actions, timescales and targets that have already been agreed and published. It uses evidence from multiple sources, including residents, staff, service users and audit activity. Publishing both the judgements and supporting evidence allows elected members, audit bodies and the public to scrutinise and challenge the conclusions reached. The process is intended to demonstrate accountability and ensure the Council measures its progress against its own commitments rather than allowing strategies to proceed without evaluation. The process also includes internal challenge and moderation. The Performance Team assesses the evidence and proposes ratings before discussions take place with responsible officers and the Strategic Leadership Team. Judgements are therefore tested and reviewed rather than being determined solely by the service being assessed.

If a strategy is rated "Very Good", does that mean there is no further room for improvement?

No. A rating of "Very Good" recognises strong performance and progress, but it is not the highest point on the scoring scale. The assessment acknowledges that further improvement is still possible and identifies areas where development can continue.

Why do the sickness absence figures appear inconsistent, and how does the Council compare nationally?

The sickness absence figures relate to different reporting periods and measures within the report. The forecast level of sickness absence is approximately 10.8 days per full-time equivalent employee. Historical local government averages have typically been around 8 to 10 days per employee, meaning the Council remains slightly above the sector average. However, sickness absence across local government and other sectors has increased significantly since the pandemic.

Different organisations use different methodologies. National figures quoted by the Office for National Statistics differ from those published by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), making direct comparisons difficult. Regardless of the source used, sickness absence levels have generally increased since the pandemic. The average figure reported publicly is only a headline measure. Much more detailed analysis is undertaken internally at service, directorate and management level, including examination of absence patterns, causes and targeted interventions.

What is being done to reduce sickness absence?

The Council has reviewed its approach to absence management and is moving away from a model based primarily on formal trigger points. Greater emphasis is being placed on early intervention, proactive management conversations, wellbeing support and preventative measures designed to address issues before they result in absence. Detailed monitoring is undertaken across services to understand the causes of absence and identify appropriate interventions to support employees and improve attendance.

Is an average sickness absence figure meaningful on its own?

The average figure is only one measure and can be heavily influenced by a relatively small number of employees experiencing long-term sickness absence. To provide a different perspective, the median sickness absence figure is around 1.9 days per employee per year, indicating that most employees experience relatively low levels of absence. More detailed management information is used internally to identify trends, causes and areas requiring intervention.

What does the Thingi measure show, and how is training monitored?

The figure reported relates to employee uptake and use of the Thingi e-learning platform rather than course completion. The initial priority has been ensuring staff are registered on the system and actively using it. Training is divided into mandatory and optional learning. Around 2,500 employees have access to the platform, and approximately 1,600 are fully up to date with their training requirements. For employees who have limited access to IT systems, alternative approaches are used, including face-to-face training sessions and toolbox talks delivered in operational workplaces.

How will councillors be supported to complete mandatory training?

Work is underway to improve the Thingi portal and reporting arrangements so that councillors can more easily identify mandatory training requirements and monitor their

completion status. These improvements are intended to be implemented before the next local elections.

What action is being taken to improve the appraisal completion rate, which is currently reported as 6.86%?

The appraisal system is new and is still being rolled out across the organisation. The 6.86% figure does not mean that the remaining staff are receiving no supervision or performance management. Instead, many employees have not yet moved onto the new appraisal process. Training is being provided and the new approach is being introduced as annual reviews become due. The expectation is that completion rates will increase significantly over the next six to nine months as the new system becomes embedded.

Why has Asset Management been assessed as 'Very Good' when a number of performance measures appear to be below target?

The performance measures listed at the end of the section relate only to one aspect of the Asset Management Strategy, including the commercial and investment portfolio. The overall assessment considers performance against all of the strategy's objectives, including maintaining a fit-for-purpose estate, improving buildings, investing in infrastructure and greening the estate. Significant progress was made across these broader areas during the year, and the overall judgement reflects all five areas of the strategy rather than a single set of commercial performance measures.

Why are some income-related targets not being achieved while the overall assessment remains highly positive?

Some individual targets, such as income generation measures, have not achieved their forecast levels, but they represent only one part of the overall strategy. The assessment takes account of a much wider range of achievements and outcomes, including improvements to council assets and estate management, many of which cannot be measured solely through financial targets.

Would it be clearer if the report explicitly explained why each strategy received its overall score?

The response acknowledged that this was a fair challenge. The rationale for the scoring is contained within the evidence presented throughout each section of the report, but setting out a clear summary of the reasons for each overall judgement at the beginning of each section could make the assessment easier for councillors and residents to understand and scrutinise. This was recognised as a potentially helpful way of improving transparency and readability.

Does the report place too much emphasis on activity and planned measures rather than measurable outcomes?

Some of the reported actions focus on establishing processes, procedures, business cases and investments because these are necessary foundations for achieving longer-term outcomes. Reporting therefore needs to demonstrate whether these actions have been completed or progressed. However, the intention of the self-assessment process

is not simply to measure activity. It is designed to assess both the delivery of actions and the outcomes they achieve. The challenge is ensuring that assessments increasingly focus on impact rather than implementation. Progress has been made in identifying evidence of outcomes in some areas, but there is still further work to do to improve the way impact is measured, evidenced and reported. As strategies mature, there should be a stronger emphasis on demonstrating what difference they have made rather than simply what activities have taken place.

What evidence is there that these activities are delivering tangible outcomes for residents, rather than just simply demonstrating progress in process and governance?

Evidence of outcomes is emerging, but it is at different stages across different strategies. Some areas have only recently completed the foundational work necessary to deliver longer-term benefits, so the full impact is not yet visible. For example, in procurement, substantial effort has been devoted to responding to legislative changes, rewriting procedures and embedding new compliance requirements. These activities are intended to create the conditions for improved outcomes, but many of the benefits have yet to be realised. Similarly, investment in digital, data and artificial intelligence capabilities has only recently been made, with projects now moving into delivery phases where benefits should start to become more apparent.

The expectation is that clearer evidence of outcomes will emerge over the next 12 to 24 months as these strategies develop. In the meantime, existing evidence includes the Council's ability to manage significant financial pressures through its Financial Strategy. The value of that strategy is demonstrated through maintaining financial stability and navigating ongoing funding challenges in a structured and sustainable way. Overall, the evidence base for resident outcomes is still developing. While governance improvements, compliance measures and new systems provide the foundations for future success, the challenge remains to demonstrate more clearly how these activities translate into measurable improvements for residents and communities.

How can the Council make better use of Geographic Information System (GIS) data following the Monmouth flooding incident?

GIS data played an important role during the response to the flooding events in Monmouth and helped support the recovery effort. The information gathered is continuing to be used to understand the impact of the flooding, identify lessons learned and improve preparedness for future incidents. GIS is also viewed as a key foundation for wider ambitions within the Digital and Data Strategy, with significant potential for broader use across council services.

What value is being gained from the GIS work undertaken during the flooding response?

The GIS information provided a detailed understanding of properties, addresses and locations affected by the flooding, which supported decision-making during the emergency response. The experience demonstrated the value of the Council's mapping and location-based data and highlighted opportunities to apply this information more widely in future.

How can the Council make better use of Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) opportunities, particularly given Monmouthshire's position on the edge of the region?

The Council continues to maintain close links with Cardiff Capital Region and is actively exploring opportunities through those relationships. Particular opportunities are being considered in connection with Castlegate and the potential to attract new occupiers and investment. Discussions are ongoing, although details could not be provided because they relate to live commercial conversations.

Is Cardiff Capital Region helping to create opportunities for Castlegate?

Active discussions are taking place with Cardiff Capital Region regarding opportunities that could benefit Castlegate. There is optimism that some of those opportunities can be converted into tangible benefits, particularly in relation to attracting businesses and making use of vacant space within the development.

Can officers identify two or three examples where the enabling strategies have already delivered measurable improvements for residents, service users or taxpayers, rather than simply improving internal processes?

The enabling strategies are intended to support the wider delivery of council services, so many of their benefits are realised through frontline services rather than being visible in isolation. One example is the investment in GIS and data systems, which improved the Council's response to the Monmouth flooding event by providing detailed location-based information to help target resources and coordinate the emergency response. A second example is the Asset Management Strategy, which has supported the use of county farms to create opportunities for new entrants into agriculture through the letting of agricultural holdings. A third example is the work undertaken through the Procurement Strategy, including "Meet the Buyer" events, which have been well received by local businesses and have helped strengthen engagement with the local business community. Additional examples include reduced staff turnover, reduced agency staffing and improvements to highways systems through digital transformation work that is due to be reported separately.

Have any measurable productivity gains been identified from the Council's use of AI tools such as Copilot?

Early evidence suggests there are significant time savings from AI-enabled tools, particularly in Children's Services. A transcription tool has been introduced which allows social workers to record meetings and automatically generate transcripts and templated notes, reducing administrative work. The next stage is to translate these time savings into measurable organisational benefits, such as improved staff wellbeing, reduced sickness absence, increased productivity or reduced staffing pressures. The Digital and Data Strategy acknowledges that more work is required to evidence and quantify these benefits, which is one reason why the strategy is currently assessed as 'Adequate' rather than a higher rating.

Why has the Digital and Data Strategy not been assessed more highly if AI and digital projects are already producing benefits?

A significant amount of development work has been completed, including investment in data, AI and digital systems, but the focus is now on demonstrating tangible outcomes and measurable benefits. Governance arrangements and frameworks are in place, but more evidence is needed to show the full impact of these initiatives on services, residents and organisational performance.

Why did the initial research into the gender pay gap not result in clear actionable insights?

The gender pay gap is a complex issue influenced by a range of social, economic and workforce factors. The public sector generally experiences a smaller gender pay gap than the private sector because of established approaches to job evaluation and equal pay, but the issue remains challenging to address. Work is continuing with other local authorities, alongside engagement with academic and international networks, to better understand the causes of the gender pay gap and identify practical interventions that could make a difference.

Will a different approach be taken to addressing the gender pay gap?

Research and collaborative work are ongoing to identify more effective actions. Some measures are already in place, but the discussion did not explore these in detail because of time constraints. Further information on potential actions and future approaches could be given separately to the committee.

Chair's Summary:

The Chair recognised the significant work that had gone into producing the report and thanked those involved in presenting and responding to members' questions. The Chair emphasised that members were highly supportive of the work being carried out across the Council. The purpose of scrutiny was to explore whether the work could be made more effective and whether the Council could be improved further.

3. For Purpose On Purpose (F-Pop) - To update the committee about F-Pop and its implications for the reorganisation of Project Management

Chief Executive Paul Matthews introduced the report and answered the members' questions:

Should the vision for For Purpose, On Purpose be more outward-looking and focused on residents rather than on the Council itself?

This is a valid and constructive challenge. The vision of what the Council ultimately wants to achieve should be determined politically by elected members rather than by officers. The For Purpose, On Purpose framework is not intended to replace or redefine the Council's political vision or the Community and Corporate Plan. Instead, it is intended to describe the type of organisation that the Council needs to become in order to achieve the ambitions set by elected members.

The framework is designed to continue breaking down barriers between the Council and residents and to create a more open, permeable organisation that works alongside

communities rather than acting in a distant or top-down manner. It is intended to encourage a stronger relationship between the Council and residents, with greater participation, collaboration and shared responsibility. The suggestion that the vision should be expressed in more resident-focused terms was not rejected. Paul Matthews indicated that such language was entirely consistent with the purpose of the framework, whose overall aim is to create an organisation that is increasingly connected to, aligned with and trusted by the communities it serves.

Is For Purpose, On Purpose based on high ideals without enough practical detail for residents?

The programme is deliberately ambitious because the Council should continually seek to improve and become the best version of itself. The framework is intended to drive purposeful change rather than function as a slogan. It will help the Council decide which activities matter most, concentrate resources on those priorities and stop or reduce work that contributes less to the desired outcomes.

What will the programme contain in practical terms?

The framework will guide changes across council services and influence how limited resources are prioritised. It will require clear choices about what the Council will do, what it will do less of and what it will stop doing. Activities arising from the programme are expected to feed into later budget considerations, including the budget for 2027/28, with potentially greater contributions in subsequent years.

How much will For Purpose, On Purpose cost to implement?

The cost is not zero, but no additional organisational growth has been requested to establish the programme. Existing resources have been reorganised to create dedicated programme leadership and a core programme team of approximately five or six key individuals. Their costs have been absorbed by changing existing arrangements rather than adding new expenditure. The wider cost is more difficult to quantify because colleagues across the organisation will need to devote time to understanding and embedding the framework. That time has an opportunity cost because it cannot simultaneously be spent on other work. This investment is considered necessary to create sufficient organisational alignment and bring the framework to life.

Is the programme expected to generate savings, service improvements or both?

It is expected to support both financial discipline and service improvement. The programme cannot simply add costs. It must help the Council use its declining resource base more effectively, redesign services and improve its ability to deliver political priorities. Success will require the Council to operate within its approved budget while becoming more resourceful and continuing to improve outcomes.

What practical benefits will residents receive?

Residents should experience a Council that works more closely with communities, makes better use of local skills and capabilities, and directs resources towards the priorities that matter most. The programme is intended to encourage greater resident

participation, strengthen trust and help communities contribute directly to improving the county. Benefits should also emerge through redesigned services, earlier intervention, stronger partnerships and more deliberate prioritisation. The overall aim is to improve Monmouthshire as a county, rather than concentrating only on the Council as an organisation.

How will success be measured?

Success will be assessed through a combination of detailed operational indicators and broader measures. At the highest level, the Council must continue to operate within the annual budget approved by Council. This is particularly important because its low level of reserves provides limited protection against financial mistakes. Other indicators will include whether key performance measures improve, whether residents increasingly trust the Council, whether more residents contribute their skills and capabilities, and whether the organisation continues to change deliberately for the better. The programme will be continually evaluated to determine whether it is shifting these measures.

How will the programme build residents' trust?

Trust must be earned by repeatedly keeping promises, being open to different views and demonstrating that those views have influenced decisions. The Council must convince more residents that it is working with them and is on their side. This will require financial discipline, greater community participation and careful consideration of how decisions, including financial decisions, affect the relationship between residents and the Council.

How will the programme respond to the Council's difficult financial position?

The Council's ambitions and priorities should determine how it spends its available money rather than allowing the budget alone to define the organisation. Where sufficient resources are unavailable, the Council must become more resourceful, work differently or draw on the capabilities of partners and communities. The framework will reintroduce a stronger focus on opportunity cost. The Council will need to select a limited number of priorities in which it wants to excel and consciously reduce or discontinue other activity. Every chosen priority must therefore be accompanied by clarity about what will be forgone to deliver it.

How will project management be improved through this programme?

The Council is reviewing the quality of programme and project management through its benefit realisation work. The aim is to identify weaknesses, strengthen practice and achieve greater consistency across the organisation. While some projects are managed to a very high standard, performance is not always consistent, and the programme is intended to raise expectations and improve the overall quality of project delivery.

How will the Council avoid taking on too many projects and overextending its capacity?

A key objective of the programme is to improve organisational discipline around prioritisation. The Council has recognised that it can sometimes be too busy and take on more work than it has the capacity to deliver effectively. The organisation needs to

become better at saying no to lower-priority activities and be prepared to defer work where taking on additional projects would reduce overall standards or displace higher-value priorities.

How will residents and stakeholders be involved more effectively in projects?

Engagement is an area where improvement is needed. Successful projects depend on listening to local communities and involving people early in the development of ideas, rather than consulting once plans have largely been finalised. There is scope to strengthen how officers engage with communities and use local knowledge to shape proposals from the outset.

How will ward members be involved in project development and decision-making?

Many officers do not fully understand the value that ward members can bring to project development. Councillors have unique knowledge of their wards, community networks and local opinion which officers cannot easily replicate. There is significant room for improvement in involving ward members earlier and more consistently, so they can help shape ideas before projects are formally developed. The best outcomes are achieved when officers and councillors work closely together. There are examples of excellent practice across the Council, but the quality of engagement is inconsistent. The programme aims to strengthen these relationships and create a culture where officers routinely work with elected members, drawing on their local knowledge to improve decision-making and reduce the likelihood of avoidable disputes later in projects.

Will project management be scrutinised further?

Yes, Infrastructure project management is scheduled to be considered by the committee on 24th November, providing a future opportunity to examine the Council's approach to project delivery in more detail and identify areas for improvement.

How will local residents know the programme exists, and how can they influence its priorities?

The programme itself will not create new priorities. Instead, it is designed to support the delivery of priorities already agreed through the Council's Community and Corporate Plan. Residents are expected to influence priorities through the normal democratic process, while the programme aims to improve how the Council works, including encouraging officers and elected members to engage more actively with communities, listen to residents' views, and involve them in conversations about local issues. Success would be reflected in more residents feeling that the Council is listening and creating opportunities for their input.

What mechanisms will there be for Town & Community Councils to be involved?

Town and Community Councils are seen as vital partners in the programme. The Chief Executive highlighted the important role they already play in supporting communities and suggested there is potential for greater involvement in the future through increased localisation of decision-making and possible transfers of powers. However, no specific framework or mechanism has yet been developed, and it was suggested that this would be a matter for the next Council to consider.

How will taxpayers know if investment has delivered value for money?

Value for money will be assessed through existing Council financial governance arrangements, including regular budget monitoring and quarterly financial reporting. Any expenditure associated with the programme will be reported transparently and subject to scrutiny by elected members through Scrutiny, Cabinet and Council processes. The longer-term test of value will be whether the programme helps the Council use resources more effectively, improve outcomes against agreed priorities, and increase community participation, although some of the measures needed to demonstrate these wider impacts are still being developed.

Chair's Summary:

Thank you to the Chief Executive for the report and his responses today. The questions have demonstrated that we are very interested indeed in this framework and very positively disposed towards the idea that you're preparing the groundwork for the future. We will be interested in asking more questions, but also supporting the work of the whole organisation as we move forward with it.

4. Next Meeting

29th September 2026 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at **12.02 pm**

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