

MONMOUTHSHIRE'S LEARNING, SKILLS AND ECONOMY DIRECTORATE INCLUSION STRATEGY

Inclusion Strategy (January 2025)

This policy sets out Monmouthshire Local Authority's Strategy for Inclusion.

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Introduction

Monmouthshire's last Estyn report published in April 2020, recognised that a number of appropriate actions have been taken by Monmouthshire's Children and Young People's (CYP) Directorate, to improve the identification and provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and that there is a passion and commitment to further improve this. However, a main recommendation of the Estyn report, stated that Monmouthshire must 'articulate a clear strategy for Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision'.

The creation of a broader Inclusion Service has meant that the articulation of an Inclusion (rather than SEN) strategy, supported by a broader suite of interconnected strategies and related policies will now provide a response to this recommendation.

This document sets out Monmouthshire's Inclusion Strategy for children and young people. It establishes our vision and framework to develop an inclusive education system which gives all children the best start in life. Our Inclusion Strategy intends to bind together and develop various areas of work currently being undertaken across the authority to support Monmouthshire's corporate aim to have '*...a truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners' starting points, strengths and educational needs*¹.

Within this strategy, 'inclusion' means, at its most simple level, children and young people belonging to and being included in their school or setting. In Monmouthshire, a truly inclusive education system is one where every child or young person, regardless of their abilities or differences, feels valued, supported, and enabled to succeed. By working collaboratively with schools, families, health and social care, and other stakeholders, we strive for a culture of inclusion where every child is valued for who they are and what they can achieve.

In Monmouthshire, inclusion is about understanding, from the child or young person's point of view, what they need to successfully be included in education, and actively creating the conditions for this. The view that inclusion is beneficial for all those within our schools and communities is shared by the Welsh Government. This is outlined in the ALN Code², where it is stated that an inclusive education, where all pupils access common opportunities in ways relevant to their needs, and which ensures that they fully belong to the school community, is of benefit to all. This important central notion highlights how inclusion is a continuous process "*... through which all pupils access common opportunities in ways relevant to their needs, and which ensures that they fully belong to the school community*³.

Monmouthshire local authority has high aspirations for all its children and young people in vulnerable groups, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), and wants to ensure that they are central to everything we do and part of every decision we make. We are keen to ensure that all our children and young people are in a school or setting where they feel included, valued and invested in as an individual, and where their emotional and

¹ ['Taking Monmouthshire Forward' \(Monmouthshire's Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28\)](#)

² [The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales \(Welsh Gov, 2021\)](#)

³ [Inclusion and Pupil Support \(Welsh Government, 2016\)](#)

mental wellbeing and learning needs are being well met. We cannot achieve this in isolation and working in collaboration with our schools and partners is key to the success of our vision and is reflected in the Welsh Government Statutory Framework⁴.

The way that education, health and care services are delivered to children, young people and their families has undergone significant changes, both nationally and locally. Education in Wales is in one of its most challenging periods. The Welsh Government has advanced an ambitious reform agenda which includes alongside the new Curriculum for Wales (CfW)⁵, the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Educational Tribunal Act⁶, 2018 and associated Code⁷ has driven the need to re-design services and review working practices. These changes have come at a time where increasing demand, both in numbers and complexity of need, is being placed on services.

The impact of the pandemic on our children, young people, their families and our communities whilst predictable, has been more intense and extensive than many envisaged. The post pandemic return to school has ensured an increased focus on wellbeing of both staff and pupils. We now better recognise and understand the significant impact of poor emotional and mental wellbeing on areas including attendance, engagement and achievement.

There is much to be proud of in Monmouthshire in terms of what has been achieved in relation to children and young people in vulnerable groups and with ALN. However, improvement, in outcomes, in experience, in engagement, in timeliness and in attainment is set against a number of challenges, and also opportunities, for the local authority and its partners. Recognising our role in working together to reduce inequalities in childhood to build a healthier and fairer Gwent, where everyone can live healthy, fulfilled lives⁸ is central to our approach and acknowledges the wider social context of challenge and change faced by many families in Monmouthshire.

This strategy aims to set out Monmouthshire's priorities in order to improve outcomes for children and young people in vulnerable groups and their families; this directly aligns with Monmouthshire's Community and Corporate Plan which outlines certain key deliverables to shape this inclusion strategy within the 'Learning Place', including for:

- Improved school attendance and reduced levels of exclusion which remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils.
- A truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners' starting points, strengths and educational needs.

⁴ [Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being \(Welsh Government, 2021\)](#)

⁵ [Curriculum for Wales - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

⁶ [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

⁷ [The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales \(Welsh Gov, 2021\)](#)

⁸ ['Building a Fairer Gwent' \(Institute of Health Equity, 2023\)](#)

Vulnerable Learners

In Monmouthshire we aim to provide high quality support and provision for vulnerable learners, working together with children, young people and their families to coordinate inclusive and equitable policies and practices. For this report and to reflect the context within Monmouthshire County Council, the use of the term 'vulnerable learners' has been adopted. Vulnerable learners are defined as those who may be more likely to experience emotional, social and developmental barriers to learning. Vulnerable groups therefore include⁹ but is not limited to:

- pupils with additional learning needs (ALN)
- children who are looked-after (CLA) or care experienced
- children and young people living in poverty
- excluded pupils, and those at risk of exclusion
- pupils with behaviour and attendance issues
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils (GRT)
- asylum seekers, refugees and new migrants
- minority ethnic pupils
- pupils from minority ethnic groups who have English or Welsh as an additional language (EAL/WAL)
- young carers
- pupils who are young offenders and children of offenders
- pupils with mental health issues and medical needs, including those learners educated other than at school (EOTAS)
- pupils who have had adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- pupils of service families / armed forces parents.

Estyn also outline that 'disadvantaged pupils' are those who may have barriers to succeeding in school because of detrimental circumstances beyond their control. These may include financial and social hardships within their families including:

- pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM)
- pupils from low-income families

Not all learners from these groups will face barriers to learning or be vulnerable to underachieving. Learners from these groups may face a range of barriers and will, therefore, require different approaches, solutions and support targeted towards meeting each of their individual needs. In addition, learners may belong to one or more of the above groups at the same time, depending on their individual circumstances.

'Inclusive education focuses on the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance and achievement of all students, especially those who, for different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalised.' (UNESCO¹⁰, 2020)

⁹ This list is based on Estyn's 2020 report '[Effective school support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils](#)' and the Welsh Government guidance 2020 '[Guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners](#)'.

¹⁰ [Global education monitoring report, 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all \(UNESCO Digital Library\)](#)

Local and National Context

Monmouthshire County Council currently carries out its statutory duties by adhering to the current legislation including;

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ratified by UK in 1992,
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) ratified by UK in 2009,
- Equality Act (2010),
- Social Services & Well Being Act (2014),
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015),
- Inclusion and Pupil Support (National Assembly for Wales Circular No: 203/2016).
- The Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal (2018) Act Wales
- The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021

In 2023 the Welsh Government published its national mission¹¹ which outlined a key objective of ‘breaking down barriers so that excellent education opportunities and outcomes can be achieved by all learners’ and highlighted the importance of the additional learning needs (ALN) reform of systems, provision and practices around person-centred practice and inclusive education.

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (2018) Act Wales provides a statutory framework for supporting learners with additional learning needs (ALN) and is accompanied by a mandatory Code. The aim, as stated in the Code is:

‘To support the creation of a fully inclusive education system where all learners are given the opportunity to succeed and have access to an education that meets their needs and enables them to participate in, benefit from, and enjoy learning’.

The views, wishes and aspirations of children and young people and their parents/carers are at the heart of the system and requires culture change in the ways in which professionals work with families, and with each other.

Importance of Participation – A Children’s Rights Approach.

Local Authorities need to have due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Chapter 5 of the ALN Code outlines the five principles of the Children’s Commissioner’s Right Way approach¹², as a way local authorities can make sure they are paying regard to the human rights of children. These are;

- Embedding children’s human rights
- Equality and Non-discrimination
- Empowering children
- Participation

¹¹ [‘Our National Mission - High standards and aspirations for all’ \(Welsh Government, 2023\).](#)

¹² <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/resources/the-right-way-a-childrens-rights-approach/>

- Accountability

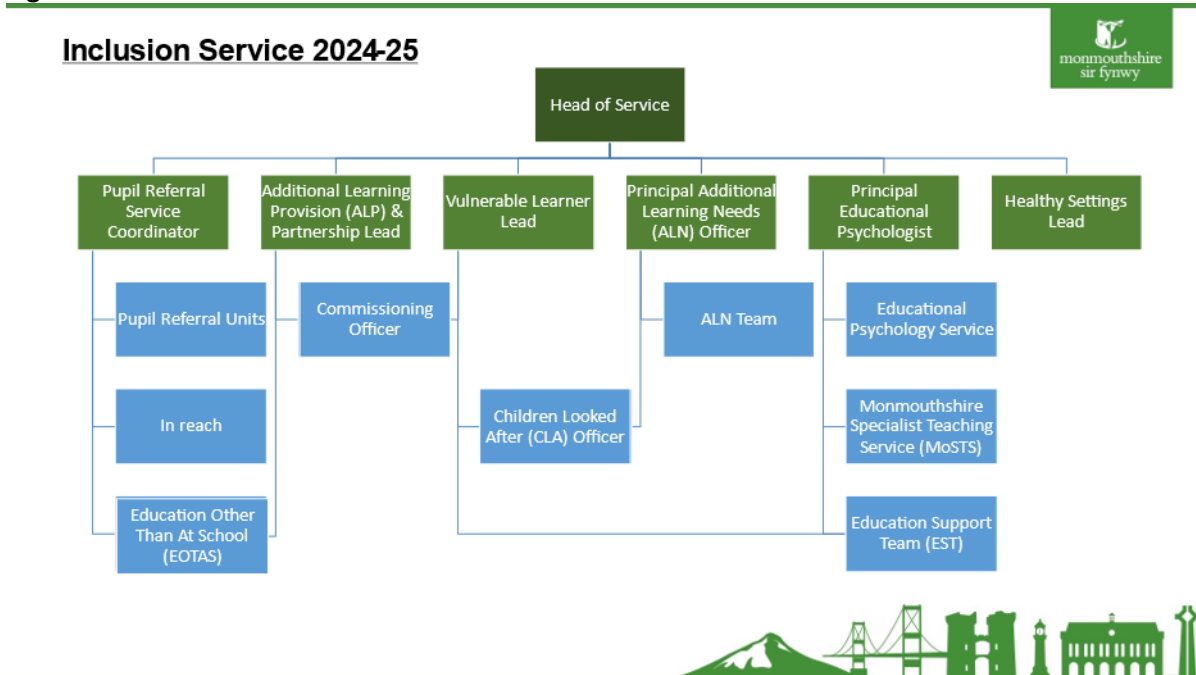
Monmouthshire is committed to adopting a children’s rights approach and embedding all five principles into its work with children and young people. Our strategic priorities are informed by Monmouthshire’s pupils, parents and carers, schools and settings, and feedback from groups and individuals. The notion of participation means listening to children and young people, including those in vulnerable groups, and their parents and carers and taking their views into account. Participation should be understood as a process, which is safe, enabling and inclusive, and which supports dialogue between children, young people, their families and professionals. Monmouthshire’s Participation Policy (Appendix 1) sets out the approach to active engagement with these important stakeholders.

Monmouthshire Children and Young People’s Directorate is committed to ensuring that these principles are embedded in all aspects of its work with children, young people, their families, schools and settings to support a fully inclusive education system.

Monmouthshire’s Inclusion Service

The creation of a Head of Service for Inclusion post in Autumn 2022 reaffirmed Monmouthshire’s commitment to be an inclusive local authority, with the aspiration that all children and young people remain in their local communities and schools. The restructure of the Inclusion Service afforded the opportunity to pull together key professionals and teams supporting our most vulnerable children and young people, see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 MCC Inclusion Service structure chart



The Vulnerable Learner Lead post created in April 2023, included the remit and responsibility of the LACE officer (Looked after Children in Education) to promote the interest of Children Looked After (CLA) in education. The Vulnerable Learner Lead role also

has responsibilities to promote the inclusion of all children and young people, including those at risk of exclusion. This role supports the management of, and the reduction of exclusions, by working to support safer management of risks related to learner behaviours and reintegration support that promotes the use of trauma informed practices and principles to ensure that children, young people and staff remain safe.

The restructure of the Inclusion Service strengthened collaboration and increased capacity to support schools and settings in Monmouthshire and the ability to meet the varied and often entwined complex needs of vulnerable children and young people.

Principles

The Inclusion Service continues to evolve and respond to the changing needs of children and young people. The principles underpinning the ALN system, as set out in the ALN Code (3.2), are also applicable to the broader inclusion agenda and ones that the Inclusion Service will include as relevant principles for the Inclusion Strategy. These are:

- Inclusive education
- A rights-based approach
- Person centred practice
- Early identification, intervention and prevention
- Collaboration and integration
- Equity; a celebration of difference and diversity
- A bilingual system

The structure of Monmouthshire's Inclusion services and associated systems ensure that inclusive and equitable practices are in place to encourage the presence, participation and achievement of all children and young people from their local community, and that support is provided for those at risk of underachievement, disengagement and exclusion.

The Inclusion and Pupil Support guidance (2016, Welsh Government) highlights a demographic of pupils who 'require extra support'. It states that 'pupils who are at risk of disengagement and social exclusion are more vulnerable, have more diverse needs and require more support than their peer group' (p. 30). Monmouthshire's Inclusion Strategy supports the following essential principles highlighted in this guidance:

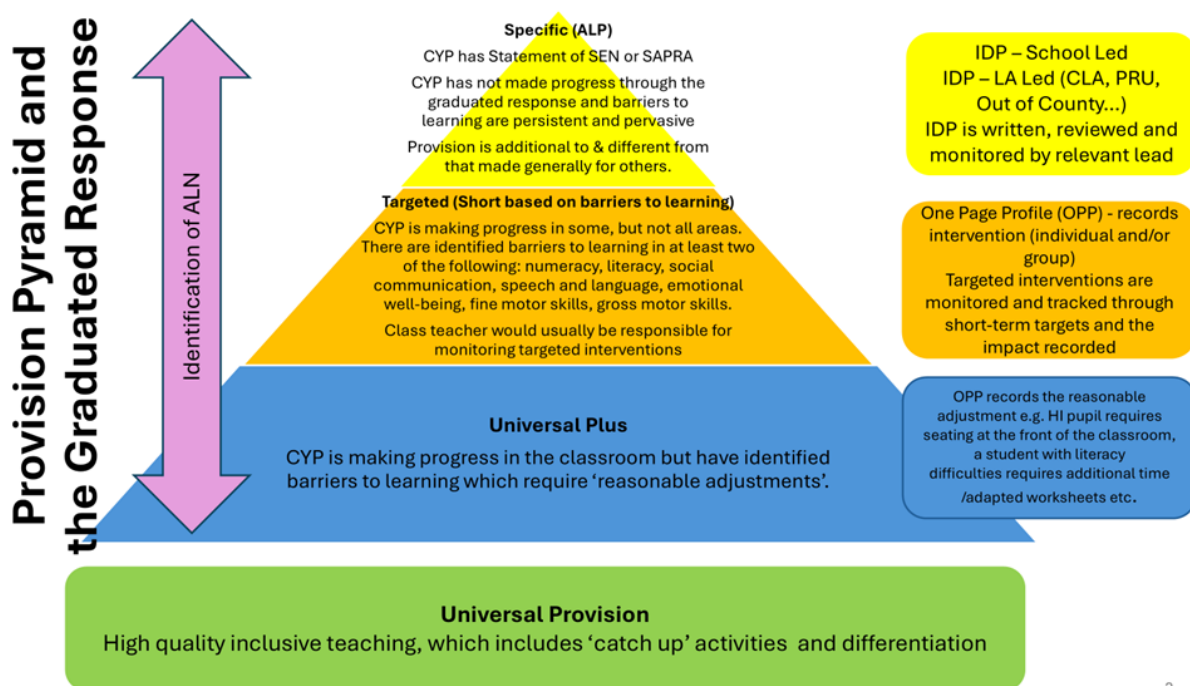
- inclusion is a process by which schools, local authorities and others develop their cultures, policies and practices to include all children and young people,
- all children and young people should have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential,
- an inclusive education service offers excellence and choice and seeks and responds to the views of parents, carers, children and young people,
- the interests of all children and young people are safeguarded,
- with the right training, strategies and support, nearly all children and young people who require extra support can be successfully included in mainstream education,

- mainstream education is not always right for every child or young person all of the time but if mainstream education is not right at a particular stage this should not prevent the child or young person from being included successfully at a later stage,
- those pupils not in mainstream education should have links to their peers in mainstream schools.

A Graduated Response to Need and Provision Pyramids

Monmouthshire’s approach to inclusion is usefully illustrated and clearly outlined using our Provision Pyramid (Fig 2).

Figure 2 Provision Pyramid template for identification of Additional Learning Need (ALN)



The provision pyramid was developed to illustrate the graduated response to the needs of vulnerable learners, including those with ALN, that schools and settings need to adopt in order to identify and secure provision and/ or interventions to meet the continuum of need. Although initially created for use within the ALN system, Monmouthshire has extended the use of the provision pyramid across all areas of inclusion services to enable a consistent approach for schools and settings to understand expectations and the support offered along the graduated response to meeting the needs of all children and young people.

The majority of children/ young people who are vulnerable, including those who have ALN, will be educated in their local mainstream setting, with access to local health services and a range of leisure facilities which allow them to live their lives alongside their peers and achieve the best possible outcomes. A smaller number of children and young people will require a more targeted and specialised level of support and intervention to meet their complex needs. For these children and young people, a more flexible and creative approach is required where education, health and social care work together to provide an integrated package of support.

Monmouthshire's Specialist Provision

In Monmouthshire, our model of specialist provision, places Specialist Resource Bases (SRBs) at the heart of identified mainstream schools. This model;

- Ensures that children and young people remain close to their communities.
- Provides opportunities for integration and inclusion with mainstream peers in structured and unstructured times, as is appropriate to their individual needs. This benefits all children and young people and fosters a greater sense of valuing diversity and difference within schools and communities.
- Supports the development of social relationships which can create long-lasting friendships that can give pupils the skills to navigate social relationships later in life.
- Promotes an inclusive culture where the families of learners with ALN benefit by being integrated more easily into the broader school community. Having an SRB within a mainstream school can reduce stigma about ALN and positively contribute to a society that is more accepting of differences and people with disabilities.

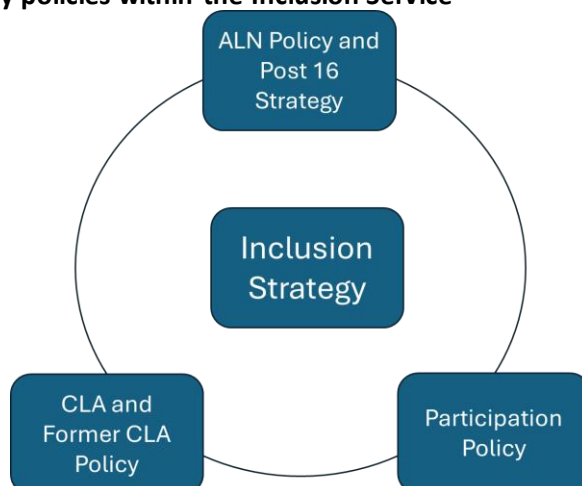
The focus on inclusion is clear in the continued development of a closer network and consistent model of specialist provision across the SRBs in Monmouthshire alongside the expectations of the ALN reforms. The work in this area consists of improvements in SRB learning environments, continual workforce development (such as the Monmouthshire Autism in Schools and Settings Project – see [Monmouthshire Autism in Schools and Settings](#) for more information) and an improved curriculum offer.

Information about specialist provision in Monmouthshire is outlined in Appendix 2 (SRB Policy and Handbook).

The Inclusion Strategy Framework

This Inclusion Strategy is the framework for a suite of interconnected strategies, policies, training and interventions. Inclusion and equity are overarching principles that guide all education policies, plans and practices.

Figure 3 Examples of key policies within the Inclusion Service

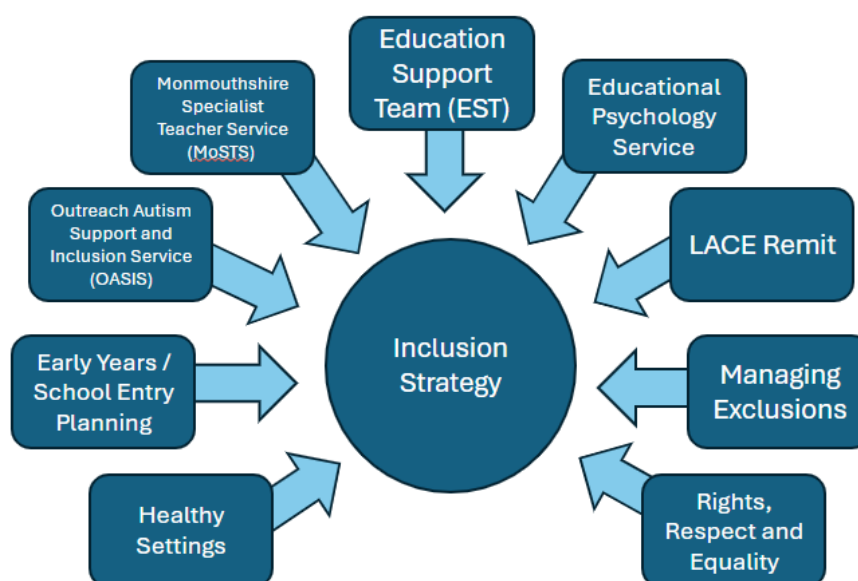


See Key Document 1 (ALN Policy) and Appendices 1 (Participation Policy), 3 (Children Looked After Policy) and 4 (Post 16 Strategy) for more details.

Early Intervention and Outreach

In order to adhere to the core principles of early identification, intervention and prevention, the Inclusion Service provides a range of early intervention and outreach. The core purpose of early intervention and outreach is to build capacity within schools to meet a range of identified needs, aiming to maintain children and young people in mainstream school placements and local communities wherever possible and, and to upskill our wider workforce.

Figure 4 Early Intervention and Outreach Support



Professional Learning and Core Training

Having a robust professional learning and core training offer is a key element of the Inclusion Strategy: this aims to support more inclusive, equitable, enabling and compassionate learning environments. In Monmouthshire the Inclusion Service provides a wide range of professional learning to reinforce and support our approach to inclusion for all children and young people. This complements other professional learning and training offers provided by the regional Education Achievement Service (EAS), which address the impact of poverty and inequality on attainment such as the Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) programme.

Our ongoing cycle of high-quality professional learning and training will:

- Build workforce capacity and skills to ensure all staff are equipped to support vulnerable learners effectively through a common understanding of language and skills that support inclusive practice in mainstream and specialist provision.
- Ensure consistency and quality and help deliver equitable services to all children and young people regardless of their needs.
- Support the emotional and mental well-being of children and young people and staff and enhance understanding of behaviours that challenge, through trauma informed and relational approaches.
- Promote equality and diversity to ensure that all children and young people feel valued and included through the ‘rights, respect, equality’¹³ and the anti-racism work¹⁴.
- Enhance collaborative working between education services and other stakeholders including health, social care, parents /carers.

As well as access to the annual cycle of professional learning and training offer from across the Inclusion Service, our schools have access to a high-quality suite of training portal pages that have been developed and reflect the broader offer of information, resources and recorded training. This training portal sits on the Monmouthshire internal SharePoint site and is accessible to all school staff or Monmouthshire professionals via this link ([Inclusion Training Portal Pages \(SharePoint\)](#)).

Figure 5 Core Professional Learning for Schools and Settings



¹³ [Rights, Respect, Equality \(RRE\) Guidance for Local Authorities \(Welsh Gov 2019\)](#) and [RRE Guidance for Schools \(Welsh Gov 2019\)](#)

¹⁴ [Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan \(Welsh Gov 2022\)](#)

Monmouthshire's Strategic Vision

Our Community and Corporate Plan outlines our aim to develop a 'truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners' starting points, strengths and educational needs'.

What do we hope to achieve?

- A consistent, high quality, inclusive educational offer that can meet the needs of children and young people from vulnerable groups, including those with ALN in pre-school, mainstream and specialist provision.
- More effective and equitable services which aim to reduce the impact of poverty and inequality.
- Provision which places a clear emphasis on early intervention and preventative work, including in the early years.
- Specialist provision which is appropriately staffed and resourced and has the capacity to meet Monmouthshire's current and projected needs for children and young people.

How do we achieve this?

In order to achieve our vision of a truly inclusive education system we need to continue to

- Build capacity in our schools and settings to meet a wider range of complex need.
- Keep children and young people within their local schools and communities, as far as is possible.
- Collaborate closely and ensure the right people are working creatively to meet the needs of children and young people from vulnerable groups.
- Focus on person-centred practice where the strengths and needs of children and young people are well understood and informed by those who know them best.
- Focus on early intervention and preventative work.
- Utilise data, information and evidence to inform the services and provision provided and to shape those needed for the future.
- Offer a range of ongoing professional learning and support at all levels regarding inclusive and equitable practices to enable excellent teaching, high quality intervention and sufficient provision in schools and settings.
- Promote the emotional and wellbeing needs of pupils, using a relational and trauma informed framework to enhance the understanding of behaviour as a form of communication.
- Challenge non-inclusive, discriminatory and inequitable practices at all levels.
- Invest to save to the achieve best practice and build sustainability for our current, and future children and young people from vulnerable groups.
- Develop our high-quality specialist services and provision for children and young people that are delivered in a cohesive and consistent way and that are responsive, flexible, and agile.
- Develop an ongoing evaluation programme and utilise the data to inform and shape service delivery.

How will we know if the strategy has been successful?

- Children/ young people are attending, engaging and succeeding within their school or setting.
- Parent/ carers will have a high level of confidence in Monmouthshire’s ability to identify and meet the needs of their children.
- The views, wishes and feelings of children and young people and their families will be at the heart of all education planning and delivery.
- Schools and settings will demonstrate an increased ability to meet the needs of a wider range of vulnerable learners through engaging with the building capacity initiatives identified in this strategy. This would be evidenced by measures such as a reduction in the exclusions for learners from vulnerable groups, including those with ALN, those who are Children Looked After (CLA) and those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM); the number of vulnerable learners maintained in mainstream settings, staff confidence, knowledge and skills to meet a range of need.
- Monmouthshire will have sufficient provision with the capacity and infrastructure to meet the current and projected needs of learners, providing high quality outreach, advice and support to schools and settings across the local authority. Measures of success could include individual learner progress, a more skilled and specialist workforce and improved access to targeted and specialist resources.

Service Business Plans: Inclusion Service

Actions to support the implementation of the of the Inclusion Strategy are included in individual service Business Plans (see Figure 6 below), which are updated on a quarterly basis. Business Plans are monitored by the Children and Young People Directorate Management Team and also by the Corporate Performance and Data Team.

Figure 6 Inclusion Service Business Plans



Evaluation and Review

The Inclusion Strategy will be evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure its effectiveness and to identify areas for improvement. Progress towards meeting its objectives will be achieved through the following:

- Quarterly monitoring of Inclusion Service Business Plans and an end of year analysis of actions that have been achieved, partially achieved, not achieved.
- Annual evaluation of professional learning delivered and the impact of training, through case studies or data analysis.
- Annual review of quality assurance processes.
- Service specific termly or annual reports to the Directorate Management Team (DMT).

Key Document Links

Key Document 1. Additional Learning Needs Policy – [ALN Policy 2025 Final](#)

Some Key Documents rely on internal Monmouthshire links. If these do not work for you, or you would like a copy of any of these documents (in Welsh or English) please email ALN@monmouthshire.gov.uk.

Appendices

- Appendix 1. Monmouthshire's Participation Policy
- Appendix 2. Information about specialist provision in Monmouthshire (SRB Handbook)
- Appendix 3. Children Looked After Policy
- Appendix 4. Post 16 Strategy – in development