

Appendix 1 Six-month 2025/26 Community & Corporate Plan progress report

The Community & Corporate Plan 2022-28 contains six objectives which focus on the longer-term future of the county and aim to address complex challenges, in line with the Future Generations Act.



The long-term nature of some objectives means that the effects of some activity may not be clearly demonstrable over short timescales, and some activity will have an impact over the longer term. The targets included in this progress report are reflective of where the council aspires to be in 2025/26. Informed by the evidence gathered, each objective has been assessed on a scale of 1-6 based on performance so far in 2025/26 by applying the following principles:

Level	Definition	Description
6	Excellent	Excellent or outstanding – all performance measures have achieved the target set and all actions have been delivered
5	Very Good	Major strengths – a significant majority of actions and measures are on track. No more than one or two falling short
4	Good	Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not been achieved
3	Adequate	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses – the evidence of success marginally outweighs areas that are not on track. Some actions are behind schedule and some measures are falling short of planned targets
2	Weak	Important weaknesses – the majority of measures and actions have not been achieved
1	Unsatisfactory	Major weakness – in most areas, performance is assessed as moving in the wrong direction and the vast majority of actions have not been delivered

Objective: A Fair Place to Live

Fair place



**Interim
Evaluation
Score: 4**

Level 4 – Good. Important strengths with some areas for improvement. The weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not yet been achieved.

Why This Matters: Nobody should be left behind in Monmouthshire or feel their voice does not count. Many of our residents are prosperous and very capable of looking after themselves and their loved ones. However, this is not the case for all and in a rural county inequality is often more hidden than in urban places. We will increase the intensity of our work to help those who need support to live the lives they want.

What we want to achieve:

- Improved life chances for people regardless of income or background
- Residents have better access to council services and support needed to live a healthy life
- Citizens are able to participate in council and community decision-making and take actions which enable them to shape their own futures

Summary of progress:

- We are implementing universal free school meals for all primary pupils. This ensures that all pupils have access to a freshly cooked meal at lunchtime, irrespective of their background. This is known to have a positive effect on health and educational attainment. We are targeting schools in more deprived areas to increase uptake.
- We are providing targeted free or subsidised play to children and young people during school holidays.
- We have increased the number of families accessing high quality early years education. This is shown to have a positive effect on long term outcomes.
- We need to ensure our efforts on tackling poverty and inequality are joined up. Improving our use of data will ensure our resources can be targeted to those with the greatest need to maximise impact.

A Fair Place: What progress have we made?

We have collaborated with providers across the county to broaden our **childcare provision** for families. We have increased the number of childcare settings from 94 to 97 during the year. 96% of eligible children now access Early Education, an improvement from 82% in 22/23. There has been a slight reduction in the number of Flying Start settings, from 45 to 42. This is because some settings currently having no eligible children and are choosing not to offer the service. We have established a new childcare setting at Trellech Primary School and will launch a consultation during the autumn term regarding a new setting at Archbishop Rowan Williams Primary School.

We have faced challenges in developing additional Cylch Meithrin settings due to limited site space and uncertainty around the permanent location for the Welsh school in Monmouth. This has meant that families in Monmouth and Chepstow cannot yet access Welsh-medium childcare, including Flying Start. In the interim, we have approved the existing Cylch Meithrin to offer Flying Start places, increasing uptake from 25 to 28 children.

We are continuing to provide targeted work to support communities and **those in need of support**. We have worked with partners to host drop-in cost of living support sessions. We have re-established the Monmouthshire Tackling Poverty Action Network. This will ensure we tackle inequalities and support the most vulnerable in society with the rising cost of living.

We are improving our use of data to ensure individuals in need of support can be easily identified. This will enable more responsive, targeted interventions. We are also participating in the Local Authority Benefit Take-up Pilot which aims to identify residents who may be missing out on means-tested devolved and reserved benefits. We will use data to undertake targeted outreach campaigns to improve benefit take-up. This project is in the early stages. Our Shared Benefits Team have begun the foundational work to integrate this tool into our systems.

We continue to promote the uptake of **Universal Free School Meals**. We are still seeing variances in uptake between areas. Presently 75% of pupils are having meals, up from 64% in 22/23. We have gathered a targeted list of schools using data on deprivation, eligibility for free school meals and additional learning needs to try and increase take-up where it will make the biggest difference. We have delivered our Food and Fun programme. This provides healthy meals and activities during school holidays as well as vital work experience for the young people employed to deliver the scheme. We achieved 6,377 attendances and served 12,849 meals. We know that nutritious food benefits children and young people by improving their physical and mental health, which enhances their ability to learn and grow. We have increased the number of children benefitting from MonLife free or subsidised play provision from 2,039 in 22/23 to 2,436 in 24/25.

We have continued to develop our relationship with the creative sector in Monmouthshire. We have facilitated workshops with local and national organisations, and the creative and economic sectors. We have held our second annual celebration of the arts day at County Hall in April 2025 which showcased arts activity from across the county. The event brought together a range of artists and practitioners enabling us to understand their priorities and inform the development of our **Cultural Strategy**. This aims to make culture more inclusive, accessible and visible for everyone in Monmouthshire. We have developed a draft strategy which is currently out for public consultation.

Objective: A Green Place to Live

Green place 	Interim Evaluation Score: 3	Level 3 – Strengths just outweigh weaknesses. The evidence of success marginally outweighs areas that are not on track. Some actions are behind schedule and some measures are falling short of planned targets.
--	--	--

Why This Matters: We recognise the outstanding beauty of Monmouthshire. As custodians of this place, we need to encourage residents and visitors to enjoy it, protect it and conserve it. The natural world in all its guises is the backdrop to our tourism and visitor economy. We will work with others to promote access to our special places whilst protecting the environment, support nature recovery, reduce our carbon emissions, reduce the risk of flooding and promote the circular economy. We also recognise that these are complex issues and it will take decades rather than years to see the full impact of the changes we are making.

What we want to achieve:

- Council operations are net zero by 2030 and local communities are supported to reduce their own carbon footprint
- Nature recovery, improved environmental and river health
- Sustainable local agriculture and farming practices with public services and residents consuming more local and seasonal produce

Summary of progress:

- We have finalised a costed decarbonisation plan which sets out areas of focus to meet our ambitions to decarbonise our estate in line with our commitment to become net zero.
- Our carbon emissions have increased in the short term due to construction projects. These projects have been designed to ensure minimal environmental impact and will contribute to an overall reduction in emissions in the long term.
- We have adopted a Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy setting out our response and how we will work with others to protect and enhance the environment.
- We have published our Food Strategy which will guide how we increase community access to land for growing and increase the amount of local produce used in our schools. These will have positive effects on nutrition and bring benefits to growers.
- Progress on delivering our decarbonisation plan will be key if we are to approach net zero at a suitable pace.

A Green Place: What progress have we made?

We have taken proactive steps to **decarbonise our operations** by finalising a costed decarbonisation plan for our estate. We will use the findings of these surveys to inform a Decarbonisation Strategy. We have invested in low carbon technologies such as the use of renewable energy. Emissions from our estate have decreased slightly since 2022/23, with a 17.8% reduction from our 2019/20 baseline. We recognise that this rate of reduction is not sufficient to reach net zero by 2030 and that substantial investment is required to further decarbonise our buildings. We have established an informal stakeholder working group to co-ordinate opportunities, work programmes and budgets and to evaluate alternative delivery models and capabilities across the organisation.

Overall **carbon emissions** increased between 2022/23 and 2024/25. This was largely due to rises in emissions from procurement and our supply chains. This included the development of Severn View Park care home and the carbon-neutral Abergavenny 3-19 school. We have ensured that, while these construction activities have temporarily raised emissions, both buildings have been designed to ensure minimal environmental impact and reduce carbon emissions in the long-term. We have identified that 87% of our total emissions are *caused emissions*—those linked to procurement, staff commuting and similar activities. This mirrors the picture across Wales where caused emissions make up 83% of total local authority emissions.

We have adopted the **Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy** and are working with partners to protect and enhance our environment. We are actively collaborating on the Wye Nutrient Management Board and Usk Catchment Partnership to improve river health on the Usk and Wye Rivers. We are leading on regional partnerships such as Gwent Green Grid and local partnerships such as Local Nature Partnership to deliver nature-based solutions and improve green spaces.

We have invested in the **transition of our fleet** to ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV). The percentage of ULEV vehicles in our fleet rose from 8% in 2022/23 to 17.36% so far in 2025/26. We have not seen tangible changes to the emissions from travel since 22/23 and since the baseline year of 2019/20. We are facing similar challenges in our ability to transition our fleet as in other work streams of decarbonisation. Due to the complexity of the challenge and the high costs involved, we are unable to transition at the desired pace without significant further investment. We are developing a fleet transition plan to support the acceleration of this work.

We have updated and expanded our **Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI)** at multiple sites across the county. We have commissioned a technical report to forecast demand to ensure we are targeting suitable locations. We will use the findings of this report to inform our EVCI strategy for the county. This will increase the availability and accessibility for all residents.

We have maintained a high rate of **recycling**. By the end of quarter 2, 71.9% of municipal waste was sent for recycling, reuse or composting. This exceeded the statutory target of 70% and is already approaching our annual target of 72%. We have achieved this through the continued participation of residents in household recycling schemes. We have, however, identified that the overall amount of waste generated per person has risen from 198kg in 2022/23 to 202kg in 2023/24 and remains above the Wales average. We have achieved the highest UK score for Waste Reduction & Food in the independently run Climate Emergency UK assessment, at 93%.

We have created a **Local Food Strategy** to facilitate access to council land for growing food and have allocated land for community use. We have supported the Welsh Government's Allotment Support Grant. This has improved, created or revived over 130 allotment plots across six sites in Monmouthshire. Community growing can provide a good source of environmentally sound, healthy, locally sourced food and make this more readily available to local people. We have worked with local farmers through the Welsh Veg in Schools pilot. This has enabled us to supply pupils in ten schools with nutritious, local food regardless of socio-economic background. We have also supported the development of new safety standards and logistics, enabling growers to expand and new farmers to diversify into organic horticulture as part of this scheme.

Objective: A Thriving and Ambitious Place

Thriving and
ambitious place



**Interim
Evaluation
Score: 4**

Level 4 – Good. Important strengths with some areas for improvement. The weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not yet been achieved.

Why This Matters: We want to foster a diverse, fairer, greener and circular economy, generating sustainable employment growth and creating conditions for shared prosperity. This will ensure that town centres remain vibrant and welcoming places that meet the needs of the local communities, businesses and visitors. Alongside this, good connectivity and infrastructure will enable people to access the services, attractions, education and training opportunities that are central to a thriving and ambitious place.

What we want to achieve:

- Vibrant town centres which bring people together and attract investment
- People of all ages and backgrounds have the skills to do well in work or start their own business
- Sustainable transport and infrastructure

Summary of progress:

- We are delivering important strategies, such as the NEET Strategy and Local Transport Plan, to support our people and communities.
- We are working in partnership with town councils and other key stakeholders to develop placemaking plans and have attracted new funding to enable town centre improvements. This will ensure vibrant and sustainable futures for our town and village centres
- We have a well-qualified population and have focused on addressing skills shortages in key industries and supporting residents into employment.
- We know that the number of young people not participating in the labour market has risen. We must continue to develop post-16 opportunities for young people, particularly those who are at risk of becoming NEET. This will improve the prospects for individuals and the prosperity of the county as a whole.

Thriving Place: What progress have we made?

We have formed placemaking partnerships across all six towns in the county. This ensures that developments reflect and address local needs. We have worked closely with partners and stakeholders to adopt **Placemaking Plans** in Usk and Chepstow. We have developed plans for Monmouth, Abergavenny, and Magor with Undy and are commencing development on one in Caldicot. We have designed these plans to create vibrant and sustainable futures for our town and village centres, drawing on the views of residents, businesses, and voluntary organisations. The establishment of delivery groups to drive and oversee the implementation of these plans will be key to their success. We have secured almost £3m in new funding from both Welsh and UK Governments to support delivery. We have developed a **Destination Management Plan** to ensure that the county becomes the most inspiring, connected and liveable place to stay, invest and work so that by 2030 Monmouthshire is Wales's stand-out rural destination.

We have continued to support our residents and local economy through the delivery of our **Economy, Employment and Skills Strategy**. We have assisted people who are economically inactive and those ready for employment through the Ready for Work and CELT programmes. So far, we have supported 58 people into employment. We have provided opportunities for people to develop and enhance their skills, whether they are looking to upskill within their current roles or gain additional qualifications. We have enabled 111 individuals to gain new skills or upskill. We have maintained our focus on addressing skills shortages. We have delivered weekly Construction Skills Certification Scheme drop-in sessions. 70% of participants have successfully obtained the green labourer's card. We have supported aspiring entrepreneurs and existing businesses, with 25 potential entrepreneurs supported to be business ready and 23 established businesses receiving non-financial support through Business Monmouthshire. We are seeing continued progress in the Monmouthshire economy. This includes as sustained levels of people in employment, 78.7%, which is above the rates for Wales and Great Britain.

We have remained committed to supporting young people to stay in education, training, or employment through our **NEET Strategy**. We have engaged with pupils whose attendance is 50% or below, offering them one-to-one support to help them re-engage with education. There have been challenges delivering one-to-one support in post-16 provision due to funding limitations, and we have relied on partners to provide advice and guidance. We are ensuring that NEET young people in Monmouthshire have access to opportunities. We have collaborated with partners to increase post-16 options, including the development of a STEM skills centre, new level 2 pathways in sixth forms, and more apprenticeship opportunities within the council. Getting young people into work or training leads to significant positive outcomes for individuals, the economy, and society as a whole.

We adopted a new **Local Transport Strategy** in May 2024. This sets out a clear ambition for transport infrastructure in Monmouthshire over the next five years. It has also enabled us to contribute to the development of a regional transport plan. We have established an infrastructure project team to ensure all transport and highways programmes of work are aligned to maximise additional benefits and ensure all funding is used effectively. We have been awarded up to £8.4m to implement transport projects to enhance access, safety and infrastructure. We have used this on community road safety training, bus infrastructure projects and road resilience projects to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. We have created or enhanced two active travel routes so far this year. This is below our target. We will continue to implement improvements to routes, utilising transport project funding. This is part of our plans for a future facing integrated transport network that meets the transport needs of our communities in a sustainable way.

We carried out a pavement and highways survey to gain a detailed understanding of their condition. We will use the findings to identify priority work and align our efforts. We have ensured that work needed on active travel and safe routes in communities are prioritised to ensure safe and sustainable travel routes for our residents. We recognise that funding the level of repairs needed on our highway network is challenging. Welsh Government's Local Government Borrowing Initiative will allow us to borrow money to fund an increased number of improvements projects. This will still not meet the identified funding gap required.

Objective: A Safe Place to Live

Safe place 	Interim Evaluation Score: 4	Level 4 – Good. Important strengths with some areas for improvement – the weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not yet been achieved.
---	--	---

Why This Matters: For most people, Monmouthshire is a really good place to live but this is not the case for everyone. It's important that people have a place to call home, feel safe and have a sense of belonging.

What we want to achieve:

- Increased supply of good quality affordable housing
- Reduce the number of people who become homeless
- A more energy efficient housing stock with a lower carbon footprint
- Communities in which everyone feels safe and respects each other

Summary of progress:

- Council has approved a deposit version of the Replacement Local Development Plan. This sets out how land will be developed for employment and will address key issues such as affordable housing.
- We are continuing to implement our Rapid Rehousing model, and this is preventing more people from becoming homeless.
- We have started to acquire accommodation to increase the availability of temporary housing in the county which is reducing the number of homeless households placed into costly and inadequate bed and breakfast accommodation.
- The continued high demand for temporary accommodation puts pressure on services. We are developing alternative provision to increase the availability of temporary accommodation.

Safe Place: What progress have we made?

We have developed a deposit **Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP)**. The deposit plan was approved by Council in October. It will now be sent to Welsh Government for public examination. This plan will address a number of key issues and align with the priorities of the organisation. It has allocated 50% affordable housing on each new development and is introducing enabling policies which will allow for further affordable housing developments to come forward. This includes facilitating more single person accommodation in the county which is currently extremely limited and is a factor contributing to homelessness. It will also help us tackle climate change and reduce bills by ensuring new developments to be of the highest energy efficiency standards.

We have increased the number of **affordable homes**. The number granted planning permission increased from 50 in 22/23 to 108 in 24/25. This is mainly attributed to improvements in river health permitting further developments in Monmouth and Abergavenny. These were areas previously restricted by high phosphate levels. The number of affordable homes delivered has also increased from 48 in 22/23 to 71 in 24/25. We recognise that more affordable homes are needed to meet demand in the county. Our deposit Replacement Local Development Plan aims to increase delivery.

We have applied a Rapid Rehousing approach and increased the resources targeted at **homeless prevention**. This includes increased staffing, procedural changes and closer partnership working to support more people at risk. We also provide grants from the Homeless Prevention Fund to help tackle arrears/debt and enable households to remain in their current accommodation or access alternatives. We have seen positive results, with the proportion of applicants successfully prevented from becoming homeless increasing from 50% at 2022/23 to 76% by quarter 2 of 2025/26. We are reviewing the Housing Support Grant programme to increase effectiveness.

We have reduced the number of households in B&B accommodation by 89%. This has fallen from 92 in 2022/23 to 10 in Q2 of 2025/26. We have also ensured that there are no 16 and 17-year-olds or families living in B&B accommodation. However, we continue to respond to high levels of demand for temporary accommodation. The number of homeless households in temporary accommodation has remained high, increasing from 117 in 22/23 to 158 at Q2 25/26. We have started to acquire accommodation for use as temporary accommodation and are repurposing council owned properties to meet demand in a cost-effective way. We have worked with housing associations to make more social housing available for homeless households. 58% of general needs social housing was allocated to homeless households in Q2 25/26. We need to ensure that allocating further social housing to homeless applicants will not be detrimental to other housing need groups.

We have championed everyone's right to feel **safe** and belong in their community. We have worked closely with young people across the county to tackle knife crime and anti-social behaviour. We have secured funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office to support this work. We have partnered with the charity Fearless to deliver workshops on critical topics such as county lines and knife crime at our youth centres, supporting young people to deal with these challenges. We have targeted young people involved in anti-social behaviour in Caldicot and other town centres and have seen a reduction in the number of ASB incidents. We are strengthening the relationship between young people and local police by regularly inviting officers to our youth centres to engage directly and listen to their concerns.

Objective: A Connected Place where People Care

Connected place



**Interim
Evaluation
Score: 4**

Level 4 – Good. Important strengths with some areas for improvement. The weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not yet been achieved.

Why This Matters: We want Monmouthshire to be a place where people's contributions are valued, they feel part of a community and are connected to others. The need and complexity of demand for care and support is high. We need to maintain a range of services that support people in periods of vulnerability, from childhood to old age, allowing them to live their lives on their terms. We know that well-being is about far more than treating people when they get sick. We need to deliver approaches that promote, physical and mental health and well-being and reduce health inequalities.

What we want 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

Summary of progress:

- We have developed strategies that will provide the provision to meet social care needs for children requiring placements and adults who require care at home. These have delivered increased placements for children within the county and increased availability of care at home.
- We have implemented preventative and reablement approaches to providing care that supports long term well-being.
- We have developed a whole authority approach to wellness and well-being (Living Well Strategy) and addressing inequality by promoting healthier lifestyles and building resilience. The delivery of the approach will be key to achieving our outcomes.

What progress have we made?

We have established a coordinated approach to **early intervention and prevention** in Children's Social Services. We are focussed on preventative family support throughout children's social care. We have achieved stability in the number of children looked after, with a gradual reduction from 208 in March 2022 to 196 in September 2025.

We have invested in **foster care** recruitment and have increased foster carer fees. We continue to face challenges recruiting and retaining foster carers, a challenge seen across Wales and the rest of the UK. However, our work has led to a slight increase in our number of in-house foster carers. This is reducing our reliance on independent fostering agencies for placements (IFAs). At the end of September, for all children in foster placements, 36% were placed with IFAs compared with 64% placed with in-house or kinship carers.

We are developing new residential and supported accommodation projects to increase **placements for children and young people**. We have completed two projects providing aged 16+ supported accommodation for five placements and a four-bed residential children's home. We are developing a further two projects, one children's residential home and a further aged 16+ supported accommodation. This is improving the availability of placements and helping to ensure children and young people can remain close to their communities. In September 2025 51.5% of children looked after were supported to remain in Monmouthshire, which is a higher proportion than over the previous eighteen months.

We are responding to an ageing population by focussing on reviewing and assessing care requirements, expanding reablement services, and rolling out assistive technology. This enables us to support adults to live independently for longer. Following a package of reablement, 62% of people were assessed as not requiring further support. This is a higher proportion than in the in the last couple of years. We have developed a **Living Well Strategy** to promote a whole authority approach to wellness and well-being and address inequality by promoting healthier lifestyles and building resilience, particularly among deprived communities.

We are implementing a **long-term strategy for commissioned domiciliary care**. Due to a combination of our activities and external factors the market for home care has stabilised. We have reduced the number of unmet care hours from 804 in March 2023 to 412 in September 2025. We are now able to provide 94.6% of domiciliary care hours. This is improving access to vital support to enable people to remain living in their own home. Adults social care service user satisfaction with care and support is 79% in September 2025 which is lower than the 83.5% in March 2023.

We are enabling **healthier, more active lives** by increasing outdoor access. Fifty-six schools, volunteers, and partners participated in nature-based wellbeing projects county-wide. Through the Shift project and the Emotional Logic grant programme, we are supporting young people's mental health, with 100% of young people engaged in the project reporting improved wellbeing.

Objective: A Learning Place

Learning place



Interim Evaluation Score: 4

Level 4 – Good Important strengths with some areas for improvement. The weight of evidence shows that the successes are greater than the areas that have not yet been achieved.

Why This Matters: We want Monmouthshire to be a place where everybody experiences the best possible start in life and has the opportunity to learn, developing the skills and knowledge they will need to reach their potential. The pandemic had a substantial effect on schools and pupils. The two years of uncertainty and significant disruption to learning inevitably left a legacy. Before the pandemic we knew that our disadvantaged learners did not achieve the outcomes we would wish. The pandemic has worsened the learning experiences of many vulnerable students such as those eligible for free school meals. The emotional and mental well-being of pupils was often affected, with many experiencing increased uncertainty, anxiety and loneliness.

What we want to achieve:

- Improved school attendance and reduced levels of exclusions which remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils.
- The benefits of the new curriculum in Wales are maximised through excellent teaching and learning.
- A truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners' starting points, strengths and educational needs.
- Continue our programme of school modernisation.

Summary of progress:

- We are implementing a range of approaches and support to improve attendance, reduce exclusions and support pupils' well-being to keep our young people in school.
- Attendance in primary schools has improved to near pre-pandemic levels, secondary school attendance remains below pre-pandemic levels. Attendance of eFSM pupils remains lower, particularly in secondary school. The number of fixed-term exclusions from schools is high and there is significant demand for support to pupils.
- We have developed an Inclusion Strategy that will help us to ensure consistent, high-quality delivery of inclusion services across Monmouthshire.
- We are developing the school estate, including the opening of the carbon neutral King Henry VIII all-through school in Abergavenny.
- We need to target our support for children and young people, particularly vulnerable pupils, using the approaches we have now developed, to support attendance in school.

How well are we achieving our desired outcomes?

We have worked closely with schools to improve **attendance**, recognising that lower attendance remains a challenge nationally since the pandemic. We have dedicated education welfare officers to support vulnerable pupils and bring them back into education wherever possible. We have held regular attendance consultations with schools to promote attendance and provide tailored support to families.

We have strengthened systems and processes by updating attendance policies in line with Welsh Government guidance. We have increased primary school attendance to 93.9%, nearing pre-pandemic levels and close to our 94% target. We have not achieved the same improvement in secondary schools, where attendance reached 90.1% during the 2024/25 academic year, compared with 88.2% for the year before.

We have continued to support **vulnerable learners** by improving our understanding of the drivers of non-attendance and low attendance. We have embedded trauma-informed practice as part of a universal, whole-school preventative approach and developed a learning programme to help schools address emotionally based school avoidance. We have implemented the whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being. This is enabling schools to promote pupil well-being effectively. Despite these actions, we have faced challenges in improving attendance for learners eligible for free school meals, particularly in secondary schools. Attendance of our eFSM cohort in primary schools was 89.1% at the end of the 24/25 academic year, 4.8 percentage points lower than the overall figure. Attendance of eFSM pupils in secondary schools was 79.8%, 10.3 percentage points lower than the overall attendance figure. Narrowing the gap between those eFSM and those not will be essential to ensure better outcomes for our pupils.

We have decreased the number of permanent **exclusions** upheld in schools by improving the operation and effectiveness of the Inclusion Panel to consider alternatives. We have worked with schools and other agencies to offer viable, risk-managed alternatives. We have faced continued pressure from high levels of fixed-term exclusions, which have increased demand on the Pupil Referral Service (PRS). We have invested in new accommodation and enhanced leadership to improve PRS capacity and ensure pupils are able to achieve better outcomes.

We have developed a new **Inclusion Strategy** and an updated Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Policy to shape our work with children and young people in schools and settings in Monmouthshire. We have ensured a focus on improving outcomes for children and young people in vulnerable groups and their families through our Inclusion Strategy. We have set out our commitment to supporting children and young people with barriers to learning and additional learning needs, ensuring they receive the necessary support, resources, and opportunities to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally through our ALN Policy.

We have continued our development and modernisation of the **school estate**. We have completed the construction of the new King Henry all-through school in Abergavenny and we are expanding the capacity of our Welsh medium schools.

We have an agreed **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan** that sets our strategic direction for the planning, delivery, and growth of Welsh medium education in Monmouthshire over the next ten years. We are mainly on target with delivering the plan. We have established immersion classes to support transitions into Welsh medium education and ensure demand for new sites.