

**SUBJECT: Cysgod Y Coed (formerly the Monmouthshire Pupil Referral Service)**

**MEETING: Performance and Overview Committee**

**DATE: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

**1. PURPOSE:**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the significant development and potential risks of the Monmouthshire Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) service, now called Cysgod y Coed.
- 1.2. Over the last couple of years Cysgod y Coed, previously known as the Pupil Referral Service (PRS), has undergone significant transformation, alongside a marked and sustained increase in demand. This growth reflects both increased complexity of need and greater reliance on EOTAS provision across the county.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

This report seeks to:

- 2.1. Provide Members with an overview of the service's current operating model, pressures, and improvements.
- 2.2. Enable effective scrutiny of the existing arrangements.

**3. KEY ISSUES:**

**3.1. Context:** Cysgod y Coed provides Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) for learners who have been permanently excluded, or who are unable to attend school due to medical or related needs. For some learners and for a range of reasons, education at a mainstream school may not be appropriate. Therefore, section 19(1) of the Education Act (the 1996 Act) gives local authorities the power to make 'arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school (EOTAS) for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them.'

**3.2.** The provision is delivered through three strands:

**3.2.1. Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)** are a statutory function of a local authority for pupils who reside in Monmouthshire who do not have a school place. Most pupils have been Permanently Excluded (PEX) from school on arrival or present with individual risk assessments that mean mainstream provision is currently unsuitable. The nature of this provision can require a rapid response at short notice. We have two PRUs in Monmouthshire currently educating 39 pupils.

**3.2.2. EOTAS Medical** provision is a statutory function and provides education for pupils too ill to currently attend school. Monmouthshire EOTAS policy requires health or Educational Psychology Service evidence to access provision. There is currently a combination of online and in person teaching for 59 pupils, who are dual registered with their school.

**3.2.3. ALN Bespoke** provision is for pupils typically with complex Additional Learning Needs (ALN) who do not have a school place. Almost all will have experienced failed out of county specialist placement or the local authority has been unable to secure suitable specialist placements. Currently 21 pupils receive ALN Bespoke provision.

### **3.3. Progress since the Pupil Referral Service (PRS) Review**

3.3.1. The LA undertook a review of the Pupil Referral Service (PRS) between November 2023 and March 2024. Since then, the LA has undertaken significant improvements to ensure it can be an effective, impactful and sustainable service that meets the needs of an increasingly complex and growing cohort.

3.3.2. There were two main, initial priorities following the Review. The first was to maximise the benefits of the two new learning facilities (Pupil Referral Units) for the service. Ty Onnen is in Abergavenny. It opened in November 2024 and currently runs with three classes (6-8 pupils). The other, Ty Pinwydd, is just outside Chepstow. Following significant redevelopment, this site opened in March 2025, it also has capacity for three classes.

3.3.3. The second main priority was to ensure a skilled and sustainable, permanent, staffing structure is established to ensure the effective development of skilled staff able to impact learner outcomes. Jake Parkinson was appointed Head of the PRS (now Cysgod y Coed) in June 2025 and has established an appropriately skilled, senior leadership team and a more robust, staffing capacity covering all areas of the service.

### **3.4. Development of service identity**

3.4.1. The service has recently adopted a new name, Cysgod y Coed, following consultation with both staff and learners. The intention was to establish a Welsh-medium identity aligned with the service's ethos and to provide learners with a positive and meaningful reference point as they transition beyond Key Stage 4.

3.4.2. The name, meaning "*the shelter or shade of the trees*", reflects the service's core values:

- Providing a safe and protective environment
- Supporting nurture, growth, and development
- Offering a restorative space for learners to re-engage with education
- Promoting a sense of belonging and community

### **3.5 Leadership and Governance**

3.5.1 Cysgod y Coed is supported by a Management Committee that is responsible for providing governance and strategic oversight to the service. The recent Estyn<sup>1</sup> inspection identified the effectiveness of the Management Committee as an area requiring improvement, particularly in relation to the level of challenge, clarity of roles, and impact on service development.

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<sup>1</sup> [Inspection report Monmouthshire Pupil Referral Service 2025](#)

- 3.5.2 In response, a number of actions have been implemented through the Post-Inspection Action Plan. Early indications suggest that these changes are beginning to strengthen the effectiveness of the committee, with improved structures, clearer lines of accountability, and more focused engagement in key areas of service performance.
- 3.5.3 However, while initial progress is positive, the impact of these changes is at an early stage and will require sustained focus to ensure that governance arrangements are both robust and effective in driving improvement. Ongoing scrutiny should consider the extent to which the Management Committee is providing appropriate challenge, supporting strategic decision-making, and contributing to measurable improvements in outcomes for learners.

### **3.6 Learner Outcomes** (academic year 2024-25)

- 3.6.1 Overall outcomes indicate moderate attainment in Level 1 qualifications (GCSE D to G grades), with more limited performance at higher levels. Just over two-thirds of pupils (67.7%) achieved at least Level 1 in Maths and English, with stronger outcomes in the PRU (60.0%) compared to EOTAS Medical (43.8%) and ALN Bespoke provision (40.0%).
- 3.6.2 Achievement of Level 2 qualifications (GCSE A\*-C grades) remains lower overall, with 35.5% of pupils attaining at least one Level 2 qualification. Performance varies across provisions, with PRU (40.0%) and EOTAS Medical (37.5%) showing stronger outcomes than ALN Bespoke provision, where no pupils achieved this measure.
- 3.6.3 Attainment in Level 2 Maths and English is notably low overall (12.9%), though outcomes are comparatively higher within EOTAS Medical provision (18.8%) than PRU (10.0%), with no pupils in ALN Bespoke provision achieving this measure.
- 3.6.4 In terms of wider qualification outcomes, 25.8% of pupils achieved four Level 1 equivalent qualifications, with strongest performance in the PRU (40.0%). However, attainment of four or more Level 2 equivalents is very limited (3.2% overall), achieved only within the PRU (10.0%).
- 3.6.5 Overall, the outcomes highlight relatively stronger attainment at Level 1, particularly within PRU provision, but more limited progression to Level 2, especially within ALN Bespoke provision—indicating a need for continued focus on raising higher-level outcomes across the service.

### **3.7 Pupil Numbers and Increased Demand**

- 3.7.1 As of 11<sup>th</sup> May 2026, there are 119 learners on roll, with an additional 3 admissions pending.
- 3.7.2 This represents:
- A 61% increase since September 2025 from 74 pupils to 119 in May 2026.
  - An average growth of 142% over a three-year period
- 3.7.3 The most significant growth has occurred within the EOTAS Medical provision, where current numbers are more than double those anticipated in the Local Authority's PRS Review in 2024.
- 3.7.4 In addition, increasing numbers of permanent exclusions from both primary and secondary sectors have contributed to broader service expansion.
- 3.7.5 While there have been improvements in processes to support reintegration - there have been 12 returns to school up until Easter this academic year, in comparison to eight in the previous academic year. A further two managed moves to mainstream

schools are pending, with the service supporting three additional learners in Year 6 engage in some transition activities in the hope that they can make successful supported transitions into mainstream secondary schools in September 2026.

- 3.7.6 The service is now supporting more younger learners with increasingly complex needs, for whom a return to mainstream provision is not always achievable in the short term. This places significant operational pressure on the service.

### **3.8 Estyn Inspection**

3.8.1 The service was inspected by Estyn in October 2025, early in the tenure of the current Head. The inspection outcome identified the service as requiring significant improvement, reflecting Estyn's confidence in the leadership's capacity to improve and the accurate nature of the existing School Development Plan.

3.8.2 The report identified:

- Strengths in safeguarding and relationships
- Early-stage improvements in leadership systems and processes

3.8.3 Four key recommendations were made relating to:

- Teaching and learning
- Self-evaluation and pupil progress
- Attendance
- Governance (Management Committee)

3.8.4 The service developed a Post-Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) setting out the key actions required to address the inspection recommendations. This plan was formally approved by Estyn in March 2026.

3.8.5 Estyn noted that the PIAP was comprehensive and well-structured, clearly addressing all four core inspection recommendations with an appropriate level of detail. The limited amendments suggested by Estyn further indicate a high level of confidence in the service's capacity to deliver sustained improvement.

### **3.9 Teaching and Learning**

3.9.1 In response to Estyn's first recommendation, the service has:

- Established a Professional Learning programme
- Introduced a structured self-evaluation cycle, including three formal Review Points annually

3.9.2 Strengthened collaboration with:

- The Local Authority School Improvement Service
- Mainstream schools
- The Bridge Achievement Centre (Newport EOTAS provision)

3.9.3 Early evidence from Review Points indicates positive progress in improving teaching and learning.

### **3.10 Curriculum and provision**

3.10.1 The service has adapted its curriculum in line with the Curriculum for Wales reforms and feedback from learners and families.

3.10.2 At Key Stage 3 the curriculum is rooted in Health and Wellbeing, focuses on Literacy and Numeracy development and incorporates wider Areas of Learning and Experience through thematic work (e.g. "Big Questions")

3.10.3 At Key Stage 4, the offer has broadened significantly. There is a greater emphasis on practical and vocational pathways, and the new VCSE qualifications are being introduced.

3.10.4 This approach reflects a commitment to providing relevant, engaging, and accessible learning opportunities.

3.10.5 Below is an outline of the curriculum pathways and offer currently in place for pupils accessing Cysgod y Coed. There will be some individual differences in what can be accessed based on pupil pathways and need.

Years R-9	Entry Level Pathways Level 1 Qualifications		Level 2 Qualifications	
Our KS3 Curriculum is rooted in the Health and Wellbeing AOLE. RSE is a core part of our offer. The Cross-Curricular skills, Four Purposes, Integral skills and wider AOLEs are mapped throughout each Unit	<i>Language Literacy and Communication</i>	Entry Level English ESW Communication	<i>Language Literacy and Communication</i>	GCSE English Language and Literature
	<i>Maths and Numeracy</i>	Entry Level Maths Financial Literacy ESW Application of Number	<i>Maths and Numeracy</i>	GCSE Maths and Numeracy Financial Literacy
	<i>Science and Technology</i>	Health and Social Care NCFE	<i>Science and Technology</i>	Health and Social Care NCFE
	<i>Health and Wellbeing</i>	SWEET Personal Growth and Wellbeing (PGW) BTEC Home Cooking BTEC Vocational Level 1 BTEC First in Sport	<i>Health and Wellbeing</i>	SWEET PGW BTEC Home Cooking
	<i>Humanities</i>	BTEC Vocational Level 1 Equality and Diversity	<i>Humanities</i>	Equality and Diversity
	<i>Expressive Arts</i>	King's Trust	<i>Expressive Arts</i>	King's Trust

### 3.11 Attendance

3.11.1 The service has seen improvements to attendance made consistently within this academic year.

3.11.2 Attendance across the service remains variable but shows improvement in specific areas:

- Attendance across the service is 47% with attendance in PRU settings at 61%.
- PRU attendance has increased by 10% since leadership changes
- For ALN Bespoke attendance is 69%.
- Attendance within EOTAS Medical remains significantly lower at 31% (out of a possible 50%).

3.11.3 This reflects:

- The nature of learners' medical and anxiety-based needs
- A historically predominantly online delivery model

3.11.4 The service has identified that online provision has presented a barrier to engagement for many EOTAS Medical learners. As a result, a transition to a more face-to-face, group-based model of provision is planned from June 2026, with the aim of improving attendance and engagement.

### 3.12 Behaviour, Exclusions and Inclusion Pathways

- 3.12.1 There has been a marked reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions since the start of this academic year, with data indicating a sustained downward trend over successive reporting periods.
- 3.12.2 Fixed term exclusions in the last reporting period (December 2025 to May 2026) have reduced to 12 (82.5 total exclusions overall, compared to 70.5 previously). This represents a significant decrease from the last reported figure of 30. During this academic year, the overtime trend shows a consistent reduction from 45 exclusions at the initial reporting point, to 30 at the second review, and now to 12 in the current period.
- 3.12.3 While this trajectory is positive, it is important to consider the extent to which this reflects sustained improvement in behaviour and engagement, rather than short-term variation. The service attributes this reduction to several contributory factors, including:
- Improved relationships between staff and pupils
  - Strengthened engagement with parents and carers
  - The development of a more positive and engaging learning environment
  - Increased pupil sense of belonging
- 3.12.4 Whilst early indications are positive, the data set remains relatively short-term. Ongoing scrutiny will be required to ensure that reductions in exclusions are sustained over time and are underpinned by improvements in behaviour, engagement, and attendance, rather than changes in practice alone.

### **3.13 ALN and vulnerable learners**

- 3.13.1 One Page profiles (OPPs) are reviewed and updated on a termly basis and to support consistency in practice; additional professional learning has been delivered to staff. These are now more precise, working documents that support pupils' progress and recognise their diverse needs. The development and refinement of OPPs remains ongoing.
- 3.13.2 A comprehensive audit of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) has been conducted across both PRU centres. Reviews are ongoing to ensure all plans remain current, accurate and responsive to individual pupil needs.
- 3.13.3 EOTAS Medical IDP reviews are carried out in collaboration with Local Authority and the pupil's dual registered school to maintain relevance and consistency.
- 3.13.4 As of May 2026, the following numbers of pupils have an IDP:
- PRU – 18
  - EOTAS Medical – 16
  - ALN Bespoke – 21
- 3.13.5 It is forecast that in the coming year, nearly all pupils accessing Cysgod y Coed will have an IDP.

### **3.14 Safeguarding**

- 3.14.1 Safeguarding remains a central priority within the service.
- 3.14.2 Estyn identified safeguarding as a strength, supported by:

- A strong safeguarding culture
- Appropriate staff training
- Effective use of recording systems (e.g. MyConcern)

Given the complexity of learners' needs, safeguarding in an EOTAS context is:

- Contextual and dynamic
- Closely linked to attendance, wellbeing, and engagement

- Monitoring data indicates ongoing need but also evidence of robust processes and oversight.

#### **4 REASONS:**

4.1 This report is intended to support Members in developing a clear understanding of the current scale, complexity, and trajectory of the service, and the implications for future planning and resourcing.

4.2 The growth in demand, combined with increased complexity of need, means that the service must continue to evolve to meet its statutory duties effectively.

#### **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

5.1 The level of growth in demand and complexity of need represents a significant change in the service provided by Cysgod Y Coed. Members are asked to note both the scale of this increase and the ongoing variability in demand, as these factors have significant implications for the sustainability and future development of the service.

5.2 Historically the service has been funded for staffing and not pupil numbers, the current funding is £506,834 and this has not grown at the same levels as pupil numbers. The LA is currently considering a new funding model, and this will be fully consulted on once proposals have been agreed. Consideration will need to be given both to addressing the now significant and increasing deficit; and the structural deficit being addressed through a sustainable funding model and approach.

#### **6 CONSULTEES:**

This report has been developed in consultation with:

- Monmouthshire County Council Inclusion Team
- Cysgod Y Coed Senior Leadership Team and Management Committee
- Children, Learning, Skills and Economy (CLSE) Directorate Management Team

#### **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- [MCC Inclusion Strategy](#)
- [MCC EOTAS Policy](#)
- [Welsh Government EOTAS Framework](#)
- [Estyn report MCC Pupil Referral Service](#)

#### **8 AUTHOR/S:**

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