

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Support for Vulnerable Learners</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Performance and Overview Committee</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> The June 2026</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>

## 1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide an update to members with an evaluative assessment of the effectiveness and impact of key inclusion services and approaches in improving outcomes vulnerable learners, including:
- The development of Trauma Informed approaches.
  - The Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) programme.
  - The Monmouthshire's Specialist Teaching Service (MoSTS).
  - OASIS (Outreach And Support Inclusion Service) including The Education Support Team (EST).
  - The Educational Psychology Service (EPS).

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

We would welcome members of this committee to:

- 2.1 Scrutinise the extent to which current approaches are delivering measurable improvements in outcomes for vulnerable learners.
- 2.2 Assess whether existing provision represents effective use of resources, including evidence of prevention and demand reduction.
- 2.3 Challenge areas where impact is variable or risks remain, particularly around capacity and sustainability.
- 2.4 Note the planned strengthening of evaluation frameworks to better evidence of long-term impact.

## 3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The areas of work highlighted in this report support the aim of the Community and Corporate Plan, reflected in Inclusion Strategy, to develop a truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners' starting points, strengths and educational needs; to improve school attendance; and reduce levels of exclusion.
- 3.2 Across the broad range of Inclusion services, there is consistent evidence of positive impact on inclusion, attendance, and prevention of escalation, including:
  - High rates of pupils maintained in mainstream placements.
  - Improved attendance and engagement for targeted cohorts
  - Increased workforce capability, reducing reliance on external provision.
- 3.3 Following the recent LA inspection, Estyn<sup>1</sup> reported that *'the inclusion team, educational psychology service and specialist advisory teachers offer a valuable range of*

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<sup>1</sup> [A report on education services in Monmouthshire County Council 2026](#)

*professional guidance that strengthens the capacity of schools and settings to meet pupils' needs effectively'.*

3.4 However, the demand for Inclusion services continues to increase, which stretches the capacity and can limit the reach and consistency of support. Also, the capacity of schools to release staff for professional learning, to provide school-based interventions and support, presents a risk to the sustainability and the impact of the support offered.

### **3.5 Trauma Informed Approaches**

3.5.1 According to Estyn, Monmouthshire *'has embedded a clear vision for a trauma-informed approach which is underpinned by strong and trusting relationships. This shared understanding underpins the authority's inclusive ethos.'*

3.5.2 The continued focus on Trauma Informed approaches as core to the universal, whole-school, preventative approach, continues to be led by the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The development of a Monmouthshire specific tiered Trauma-Informed Professional Learning programme (Trauma Informed Practice Skills and Strategies - TIPSS)<sup>2</sup> and supervision, is now offered and delivered to schools, services and early years settings. This has provided sustainability and flexibility to meet longer-term need, in line with local and national contexts and priorities.

3.5.3 Eight primary schools, Cysgod Y Coed (formally the Pupil Referral Service) and the Education Welfare Service have engaged with whole school/ service TIPSS 'Trauma Skilled' Professional Learning.

3.5.4 The impact is that whole-school and workforce professional learning has led to demonstrable improvements in staff confidence, knowledge, and consistency of response.

3.5.5 Adoption of relational and trauma-informed approaches is contributing to:

- Reduced need for reactive behavioural responses
- Increased alignment between policy (e.g. Behaviour/ Relationships) and inclusive practice

3.5.6 Our evidence of this includes:

- Evaluation feedback is consistently positive, indicating improvements in practitioner capability.
- Expansion across schools and services demonstrates scalable model with growing reach.

3.5.7 There is emerging impact on pupil outcomes, though this is not yet consistently quantified or tracked across the system.

### **3.6 Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA)**

3.6.1 ELSA is a school-based targeted, evidence-based intervention designed to build capacity of school staff to support the emotional needs of their learners.

3.6.2 The ELSA programme continues to offer a high reaching and strong preventative model, led and delivered by Educational Psychologists.

3.6.3 Currently Monmouthshire has approximately 80 active ELSAs across schools, settings and services. In Autumn 2025, ELSA Initial Training course trained fourteen new ELSAs. Currently all primary and secondary schools, and Cysgod Y Coed have at least one active ELSA, however this can change due to staff turnover.

3.6.4 The ELSA programme contributes to:

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<sup>2</sup> [Home - ACE Hub Wales](#)

- Early intervention in emotional and mental health needs
- Reduced escalation to specialist services

3.6.5 This is evidence through positive stakeholder feedback across schools, settings and families.

3.6.6 The Risks to Impact include:

- Support staff (teaching assistants) turnover and challenges facing schools to consistently release staff, leading to possible reduction in continuity and quality.
- The capacity of the Educational Psychology Service to maintain the levels of training and supervision required for high numbers of ELSAs across the LA.

### **3.7 Monmouthshire Specialist Teaching Service (MoSTS)**

3.7.1 MoSTS aims to improve outcomes for pupils with literacy difficulties in primary schools in Monmouthshire. The service has a high perceived value illustrated by the high demand.

3.7.2 During the academic year 2024-25, MoSTS received 114 individual requests for involvement from primary schools. They provided blocks of intervention to approximately 66 pupils in primary schools and assessed and provided advice to schools in relation to a further 4 pupils. *It is worth noting that due to pupils/requests panning academic years these numbers don't align.*

3.7.3 Pupils receiving intervention show:

- Measurable improvements in literacy (reading, spelling, comprehension)
- Increased confidence and independent learning strategies

3.7.4 This is evidenced by quantitative and qualitative evaluation which confirms positive progress for pupils. Parent/carer and school evaluations were also very positive.

3.7.5 To support manage the reduction in the capacity of the team, a robust approach to managing, tracking and prioritising workflow and waiting list has been developed.

3.7.6 There is an emerging model of support and associated resources, with the aim to increase system-level impact through school-led delivery, this shift toward school-delivered interventions supported by MoSTS is likely to:

- Increase reach.
- Improve efficiency.
- Reduce reliance on specialist input.

3.7.7 The risks to impact currently include

- Reduced capacity of MoSTS limits number of pupils supported directly.
- Potential increased reliance on schools to deliver interventions consistently.
- Workforce pressures in LA and schools affecting scalability.

### **3.8 OASIS (Outreach and Support Inclusion Service)**

The Outreach And Support Inclusion Service (OASIS) is a co-ordinated team of specialist staff from the Education Support Team (EST) and Monmouthshire's Specialist Resource Bases (SRBs). OASIS aims to support the inclusion of pupils with complex needs in mainstream schools by offering collaborative specialist support to mainstream schools, to develop and enhance good inclusive practice, and build capacity.

### **3.9 SRB Led Outreach**

3.9.1 In academic year 2024-25, 24 pieces of Outreach work were allocated to SRB leads and 15 pieces of work were jointly allocated with EST.

3.9.2 SRB Leads supported the Enhanced Transition Process with Early Years Educational Psychologists.

### **3.10 Education Support Team (EST)**

3.10.1 The EST support schools to meet the needs of primary aged pupils presenting with behaviours that challenge, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), neurodevelopmental conditions, and those of risk of exclusion. They also support schools to meet the needs of Children Looked After (CLA).

3.10.2 Across 2024-25 EST supported 80 pupils in primary schools across Monmouthshire. Of the 80 pupils supported:

- 95% (76 pupils) remained in their mainstream placement
- 79% increased attendance
- 58% returned to full-time education (from a reduced hours Pastoral Support Plan)

3.10.3 There is clear evidence of

- Prevention of exclusion
- Improved attendance outcomes
- Reduced demand for specialist placements

3.10.4 Therefore, the EST represents significant cost avoidance.

3.10.5 The evidence of this impact is through strong quantitative data supported by extremely positive qualitative feedback from school staff, pupils, and parents/carers.

3.10.6 The principal risk to this service arises from sustained and increasing demand from schools. Maintaining a high-quality, responsive service will depend on ensuring that there is sufficient capacity through the recruitment and retention of appropriately skilled and experienced staff.

### **3.11 Educational Psychology Service (EPS)**

3.11.1 The EPS represents a critical enabler of system-wide inclusion, with strong strategic impact. It aims to support the capacity of schools and settings to provide consistent, high quality inclusive practice that reduces barriers to learning. The EPS maintains a focus on long-term, preventive, sustainable models of working, in collaboration with others.

3.11.2 The EPS leads on a responsive, comprehensive and evaluated professional learning focused on workforce development.

3.11.3 In addition to leading on key areas already outlined in this report (TIPSS and ELSA), the EPS continue to support the Monmouthshire Autism in Schools and Settings (MASS) programme. Which was recognised by Estyn as a 'spotlight' of best practice in the LA recent Estyn inspection report (February 2026).

3.11.4 Every school and Cysgod Y Coed has a school link Educational Psychologist (EP). As part of their EP link role, EPs engage in individual casework. During academic year 2024-25, there were 263 requests for involvement for individual pupils representing high levels of demand and perceived value.

3.11.5 The EPS has a robust Early Years model of support and in 2024-25, 35 children were accepted at the EYs ALN Panel for EP involvement for school entry planning supporting pre-school children with complex ALN to have a successful transition into school.

3.11.6 Feedback and data gathered for 2024-25, from school staff and parent/carers is positive and reflects that the EPS supports schools to understand and meet the needs of the children and young people.

3.11.7 A potential risk to the ongoing provision of a high-quality service and impact include the increasing, high demand, at an individual pupil level which could impact on the service's capacity to maintain a systemic, preventative focus.

#### **4. REASONS:**

4.1 To provide the committee with an update on progress being made with regards to delivering the commitments set out in the Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28, alongside compliance with ALN legislation and the Principles of the Code.

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

5.1 ELSA. Schools and settings currently pay towards Initial ELSA training and ongoing supervision and professional learning, which allows the continued commitment and use of EPs to deliver the programme.

5.2 MoSTS, EPS and EST. EPS, MoSTS and EST have individual budgets, and are supported the Principal Educational Psychologist, with oversight of the Head of Service for Inclusion. EST is now line managed by the Vulnerable Learner Lead.

#### **6. CONSULTEES:**

- Inclusion Team
- Children, Learning, Skills and Economy DMT

#### **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

- Performance and Overview Scrutiny Paper – 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025
- EST Annual Report 2024-25
- MoSTS Annual Report 2024-25
- EPS Annual Report 2024-25

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