

SUBJECT: Establishing a Gwent Wide Social Care Workforce Development Service

MEETING: CABINET

DATE: 16th September 2026

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to establish a Gwent-Wide Social Care Workforce Development Service hosted by Caerphilly County Borough Council.

The report outlines the strategic rationale, options considered, proposed service and governance model, financial and workforce implications and seeks endorsement to proceed with planning the implementation of a regional service.

As this refers to the creation of a shared service, it requires a Cabinet decision under Regulations 4 and 7 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Discharge of Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2002.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet approve the proposal for Monmouthshire to be part of a Gwent-Wide Social Care Workforce Development Service, **a shared service**, that includes five Local Authorities hosted and managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council.

That Cabinet delegates authority to the director of Social Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Social Care, to progress implementation arrangements including the TUPE transfer (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006) of staff and the transfer of the SCWWDP (Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme) grant funding and associated local authority match funding to support the new regional service.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Context

The Monmouthshire Workforce Development Team deliver a comprehensive programme of workforce learning, development and professional support for social care across Monmouthshire. The team is responsible for workforce planning, the all Wales induction framework, mandatory and specialist training, social care professional qualifications, social

work career pathways, practice education and registration support. In addition, the service manages workforce development grant funding, works with commissioned providers and partners across the care sector, works closely with Universities and Colleges, and provides business functions such as workforce data reporting, training quality assurance and training administration. Through these activities, the team helps ensure that Monmouthshire has a skilled, compliant and sustainable social care workforce capable of meeting current and future service demands.

Monmouthshire continues to face a number of significant workforce development challenges including difficulties recruiting, developing and retaining a skilled social care workforce, increasing statutory and regulatory requirements, ongoing financial pressures and growing demand for services. As a relatively small authority operating within a shared labour market, there are also challenges around service resilience, capacity and maintaining a consistent workforce development offer.

The authority must also respond to sector-wide workforce shortages and increasing service complexity, while ensuring staff have access to high-quality learning and development opportunities. In addition, Monmouthshire's rurality presents unique workforce challenges, including attracting and retaining staff in hard-to-reach areas, supporting a geographically dispersed workforce and ensuring equitable access to training and professional development opportunities across the county. These factors reinforce the need for workforce development arrangements that are both resilient and regionally collaborative, whilst remaining responsive to local service needs and priorities.

The proposed regional service is intended to strengthen the capacity, capability and sustainability of the social care workforce through an integrated approach built around three core elements:

- **Social Work Careers**
- **Social Care Skills Development**
- **Business Strategy**

It will incorporate business partnership, facilitation and performance management functions. At the heart of the model is a strong customer focus, ensuring that workforce development activity is shaped by the needs of people who use services as well as meeting the requirements of the workforce across the sector.

Regional Development

As a region, there already exists a number of well-established regional joint working arrangements across social care. Examples include the Gwent-wide Safeguarding Board, the Emergency Duty Team, Shared Lives Services, Regional MyST and the South East Wales Adoption Service as well as shared sub-regional arrangements for Youth Offending Services. There is a strong commitment through Directors of Social Services to collaborate in bringing services together where this has the potential to produce benefits of scale and increased resilience.

Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent already have a joint Workforce Development Team hosted by Blaenau Gwent, which has been in place for 12 years. This long-standing collaboration has demonstrated the benefits of shared workforce development activity.

In July 2024, the Gwent Directors of Social Services Group requested the exploration of the potential to develop a regional workforce development service in response to increasing workforce and financial pressures across the local authorities. In addition, some local authorities were reviewing their workforce development arrangements and were keen to progress with a regional approach. Blaenau Gwent led this scoping work and two options were presented back to Gwent Directors to either maintain the current local authority based service delivery or to establish a new Gwent-wide service.

It was agreed by the five Gwent Local Authorities that a regional approach would deliver business efficiency and value for money, enabling shared resources, reduced duplication, improved consistency and increased resilience. It provides opportunity to leverage collective capacity and capability, support continuous improvement, and deliver a more consistent and effective workforce development offer to the social care sector. Ultimately the regional service will aim to improve workforce outcomes, support high-quality social care delivery, and contribute to better outcomes for individuals, families and communities across Gwent.

In June 2026, Caerphilly County Borough Council Cabinet approved the establishment of a Gwent-Wide Social Care Workforce Development Service, to be hosted and managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council, and delegated authority to progress implementation arrangements subject to agreement across the five local authorities that appropriate workforce, financial, legal and IT resources are in place.

Monmouthshire's decision therefore forms part of the wider regional governance process and seeks approval for Monmouthshire County Council to join the rest of Gwent and participate in the proposed regional service that will be hosted and managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council and to progress the local implementation arrangements necessary to support its establishment.

HR Implications

Monmouthshire and all other existing local authority employed social care workforce development staff will be ring-fenced into the new regional structure with no expected job losses or redundancies envisaged. Initial consultation on the potential proposal has already taken place with workforce development staff across the local authorities and, subject to receiving approval to proceed, this consultation will be formalised including engaging with Trade Unions.

The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) arrangements will apply and will be progressed incrementally through a phased implementation plan. Appropriate HR advice and support will be critical to achieving successful delivery of the new service.

Digital and Data

The transfer of staff to Caerphilly will require IT and digital support in relation to creating accounts and supporting the creation of the new service. The positive is that all local authorities are already using Thingi to record training, therefore the reporting and data requirements should have little or no customer impact [although Thingi re-configuration will be required].

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

The establishment of the regional service is expected to have a positive impact by improving access to workforce development opportunities and supporting a more stable and skilled workforce. There are no adverse impacts anticipated.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Benefit	Dis-benefit
Do nothing – Maintain current local WDT team in Monmouthshire - Not Recommended	Retains full local control over Monmouthshire's workforce development priorities, planning and delivery. Maintains existing local knowledge and relationships, including established links with Monmouthshire social care teams, providers and partners. Preserves local responsiveness, allowing training and support to be tailored quickly to Monmouthshire-specific needs. Avoids the complexity of structural change, including TUPE transfer, staff consultation, new governance arrangements and changes to reporting lines. Reduces immediate disruption for staff, as existing employment arrangements, roles, working relationships and local management structures would remain in place.	Continued variation across Gwent, with each local authority planning and delivering workforce development separately, leading to differences in capacity, capability, training offer and consistency. Weaker alignment with the regional direction of travel, as national and regional strategic drivers are increasingly promoting collaborative and regional approaches to social care workforce development. Ongoing duplication of effort, with each authority continuing to plan, commission, deliver and evaluate training independently where a shared approach could be more efficient. Limited economies of scale, reducing opportunities to make best use of resources,

	Maintains continuity of current service delivery, avoiding transition risks while the Gwent-wide model is established. Protects bespoke local training arrangements, including areas currently supported by the Workforce Development Team that may not sit fully within the core regional programme. Supports local accessibility, particularly important given Monmouthshire's rurality and the need for suitable local training venues. Keeps decision-making closer to local operational pressures, enabling quicker responses to emerging service needs. Avoids reliance on regional governance arrangements, reducing the risk that Monmouthshire priorities could be diluted within a wider Gwent model. Provides more certainty in the short term, as current arrangements are already understood by staff, managers and stakeholders.	specialist expertise, training provision and SCWWDP grant funding. Reduced resilience and sustainability, particularly as our small team has limited capacity to respond to increasing demand, regulatory requirements and workforce development priorities. Less opportunity for innovation, with 4 separate team and limited resource to develop new regional programmes, shared career pathways and wider learning opportunities. Limited training access for Monmouthshire staff, as staff may not benefit from the broader range of learning and development opportunities that could be available through a Gwent-wide service. Less consistency for the workforce and providers, with staff and partner organisations potentially experiencing different training standards, systems and support depending on their local authority area. Reduced strategic influence as a region, as Gwent may be less able to present a coordinated position to Social Care Wales, Welsh Government and other national partners. Risk of weaker value for money, as separately
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		managed services may continue to duplicate planning, administration, procurement and performance activity. Missed opportunity to strengthen specialist capacity, including areas such as social work careers, social care skills development, data, evaluation, quality assurance and business support. Risk that Monmouthshire becomes isolated from wider regional workforce development, particularly [as is likely] if other authorities progress towards closer collaboration or shared delivery arrangements.
Monmouthshire joins the rest of Gwent and participates in the proposed regional service – Recommended	More strategic regional leadership across the Gwent footprint, with shared priorities and clearer governance through Directors and Heads of Service. Greater consistency and equity in workforce development provision across all partner authorities. Improved access to training opportunities, as staff would benefit from a wider regional training offer across Gwent rather than being limited primarily to local provision. Stronger workforce resilience, with shared capacity to respond to workforce pressures, recruitment challenges, skills gaps and regulatory requirements.	Reduced direct local control for Monmouthshire over day-to-day workforce development priorities, as decisions would be shaped through a regional management board. Risk that Monmouthshire-specific needs may be diluted within a wider Gwent model, particularly given the rurality of Monmouthshire and the need for accessible local training. Uncertainty about local training venues, as the current Magor base is uncertain and suitable accommodation within

	Reduced duplication of effort, as planning, commissioning, delivery, evaluation and performance activity can be coordinated regionally. Economies of scale, enabling training, development programmes and specialist support to be delivered more efficiently. Improved professional development pathways, particularly through the proposed focus on Social Work Careers and Social Care Skills Development. Enhanced business support and performance oversight, including stronger planning, data, quality assurance, evaluation and continuous improvement. A more sustainable service model, allowing the structure to be tested and refined against demand and customer need. Retention of local responsiveness, through the proposed hub and spoke model, ensuring Monmouthshire-specific needs can still be recognised. Better regional collaboration and shared learning, supporting innovation and stronger practice across adult and children's social care. Improved ability to meet national policy expectations, including alignment with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Social Care Workforce Strategy for Wales.	Monmouthshire would still need to be secured. Potential loss of local flexibility, especially where Monmouthshire currently provides bespoke or additional training beyond the core social care workforce programme. Transition complexity, including TUPE arrangements, staff consultation, changes to management arrangements and the need to maintain service continuity during implementation. Possible disruption to staff and teams, particularly while roles, reporting lines and the longer-term staffing model are reviewed during the first 6–12 months. Risk of increased travel or access issues, especially if the regional hub is based at Foxes Lane, Oakdale, and local delivery arrangements are not sufficiently robust. Dependence on effective regional governance, meaning the success of the model will rely on clear accountability, escalation routes and strong partnership working between authorities. Potential gaps in corporate support arrangements, as functions currently supported by Monmouthshire's Workforce Development
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	Greater training availability across the Gwent footprint, giving Monmouthshire staff access to a broader range of learning, development and career progression opportunities. Maintained statutory accountability, while enabling more effective collaboration across authorities. Continuity and protection for staff during transition, with TUPE arrangements, no compulsory redundancies proposed as a direct result, and a phased implementation approach.	Team may need to move to corporate HR, performance, data or training teams (e.g. safeguarding / social care leadership training) Uncertainty around digital learning and systems administration, including responsibility for Mosaic-related digital training and Thingi system administration. Risk to responsiveness during the early implementation period, as the new service establishes its operating model, leadership structure and customer offer. Potential concern from staff or stakeholders about the move away from a local authority-based service model to a hosted regional service.
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6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The success of the Gwent-Wide Social Care Workforce Development Service will be evaluated through an agreed performance framework aligned to the objectives of the Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme (SCWWDP), regional workforce priorities and local authority requirements.

Evaluation will focus on three key areas:

Workforce Outcomes

- Recruitment and retention of the social care workforce.
- Participation in learning, development and qualification programmes.
- Progression and career development opportunities for social care and social work staff.
- Improved workforce skills, capability and resilience across the region.

Service Performance

- Delivery of agreed workforce development programmes and activities.
- Achievement of SCWWDP priorities and grant outcomes.
- Consistency and equity of workforce development provision across the five local authorities.
- Training quality, accessibility and customer satisfaction.
- Effectiveness of regional partnership working and governance arrangements.

Financial Performance

- Effective utilisation of SCWWDP grant funding and local authority match funding.
- Achievement of planned financial outcomes and budget management.
- Demonstration of efficiencies and reduced duplication through regional working.
- Delivery of value for money and sustainable workforce development arrangements.

Performance information will be reported regularly through the agreed regional governance arrangements via a Regional Management Board, including the Gwent Directors of Social Services, to enable oversight of progress, risks, financial performance and achievement of outcomes. Annual review arrangements will be established to assess the effectiveness of the service and inform continuous improvement and future workforce development priorities.

Success measures will include:

- Delivery of agreed SCWWDP grant outcomes.
- Increased participation in learning and development activity.
- Improved recruitment and retention indicators.
- Positive stakeholder and participant feedback.
- Consistent service delivery across the region.
- Delivery within approved budgets and achievement of identified efficiencies.

7. REASONS:

The proposed regional service will increase resilience, capacity and sustainability by creating a larger workforce development function serving all five Gwent local authorities. Monmouthshire staff will benefit from access to a significantly wider range of training, qualifications, professional development programmes and career pathways available across the Gwent footprint, increasing both the availability and accessibility of learning opportunities. The larger service will enable the sharing of specialist expertise, reduce reliance on individual posts, strengthen workforce planning, and support recruitment and retention. The model will also improve consistency of workforce development provision, strengthen the management and delivery of SCWWDP funding, reduce duplication of effort and deliver improved value for money through collaborative working, whilst maintaining a clear focus on Monmouthshire's local workforce priorities.

It aims to strengthen workforce capacity, improve consistency in practice, and deliver efficiencies through shared resources, supporting better outcomes for service users.

Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent already operate a joint Social Care Workforce Development Team which has, for several years, assumed a regional leadership role in relation to joint

working across the other Gwent local authorities and in managing the Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme (SCWWDP) Grant funding that amounts to £2.1 million per annum across the region.

As outlined above, the Gwent Directors of Social Services have agreed in-principle to create a Gwent-wide Social Care Workforce Development Service which will be hosted and managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council. (Please refer to the two options considered by Gwent Directors of Social Services attached at Appendix 1). The proposal is seen as an expansion of the current service.

The model strengthens Directors' ability to meet their statutory responsibilities to ensure a skilled and sustainable workforce and to promote collaborative, partnership-based approaches to workforce planning and development. It is aligned with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, supporting regional working, integration and improved outcomes for people.

Overall, the Directors consider that a single Gwent-wide Workforce Development Team will enhance capacity, capability and sustainability across the social care workforce, enabling improved service quality and better outcomes for individuals, families and communities. It represents a strategic, collaborative and future-focused response to the challenges facing social care and to the statutory leadership responsibilities of Directors.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The development of the new regional service will be funded from within the existing local authority budget allocations. The funding commitments will need to be confirmed and approved by each local authority in order for the development to proceed; however, the proposal assumes that the regional service will be funded through existing workforce development resources, with no additional budget growth required at this stage.

The SCWWDP (Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme) is funded through a combination of Social Care Wales grant funding and local authority match funding contributions. Current arrangements provide 70% grant funding, with local authorities contributing the remaining proportion to support the workforce development programme.

Funding	Annual Amount
SCWWDP Grant (70%)-	£204,953.00
Monmouthshire grant contribution (30%)	£ 87,836.00
Total	£292,789

As part of the proposed regional arrangements, Monmouthshire's SCWWDP budget and associated match funding contribution will transfer into the Gwent-Wide Social Care Workforce Development Service hosted by Caerphilly County Borough Council. This will enable the continued delivery of workforce development activity while benefiting from shared resources, strengthened grant management and increased access to learning and development opportunities across the region.

9. CONSULTEES:

The report has been circulated to the consultees listed below:-

Social Care DMT
Cllr Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member
Catherine Trett, Workforce Development Manager
Matt Gatehouse, Chief Officer People, Performance & Partnerships
Property Services

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Proposed Operating Principals and Next Steps

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