

Appendix 1

ALN and Inclusion Strategic Plan

Summary

2024 - 2030

Powys County Council

In partnership with

Powys Teaching Health Board

NPTC Group



Our Vision - Education

All children and young people in Powys will experience a high-quality, inspiring education to help develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable them to become healthy, personally fulfilled, economically productive, socially responsible and globally engaged citizens of 21st century Wales.



GIG
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Addysgu Powys
Powys Teaching
Health Board



GRŴP COLEGAU
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GROUP OF COLLEGES

PART 1: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

1. ALN and Inclusion in Powys – Why Change is Needed

- 1.1 Powys is a large, rural authority. Covering a quarter of the landmass of Wales, it contains only 4.3% of the population, making it the most sparsely populated county in Wales.
- 1.2 Delivering services across such a large, sparsely populated area is challenging and expensive. This is particularly true for education and specifically for Additional Learning Needs (ALN), where unique challenges are presented in delivering effective ALN and inclusion services. In September 2024, there were approximately 4763 learners with ALN at either a School Individual Development Plan (IDP), Local Authority IDP or receiving Universal Learning Provision (ULP) to help meet their ALN needs.
- 1.3 To support learners with complex needs, Powys has the following specialist provisions:

Number of Primary Specialist Centres	Number of Secondary Specialist Centres	Number of Special Schools	Number of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)
15	4	3	2

- 1.4 In 2020, Powys County Council launched a thorough review of educational provision across the county. As part of this review a transformation programme was instigated that included four key workstreams.
- 1.5 Workstream 4 focussed on Special Educational Needs (SEN) / ALN across the county. Following an in-depth consultation process with key stakeholders, the Future of Special Educational Needs/Additional Learning Needs in Powys Strategic Plan¹ was launched in September 2020. The Powys SEN/ALN Strategic Plan aimed to address significant challenges in the provision of support for learners with special educational needs. It responded to criticisms raised by Estyn and acknowledged the need for substantial improvements. The Strategic Plan outlined a vision for more accessible, equitable, and consistent support, emphasising early identification, intervention, and inclusive education.
- 1.6 A review of the SEN/ALN Strategic Plan and subsequent issue of a new ALN Strategic Plan for Powys will ensure that it is still ‘fit for purpose’ for Powys learners, following significant changes that have occurred in the World since 2020, including a global pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis.

2.0 Sustainable Powys

- 2.1 Public Services across the UK are under considerable pressure as demand and costs rise, far outstripping the funding that is and will be available to them over the medium term. These growing financial and workforce pressures are having an impact on the ability of public services to meet the needs of their population. Our financial modelling estimates a budget gap of more than £50.9m over the next 5 years.

¹ <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/6359/Additional-Learning-Needs-Key-Documents>

- 2.2 In response to this challenge, the Council recognises the need to transform the type and volume of services that we can offer to put the organisation on a more sustainable footing. We cannot continue to deliver services in the same way we have done so for decades. To achieve this fundamental transformation, a significant programme of change will be delivered to achieve a Sustainable Powys which is financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable. We must become more connected to the population we serve.

3.0 Specific Challenges Facing ALN and Inclusion Services in Powys

3.1 Financial Pressures

- 3.1.1 All services are under significant financial strain. The need to optimise resources while ensuring high-quality support for learners with ALN is a constant challenge. Many councils across the UK have highlighted that the financing of ongoing provision for learners with ALN or SEN has been a factor in declaring a S114. In addition, the cost of resources and provision has significantly increased over recent years.² There is a need for strategic collaborative partnerships and appropriate resource allocation to address these financial pressures.

3.2 Change in Need Since COVID-19

- 3.2.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increased demand for ALN services. There has been a notable rise in the number of children and young people requiring additional support due to the pandemic's impact on mental health and learning.

3.3 Increased Pressure on Settings and Schools

- 3.3.1 Settings and schools are facing significant challenges in managing the diverse behavioural and educational needs of their learners, as well as ensuring inclusive practices. The increasing complexity of these needs, coupled with limited resources, has made it difficult for settings and schools to provide the necessary support and interventions. Despite the dedicated efforts of staff, the demand for specialised services and tailored approaches continues to grow.

3.4 New Legislation

- 3.4.1 The introduction of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 has brought about significant changes in how ALN services are delivered. This legislation mandates a comprehensive approach to supporting learners with ALN, requiring local authorities to develop strategies that align with the new legal framework.

3.5 Capacity within Specialist Provision and Inequality in access to ALN provision

- 3.5.1 Within Powys, learners with ALN attend a range of settings, including special schools, specialist centres, the pupil referral unit (PRU) as well as mainstream schools.

² <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Twenty-six-councils-could-face-S114s-over-SEND-deficits/61331>

- 3.5.2 While some mainstream schools provide very well for learners with ALN, this is not consistent across all schools. Not all schools have the facilities they require to be able to meet the needs of learners with ALN, including those with physical and/or medical difficulties and those with significant behavioural difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder.
- 3.5.3 Depending on where learners live, they have access to a different quality and type of provision. Some learners must travel long distances to reach a provision that meets their needs. Many learners experience difficulty on transition from primary to secondary settings, due to a lack of suitable provision.
- 3.5.4 Provision for learners with the most complex needs is at capacity.

3.6 Impact on Learners

- 3.6.1 As a result of the challenges, learners may experience the following impact on their education:
- There has been a noticeable increase in low attendance rates. Many learners are struggling to attend school regularly due to unmet emotional and mental health needs, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - There has been a rise in exclusions, both fixed term and permanent. Schools, unable to manage the complex needs of some learners, have resorted to excluding them, which further disrupts their education and can lead to long-term negative outcomes.
 - Additionally, more families are opting for Electively Home Educated (EHE) solutions. Parents, concerned about the lack of adequate support in schools, are choosing to educate their children at home to ensure they receive the necessary attention and care.
 - There has been an increase in Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). Learners experiencing significant emotional distress are avoiding school altogether, which impacts their educational attainment, health, social functioning, and life prospects.

PART 2: STRATEGIC AIM & OBJECTIVES

4. Vision Statement

- 4.1 All children and young people in Powys will experience a high-quality, inspiring education to help develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that will enable them to become healthy, personally fulfilled, economically productive, socially responsible and globally engaged citizens of 21st century Wales.

4.2 Strategic Aim

- 4.2.1 The overarching aim of this Strategic Plan is to create a comprehensive, inclusive, and equitable education system in Powys that meets the needs of all learners, including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

4.3 Strategic Objectives

- To develop a shared understanding of ALN and Inclusion across Powys.
- To implement effective early identification and assessment processes.
- To provide high-quality training and professional development for staff working with learners with ALN.
- To increase the availability of specialist support services within the region.
- To improve access to technology and assistive technology for learners with ALN.
- To develop effective transition plans for learners with ALN moving between phases of education and into adult life.
- To promote inclusive practices in all educational settings.
- To engage with parents, carers, and young people to ensure their voices are heard.
- To monitor and evaluate the impact of the Strategic Plan and make necessary adjustments.

4.4 Partnership Working

- 4.4.1 Effective partnership working is essential for delivering successful ALN and inclusion services in Powys. This Strategy emphasises collaboration between the local authority, health board, and Post-16 FEI sector (NPTC Group) to ensure a seamless and coordinated approach to supporting learners with ALN.

4.4.2 Key partnerships will include:

- Local Authority and Health Board: Joint working on early identification, assessment, and provision of health and social care services for learners with ALN
- Local Authority and Post-16 FEI (NPTC Group): Collaborative planning for transitions, shared curriculum development, and information sharing
- Schools, Colleges, and Providers: Collaborative approaches to inclusive practice, sharing expertise, and joint training initiatives
- Voluntary and Community Sector: Partnerships to provide additional support services and promote community inclusion
- Parents, Carers, and Young People: Active involvement in decision-making and service development

4.4.3 By fostering strong partnerships, we aim to:

- Promote a shared vision for ALN and inclusion
- Improve information sharing and communication
- Enhance joint planning and service delivery
- Optimise resource allocation and utilisation
- Empower learners with ALN and their families

4.4.4 Work already undertaken to inform the development of this Strategic Plan

Inclusion Service Day, including input from DECLO	15 December 2023
NPTC and PCC Education	23 January 2024
NPTC, PCC Education and Health	19 March 2024
Inclusion Service Day	08 April 2024
PCC Education and Health	27 June 2024
PCC and PTHB – Joint Operational Processes Meeting	01 August 2024
PCC and Schools Behaviour Specialist Working Party	01 October 2024
PTHB, PCC Education / Social Care Neurodiversity Pathway Review	01 October 2024

PART 3: IMPLEMENTATION

5. The Strategic Plan will be delivered via three distinct workstreams:

5.1 Workstream 1: Inclusion for All

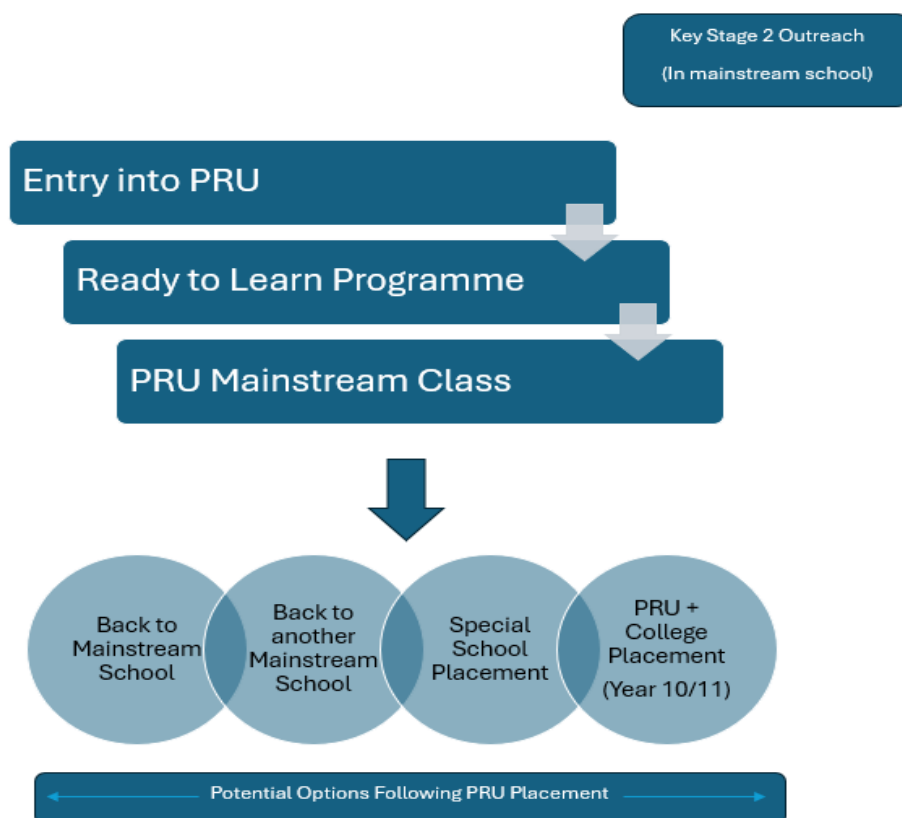
5.1.2 Workstream 1 focuses on service improvement and development. It aims to support and address the challenges raised by professionals and families regarding ALN and Inclusion. Work carried out as part of this programme will review current systems and processes holistically, to ensure they support all stakeholders effectively. This will be achieved through collaboration, aligning processes across different agencies to positively impact the lives of children, young people, and their families. The work will involve continuous self-evaluation and improvement, ultimately becoming part of the business-as-usual and self-assessment processes within organisations.

It includes the following areas of improvement:

- Early Intervention
- Transition
- Communication, Lived Experiences, Co-Production
- Welsh Medium ALN
- Post-16 ALN Provision
- Behaviour Support
- Neuro-Affirming Schools
- Referral Processes

5.2 Workstream 2: Educated Other Than at School (EOTAS) and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

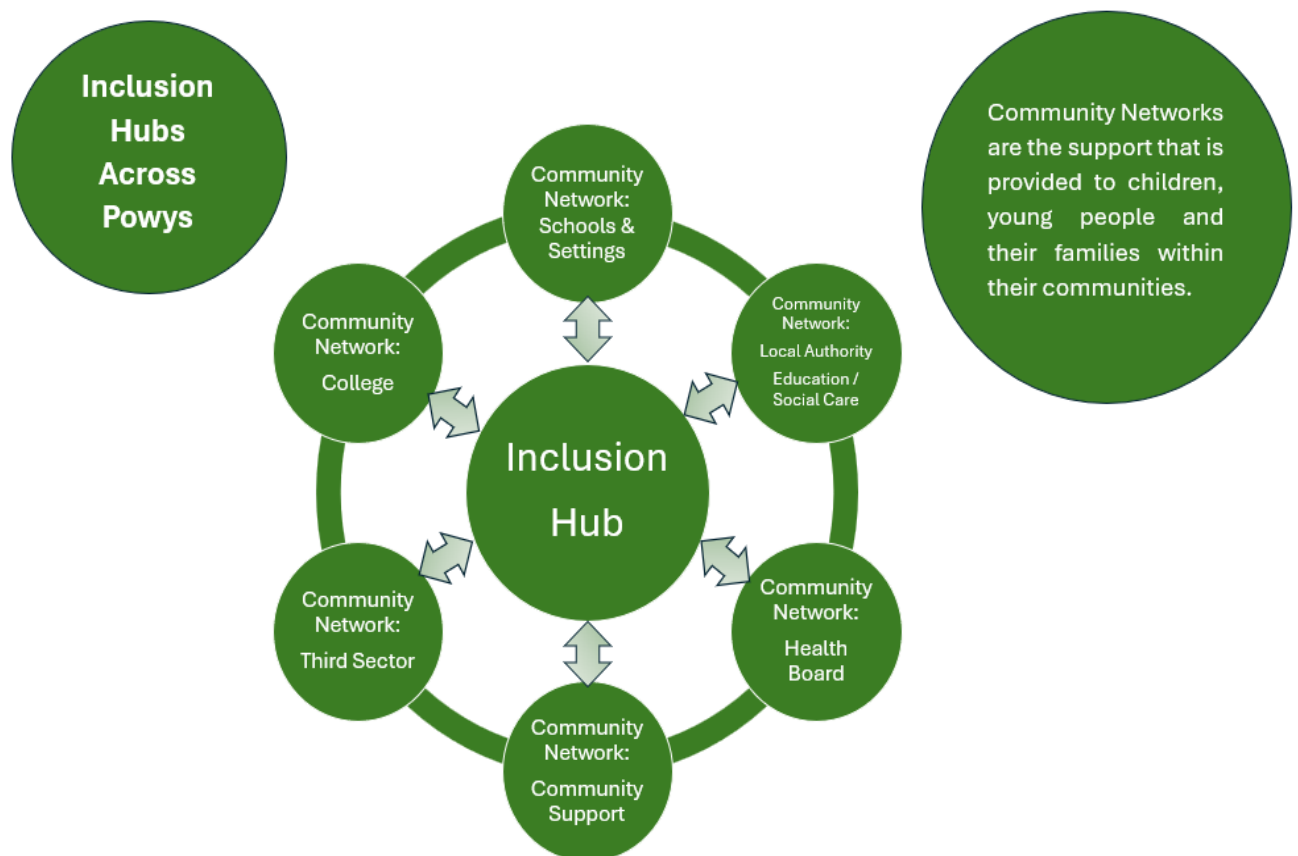
- 5.2.1 Workstream 2 focuses on learners who are Educated Other Than at School (EOTAS). This also includes the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). The programme's aim is to review current practices and processes and implement improvements to better support these learners. The goal is to facilitate their reintegration into mainstream schools or smooth transitions to further education (FE) placements, promoting their overall wellbeing and academic success. At the completion of this programme of work there will be a holistic support system for learners in Powys who are educated outside of traditional school settings that prioritises both educational and pastoral needs, ensuring that learners receive balanced support.
- 5.2.3 The current provision is a single service (Pupil Referral Service) with two sites. There is one site in Newtown and one site in Brecon, both in rented accommodation.
- 5.2.4 The intention is to deregister the PRU and re-register as two separate entities. This means that each individual PRU can create a learning environment specific to the needs of the learners within their community. This will enable a Management of Change process to be carried out to ensure that there is appropriate staffing of both PRUs. The current accommodation in Newtown and Brecon will remain – and further exploration of alternative Council-owned sites will take place in order to ascertain whether there is more suitable accommodation within the council portfolio.
- 5.2.5 The following illustrates the Proposed Pathway for Entry and Exit to the PRU:



5.3 Workstream 3: The development of a new Inclusion Hubs and Community Network Model – Including Specialist Learning Centres

5.3.1 Workstream 3 explores the potential of creating a more integrated, accessible and supportive environment for learners, families, and the wider community, fostering a more inclusive and resilient society. It will explore the suitability of establishing new Inclusion Hubs across Powys that will integrate specialist support, ensuring accessibility and high-quality services for all learners. These hubs may house co-located services from education, health, and children’s services, providing a holistic approach to support and could work with communities, through a Community Network Model, to provide additional support where needed.

5.3.2 The following diagram illustrates the potential Inclusion Hub and Community Network Model:



PART 4: INDICATIVE TIMELINE, SUCCESS CRITERIA AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

6. Indicative Timeline

Month / Year	Activity	Details
November 2024	Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee Discussion	Discussion on ALN and Inclusion Strategic Plan
November 2024	Cabinet Discussion	Discussion on ALN and Inclusion Strategic Plan
December 2024	Commence Workstream 1: Inclusion for All Ongoing: Continuous implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W1.1 Early Intervention • W1.2 Transition • W1.3 Communication, Lived Experiences, Co-Production • W1.4 Welsh Medium ALN • W1.5 Post-16 ALN Provision • W1.6 Behaviour Support • W1.7 Neuro-diverse Affirming Schools • W1.8 Referral Processes
December 2024	Commence Workstream 2: EOTAS Provision (Including the PRUs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start process of de-coupling the PRU and establishing 2 new PRU entities • Management of change process • New PRU Model opens
January 2025	Commence Workstream 3: Developing Inclusion Hubs and Community Network Model	<p>PHASE 1 – feasibility work to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement on the principle of the model • Identify potential sites and potential specialist centre closures • Understand costs / savings / benefits of potential model / sites • • Bring forward a costed Proposal Paper(s) to Cabinet <p>PHASE 2 – school reorganisation process, if required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the proposal(s) are approved, the process will move to the formal consultation phase in accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code.

7. Success Criteria

7.1 Workstream 1 - By August 2028:

- Consistent and improved transition to high school, results in improved and sustained attendance rates as the learners move through key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- Attendance for learners with the most complex needs and who are eFSM shows improvement.
- Inclusive practices and provision within settings and schools lead to reduced fixed term and permanent exclusions.
- The number of families choosing to EHE has decreased.
- The number of learners that are identified as suffering from EBSA has significantly decreased.

7.2 Workstream 2 – By January 2026:

- A new model for EOTAS provision, including the PRU, is implemented.
- The majority of learners in key stage 2 and key stage 3 remain, or return to their home schools, following a period of intervention in a local authority provision, like the PRU.
- Settings and schools are positive about the support offered to them.

7.3 Workstream 3 – By September 2030:

- Feasibility concluded on a potential Inclusions Hubs and Community Network Model

8. Monitoring Arrangements

- 8.1 The Council's Transformation Delivery Board is responsible for monitoring the outcomes of this Strategic Plan. This will be reported quarterly as part of Council's Transformation Programme Performance reporting.
- 8.2 The Council's Transforming Education Programme Board is responsible for the delivery and monitoring of progress against the success criteria listed above.
- 8.3 The progress of each Strategic Objective will also be monitored through the multi-agency ALN Integrated Steering Group (AISG).