

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**CABINET EXECUTIVE
26th November 2024**

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Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys

REPORT TITLE: Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Inclusion
Strategic Plan 2024 - 2030

REPORT FOR: Decision

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report to Cabinet is to recommend the approval of a new ALN and Inclusion Strategic Plan for Powys as set out in Appendix 2 to the report. This Strategic Plan aims to create a comprehensive, inclusive, and equitable education system that meets the needs of all Powys learners, including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Key objectives include enhancing early identification and intervention, developing a supportive educational environment, improving access to specialist services, and ensuring effective transition pathways. The Strategic Plan emphasises partnership working between the local authority, health board, and local college to deliver cohesive support. This update is essential to address significant changes since 2020, such as the global pandemic and cost-of-living crisis, and to ensure compliance with the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, 2018.

1.2 The paper is supported by the following appendices:

- Appendix 1: ALN and Inclusion Strategic Plan Summary
- Appendix 2: ALN and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2024-2030
- Appendix 3: Impact Assessment

2.0 Background

2.1 Sustainable Powys

2.1.1 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 estimated a budget gap of more than £60 million over the next 5 years.

2.1.2 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.

2.1.3 Sustainable Powys is based on a set of principles:

- Being open minded and seeking innovative solutions, using all the expertise available
- Delivering best possible outcomes through transformation to provide better quality services
- Using evidence – better understand need and model future demand, if we aren't getting results, we should change
- A continual process of learning and adapting to meet existing and long-term needs sustainably
- Engaging early with people in agreeing, designing and delivering approaches so we listen, understand, reflect and feedback
- Addressing the fundamental question: why do we do what we do?
- A strategic whole system approach, with partners, communities and the people of Powys
- Delivering outcomes that are affordable or no cost

2.1.4 This is supported by a Place-Based Planning model based on the following principles:

- We will provide a hub in each of the four core areas - anything else will only be provided if there is an approved business case to support it
- We will utilise schools and other community assets wherever we can for community-based solutions and services
- Travel times can be up to 1 hour to your nearest hub (even if you are a child)
- Provision must be digitally supported
- Public and Community transport must align each locality to the hub

2.1.5 Delivering a Sustainable Powys will ensure that we can maintain a balanced budget, support each other, and protect the environment and nature of Powys. We will make better use of collective and reduced assets across the county, break down silos between services and maximise coordination with external providers and partners. In achieving this we will have to make some difficult decisions as to how we prioritise our budget, supporting the needs of those that are most vulnerable in our County. This will be driven by focusing on the services that we are obliged to deliver in the most effective and efficient way, building a stronger, fairer, and greener future by fostering well-

connected, economically resilient communities, ensuring fair access to services, tackling poverty and inequality and supporting the wellbeing of the people of Powys.

2.2 Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys

- 2.2.1 The Council's Transforming Education in Powys Strategy 2022-32 is instrumental to the delivery of Sustainable Powys. It sets out a number of Strategic Aims and Objectives to shape the Council's work to transform the Powys education system over the coming years.
- 2.2.2 The requirement to improve ALN provision falls under Strategic Aim 4: 'We will improve ALN/SEN provision across the county.'
- 2.2.3 In order to take forward this Strategic Aim, an ALN Strategic Plan was approved in autumn 2020, however there is now an opportunity to introduce a new Strategic Plan that reflects the significant changes in the demand for support for children and young people with ALN since then.

2.3 ALN & Inclusion Strategic Plan

- 2.3.1 Powys, characterised by its expansive rural landscape and dispersed communities, faces unique challenges in delivering effective Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion services. This Strategic Plan aims to address these challenges by outlining a comprehensive approach to supporting learners with ALN, fostering inclusive environments, and ensuring equitable access to education and opportunities for all learners.
- 2.3.2 This Strategic Plan for ALN and Inclusion is a comprehensive plan for the whole of Powys, designed to be co-created in partnership with Powys Teaching Health Board and NPTC Group. It is essential that this Strategic Plan is developed collaboratively to ensure a seamless and effective approach to supporting learners with ALN throughout their educational journey and beyond.
- 2.3.3 By working together, we can create a unified system that identifies and addresses the needs of learners early, providing consistent and high-quality support across all sectors. This collaborative approach will optimise resources, share expertise, and ultimately improve outcomes for children, young people and their families
- 2.3.4 The Strategic Plan will be implemented through the following three Workstreams:

Workstream 1: Inclusion for All
- 2.3.5 Workstream 1 focuses on service improvement and development. It aims to support and address the challenges raised by professionals

and families regarding Additional Learning Needs (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 of schools, the council and other key stakeholders.

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

- 2.3.6 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.
- 2.3.7 The current provision is a single service (Pupil Referral Service) with two sites (Pupil Referral Units). There is one site in Newtown and one site in Brecon, both in rented accommodation.
- 2.3.8 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.

Workstream 3: Development of a New Inclusion Hubs and Community Network Model – Including Specialist Learning Centres

- 2.3.9 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. The programme 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.

2.3.10 Further feasibility work is required to explore and further develop this potential new model, including engagement with partners. Any changes to the current Specialist Centres would need to be aligned with the statutory school reorganisation process as outlined in the School Organisation Code.

3.0 Indicative Timescales

| 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 two 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. |
|--|--|---|

4.0 Advice

- 4.1 It is advised that the Cabinet approves the ALN and Inclusion Strategic Plan as the roadmap for development and improvement in Powys.
- 4.2 The reason for this is to deliver the overarching aim of the Strategic Plan which 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).

5.0 Resource Implications

5.1 Workstream 1:

- 5.1.1 The majority of this work will be undertaken by existing officers funded by base budget, as part of service improvement and become “business as usual”. In addition, it is proposed that 4 posts (total estimated cost £157k) will support transition at the various stages and these will be funded by the ALN element of the Local Authority Education Grant received from WG.

5.2 Workstream 2:

- 5.2.1 Proposed Pupil Referral Unit changes (see Strategic Plan section 4.2) - It is estimated that there would be a revenue saving of £135k in respect of a new model, within the current premises.
- 5.2.2 Currently funding is transferred from the pupils’ “home” mainstream schools (where they are on roll) to the PRUs for the period that the pupils attend the PRU. The funding transferred will be changed to align with the Component 1 per pupil element that the mainstream school receives. The £135k saving includes the estimated impact of this change.
- 5.2.3 There may be an opportunity to use grant funding in respect of the funding of the EOTAS Co-ordinator, if this was the case the estimated saving would increase to £189k. This will depend on the relevant grants and T&C’s each year that the service can access.

- 5.2.4 There are no additional transports costs expected with this model currently, but any changes to demography in terms of pupils accessing the PRU would need to be addressed through the relevant years Financial Resource model.
- 5.2.5 If, in future, alternative suitable accommodation is identified for PRU that enables the Council to cease the current rental arrangements, then the above saving would need to be reviewed. There would also be a requirement to consider, at that time, the impact of any capital investment required for relocation of either PRU to Council-owned accommodation.

5.3 Workstream 3:

- 5.3.1 While the current Specialist Centres provision could potentially fit within the definition of an 'Inclusion Hub and Community Network' model, it may not be the optimal model for delivering support to learners with ALN. Workstream 3 will explore the potential to develop an integrated model, co-locating services from education, health and children's services, aligned with the principles of Sustainable Powys. The resource implications will need to be fully assessed as the model is explored and developed further.
- 5.3.2 The current budget for the Primary and Secondary Specialist Centres is £2.2m for the 2024/25 financial year. This fully funds the places for the learners that attend the Specialist centres.
- 5.3.3 In addition to this, the current funding formula allocations provided to schools adds a 50% per pupil amount for those learners that access the Specialist Centre to allow for integration back into the mainstream school. The proposed Inclusion Hub and Community Network model could impact on both individual schools' delegated funding and the overall schools delegated budget and these impacts would need to be assessed as further exploration of a proposed model is developed.
- 5.3.4 The ISR (Individual School Range) of the leadership team in schools' salary scales may be affected and would need to be reviewed as part of any change process.
- 5.3.5 Currently schools receive contributions from the Specialist Centre budgets towards providing management time, mid-day supervision and PPA for the teachers (statutory Planning, Preparation and Assessment time). There would be an impact on the schools' budgets should this contribution cease as part of any proposed new model brought forward.
- 5.3.6 Any alterations to the current model may have transport and potentially catering budget implications and this would need to be costed and form part of detailed proposals to be included in the relevant years' Financial Resource Model.

- 5.3.7 As the new Inclusion Hub and Community Network Model is developed further, then consideration would need to be given to any requirement for capital funding and where that would be funded from e.g. Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme or any future capital funding from Welsh Government to support ALN; Council's capital assets and borrowing.
- 5.3.8 The Council remains responsible for all repairs and maintenance of the current PRU accommodation, and this will need to be prioritised and funded from the Schools Major Improvement Programme.
- 5.3.9 The Director of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer) has provided the following comment: "It is crucial in the current financial environment, that all public funds are used as cost effectively as possible. The proposals for Workstreams 1 and 2 of the Strategic Plan can either be accommodated within existing budget or will provide cost reductions in line with the Sustainable Powys programme. Further detailed financial work will need to be undertaken as proposals for Workstream 3 are developed further."

6.0 Legal implications

- 6.1 Legal: the recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view.
- 6.2 The Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and support the recommendation".

7.0 Climate Change & Nature Implications

- 7.1 The Strategic Plan promotes sustainable practices within educational settings, which can contribute to lower carbon footprints.
- 7.2 The Strategic Plan can foster environmental awareness among students and staff, encouraging them to adopt eco-friendly behaviours both within and outside the school environment. This can lead to a more environmentally conscious community that actively participates in climate action.
- 7.3 The use of technology for remote consultations, online schooling, and assistive technology reduces the need for travel and physical resources, contributing to a greener approach to education and support services.
- 7.4 However, there is a potential for additional travel and transport requirements if the Inclusion Hubs and Community Network Model replaces the current configuration of Specialist Centres in schools, which may have a negative impact on carbon. This would need to be considered more fully as the Model develops.

8.0 Data Protection

8.1 N/A

9.0 Comment from local member(s)

9.1 N/A

10.0 Impact Assessment

10.1 The assessment indicates that the impact of the new ALN & Inclusion Strategic Plan would be positive as it would provide improved inclusion services for Powys learners, ensuring equity of provision for all learners with potential for more financially suitable provision. There would also be benefits to learners in terms of access to enhanced wellbeing support, specialist ALN provision, and a single point of contact for multiagency support for families, providing advice to enable them to thrive.

It is acknowledged that implementation of the proposed model may result in additional travel for some learners. To improve access to the provision, there would be an opportunity to develop a sustainable travel plan and active travel routes to support the model's implementation.

It is also acknowledged that there could be an impact on communities where inclusion services are currently provided should this not be available in the future.

Work on the potential reconfiguration of inclusion services is currently at an early stage, so the impact of the plans will continue to be reviewed as the work moves forward. Engagement and consultation will be a key element of this, to ensure that the views of learners, staff, and other stakeholders can be taken into consideration.

11.0 Recommendation

11.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the new ALN and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2024 -2030 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, for immediate implementation.

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