

A SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN FOR
MERTHYR TYDFIL

2013 – 2017

FINAL DRAFT

Reviewed and updated for 2014/15

Revised and approved by the Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board - July 2014

Please note: To be presented to LSB partners boards or equivalent for approval

FOREWORD

On behalf of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board, welcome to the revised Single Integrated Plan for Merthyr Tydfil.

The Local Service Board brings together our public service leaders and is at the heart of multi-agency working. It is responsible for leading and overseeing the delivery of the new Single Integrated Plan. The Plan identifies clear outcomes we want to achieve that will have a positive impact for people.

The Local Service Board is committed to delivering the vision for Merthyr Tydfil to:

To strengthen Merthyr Tydfil's position as the regional centre for the Heads of the Valleys, and be a place to be proud of where:

- **People learn and develop skills to fulfil their ambitions**
- **People live, work, have a safe, healthy and fulfilled life**
- **People visit, enjoy and return**

In the past, planning for public services has often been too attentive to demand rather than need. This has resulted in the provision of services which treat problems after they have arisen, rather than preventing their occurrence in the first place.

The LSB must focus its efforts on prevention and early intervention and in order to break cycles of dependency and prevent the persistence of poor outcomes from one generation to the next. As a Local Service Board, we appreciate and embrace the importance of this and the need to work differently.

At a time of reducing budgets and rising expectations, services need to be sustainable in the longer-term and based on an analysis of need not demand. The foundation for moving forward is a well-evidenced, single integrated plan for the area that clearly reflects the needs of the local population.

We also recognise that when problems do occur and people find themselves in difficult circumstances, there will always be a need to provide help as soon as possible to prevent problems from becoming far worse.

The Single Integrated Plan is based on the needs of the whole population in the County Borough and has a specific focus on groups who are disadvantaged, vulnerable or at risk of becoming vulnerable.

The current financial pressures and the impact of welfare reforms pose many challenges for the area, its people and communities, and the organisations that serve them. Working together has never been as important and is essential if we are to make our vision to reality. No one organisation can tackle the challenges alone and no organisation can do this without the involvement of the communities we serve.

Continuing to deliver the Single Integrated Plan will be a challenge for us as partners of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board.

We are all are committed to making a real difference to people's lives by providing joined-up services that are both effective and efficient.

The Well Being of Future Generations Bill (previously the Sustainable Development Bill) , to be introduced in Summer 2014, will place sustainable development at the heart of the Welsh Government and organisations delivering public services in Wales.

This will provide an opportunity for the partners of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board to help break the cycles of deprivation by delivering sustainable improvements through prevention and early intervention and creating effective services to ensure positive outcomes for our communities.

CONTENTS

Page No.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL SERVICE BOARD?	6
HOW HAS THE SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN BEEN DEVELOPED?	6-7
WORKING DIFFERENTLY –PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION	7-8
OUR NEEDS	8-12
OUR VISION FOR MERTHYR TYDFIL	13
OUR PRIORITY OUTCOMES	13
OUR PRIORITY AREAS	13
UNDERPINNING PRIORITY – “LEARNING FOR LIFE”	14-17
OUR PRIORITY OUTCOMES	
• People in Merthyr Tydfil have the opportunity and aspiration to learn and develop their skills and maximise their potential.	18-32
➤ Attainment and Skills	18-23
➤ Employability	24-28
➤ Participation	29-32
• People in Merthyr Tydfil benefit from a strong, sustainable and diverse economy.	
➤ Economic Development	33-36
➤ Business Development	
• People who live and work in Merthyr Tydfil are supported to enjoy a healthier and better quality of life.	37-58
➤ Healthy Lifestyles	37-44
– Smoking	
– Obesity/ Physical Activity	
– Sexual Health	
➤ Mental Health and Emotional Well Being	45-48

➤ Promoting Independence	49-53
➤ Meeting the needs of vulnerable children	54-58
People enjoy a vibrant, attractive, safe and sustainable environment in which to live, work, play and visit.	59-78
➤ Community Safety	59-73
– Safer Communities	
– Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	
– Substance Misuse	
– Community Cohesion	
– Offender Management	
➤ Housing	74-75
➤ Safeguarding vulnerable people	76-78
SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES OF THE SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN	79-81
OUR ENABLING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN	82-87

WHAT IS THE LOCAL SERVICE BOARD?

The Local Service Board is where the Leaders of local public sector organisations and voluntary organisations work together as partners to improve the delivery of services to you.

The Local Service Board is chaired by a community representative and consists of the Leaders from the organisations that deliver services to you.

During 2013/14, the Local Service Board reviewed its membership and identified champions for each of the priority areas within the Single Integrated Plan.

Our Local Service Board Members are:

- A Community Representative who chairs the Board
- The Leader and the Chief Executive of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
- The Chair and the Chief Executive of Cwm Taf University Health Board
- The Chief Superintendent, Northern Division, South Wales Police
- The Chair and the Chief Officer, Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil
- A senior official from the Welsh Government (WG)
- The Director of Community Services and lead Director for Children and Young People - Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
- The Director of Customer Services - Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
- The Director of Public Health - Cwm Taf University Health Board
- The Director of Primary, Community and Mental Health Services - Cwm Taf University Health Board
- Our Youth Mayor and Chair of the Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum

HOW HAS THE SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN BEEN DEVELOPED?

The Plan was developed based on a robust evidence base in the form of a Unified Needs Assessment. A series of engagement events were also held with our key partners and stakeholders, including individual events with the Third Sector, children and young people and Councillors.

The Welsh Government identified the outcomes Wales should work towards and the priority areas for action in the Programme for Government. These high level outcomes provide the framework for our needs assessment, and are closely linked to our priority outcomes identified later on in this Plan.

The following Programme for Government outcomes are of particular significance for local multi-agency delivery:

- Improving early years' experience
- Improving educational outcomes for children, young people and families living in poverty/Improving the skills of young people and families

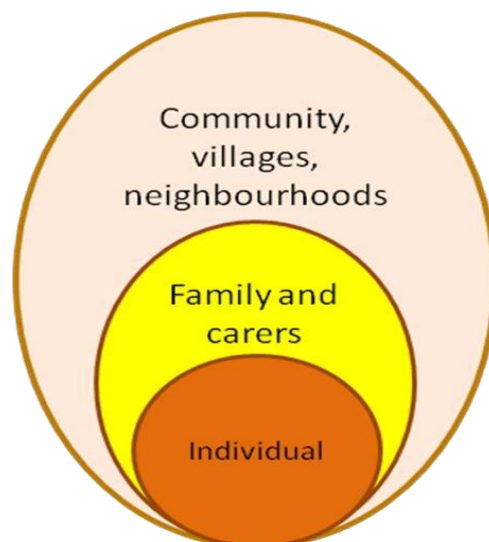
- More inclusive and cohesive communities
- Improving health outcomes of children, young people and families living in poverty/Preventing poor health and reducing health inequalities
- Ensuring people receive the help they need to live fulfilled lives
- Creating sustainable places for people

WORKING DIFFERENTLY – PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

A huge amount of work has been done over many years with notable successes, although we have often continued to provide services which treat problems after they have arisen, rather than preventing their occurrence in the first place.

This has started to change in recent years; however, we have not focused sufficient efforts and resources on prevention and early intervention. As a result we have not broken the cycles of dependency and the persistence of poor outcomes from one generation to the next.

Every person in Merthyr Tydfil is surrounded by a network of family, friends and neighbours that influences their quality of life. They in turn contribute to the community in which they live. There is a need to complement these networks by supporting people to live fulfilled lives, and when they need it to tackle life problems. This is important not only for the individuals concerned but for the resilience, well being and development of our community as a whole. To do this we need to make the right services available at the right time, and ensure they are efficient and well co-ordinated. This is about managing the needs of our community.



The Programme for Government emphasises the importance of all parts of Wales providing multi-agency support for families who need it, tailored to the particular issues they face, bringing together help from social services, health services, education, justice and voluntary services.

By improving our ability to respond quickly through prevention and early intervention, we will aim to help more people to live fulfilled lives in the community, reducing the need for specialist services in the future.

OUR NEEDS

A detailed needs assessment of Merthyr Tydfil was undertaken when we developed the Plan showing us what it is like to live in Merthyr Tydfil. The identified needs are shown in more detail under each of the Plan's priority areas. As part of the review of the Plan, an updated summary document is currently under development and will be available in the Autumn.

It is the role of the LSB to use the local needs analysis to determine what will be the highest priorities for local action.

Living in Merthyr Tydfil: Key Headlines

Since the 2001 Census the population of Merthyr Tydfil has gone through a period of substantial decline and then growth, which is likely to be linked to the arrival of new residents from other regions of the UK and from outside the UK. The latest population estimates show that the population of Merthyr Tydfil is 58,898, who lived in 24,395 households. The population grew by 4.9 % (2,691) in the 14 years since the last census. 49% of the resident population in Merthyr Tydfil is male, and 51% female. This is in line with the gender split nationally.

Ward population estimates are available for 2011. The mean population of wards in Merthyr Tydfil is 5,350. However, population sizes vary widely across the borough ranging from 3276 in Bedlinog ward to 7690 in Town ward.

In 2010 there were 718 live births in Merthyr Tydfil and 558 deaths. In 2001 there were 602 live births and 655 deaths.

Although in recent years there has been an increase in the number of births, Merthyr Tydfil, like the rest of the country, has an ageing population. People are living longer. There has been considerable growth in the number of people in their 60's, as well as those in their 80's and 90's.

The 2012 mid year estimates shows the percentage of the population in Merthyr Tydfil aged 65 and over is 17.2%. This is an increase of 1,077 people in this age category since 2001, which represents an increase of 11.8%. There were 5,592 residents aged 65-74 in 2012 (9.5% of the population), compared with 4,883 in 2001. This is an increase of 14.5%. There was also an increase in older people aged 75 and over, up from 885 to 1,205.

The population of those aged 65 years and older is projected to rise from 9,800 in 2011 to 13,800 by 2033. The percentage of people aged 75 and over is projected to increase from just under 8% at local authority level to around 12.5% by 2033.

The percentage of people aged 85 and over is projected to double from around 2% to around 4% by 2033.

Falls are already a significant burden upon health and health services in Wales and this will become a greater burden in the future as the size of our older population increases. Many individuals can lose their independence and quality of life as a result of a fall. By 2030 the number of people in Cwm Taf aged 65 and over predicted to attend A&E because of a fall is 1,583.

Merthyr Tydfil has a minority ethnic population of 3,167 individuals (2011 Census). This represents 5.4% of the total population, up from less than 1% in the 2001 Census.

Quality of life and health related risk behaviours are worse in Merthyr Tydfil than the Wales average, which has a detrimental effect on our population.

Limiting long term illness is a measure of long term illness, health problems or disability that limits a person's daily activities or the work they do. Census 2011 shows that 26.9% of the population in Merthyr Tydfil have activity limitation. Welsh Health Survey 2011/12 indicated that 20% of adults reported being '**limited a lot**' by either a health problem or disability, this compares to the Wales average of 16%.

Although life expectancy at birth has increased across Wales between 2000/02 and 2010/12, there is a clear gradient between the most deprived and least deprived areas. People living in areas of high deprivation have lower rates of life expectancy than people living in areas with less deprivation.

Of the local authorities in Wales, Monmouthshire had the highest life expectancy at birth for both males (80.1 yrs) and females (83.9 yrs). Ceredigion was joint highest for life expectancy at birth for females. Blaenau Gwent had the lowest life expectancy at birth for both males (75.7yrs) and females (79.9 yrs).

In Merthyr Tydfil male life expectancy (77.4yrs) for 2010-12 was not significantly different from the Welsh average. Female life expectancy (81.1yrs) for 2010-12 was lower than the Welsh average (82.2yrs)

People in the least deprived areas not only live longer than those in the most deprived areas, but they also spend a substantially higher proportion of their life expectancy in good health. The most recent data shows that Merthyr Tydfil has the lowest healthy life expectancy in Wales (2005-09). There are large inequality gaps in health life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas.

The gap in healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived is substantial at 16.2 years for males and 15.8 years for females in 2005-09

Between 2001 and 2009, the all cause mortality rate in people aged 75 and under in the most deprived areas of Cwm Taf was up to double that in the least deprived areas, for women and men (and was consistently higher than the Welsh average).

Findings from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2011 show that Merthyr Tydfil is ranked the most deprived local authority in Wales. The three most deprived areas¹ in Merthyr Tydfil are:

- Penydarren¹, ranked 4 out of 1896
- Gurnos², ranked 13 out of 1896
- Merthyr Vale², ranked 17 out of 1896.

In 2011 Child poverty in Merthyr Tydfil was 27.2% (the second highest rate in Wales), down from the 2010 figure of 28.2%. The Wales average was 21.9% and the UK average 20.1%.

Key Stage 4 level 2 threshold is an account of pupil achievement in all qualifications approved for pre 16 use in Wales. This provides an indication of the proportion of pupils who, at the end of compulsory education, have a good standard of language and numeracy skills.

Although performance was higher in 2013 compared to the previous year in all of the main indicators, (up from 32.5% to 38.7%) current standards mean we are still the lowest in Wales, joint ranked 22 out of 22.

Overall the trend for Year 11 NEETs in Merthyr Tydfil is declining, but with many peaks and troughs in between 2004 and 2013. The NEETs figured peaked in 2005 at 11.9% (51) while the latest figures are the lowest since records began and are below the Wales average at 1.9% (13). The Wales average for 2013 was 3.7%.

The five year trend for Year 13 NEETs shows a steady decline from 8.3% in 2008 to 4.3% in 2012. However the latest data shows an increase in Year 13 NEETs up to 7.2%. The Wales average in 2013 was 4.7%.

In Merthyr Tydfil 13.7% of adults aged 16-64 years had no recognised qualification in 2013. This compares to the Wales average of 9.7% and the UK average of 8.7%.

The National Survey of Adults Skills 2010 estimated the basic skills need in Wales as 25% for literacy and 53% for numeracy. Applying the percentages identified in the national survey to the 2012 mid year estimates, we can estimate the number of adults aged 16-64 living in Merthyr Tydfil with literacy and numeracy skills need; 9,437 for literacy and 20,006 for numeracy.

Merthyr Tydfil lags well behind the rest of Wales on almost all economic measures.

In 2013 the employment rate in Merthyr Tydfil was 63.6%. This was the third lowest amongst the 22 Welsh local authorities. The rate declined over the year by 0.9%, compared to a 1.6% rise in the national average (68.9%).

¹ (Lower Super Output Area- LSOAs)

In the year to December 2013 the ILO unemployment rate for working aged people aged 16-64 in Merthyr Tydfil was 10% (2,500 people), which represents a decrease of 2.1 percentage points (down 600) over the year. The unemployment rate remains well above the Wales (8.1%) and UK (7.7%) average.

In March 2013, there were 1,772 people aged 18-64 years claiming JSA in Merthyr Tydfil, 4.7% of that population. This compares to the national rate of 3.4%, and the UK rate of 2.9% and is the third highest of all local authorities.

In March 2013, there were 585 young people aged **18-24** years claiming JSA in Merthyr Tydfil, 10.9% of that population, and the second highest rate in Wales, and almost twice the national average (6.3%) The UK average was 5.0%.

In the year to December 2013 the economic inactivity (excluding students) rate in Merthyr Tydfil was 26.6% (**8,700**), which represents a 2% increase over the year. This compares to a decrease in the Wales average of 1.2% and a decrease in the UK average of 0.5%. The number of adults economically inactive because of long term sickness has historically been very high in Merthyr Tydfil. In 2013 economic inactivity due to long term sickness had reduced to 34.5% (3,600) but remains well above the Welsh average of 25.8% and the UK average of 21.9%

In 2012 24.6% of households were workless in Merthyr Tydfil, 3.1 percentage points above the Welsh average and 6.5 percentage points above the UK average. In 2012, 20.6% of children in Merthyr Tydfil lived in workless households, down from 29.2% in 2011. The Wales and UK average were 17.7% and 14.9% respectively in 2012.

Gross disposable household income (GDHI) measures the level of disposable income available to households and is sourced from Regional Accounts (ONS). In 2011 GDHI per head in Merthyr Tydfil stood at £13,081 and was the joint lowest amongst the 22 Welsh local authorities. Between 1999 and 2011 GDHI per head in Merthyr Tydfil has been below the Welsh average

Goods Value Added (GVA) is a measure of the size of the economy of an area, and is sourced from Regional Accounts (ONS). GVA per head in 2011 stood at £12,985 in Merthyr Tydfil. This was below the Welsh average and the joint fifth lowest amongst the 22 Welsh local authorities. Between 1999 and 2011 GVA per head in Merthyr Tydfil has been below that for Wales as a whole, with the gap narrowing slightly over this period.

In 2012 average weekly earnings in Merthyr Tydfil stood at £469. This was the eighth lowest amongst the 22 Welsh local authorities. In 2002 earnings in Merthyr Tydfil equalled the Welsh average; they moved below in 2007 and remained below in 2012 with the gap widening

Merthyr Tydfil has a significantly higher proportion of older housing stock than elsewhere in Wales. According to the 2001 Census there are currently 24,596 houses in Merthyr Tydfil; 52% are terraced houses with 45.4% of all dwellings built pre 1919.

The most significant hazards in private sector dwellings in Merthyr Tydfil were those associated with the threat of excess cold, falling on stairs, and falls on level surfaces. 39.1% of private stock is considered to contain a Category 1 hazard (about 4 in 10, approximately 7,900 dwellings).

The rate of homelessness acceptances in Merthyr Tydfil has fluctuated above and below the Wales average since 2001-02 to 2011-12. In 2012-13 the homelessness rate continued to be below the Wales average and was the sixth lowest of all local authorities in Wales.

During 2012-13, the rate of additional affordable housing provision in Merthyr Tydfil increased substantially in 2012-13 compared with the previous year when it was below the Wales average. It is now the fourth highest rate amongst all local authorities in Wales.

It is estimated that 22% of most serious violent offences are domestic violence. The Merthyr Tydfil MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) has the highest rate of high risk domestic abuse referrals of all MARACs in the Wales, and the 3rd highest in the UK.

Overall there were a total of 4,141 police recorded offences in Merthyr Tydfil between 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2012. This is a 17% reduction (860 offences) on the same period for 2010/2011.

36% of respondents to the 2012 Police Community Satisfaction Survey in Merthyr Tydfil said that drug use / drug dealing was a very big / fairly big problem in their area.

The estimated number of individuals referred for alcohol treatment for Merthyr Tydfil was the highest of all authorities in the past few years.

Merthyr Tydfil was ranked the 2nd highest of the 22 local authority areas for substance misuse referrals in 2012/13.

The 2013 Children in Need census showed that there were 575 Children in Need in Merthyr Tydfil, a rate of 460 per 10,000 people aged 0-17 years. This is the 3rd highest rate of all local authorities in Wales.

Children in need have a far lower attainment levels than their peers at each of the Key Stages. Children in need who are “looked after” by the Council have slightly better attainment than those not “looked” after, but both groups are well below the national rate of attainment for all pupils.

The number of children on the Child Protection Register as at 31st March 2014 was 133, up 17% on the previous year.

Numbers of Looked after Children in Merthyr Tydfil as at the 31st of March 2014 was 175, down from 183 the previous year.

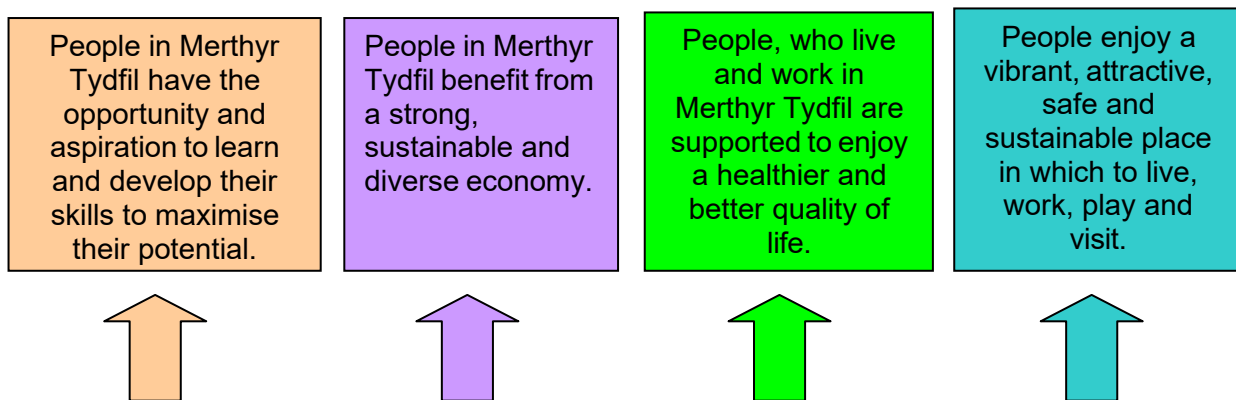
The needs assessment has led us to identify the following priorities:

OUR VISION FOR MERTHYR TYDFIL

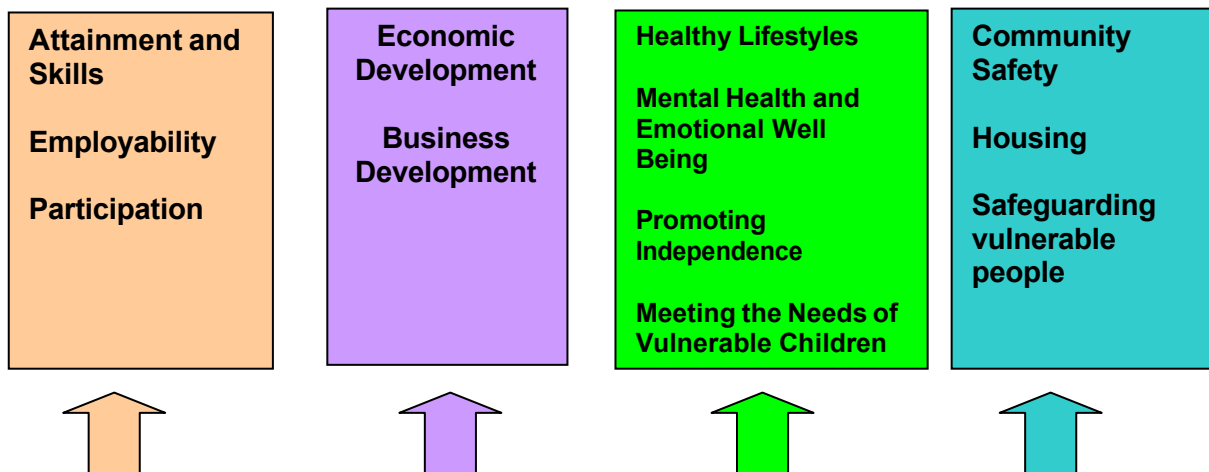
To strengthen Merthyr Tydfil's position as the regional centre for the Heads of the Valleys, and be a place to be proud of where:

- People learn and develop skills to fulfil their ambitions
- People live, work, have a safe, healthy and fulfilled life
- People visit, enjoy and return

OUR PRIORITY OUTCOMES



OUR PRIORITY AREAS



UNDERPINNING PRIORITY FOR THE SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN

LEARNING FOR LIFE

It is important to point out that each priority outcome and each priority area are interlinked and support each other. We can no longer deal with the issues facing the County Borough in isolation from each other.

Learning for Life underpins all our efforts to address our Vision and Priority Outcomes.

UNDERPINNING PRIORITY FOR THE SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN LEARNING FOR LIFE

Why Learning for Life?

The LSB sees Learning for Life as the key underpinning priority for the SIP because it will help us deliver the Vision for Merthyr Tydfil and the priority outcomes. Our ambition is that all, children, young people and adults maximise their potential, are resilient to changing circumstances and remain independent for as long as possible.

The benefits of a good education and effective learning are far reaching and long lasting and research shows that this :

- provides the skills and qualifications required to secure high quality employment,
- is the catalyst for local economic prosperity
- is at the heart of low cost quality healthcare
- helps combat social isolation, promote inclusion, and contributes to community cohesion
- is instrumental in helping reverse decline in disadvantaged communities, helping to foster a strong sense of a safer community

The first 1000 days of life from conception to age two significantly influences the outcomes for children, parents and families throughout the life course and from generation to generation. Brain and biological development during the first years of life depends on the quality of stimulation in the infant's environment—at the level of family, community, and society. Early child development, in turn is a lifelong determinant of health, well-being, and learning skills. Taken together, these facts make early child development a social determinant of health. If we are to make a difference, we need to ensure that parents are informed how their health and lifestyles have a major influence on their unborn babies.

Addressing early childhood development means creating the conditions for children, from prenatal to 8 years of age, to thrive equally in their physical, social/emotional, and language/cognitive development. Safe, cohesive, child-centred neighbourhoods, communities, and villages matter for early child development. All the research evidence shows that when we give a child the best start in life, the child is more likely to reach his or her potential and be successful. Over time this benefits the wider community, the economy and the general wellbeing of society. To achieve this we have to reduce inequalities in the early development of physical and emotional health, and cognitive, linguistic, and social skills, to ensure high quality maternity services, parenting programmes, childcare and early year's education to meet need across the social gradient and to build the resilience and well-being of young children in proportion to need. We also need to continuously improve the conditions for families to nurture their children by addressing economic security, flexible work, information and support.

We already know from our own needs assessment and from research that prevention and early intervention with families and within communities helps us achieve positive outcomes especially when quality learning is at the heart of what we do. The adoption of the preventative agenda will not only provide positive results during the formative years but throughout a person's life. Enabling interventions that promote and maximise independence and build resilience delivered at key stages have been shown to deliver positive outcomes in later lives for adults.

We need to enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives. This means improving skills and qualifications for all. Research shows that individuals who fail to gain qualifications are clearly disadvantaged in many aspects of later life - from the jobs they obtain and the wages they earn to their sense of physical and emotional health and well-being, their experience of crime & how safe they feel, and the quality of their environment including their homes. Improving the access and use of quality lifelong learning across the social gradient coupled with access to other supportive services such as parenting and good healthcare, is critical to the success of Merthyr Tydfil.

Literacy and numeracy are fundamental skills required to function and progress in society, both professionally and socially. The 1999 Moser Report identified the numerous impacts that poor basic skills can have upon personal earnings and families, upon communities and society, and for the economy. Alongside other factors such as a special educational need, poor attendance in school, exclusions, several movements of school and being looked after; there are a series of determinants that can lead to some children and young people becoming disengaged from school, the home and the wider community. Ensuring that schools, families and communities work in partnership with key agencies such as the local authority, health, the police and the voluntary sector, helps to reduce the differences in health and well-being and builds resilience of children and young people.

There has been much debate about social mobility in the UK with concerns that there remains too strong a link between social background and educational achievement. A recent study from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) looks at whether there is an inevitable link between disadvantaged backgrounds and a cycle of poor school results and limited job prospects. The study says that this is not the case for many pupils from poor homes - with an international average of 31% of secondary school pupils succeeding even though the 'odds are stacked against them'. Other research shows that the impact of poverty on schools can be significantly reduced when there is an ethos in the school based on rights and responsibilities, a good and supportive learning environment, high quality teaching and learning, effective analysis and use of data and strong distributed leadership. Poverty therefore doesn't equal destiny in education.

The highly respected Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE) 3-16 project, analysed by the Institute of Education, finds that the combined effect of a quality home learning environment, quality pre-school, and quality primary school helps disadvantaged children get ahead, and 'succeed against the odds'.

The EPPSE researchers conclude “Although parents’ social class and levels of education were related to child outcomes, the quality of the home learning environment was more important. The home learning environment is only moderately related to social class. What parents do is therefore more important than who they are’.

Children also require stimulating, supportive and nurturing care when their parents are not available. Research shows that high quality childcare and early childhood education from the age of 2 years can significantly improve children’s chances for success in later life.

Effective engagement and support strategies for parents will help create strong healthy families, which invariably improve the home learning environment. Positive parenting can protect children against risk factors such as material deprivation and poor parental education. Effective parenting also helps prevent problems such as poor wellbeing and mental health, domestic abuse, substance misuse, household poverty and worklessness each of which impact on the family.

Currently a significant range of services are provided across Merthyr Tydfil by a number of different providers that support the Learning for Life priority and the wrap around aspects such as parenting and childcare that support opportunities for learning. These include, as examples:

- Think Family Programme Multi Intervention Assistance (MIA) funded by Welsh Governments Families First Programme.
- Integrated Family Support Services and Teams
- Youth Services and Youth Support Services
- Communities First Programme
- Early Years Services
- Library Service
- Pre- School Education
- Nurseries and Crèches
- Play
- Education Services, Schools – Nursery, Primary, Secondary
- Flying Start Programme
- Parenting and Families Programmes
- Carers
- Adult Community Learning
- The College at Merthyr Tydfil
- Healthy Schools Initiatives
- Get Merthyr Active
- Community Safety Prevention Work

Our current services are, however, a mixture of universal and targeted services and some are provided in specific geographic areas. The services as a whole are not always co-ordinated, funding comes from a variety of sources including core funding as well as grants, there is no guarantee of sustainability and it is not yet clear what is currently adding value and making a difference for the community of Merthyr Tydfil.

In order to address the combination of economic disadvantage, low educational attainment and poor health status in Merthyr Tydfil, it will be necessary to adopt a coherent multi-agency prevention and early intervention approach linking with families and communities. Continuing to work with our Community First Clusters will be key to this work. This will help to break cycles of dependency and prevent the persistence of poor outcomes from one generation to the next.

Our ambition is therefore to:

- Improve attainment and achievement for all children, young people and adults and help each to reach their potential
- Improve the learning environment
- Make the best use of physical, financial and human resources

Among all the social determinants of health, early childhood development is the easiest for us to understand because improved early childhood development not only means better health, but a more productive labour force, reduced criminal justice costs, and reductions in other strains on the social safety net. Spending on early child development is an investment and we need to incorporate it into Merthyr Tydfil's policy and plans accordingly.

The focus has to be on the early years but with action across the life course which is proportionate action across the social gradient at key points of intervention – proportionate universalism. A focus on the social determinants is key - families, education, income, gender, race, community, housing, environment, work, ability to participate. A people and places focus helps to increase social cohesion and social capital to help empower individuals and communities. Partner organisations have a key role in being exemplar employers helping to provide a wider focus on healthy sustainable communities and enabling better access to green space, active travel, reducing crime and the fear of crime and improving the environment.

To help do this we need to devise a programme that initially identifies the outcomes and benefits we want to achieve (eg readiness for school, functional literacy levels at 11 years, transferable skills, a good home environment, fewer NEETs at 16 years, increased levels of employment etc) and then helps to identify :

- current service provision & providers;
- funding arrangements;
- potential duplication;
- what is working and making a difference and what is not working;
- what research shows is successful and best practice; and
- opportunities for expanding appropriate provision including funding opportunities.

and we realign these to meet our desired outcomes and benefits.

This work will continue to be carried as a matter of priority and led by the Local Service Board in order to inform the action required to address the issues highlighted in the needs assessment and in this Plan.

OUR PRIORITY OUTCOMES

People in Merthyr Tydfil have the opportunity and aspiration to learn and develop their skills to maximise their potential.

KEY PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

- Attainment and Skills
- Employability
- Participation

Links to the Welsh Government's Programme for Government

- Improving early years' experience
- Improving educational outcomes for children, young people and families living in poverty/Improving the skills of young people and families
- More inclusive and cohesive communities
- Ensuring people receive the help they need to live fulfilled lives

Attainment and Skills

What do we want to achieve?

Children, young people and adults in Merthyr Tydfil reach their academic potential and have the necessary skills to contribute as responsible citizens to their own development and that of the wider community.

What do we know?

In 2012 the proportion of working age adults who held a Level 2 and above qualification was 69.3% compared to 75.1% nationally. There has been a positive improvement of 18.4% since 2001 compared to the national average improvement of 14.7%. Merthyr Tydfil has improved from its position as the lowest performing authority in Wales in 2011 to 19th out of the 22 Welsh Local authorities in 2012.

In 2012, Nomis (Official labour market statistics) reported that 14.8% (5,200) of working aged adults 16-64 years of age had no qualifications compared with the Welsh average of 11.4% and the GB average of 9.7%. Performance in Merthyr Tydfil has continued to improve by 11.7% since 2004 (26.5%) which compares favourably with the Welsh average decrease of 4.1% for the same period. This improvement has also seen Merthyr Tydfil improve from being the worst performing Welsh authority to currently being 18 out of 22 local authority areas.

Of the most vulnerable families known in Merthyr Tydfil 54% had no parent with an academic qualification.

The National Survey of Adults Skills 2010 estimated the basic skills need in Wales as 25% for literacy and 53% for numeracy. Using the percentages identified in the national survey we can estimate the number of adults living in Merthyr Tydfil with literacy and numeracy skills need as; 9,655 for literacy and 20,468 for numeracy.

In 2013 we have seen a greater rate of improvement in the percentage of 15-year-olds achieving 5 A* to C including English or Welsh as a first language, and Maths than the rate of improvement nationally. Performance increased by 6.2% compared with an average increase in Wales of 1.6%. The head teachers are determined to rise to the challenge set by Welsh Government that asks us to work collectively to reduce the impact of disadvantage on academic attainment and achievement. Our goal is to progress further and achieve above 50% in 2016.

Improvements have also been made in other areas and greater numbers of pupils have been awarded qualifications. There has been a dramatic fall in the percentage of pupils not in education, employment or training (NEET) from 6.2% to 1.87% while 70.7% of pupils gained 5 A* to C (Level 2 threshold) which is an increase of 5.7% points compared to 5.2% nationally. Over 90% of pupils obtained 5 or more GCSEs (Level 1 threshold) – an improvement of 5.3% points compared to 1.4% nationally. When compared to other local authorities Merthyr Tydfil CBC is ranked 16th out of 22 for the Level 1 threshold and 19th out of 22 for the Level 2 threshold.

At the same time secondary school attendance continued to improve and is above the National average. In 2013 Merthyr Tydfil CBC was ranked joint 4th out of 22 local authorities in Wales compared to 12th position in 2011/12. The number of fixed term exclusions from secondary schools decreased in 2013 which has resulted in a 47% reduction in the number of days lost due to fixed term exclusions.

At Key Stage 4 the schools have put in place different interventions such as Assertive Mentoring, and revision sessions as well as support and intervention from the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSCJES). In Primary and Secondary schools funding has been allocated for a Basic Skills Manager (BSM) to ensure all pupils gain a good grounding in reading, writing and mathematics skills which builds the right platform for children to excel at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Looking forward all schools in Merthyr Tydfil CBC are involved in school-to-school support in order to accelerate improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and leadership.

Positive trends in performance in the majority of key indicators at foundation phase, key stage 2 and key stage 3, and the rate of progress is faster than at a national level.

Key stage 4 performance increased across all indicators in 2013, with performance in 3 out of the 5 key indicators at or above expected performance levels.

Positive trend in key stage 2 performance for, Reading, Writing and Mathematics (RWM) and Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science (RWMS) in combination where performance is ranked 17/22 and 16/22 when compared to other local authorities.

Reduction in the number and percentage of pupils leaving school without any recognised qualifications.

An increase in both secondary and primary school attendance rates, secondary school attendance in Merthyr Tydfil CBC is above the National average and ranked joint 4th out of 22 local authorities in Wales, primary school attendance in Merthyr Tydfil CBC is ranked 17th out of 22 local authorities an improvement from 22nd in 2012.

Gwaunfarren Primary School and Heolgerrig Community School have both been removed from Special Measures. 73% of schools are judged good or better for Outcomes achieved and attained by learners.

Performance at Foundation phase, key stage 2 and key stage 3 is below national averages and expected performance levels. Performance ranks below 19th for all the key indicators at the end of foundation phase (age 7), key stage 2 (age 11) and key stage 3 (age 14).

Performance at key stage 4 is significantly below the national average and expected performance levels in the most important indicator, the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and Mathematics. In 2013 61% of year 11 pupils left school without this important qualification.

Schools' performance is also compared with other schools on the basis of free school meal eligibility.

For all key indicators there are too many schools in the bottom 2 quarters. Performance at the secondary stage is particularly poor, at key stage 3, 3 out of 4 schools are below the median for the core subject indicator and at key stage 4, all schools are below the median for the level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and Mathematics indicator.

National reading and numeracy tests for years 2 to 9 show that pupils within Merthyr Tydfil CBC are not performing as well as pupils nationally and when compared with other local authorities' performance is ranked 21/22.

Merthyr Tydfil CBC has no secondary schools in the higher Welsh Government performance bands 1 and 2. Pen-y-Dre High School has improved from band 5 to band 3, Afon Taf High School and Bishop Hedley High School have remained in band 4, Cyfarthfa High school has moved from band 3 to band 4.

At key stage 5, the percentage entering at least 2 A levels or equivalent who achieved the level 3 threshold decreased in 2013 and Merthyr Tydfil CBC is ranked 22nd out of 22 local authorities in Wales.

The percentage of pupils achieving above the expected outcome (an indication of the performance of more able and talented learners) at the foundation phase and at key stages 2 and 3 are below the national average in all areas of learning and subjects.

Girls outperform boys in all key indicators at each key stage. The trend in performance for both boys and girls at the foundation phase, key stage 2 and key stage 3 is positive however girls have improved at a faster rate than boys in the majority of areas of learning and subjects therefore the gender gap has increased.

Story behind the data

Increasingly economies are being transformed into high skill economies. Welsh government data shows the change in employment rates between 2001 and 2011 is smaller for higher qualification levels, suggesting the impact of the recession on employment rates has affected those with no or low qualifications most. There is a wide body of research on the social and economic outcomes associated with educational attainment.

A review of these studies reveals that individuals who fail to gain qualifications are clearly disadvantaged in many aspects of life—from the jobs they obtain and the wages they earn to their sense of physical and emotional well-being. Society is also disadvantaged when students drop out, since studies show that dropouts are less likely than graduates to contribute to the social and economic well-being of the country.

Literacy and numeracy are fundamental skills required to function and progress in society, both professionally and socially. The 1999 Moser Report identified the numerous impacts that poor basic skills can have upon personal earnings and families, upon communities and society, and for the economy.

There is a body of evidence to illustrate the importance of family programmes and the positive impact of improving adult literacy and numeracy skills to aid prevention of the intergenerational transfer of poor literacy, language and numeracy skills. It has been found that family learning has a wider positive impact by enhancing confidence and greater self esteem for children and their families within schools and the wider community.

Educational attainment is strongly linked with deprivation. Intelligent children from the most deprived families, in general, have lower educational attainment than less able children from the more affluent families. However recent studies from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the well respected EPPSE study have shown that the link between poverty and educational attainment is not inevitable.

The EPPSE research provides new evidence concerning the **combined** effects of Home Learning Experience, preschool and primary school in shaping educational outcomes. The three key findings from the study are:

1. **Home learning:** The quality of the home learning environment (HLE) is more important for intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income. What parents do with their children is more important than who parents are.
2. **Pre-school.** The effects of pre-school have a powerful long term impact on children right up to the age of 11-14. However it is the quality and effectiveness of the pre-school attended that predicts better outcomes (intellectual/cognitive and social/behavioural development).
3. **Primary school:** The academic effectiveness of primary school can continue to influence students' longer term academic outcomes at secondary school. A primary school with high academic effectiveness had significant effects for English, Science and Maths, but the positive benefits were stronger for maths and science.

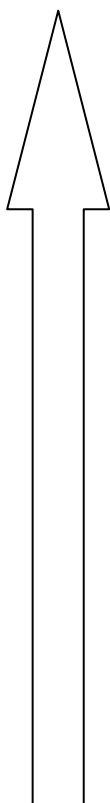
In order to help reduce the achievement gap for multi disadvantaged groups, actions to improve the Home Learning Environment, pre-school and primary school experiences will be needed, since improvements to any one in isolation would be insufficient to boost outcomes on its own.

An evaluation of Family Support Services (FSS) in Merthyr Tydfil showed that children in areas receiving additional family support services under the Flying Start Programme tended to be better prepared for school, demonstrated higher levels of social development and had many more experiences than other children.

What will we do?

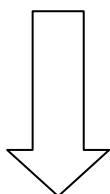
- Improve standards in basic skills.
- Improve standards at the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and Maths.
- Support Regional School Improvement through the Central South Wales Consortium.
- Ensure a comprehensive programme is implemented to support child development in the first three years and through the transition from pre-school to primary school.
- Agree and adopt an education plan to address low standards of attainment, attendance and achievement across all key stages, for 3-16 year olds.

How will we measure success?



“Going Up”

- % of pupil attendance in primary and secondary schools.
- % of pupils who achieve the Level 2 thresholds including English or Welsh and mathematics.
- % of pupils who achieve the Level 2 threshold including vocational equivalents.
- % of pupils achieving the Core Subject Indicator (Level 4 or above in English and Welsh, mathematics and science) at the end of Key Stage 2.
- % of pupils who achieve the expected level in the Foundation phase indicator.
- % of pupils eligible for free school meals who achieve the Foundation Phase Indicator (in teacher assessments) compared to pupils who are not eligible for free school meals.
- % of pupils eligible for free school meals who achieve the Core Subject Indicator at KS2, compared to pupils who are not eligible for free school meals.
- % of pupils eligible for free school meals who achieve the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE A*-C in English/Welsh and Maths, at the end of KS4 compared to pupils who are not eligible for free school meals.



“Coming Down”

- % of pupils who leave compulsory education without an approved external qualification.

Employability

What do we want to achieve?

Working age people in Merthyr Tydfil, particularly those in low income families gain, and progress within, employment

What do we know?

Employment rate

There were 22,400 people in employment in Merthyr Tydfil in the year to September 2013. This was the 4th lowest in Wales. The number of people in employment is down 100 or -0.4% over the year. This compares to a 2% increase for Wales and a 1% increase for the UK. The employment rate in Merthyr Tydfil in the year to September 2013 was 62.8%, down 0.9 percentage points over the year. This was below both the Wales (68.3%) and UK (71.1%) averages.

Unemployed, refers to people without a job who were available to start work in the two weeks following their interview and who had either looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained.

There are two official measures that can be used to describe unemployment:

1. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) measure of unemployment from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), which essentially captures people who are currently not working, but are available for work.
2. The actual number of people claiming unemployment benefits (mainly Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)), also known as the 'claimant count'.

As of September 2013 unemployment in Merthyr Tydfil was 10.8 % (2,800 people) , with the Welsh average being 8.4%. At the same period in 2012 the figures were 13% (3,400).

Economically inactive are people who are neither in employment nor unemployed. This group includes, for example, all those who are looking after a home, long term sick.

As of September 2013 residents economically inactive in Merthyr Tydfil was 42.1% (17,300) with the Welsh average being 39.4%. At the same period in 2012 the figures were 40.8 (17,900).

The number of adults economically inactive because of long term sickness has historically been very high in Merthyr Tydfil.

In September 2010 (*NOMIS*) the figure was 41.9% (3900) adults aged 16-64 years in the borough not working due to long term sickness. In September 2013 this came down to 33.3%, (3500) and the Welsh average is 26% .

Young People aged 16-25 not in education , employment or training

A worrying trend is the number of young people not in employment. A third (33.1 %) of 16-24 year olds living in the County Borough were out of work in September 2012. In January 2013, there were 765 young people aged 16-24 years claiming JSA in Merthyr Tydfil, 10.9 % of that population. This rate whilst improved on the previous year is well above the national rate (6.5 %) and is the second highest of all local authorities. The most recent trends show that since 2005 the unemployment rate for young people across Merthyr Tydfil has been consistently higher than the rates for Wales and the UK (ILO unemployment rate).

One of the key factors in unemployment is the level of qualification an individual holds. Vulnerable Family research indicated 54% of the 300 most vulnerable Families in Merthyr Tydfil do not hold a qualification.

December 2012 shows that the County Borough has 13% of working age adults with no qualifications. This is two percentage points higher than the Welsh national average of 11%. However, this is a significant improvement from 2011 when the percentage was 18.8% and 2009 when it was 21.4%.

In 2012, the percentage of the population with qualifications below level 2 was 17.7% and this is also higher than the Welsh national average of 15.1%. However, trends for the last four years show that the percentage number is improving year on year from 19.3% in 2009.

In 2012 the proportion of working age adults who held a Level 2 and above qualification was 69.3% (63% in 2011) compared to 75.1% nationally. There has been a positive improvement of 15.5% since 2005. Despite improvements Merthyr Tydfil is positioned in the bottom quartile in Wales.

In 2012 the proportion of working age adults holding level 4 qualifications or above was 26.5% nationally it was 32.6%.

Story behind the data

Employment contributes toward tackling the poverty issues within Merthyr Tydfil.

According to HM Revenue and Customs, the most recent data (August 2010) indicates that 28.2% of all children living in Merthyr Tydfil live in families deemed to be in poverty.

Thirty seven per cent (1090) of children aged under 4 also live in income benefits households according to DWP and HMRC Flying Start expansion data (October 2013).

These levels of families with children deemed to be living in poverty is far greater than the Welsh average of 22.2%.

The UK Government's welfare reform has and will continue to have a significant negative impact for those living in poverty in Merthyr Tydfil. Merthyr Tydfil, which has one of the highest levels of existing benefit claiming in the UK is more likely to be disproportionately affected. Those on disability living allowances, non-working lone parents and workless couples with children, those with children under five and families with more than two children are most likely to be affected by the tax and benefit changes.

An analysis of the job vacancy figures for Merthyr Tydfil and surrounding areas of Blaenau Gwent and Rhondda Cynon Taff show a significant shortfall in the jobs available through Job Centres (197 in February 2011, February 2012 was 173 jobs). There is increased pressure for 19-24 year olds (particularly those with low level qualifications and skills) for 'entry-level' employment as the ratio of job seekers to job vacancies rises.

In terms of NEETs, whilst Merthyr Tydfil has improved in 2012/13 on the number of NEETs from the previous year (6.2% to 1.87%), for 16 year olds and the number of young people at 16 unknown has reduced to nil from 0.6% there are still too many young people aged 17-19 (9.53% NEET and 3.53% unknown) identified as NEET through the annual Careers Wales Destination Survey.

A Wavehill Report on Worklessness (2011) states that disadvantaged areas such as Merthyr Tydfil often lack some of the social and economic infrastructure able to support people on their path into employment. Examples of this infrastructure include education, weak skills in literacy and numeracy, public transport, and childcare facilities. All of these factors have been identified as serious issues in the needs analysis for Merthyr Tydfil.

It is important to note the wider benefits of employment. Scientific evidence shows that people in work tend to enjoy happier and healthier lives than people who are out of work. Also, people with health conditions, such as back pain, stress, depression and high blood pressure find work is often the best way to recover. A 2006 review ("Is work good for your health and wellbeing?") also found that being out of work for long periods was generally bad for your health, resulting in:

- more consultations, higher use of medication and higher hospital admission rates than for the average population
- a two-to-three times increased risk of poor general health
- a two-to-three times increased risk of mental health problems
- a 20% higher death rate

Merthyr Tydfil's approach contributes to each of the Welsh Government's three strategic objectives which are:

- To reduce the number of families living in workless households;
- To improve the skill level of parents and young people in low income families so that they can secure well paid employment;
- To reduce the inequalities that exists in the health, education and economic outcomes for children living in poverty, by improving the outcomes of the poorest.

Merthyr Tydfil needs to embed a collaborative culture to tackling unemployment. Programmes and interventions need to be coordinated and focused across a range of organisations to support adults and young people (16 plus) develop their skills and qualifications for work, and support them to both gain and sustain employment. This will in turn support the reduction of family poverty.

By 2017, we want the percentage of working aged adults with no qualifications to be lower in Merthyr Tydfil than the Welsh average and the percentage of adults with level 1 and 2 qualifications to be higher than the Welsh average. The success within this area will to a large extent be dependent on successful funding through the new EU funding streams.

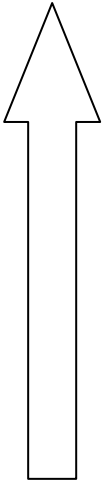
The Developments of employment within the SIP are “to some extent” linked to the jobs created through Economic Development services (i.e.) business support/development, inward investment, physical regeneration as these developments should make an important contribution towards improving the unemployment rates for Merthyr Tydfil.

Merthyr Tydfil's current approach has been successful and as a result unemployment figures and economic activity rates have improved. However due to the austerity measures introduced by local government and efficiencies that the local authority has had to undertake the previous success will be exceptionally difficult to maintain and consequently targets and outcomes need to reflect the reduced resources going into this area. (February 2014).

What will we do?

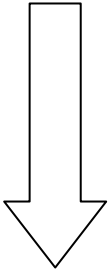
- Develop a sustainable infrastructure to help improve skills for work for adults learners (16 plus) by introducing a revised curriculum focusing on critical priorities and maximising funding.
- Deliver a programme to focus on improving the basic skills levels of adults age 16 or over to support their employment prospects and their ability to develop those same skills for their children.
- Develop effective local and regional planning mechanisms to collaborate on unemployment issues; in order to maximise opportunities for residents.

How will we measure success?



“Going Up”

- % of working age population who are qualified to NVQ Level 2 and above.
- % of former looked after children in education, employment or training at age 19.
- The number of individuals supported by the Council who go on to gain employment.
- The number of adult learners who participate in developing their basic skills.
- The number of adults (age 16 and over) supported by the Council who gain a qualification at NVQ Level 2.



“Coming Down”

- % of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment, or training.
- % of the working age population with no qualifications
- % of children under 16 living in working age households with no-one in employment.

Participation

What do we want to achieve?

Children, young people, their parents and carers in Merthyr Tydfil are empowered to participate fully in influencing decision making relating to the services they receive and all aspects of their lives - Having a voice, having a choice.

What do we know?

Our goal in Merthyr Tydfil is for every young person to be aware of 'Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum's (MTBWYF) vision 'It's your voice, your choice!' "Giving All Children & Young People the Right to Be Seen *and* Heard" is something the MTBWYF Cabinet continues to drive forward as part of their agenda.

The full Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum currently meets on a bi-monthly basis. The MTBWYF Cabinet meet on average, on a fortnightly basis. The MTBWYF facebook page (this is a closed page for reasons of internet security and monitored by the Partnership Team) and the Merthyr Noise websites continue to provide opportunities for participation to young people across the County Borough.

As a proportion of the overall population, those aged 11-25 represent 18.8% (11,114) of the total population in Merthyr Tydfil; nationally the proportion aged 11-25 represents 19% of the total population.

Between the ages of 11 to 25 there are marginally more males than females (5571 versus 5543). Across the age groups the largest difference is found in the 21-25 age bands where there is an estimated 6.2% more males than females. For ages 11-25 the difference is estimated at 0.5 % more males than females (5571 versus 5543).

In early 2013, there were 74 MTBWYF members actively involved in Forum activities and registered on its database. During the summer/autumn 2013, the MTBWYF Cabinet decided to undertake a Roadshow with the main focus of expanding registration and increasing membership numbers. As a result, the Youth Cabinet visited Pen-Y-Dre's Funky Fun Day, 3G's Forsythia Youth Project, Willows Youth Centre – Troedyrhiw, World Mental Health Day, Info Shop, VAMT and the Visible Project. As of January 2014, these efforts were reflected by a rise to 154 registered young people now recorded on the MTBWYF data-base and representative of Young People residing in the County Borough.

This year's success and the MTBWYF Cabinet's mission to increase membership also impacted on a record number of 9 young people standing for the Youth Mayor position. This is a marked improvement on the number of Young People standing over recent years. Consequently, on Friday 22nd November 2013, Merthyr Tydfil inaugurated its fifth Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor.

Since 2011, 2500 young people, including individual youth members representing youth centres (both voluntary and statutory), school pupils – representing school councils, young carers, LAC and Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum Members and the Rainbow Group have been trained regarding their rights and entitlements (UNCRC) and the importance of the 'Do we meet your standards – the Seven National Participation Standards.

During 2013 approx 170 professionals undertook 'Young People Say' Training – including Corporate Parenting, MIA Key-worker, Play Colleagues, Education Welfare Officers, 3 G's Development Trust, Treharris Boys & Girls Club, Education Inclusion, Health Visitor, VAMT Colleagues, Counselling Staff, Family Liaison Staff, Youth Service Staff, Teachers etc. Note: this vitally important training programme is both Young Person led and delivered and addresses the Participation/Children's Rights agenda using the UNCRC's Article 12 as the 'enabling' article.

MTBWYF members have supported a number of strategic and working groups during 2013, including for example the Local Service Board (LSB), Corporate Parenting Board, the Looked After Children Working Group – The Rainbow Group, Education Service Improvement Board, the Junior Local Safeguarding Children's Board – and the development of an Anti-Human Trafficking Group.

New group representation being considered includes:

- Town Centre Regeneration;
- Elected seat on the Community Health Council.

Story behind the data

Children have a legal right to be consulted about decisions which affect them. In Merthyr Tydfil we are committed to the principle of empowerment of Children, Young People and their parents and / or guardians in how we deliver all our Children and Young People's services. This supports the three pillars of the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child – Protection, Participation and Provision. There is evidence that services in which children, young people and their families are fully involved will be better designed and more effective in meeting the needs identified.

Recent examples of improvements to services using this method include:

- MTBWYF involvement in the consultation of the South Wales Programme (re-configuration of health services);
- JLSCB – development of Anti-Human Trafficking Group;
- The development of a Young Person's page on the Cwm Taf Consultation Hub;
- Welsh Governments Youth Engagement Consultation;
- Children's Rights Scheme; and
- MTCBC Budget Proposals.

Empowering Children and Young People to participate fully in decision making and all aspects of community life also helps develop skills, and increases confidence, it raises aspirations and assists Young People to achieve at a higher level in adult life, helping them become aware of their role as local and global citizens. The current MTBWYF Cabinet have 4 young people now in HE (it should be noted that this is not accessed via the conventional routes dependant on A level grades).

During April 2014, the Participation Promise will be re-launched (following MTCBC Cabinet discussions). Currently 4 organisations have been awarded the National Children and Young People's Participation Kitemark for Wales – nonetheless, it should be noted that the Welsh Government is currently making a strategic decision regarding the next phase and continuation of the 'Do we meet your standards' - 7 National Participation Standards.

For his dedication to the community, our previous Youth Mayor, Daniel Walsh was given the title 'Give More Star' by the UK-wide charity. Give More' encourages people to volunteer in their communities and recognises the achievements of those who do. Daniel not only invests long hours of volunteering and represents young people of the Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum (MTBWYF) at high profile meetings and focus groups, but also works part-time, studies and still cares for his parents. Earlier this year, Daniel won the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) Volunteer of the Year Award. He has since inspired his peers and helped to allay the fear of crime amongst older members of the community.

The office of the Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor is seen as exemplar by the Children's Commissioner, Welsh Government and other Councils. These roles have been in place since 2009. The agenda has strong political and senior officer support and has done so for a number of years including attendance at the Youth Mayor Hustings, elections and Youth Mayor Inauguration in the Council Chamber.

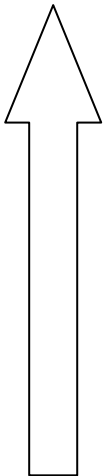
Children's Commissioner for Wales, Keith Towler, commented in 22nd Nov 2013 that. "What strikes me about the success of the MTBWYF and the Youth Mayor is the extent to which adults listen and respond to the issues raised by young people. Young people in Merthyr have got a lot to say and a lot to contribute to their local community but the real strength of this work is the contribution it makes to democracy. The voice of children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil is alive and well and long may that continue."

What will we do?

- Ensure a participation approach is adopted by strategic and operational services delivered for children and young people in Merthyr Tydfil are aware of and involved in participation through the re- launch of the Participation Promise and the identification and targeting of service areas.
- Provide opportunities for children and young people to be involved in the Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum and to raise awareness of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the value of participation.
- Co-ordinate and implement training for individuals and young people to maximise the impact of the Participation Kite Mark Ward/ Young People Say Training.

- Promote the Youth Mayor Initiative ensuring transparent democratic processes are in place for the selection of the Youth Mayor.
- Provide opportunities for the Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum to connect with the wider national participation agenda, Families First initiative. Youth Assembly for Wales, Children's Commissioner's Office, Welsh Government and the All Wales Participation Workers Forum.

- **How will we measure success?**



“Going Up”

- Number of schools /organisations that have agreed and signed up to the Participation Promise.
- % of young people engaging in the Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum (MTBWTF).
- Number of panels, boards and initiatives with young people representation.
- Number of organisations achieving/accessing the Participation Kitemark Award/ Young People Say Training.
- Number of young people trained to deliver Kitemark and Young People Say Training.
- Number of young people sitting on the Youth Assembly for Wales.

OUR PRIORITY OUTCOMES

People in Merthyr Tydfil benefit from a strong, sustainable and diverse economy.

KEY PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

- Economic Development
- Business Development

Links to the Welsh Government's Programme for Government:

- Improving educational outcomes for children, young people and families living in poverty;
- Improving the skills of young people and families;
- More inclusive and cohesive communities;
- Creating sustainable places for people.

Economic/ Business Development

What do we want to achieve?

A growing and sustainable economy for Merthyr Tydfil, delivering a diverse range of quality job opportunities.

What do we know?

In 2011, there were 1,360 VAT and/or PAYE based enterprises in Merthyr Tydfil. 87% of these employed less than 20 people. This highlights the importance of small companies to the local economy. There were 95 enterprise births in Merthyr Tydfil and 145 enterprise closures. The rate of business births and closures in Merthyr Tydfil as a proportion of working age population is the same as the rates for Wales.

The Service Sector is the largest employer in Merthyr Tydfil. In 2008, the Service Industry provided 79.9% of jobs, the Manufacturing Sector was the second largest with 16.7% and Construction and other provided 2.8%. Within the service sector public administration is the largest employer with 39.3% of jobs which is above the Welsh average of 32.9%.

The breakdown of employment by sector shows that there is a lower proportion of jobs in professional occupations in Merthyr Tydfil than in Wales.

The main occupational areas in Merthyr Tydfil are the Elementary Occupations (17.1%) which are those jobs that consist of simple and routine tasks which mainly

require the use of hand tools and often some physical effort, with the Associate Professional and Technical Occupations, Administrative and Secretarial Occupations and Skilled Trades & Occupations, each of which account for 12% each of the population working in these sectors.

Labour Force Survey estimates at local authority level are available for the period October 2011 to September 2012. Merthyr Tydfil had an unemployment rate of 12.1%, the second highest in Wales after Blaenau Gwent (International Labour Organisation unemployment rate). In January 2013, there were 2,395 adults aged 16 to 64 claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), 6.3% of that cohort, compared to Wales rate of 4.2% and the GB rate of 3.8 (claimant count)

Gross Value Added (GVA) is a measure of the size of the economy of an area, GVA per head in 2007 stood at £11,604 in Merthyr Tydfil. This was below the Welsh average of £14,853 and the fifth lowest amongst the 22 Welsh local authorities. Between 1999 and 2007 GVA per head in Merthyr Tydfil has been below that for Wales as a whole.

In 2012, the average gross earnings in Merthyr Tydfil were £432.70 per week, this compares to the Wales average of £503.10

The local economy is not providing enough employment opportunities for all age groups through the economy as a whole. The ratio of vacancies to those looking for work (JSA claimants) is 1 for every 17 people looking for work in Merthyr Tydfil, compared with 1 to 6 in Wales. This level is before more claimants are identified from reassessments of capability across a range of working benefits.

Story behind the data

The Government's austerity measures, aimed at getting the public sector deficit into order over the next four years, have yet to fully impact on the economy. However, coming at a time when the prospects for economic growth in 2012 are particularly weak, it looks likely that the private sector will not make up for the negative impact of these austerity measures given the lack of an export led recovery due to the downturn in our major trading partner – the EU.

The housing market, a gauge of consumer confidence, remains weak and the outlook is for house prices to be little changed for a prolonged period.

The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) annual inflation stands at 2.2% in September 2012, down from 2.5% in August. This is the slowest rate of inflation since November 2009, when it was 1.9%. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) still remains of the view that the CPI rate will fall back to, or below, the 2% target level within a two year horizon.

Merthyr Tydfil has experienced a prolonged process of economic decline that began in the 20th Century with the demise of heavy industry based on steel and coal.

The structure of the local economy has the same characteristics as other similar past industrial areas in Britain:

- Disproportionate dependence of Public Sector employment;
- Remaining dependence on manufacturing industries;
- Low levels of inward investment;
- High levels of worklessness and benefit dependence;
- Low business birth rate; and
- Low levels of business resilience.

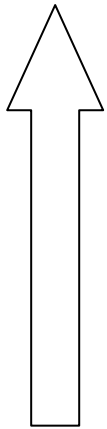
We want Merthyr Tydfil to have a growing and sustainable economy, making the most of our unique geographic position as the natural service centre for the Heads of the Valleys and improving the employment chances of local residents by creating new and sustainable jobs. We will support development of a thriving, engaged and competitive business sector that is both resilient and competitive in a changing global market. In particular, we will improve the economic position in Merthyr Tydfil by targeted development of the Tourism and Retail economy, continue to improve the physical infrastructure, continue to increase inward investment and improve links with education and training.

In growing this sustainable economy the local development plan will provide a landscape blueprint for permitted development in both a domestic and business context. The Primary aim of the Local Development Plan (LDP) is to facilitate a reduction in current levels of out migration from the County Borough so that population levels stabilise by 2011 and a 10 year period of enhanced growth is achieved thereafter. This Primary aim will be achieved by focusing the majority of new development within Merthyr Tydfil itself, reflecting resource efficient settlement patterns, reducing the need to travel in order to enhance the town's role as a hub settlement in the Heads of the Valleys; targeting selected development opportunities to the Valleys settlements, helping to regenerate communities by developing realistic and achievable roles based on a quality residential environment within easy access of a wide range of jobs and services.

What will we do?

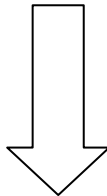
- Deliver the Vibrant Viable Places (VVP) economic development programmes to support and underpin the regeneration of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, Cyfarthfa Park and Castle and increase the occupancy within the Orbit Centre and the Town Centre.
- Develop a new Social Enterprise Strategy to identify and focus on key sector growth opportunities.
- Co-ordinate a plan for Tourism Through the Destination Development Plan, which recognises the importance of Tourism to the Welsh economy.
- Retail sector forums will be developed to directly link the Cyfarthfa Retail Park and Merthyr Town Centre targeting vacancies and employment opportunities.

How will we measure success?



“Going Up”

- The workplace based Gross Value added per head of working population.
- The median annual pay (gross) of full time workers.
- The number of new business births in the area.
- The 3 year survivability of newly born enterprises.
- The supply of housing land.
- Total jobs created by the VVP.
- Total jobs accommodated by the VVP.
- Supply of Business Land



“Coming Down”

- % of the working population claiming Job Seekers Allowance
- The total annual vacant floorspace in the Town Centre

OUR PRIORITY OUTCOMES

People, who live and work in Merthyr Tydfil are supported to enjoy a healthier and better quality of life.

KEY PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

- Promoting Healthy Lifestyles and in particular reducing the harm caused by smoking, a reduction in obesity, physical activity and promoting good sexual health
- Mental Health and Emotional Well Being
- Promoting Independence
- Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable Children

Links to the Welsh Government's Programme for Government:

- Improving early years' experience;
- Improving health outcomes of children, young people and families living in poverty;
- Preventing poor health and reducing health inequalities; and
- Ensuring people receive the help they need to live fulfilled lives.

Healthy Lifestyles – Smoking

What do we want to achieve?

To reduce the harm from smoking in Merthyr Tydfil

What do we know?

Smoking rates have declined steadily since the 1970s across the UK. Smoking is less common in England than in Wales and Scotland. Around one in four adults in Wales and Scotland reported themselves to be cigarette smokers in 2010, compared to one in five in England.

The relatively slow pace of decline in smoking rates in recent years represents a considerable challenge to meet the Welsh government target of reducing smoking rates to 16 per cent by 2020 as set by the Tobacco Control Action Plan for Wales.

The more recent threat is the rapid increase in use and promotion of e-cigarettes is a concern although there is no accurate data locally.

There is no evidence that e-cigarettes can help people quit smoking, they are an unlicensed product and therefore there are no assurances about the safety or the product, they normalise smoking and the flavoured varieties are attractive to children, which could lead to addiction.

Results of the 2011/12 WHS were published in September 2013 and show that the rate in Merthyr is 24% of adults smoking. This is encouraging given the trend over the last 10 years. However, much work needs to be done to meet the 16% target for 2020.

	2003/5	2004/6	2005/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Rhondda								
Cynon Taf	28	28	26	24	24	27	26	26
Merthyr Tydfil	27	26	28	31	30	26	24	24
Cwm Taf HB				25	25	27	26	26
Wales	27	27	25	24	24	24	23	23

A tobacco conference will be held in Cwm Taf in early July to celebrate the good work of partners in reducing smoking rates and focus on future priority areas to tackle.

In 2010, 5% of the surveyed young people in Cwm Taf reported smoking at least once a week. This survey is only carried out every 5 years and has relatively small sample sizes.

	Boys	Girls
Cwm Taf	6%	4%
Wales	5%	8%

The 2010 Infant Feeding Survey (IFS) shows that mothers in Wales were the most likely to have smoked before or during pregnancy (33%) and mothers in England the least likely (26%). A high proportion of pregnancies in Cwm Taf are those aged under 20 and those aged 20 or under were more likely to have smoked throughout pregnancy (50% in 2005 and 32% in 2010). Data for smoking during pregnancy is currently taken from the Infant Feeding Survey.

Current development is underway via early years pathfinder work to facilitate improved data quality, comparable across Health Boards.

Cwm Taf is directly involved in the maternity and early years surveillance working group, and this will enable more local data to be reported upon in the near future

Story behind the data

Smoking continues to be the greatest single cause of ill health and premature death in Wales, causing around 5, 650 deaths each year. Almost half of all long-term smokers will die in their middle age as a result of tobacco use.

Smoking is also a main cause of health inequalities, having been identified as a leading cause for the gap in life expectancy between rich and poor.

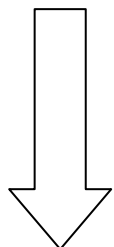
Other associated issues that impact particularly on more deprived communities include: the financial cost of smoking e.g. a person who smokes 20 cigarettes a day will spend more than £2,000 per year; and exposure of other home residents to second hand smoke.

Maternal smoking is the key cause of poor outcomes for mothers, babies and children. It is associated with increased risk of miscarriage, perinatal death, prematurity, low birth weight and congenital abnormalities in the baby. In addition, children of smokers are more likely to take up smoking themselves.

What will we do?

- Work in partnership to implement the Smoke Free Cwm Taf Action Plan to:
 - Continue multi agency work to reduce prevalence;
 - Prevent people starting smoking by delivering effective education on the harm from smoking at all levels from pre-school to further education;
 - Help people to stop smoking by training front line health and community workers to motivate smokers to quit and refer to effective support service;
 - Reduce environmental exposure by promoting smoke free environments;
 - Raise awareness of the risks of e-cigarettes as an unlicensed and unregulated nicotine product.
- Help to lower the effects of second hand smoke by encouraging smoke free places - A Smoke Free Homes steering group has been established to take forward a project in conjunction with Communities First and Registered Social Landlords along with encouraging children's playgrounds and sports grounds to be smoke free.
- Increase the number of community pharmacies who provide smoking cessation support for those wishing to quit.
- To support schools and further education settings to progress the Healthy Schools Programme.

How will we measure success?



“Coming Down”

- Adult smoking prevalence rates.
- % of 15 year olds smoking weekly.
- % of women smoking during pregnancy.

Healthy Lifestyles – Obesity and Physical Activity

What do we want to achieve?

People in Merthyr Tydfil are active and maintain a healthy weight

What do we know?

The majority of adults in Merthyr Tydfil are either overweight or obese.

The first report for the Child Measurement Programme for Wales provides findings from the measurements of children in reception year (age four to five) during the academic year 2011/12. The prevalence for overweight and obesity for Wales was 28%. The figure of 34% for Merthyr Tydfil is the highest in Wales. This data will provide a baseline against which future progress can be measured.

Fruit and vegetable consumption for adults and children in Merthyr Tydfil is below the Welsh average, as are physical activity rates.

Story behind the data

Overweight and obesity are important determinants of a wide range of avoidable morbidity and mortality including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and arthritis.

Prevalence is higher among lower income groups than among the more affluent. Deprivation is a key component of social inequality and Cwm Taf is the health board area with the highest proportion of deprived areas in Wales.

Obese children are much more likely to be obese in adulthood.

The causes of obesity are not simply due to individuals' food and physical activity choices. They are more complex than this, and relate to a wide variety of societal, environmental and behavioural factors.

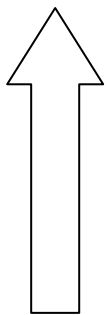
Urbanisation has contributed to the proliferation of obesogenic environments, typified by high levels of car use, 24-hour food availability, sedentary occupations and low levels of physical activity. It has been suggested that obesity will only decrease if there is a supportive built environment which encourages active travel, the use of green spaces and increases the opportunities for adults and children to be physically active.

What will we do?

- Through the Get Merthyr Active Plan, Merthyr Tydfil will aspire to be the most physically active Local Authority in Wales by 2020. This is a whole population programme encouraging adults and children to participate in physical activity so that they will improve their longer term health and well being.

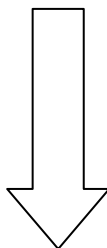
- Multi agency partnerships will drive the Cwm Taf Healthy Weight, Healthy Valleys Strategic Action Plan Key actions will be developed under the following themes:
 - clear leadership and co-ordination of action,
 - improving healthy eating and physical activity levels,
 - supporting overweight people to reduce weight and increase physical activity and
 - improving the wider environment to encourage healthy eating and an increase in physical activity.
- Protect, improve, promote and provide sufficient use of safe, accessible open and green spaces to meet the socio-economic, health and learning needs of residents and communities of Merthyr Tydfil.

How will we measure success?



“Going Up”

- % of adults reported meeting the physical activity guidelines of 5 x 30 minutes in the past week.
- % of adults reported eating five/more portions fruit/vegetables the previous day.
- % of children and young people meeting weekly physical activity recommendation of 60 minutes of moderate intensity.
- Physical activity on 5 or more days of the week



“Coming Down”

- % of adults reported as being overweight or obese in Merthyr Tydfil.
- % of children aged 4-5 who are overweight or obese.

Healthy Lifestyles – Sexual Health

What do we want to achieve?

People in Merthyr Tydfil have good sexual health, a good knowledge of sexual health and relationship behaviour, and are fully aware of the potential outcomes of risky behaviours.

What do we know?

Reducing unwanted pregnancies, particularly teenage pregnancy is a key action to reduce inequalities in health. In England and Wales the under-18 conception rate for 2011 was the lowest since comparable conception statistics were first produced in 1969, at 30.9 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–17. A comparison of the teenage conception rates between Wales and England shows that the rate in Wales was higher than in England, 34.2 conceptions per 1,000 women aged 15-17 compared with 30.7.

Teenage conception is associated with adverse outcomes for both mothers and babies. Teenage mothers generally have lower socio-economic background, with the risk of becoming a teenage mother in social class V being ten times higher than social class I. For the mother, increased adverse health outcomes include (Paranjothy S, et al, 2009). Risks include:

- Premature death, linked to health damaging lifestyles, poor psychosocial health or a violent environment;
- Three times more likely to live in poverty;
- Less likely to complete their education and training

These contribute to restricted job opportunities and the cycle of deprivation for teenage parents and their vulnerable families.

Adverse health outcomes for the child, some linked to risk factors for the mother, include:

- Pre-term delivery;
- Low birth weight;
- Small for gestational age;
- Increased neonatal and infant mortality rates;
- Increased risk of maltreatment or harm;
- Higher rates of illness, accidents, injuries;
- Higher rates of cognitive behavioural and emotional complications;
- Increased sexual activity at younger age and teenage pregnancy, with absent father; and
- Less likely to be breastfed (NHS Information Centre, IFF Research 2011).

Although the rates are reducing, they are reducing in other parts of Wales at a greater rate.

Story behind the data

Although the evidence suggests that there are similar rates of sexual activity in young people from affluent and deprived areas of Wales, the outcomes for young people in the most deprived areas are worse. In Merthyr Tydfil teenage conceptions are twice as likely to result in births compared to more affluent areas (ONS 2012). A range of national and local surveys have informed us what young people say:

- Decisions to have sex are often spur of the moment, linked to alcohol;
- Belief that the average age to start sexual activity would be 14, whereas surveys indicate that only a third of young people are sexually active at 15 years of age;
- Generally good awareness of contraception methods but spontaneous nature of sexual activity meant that condoms were often forgotten;
- Other methods of contraception were often not taken up due to concerns about confidentiality;
- Insufficient, inconsistent sex education within Personal and Social Education (PSE) and Sexual and Relationship Education (SRE) in schools.

In the more deprived areas conceptions are most likely to lead to births. This indicates cultural differences in the more deprived areas that result in higher birth rates for pregnant teenagers, when compared to the more affluent areas of Wales. Merthyr Tydfil has a lower percentage of teenage conceptions ending in termination compared to the Welsh average, 32.8% compared to 42% (2011) and a higher maternity rate per 1000.

Rates of STIs are increasing for Wales as a whole, particularly amongst those aged 15-24 years. It must be noted that it is unclear how much of this rise may be in part attributed to greater awareness and improved surveillance however.

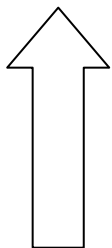
Data is available annually at a local authority level which actually shows rates of gonorrhoea and Chlamydia at lower rates than the Welsh average. However it must be appreciated that this data is only for those clients who attend a specialist GUM clinic which it is likely the majority of young people in this area do not, due to transport issues etc. Plans to explore further data development around STIs to provide a clearer picture are underway.

Young substance misusers are a particularly high risk group regarding teenage pregnancies. Approximately half of babies born to this group do not reside with their mothers. Preventing first pregnancies in this group is now a high priority.

What will we do?

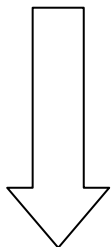
- Cwm Taf Sexual Health Advisory Board to complete and deliver a Sexual Health and Teenage Pregnancy Strategy to include:
 - Targeting and promoting the provision of Long Acting and Reversible Contraception (LARC) in the areas with the highest rates of teenage conceptions;
 - Targeting and promoting the provision of Long Acting and Reversible Contraception (LARC) to teenage parents;
 - Increasing access to the condom card scheme in all schools and in youth and community settings in the areas with the highest rates of teenage conceptions;
 - Working with multi agency partners to support consistent and high quality personal and social education in schools. In particular, the link between alcohol and risk taking behaviour which contributes to teenage conceptions and sexually transmitted infections;
 - Supporting the provision of youth specific family planning services, recognising the barriers to young people accessing open community services.
- To continue to work with statutory and third sector organisations to connect young substance misusers with appropriate conception and sexual health services to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

How will we measure success?



“Going up”

- Prescribing of Long Acting and Reversible Contraception (LARC).
- Uptake of condoms through the Condom Card Scheme.



“Coming Down”

- Teenage conception rates.
- Sexually Transmitted Infections.
- Rate of low birth weight babies.
- Rate of pre-term births.

Mental Health and Emotional Well Being

What do we want to achieve?

Children, young people and adults in Merthyr Tydfil enjoy good mental health and wellbeing

What do we know?

Merthyr Tydfil has always had particularly high rates for claiming out of work benefits, higher than the Wales average. Currently the commonest claim for benefits is for stress related and mental health conditions. The most recent data shows that in August 2012, there were 9,440 people claiming at least one working age benefit, this is a quarter (24.8%) of the resident population in Merthyr Tydfil.

Worklessness has repercussions which go far beyond the financial. It is proven that being in work boosts self-esteem, health and well-being. People who have been out of work for a long time; or who have never worked; are up to three times more likely to have poor health than those in work. In 2011, there were 7,100 adults aged 16-64 years with no recognised qualification, 20.1% of that cohort (the lowest performing Local Authority). Using the percentages from the National Adult Basic Skills Survey Wales 2010, we can estimate numbers of adults living in Merthyr Tydfil with basic skills needs for literacy are 9,655 and for numeracy 20,468.

Vulnerable Family research indicated that 54% of the 300 most vulnerable families in Merthyr Tydfil do not hold an academic qualification.

Welsh Health Survey data suggests that over 18,000 people in Cwm Taf may be receiving treatment for depression or anxiety at any one time.

The Welsh Health Survey shows an improvement in the mental health component summary score for Merthyr Tydfil moving from the lowest level of self reported mental health to 18th out of the 22 local authority areas. The Welsh Health Survey also shows that 12% of residents in Merthyr Tydfil are being treated for a mental illness. The Wales average is 11%. Males have a lower proportion being treated than females, suggesting that they may not be as proactive when seeking help to cope with mental illness.

The supply of antidepressants by prescription across Cwm Taf has increased significantly. In 2008/09 Cwm Taf residents received 342,627 anti depressant prescriptions, this increased to 452,225 in 2011/12 which represents an almost 30% increase.

In Cwm Taf hospitals in 2010, there were 6,605 admissions where a mental health problem was recorded by a clinician as a secondary diagnosis. 37 children were admitted to hospital in Cwm Taf in 2010, for any mental health problem. 35% of these were for anorexia.

Dementia is a major public health issue in Wales. Approximately 42,000 people in Wales have dementia. It is most common among older people - dementia affects one in twenty over the age of 65 and one in five over the age of 80. Most older people will continue to live in the community with the support of spouses and other family members, but many will be vulnerable to needing alternative care and support as their dementia progresses, especially if living alone.

As life expectancy increases, there will be more older people and so more people with dementia. It is anticipated by 2030 there will be a large increase (almost double) in the number of people with dementia in the 80-84 and 85+ age groups in Merthyr Tydfil.

A survey of 356 young people in the Cwm Taf area, (219 from Merthyr Tydfil), found that one in 10 young people felt that their life is not going well, and close to one in three young people indicated that they wished they had a different kind of life. The Health Behaviour in School - Aged Children Survey (HBSC) 2009/10 questioned children aged 11-16 on their self rated life satisfaction. The greatest majority rated themselves as satisfied with a score of 6 or more out of ten. 83% of students in Cwm Taf fell into this category, which was the same as the Welsh average.

Story behind the data

As stated in the Cwm Taf Health Board Annual Report “*Mental illness is consistently associated with deprivation, low income, unemployment, poor education poorer physical health and increased health-risk behaviour*”. Merthyr Tydfil scores particularly highly on a range of these indicators. All of these risk factors are present in the local area and so not surprisingly the population of Merthyr Tydfil rates lower than the Welsh average for self perceived mental wellbeing and higher than the Welsh average for self reported treatment for mental illness.

The evaluation of Skills for Life in England noted “There is a clear association between poor basic skills and learning disabilities, and poor basic skills and poor health” The Moser report also noted that there is a link to both physical and mental illness' from poor literacy and numeracy.

The most significant general priority in relation to emotional wellbeing and mental health for children and young people relate to addressing issues that are ‘family related’. There is a significant research base on the effective engagement and support strategies for parents in helping to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health for children and young people. Invariably parenting programmes and support for effective parenting also links to wider issues of addressing specific challenges such as domestic abuse, parental mental health needs, substance misuse, household poverty and worklessness each of which impact on the family.

A significant proportion of resources are currently dedicated to the more complex spectrum of mental health and people do not receive support soon enough or close enough to home. When people become ill, recovery needs to take place in the most appropriate setting, help them to address their difficulties and enable people wherever possible to regain their wellbeing and independence.

Good mental health and personal resilience are fundamental to our physical health, our relationships, our education, our work and to achieving our potential.

People of any age who have more complex health needs will require more specialist help, often but not always outside of their family or home setting. Admission to hospital should become the exception rather than the rule as the shift from inpatient to community based care gathers momentum. To prevent and respond to acute crisis requires a coordinated multi agency response, particularly where the service user is displaying challenging antisocial behaviour, is misusing substances and/or is perceived as a threat to themselves or others.

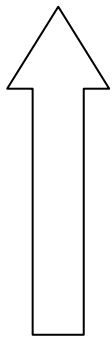
A wide range of community, universal and prevention services provided by a range of statutory and Third sector partners can support people to live fulfilled lives and when they need it, provide help to tackle the life problems which can often lead to mental health problems.

A “Together for Mental Health Partnership Board” has been established with partners across Merthyr Tydfil and the Cwm Taf area in order to ensure this all Wales strategy is effectively implemented locally. The strategy makes mental health everyone’s business and so the partnership board brings together leaders from health and social care, the police and probation services, education, housing, the third sector and local services users and carers to drive forward this agenda.

What will we do?

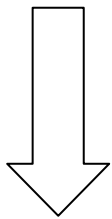
- We will work together in partnership to deliver the key actions in the All Wales Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan, priority actions this year include:
 - Tackling stigma and discrimination by exploring opportunities such as the ‘Time to Change’ campaign to engage with the whole community;
 - Implementing the ‘Talk to Me 2’ strategy and building on local good practice to tackle suicide and self-harm;
 - Improving wellbeing and resilience by offering accessible interventions and support in partnership with Communities First and the Third Sector.
- We will continue encourage and support organisations to achieve the Corporate Health Standard and Small Workplace scheme awards which promote Wellbeing through Work initiatives and a healthy workforce.
- While we are now ensuring 90% of individuals receiving mental health services have a care and treatment plan we will maintain this and continue to promote the co-production of outcome focused care plans.
- The primary care mental health service is now available in all GP practices across Merthyr Tydfil but we will continue to develop this service with partners to ensure timely assessment and access to local services for all those in need.

How will we measure success?



“Going up”

- % of young people scoring 6 or higher in terms of life satisfaction in the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey (HBSC).
- % of adults (age 16+) self reported mental health and wellbeing.
- % of young people who respond to the Viewpoint survey, reporting they feel happy and hopeful.
- Number of General Practitioner practices that are able to provide specialist assessment and a stepped range of interventions to support patients experiencing “mild to moderate” mental illness.
- % of adults involved in developing their care and treatment plan.



“Coming Down”

- % of adults (age 16+) reporting being treated for a mental illness.

Promoting Independence

What do we want to achieve?

People in Merthyr Tydfil are able to lead independent and fulfilled lives.

What do we know?

The percentage of the population in Merthyr Tydfil aged 65 and over is 16.7%. This is an increase of 741 people in this age category since 2001. Older people in particular are heavy users of health and social care services and our elderly population is increasing. If current trends continue, the number of people aged 65+ living in Cwm Taf will increase by 50% between 2008 and 2033. This is likely to cause a rise in chronic conditions such as circulatory and respiratory diseases and cancers.

Within the Cwm Taf LHB area, there is a predicted increase (54%) in both the number of older people attending A&E and the number of hospital admissions up to 2030, as a result of a fall. Many individuals can lose their independence and quality of life as a result. Estimates suggest that one in three people aged 65 years and over experience a fall at least once a year – rising to one in two among 80 year-olds and older. Although most falls result in no serious injury, approximately 5 % of older people in community who fall in any year sustain a fracture or require hospitalisation.

The number of people aged 65 years and over with dementia is predicted to increase by 55% in the next 20 years in Merthyr Tydfil.

Self reported physical health scores are worse in Merthyr Tydfil than in many parts of Wales, with the summary score of 47.5 here compared with 48.8 for Wales. This is a reflection of the deprivation and health inequalities faced by many of the residents. According to the Welsh Health Survey, the Cwm Taf University Health Board area has the highest percentage of people (25%) who reported their general health to be 'poor or fair'. Within Cwm Taf the results at local authority level were 27% for Merthyr Tydfil and 25% for RCT, both of which are significantly above the Welsh average (20%).

The Census 2011 shows that 13% (401,000) of usual residents in households in Wales lived alone. Of the usually resident population who lived alone 5.9 % (178,000) were aged 65 and over. At local authority level figures vary from 7.8 % in Conwy to 4.6 % in Cardiff. Merthyr Tydfil is ranked 20th out of the 22 local authorities, with 3026 (5.2 per cent) residents aged 65 and over living alone. In Merthyr Tydfil 116.5 per 1000 population of adult service users aged 65+ continue to live independently at home which is above the Welsh average of 78.6 per 1000 (2011/12). In 2012/13 this reduced slightly to 114.85 against a Welsh average of 77.53.

A delayed transfer of care – also known as “bed blocking” – arises when a person who no longer needs hospital treatment is unable to leave hospital and return to their own home or to a social care setting such as a residential home in 2013/14, the rate of delayed transfer of care for social care reasons per 1000 population age 75+ was 5.50.

Story behind the data

The Home for Life Strategy provided the direction of travel for adult social services and it has enabled us to develop services which will compliment the new Social Services and Well Being Act. The structure of Adult Social Care has been revised to support the outcome of promoting independence and realigning all enabling services into one "front door" for customers. The development of these services is identified in the strategic plan for adult social care. One of the other key areas of development is the integrated delivery of Health and Social Care Services in the community. Welsh Government has produced consultation documents in respect of the direction of further integrated service delivery though the advice to date is that this will be more of a collaboratively delivered approach rather than full integration.

Managers from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Cwm Taf University Health Board meet on a monthly basis to discuss locality issues and progress integrated service delivery. The advent of the Intermediate Care Fund for 2014 / 2015 will help with the process of integration. A Statement of Intent has been published and forms the basis of the work going forward.

This Statement of Intent was agreed between Cwm Taf UHB, Merthyr Tydfil CBC, the Third Sector and Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC to further develop services in the following areas:

1. Frail Elderly and Rehabilitation model;
2. Localities Partnership working;
3. Unscheduled Care;
4. Older Persons Mental Health Services;
5. Primary Care Services.

To support this work a successful bid was made by partners to the Welsh Government for non-recurrent Intermediate Care funding in 2014/15. Implementation of these plans will be a key priority in 2014/15 and will lay the foundation for a new range of Intermediate Care services in the Borough.

Evidence suggests that basic support to maintain and improve general wellbeing together with practical help in the home and opportunities to meet with other people and prevent loneliness avoids deterioration and the need for more intensive services. The development of a strong community infrastructure is essential to support people maintain their health, social networks and financial stability. This approach can prevent the premature escalation of people's needs and a requirement for intervention by statutory services.

Increasingly frail people with several long term health problems and more complex needs run the risk of unplanned admissions to hospital as opposed to managing exacerbations of chronic disease in the community. Any disruption to the usual living and support arrangements can have a major impact on the need for care and support on a longer term basis. Many emergency admissions could be managed differently and effective hospital avoidance services could prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.

Where admission to hospital is necessary, the aim should be to enable people to return to their usual place of residence as soon as possible.

Services must be about promoting wellbeing and supporting individuals, families and communities to independence rather than creating dependency. The emphasis is on enabling services, early intervention, prevention and short term services which avoid admission to hospital and facilitates discharge.

One of our priorities for 2012/13 was to relocate a number of health and social services to the new Kier Hardie University Health Park. This was completed in October 2012 and the move has resulted in learning disability day services and the reablement service being co-located with the health service clinical team. Benefits to service users include access to both clinical and social care staff during attendance at the centre for assessment, treatment and routine medical tests, removing the need for home visits and significantly increasing response times.

Services have also been restructured to enable us to respond more effectively to the future increasing demand for services within the community. The structure was also designed to allow us to develop future integrated services in the locality of Merthyr Tydfil. This is aimed at improving the way we work together to provide our services and can be demonstrated by the range of services that we now have at the new Kier Hardie University Health Park facility. This is a strong foundation which will look to build upon further in 2014/15.

Our Vision for Integrated Services

Our Vision is: 'Supporting people to live independent, healthy and fulfilled lives'. This will be achieved by providing health and social care services:

That is:

- Integrated, joined up and seamless;
- Focused on prevention, self-management and reablement;
- Responsive and locally delivered in the right place, at the right time and by the right person; and
- Safe, sustainable and cost effective.

Which will:

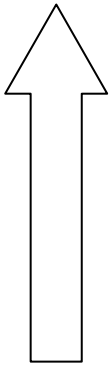
- Promote healthy lifestyles and prevent ill health;
- Promote independence and protect the vulnerable; and
- Improve services and joint working;

All of the partners recognise that the issues facing older people are complex and interrelated, requiring a joined up response across all sectors, combining and focusing efforts of different service providers to achieve maximum effect and avoid duplication.

What will we do?

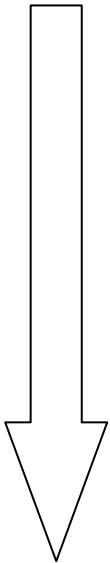
- Support the drive for a cultural shift towards the delivery of greater community involvement and prevention amongst social work professionals.
- Develop a framework to deliver integrated services between Social Services and the Health Service.
- The modernisation of social services in line with the Social Services and Well Being Act to ensure early intervention, reablement, and prevention to support people in a recovery model of care.
- Invest in the development of short-term services such as Reablement and Community Integrated Assessment Service (CIAS);
- Formalise information sharing and integration between health and social care staff; and
- Locate services in the community where they are needed.
- Further development of the @Home Service (which is the overarching name for a range of services provided in the community) which include the existing core services of:
 - District nursing services
 - Primary Care GP services
 - Reablement services
 - Joint Emergency Therapy Team (JETT)
 - Palliative Care
 - Community Mental Health
 - Community Stroke services
 - Parkinsons and other chronic disease services)
- Develop a single point of access across health and social care to streamline the pathway for frail elderly patients and provide primary care colleagues with a more robust and timely response.
- Implement Integrated Assessment on a phased basis, starting with an emphasis on the interface with community hospitals.
- Implement the Merthyr Tydfil Carers Strategy 2012-17 and meet the requirements of the Carers Measure.

How will we measure success? .



“Going up”

- Number of people offered/taking up Direct Payments.
- % of the adult population who can live independently without the need for a formal package of social care arranged or provided by the Local Authority.
- % of carers of adults offered an assessment in their own right during the year.
- Number of telecare assessments offered / undertaken



“Coming down”

- % of the adult population who cannot live independently
- The average number of calendar days taken to deliver a disabled facilities grant.
- The rate of delayed transfers of care for social reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 or over.
- The number of emergency hospital admissions
- Percentage of people reporting limiting long term illness - all ages and 65+.
- Number of readmissions to hospital for those aged 65+.
- Reduction in the number of admissions directly from hospital to nursing and residential care.
- Reduction in the number of admissions to residential/nursing care.

Meeting the needs of vulnerable children

What do we want to achieve?

Children and young people in need of support receive services to meet their needs

What do we know?

The Welsh Government conducts a census of all Children in Need (CIN) on an annual basis, as of March 31st on every year. They define CIN as those who receive social services from their local authority and whose case had been open on March 31st for at least three months continuously. CIN include looked after children, children on the child protection register as well as other children in need, including disabled children. These children and young people are the most vulnerable children in our community. There are of course other children in Merthyr Tydfil who are vulnerable and require services and support to prevent them becoming or remaining vulnerable and / or their levels of need increasing. This includes children who receive services funded from the Family First and Flying Start programmes in Merthyr.

The latest statistics from the Children in Need (CIN) census in Wales produced by the Welsh Government were released in February 2013. Statistics on children in need include data for Wales for the period up to the end of March 2012. Generally the most recent all Wales data indicates that there were 20,240 children in need which was a rate of 320 per 10,000 children aged under 18 years, and 70 who were unborn.

Additionally:

- Of these children 39% were on the child protection register, 28% looked after and the remaining 33% worked with as children in need;
- 46% had one or more factors recorded at referral;
- A quarter (25 per cent) of children in need had a disability and 9% an Autistic Spectrum Disorder;
- Parental substance or alcohol misuse and domestic abuse were the most frequently recorded parenting capacity factors;
- Amongst referrals from the police 43% featured domestic abuse and 27% alcohol or substance misuse;
- The attainment of children in need at each Key Stage assessment was much lower than the average for all pupils and the gap between CIN and the general population increases with age;
- An average proportion of 30% (for all ages) of CIN had a statement of Special Educational Needs compared to 3% of the general population.

The March 2012 CiN census, showed that there were 555 Children in Need in Merthyr Tydfil worked with for more than 3 months, a rate of 440 per 10,000 people aged 0-17 years.

This was the 2nd highest rate of all local authorities in Wales. 58% were male and 42% are female, proportions which were in line with the rates across Wales.

Comparative data for Merthyr Tydfil for the issues highlighted above are as follows:

- Of these children 26% were on the child protection register, 24% looked after and the remaining 52% worked with as children in need;
- Just over a quarter (27 per cent) of children in need had a disability and 7% an Autistic Spectrum Disorder;
- Parental substance or alcohol misuse and domestic abuse were the most frequently recorded parenting capacity factors domestic abuse 47%, substance or alcohol misuse 42%;
- Merthyr follows the pattern of attainment for CIN i.e. attainment of children in need at each Key Stage assessment was much lower than the average for all pupils and the gap between CIN and the general population increases with age;
- 24% (for all ages) of CIN had a statement of Special Educational Needs compared to 3% of the general population and a further 49% were subject to school action or school action plus.

2011/12 saw a significant increase (69%) in the numbers of children in need of protection whose names are on the Merthyr Tydfil Child Protection Register. The trend data over the last 2 years indicates that numbers have remained at this higher level since this time with a further increase of 13% in 2013/14. On the 31st March 2014 there were 134 children in Merthyr's Child Protection register, putting Merthyr Tydfil within the group of five local authorities in Wales that have the highest rate of children's names placed on the Child Protection Register per 10,000 population.

Similarly, between 2009 and 2012 Merthyr Tydfil saw an increase of 18% in the numbers of children it looks after; this was however in the context of significant increases across the UK and an average increase of 22% across Wales. On the 31st March 2014 the Local Authority was the Corporate Parent to 175 looked after children indicating that there has been a small reduction in overall numbers since 2012 and that there are emerging signs that this may be beginning to stabilise albeit at a higher level than pre 2012.

However Merthyr Tydfil still has one of the highest rates of looked after children across Wales; currently ranking 2nd highest of 22 local authorities.

More children (per 1000 head of child population) are receiving a service from social services in Merthyr Tydfil than comparator authorities and the Welsh average (68:1000 in Merthyr, 44:1000 comparator LA's, 41:1000 Wales average [2010/11 data]) and this has been the trend for a number of years.

While children's services provide for the most vulnerable children, other universal and targeted services support children and families with emerging and less significant levels of need. One of the most significant is the Multiple Intervention Assistance Service (MIA), funded through the Families First Programme.

Since the implementation of the service in April 2012, the most prevalent reasons for referral to the MIA Service has tended to fluctuate on a monthly basis but always falls within one of the below areas:

- Challenging Behaviour;
- Unable to afford essential items;
- Emotional and Mental Health problems;
- Managing Challenging Behaviour;
- Low income.

Story behind the data

For many families living in Merthyr, bringing up children so as to achieve the best possible outcomes for them involves dealing with a number of challenges. The area suffers the highest levels of deprivation in Wales impacting on most of the essential needs of families – income, housing, employment being the most obvious. Linked to these deprivations, Merthyr has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy and the levels of substance misuse, domestic violence and crime are also relatively high.

Under such circumstances, many children in Merthyr may have additional needs that have to be met if they are to make use successfully of the universally available provision. What we have seen over time is relatively more children tending to be referred to children's services for statutory services to respond. The system for handling referrals was changed towards the end of 2011 and has improved the timeliness and overall efficiency in managing demand. Child safeguarding concerns are identified and dealt with appropriately. In addition, developments funded by the Welsh Government's Families First initiative have strengthened the early multi agency response to the needs of families.

However, demand remains high and there remains a need to further strengthen the specialist assessment and family support services required to respond to families and children in most need and worked with by children's social services alongside ensuring that prevention and early intervention services really make a difference and prevent need escalating.

Meeting the needs of children who are at risk or looked after children is a very resource-intensive way of meeting needs although, for some, it is the only way of meeting need and ensuring children are safe from harm.

The overarching aim for all partners in all services is to identify those children for whom outcomes and permanence is compromised and to provide services and interventions that will support the community and families in establishing and achieving stable, supportive and protective care for all children and young people.

The key aim is to support children within their own families whilst ensuring that they are protected from harm (including the cumulative impact of chronic neglect) and services need to be in place that enable and empower parents whilst ensuring necessary protective interventions where they are required.

A fundamental shift in emphasis to effective prevention and de-escalation of need should be promoted based on considering the need for permanence for all vulnerable children whether this requires lower level support services or more intensive programmes of intervention and change to maintain a child at home where it is safe to do so. Alongside this a range of effective services must be in place to provide for and help achieve good outcomes for those children most in need, those at risk and on the child protection register or looked after by the Local Authority.

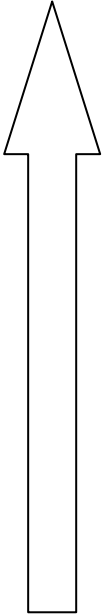
What will we do?

- Progress and expand delivery of the Flying Start Programme.
- Review the Family First Programme to ensure it continues to meet local need, responds to local and national outcome measures and demonstrates impact for children, young people and families.
- Continue to develop a greater range of enhanced specialist assessment and intervention services for children in need, including developing a more comprehensive Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS) to enable children to live within their own families where it is safe and in their interests to do so.
- Undertake a review of thresholds for intervention and capacity across the range of need.
- Develop mechanisms to keep under review the effectiveness of preventative services and resource streams (across partners - statutory and third sector) in supporting the most vulnerable children and families and diverting them from statutory intervention.
- Continue to ensure that there are alternatives to children becoming looked after but that the Local Authority also does look after those children whose needs cannot be met in other ways.
- With key partners implement a Family Support Pathway model of providing services to disabled children and their families.
- Agree a prevention and early intervention plan to support the mental health and emotional health of those young people experiencing difficulties preventing escalation into statutory services
- Identify in full the direction and changes that will be required when the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and plan accordingly.

How will we measure success?

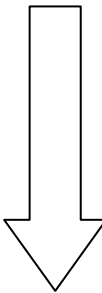
Further work is needed to develop and agree a comprehensive range of appropriate population measures e.g. rates of Children in Need, children on the Child Protection Register and Looked-After Children.

We need to consider what might be "safe" and appropriate targets for these, alongside identifying health, educational and other appropriate measures of all vulnerable children plus some additional outcome measures.



“Going Up”

- The percentage of the child population (aged 0-3) who are in receipt of a Flying Start Service.
- The percentage of children in their Flying Start settings who reach their development milestones at 3 years of age.
- Number of children benefitting from the Flying Start nursery provision
- Numbers of referrals to the Intensive Family Support Team (to the level of Merthyr Tydfil's proportion of the service) .
- The proportion of children receiving children's social services as “children in need”
- Numbers of families reporting positive outcomes from the Families First Programme.
- Proportion of children and families reporting positive outcomes from the service they receive from social services.
- The levels of care leavers in education, training or employment.



“Coming Down”

- The percentage of the population (aged under 18) who are Children in Need and worked with by social services.
- The rate of looked after children per head of population.
- The number and percentage of repeat child protections registrations within 2 years.
- Overall number of contacts to children's services.

OUR PRIORITY OUTCOMES

People enjoy a vibrant, attractive, safe and sustainable place in which to live, work, play and visit.

KEY PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

- Community Safety - Safer Communities, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, Substance Misuse, Offender Management and Community Cohesion
- Housing
- Safeguarding Vulnerable People

Links to the Welsh Government's Programme for Government:

- More inclusive and cohesive communities;
- Creating sustainable places for people.

Safer Communities

What do we want to achieve?

People living in and visiting Merthyr Tydfil are safe and feel safe in our local communities.

What do we know?

Comparative to national trends, the overall crime rate in Merthyr Tydfil has seen a continual improvement. 2013 saw a 7% decrease in crime, with 3647 incidents recorded (down from 3921 incidents in 2012), as well as a decrease in the number of victims of crime.

Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) according to police statistics has also been decreasing. 2013 has seen a decrease of 3.5% compared with 2012 which is a decrease of 93 incidents.

Vehicle Crime, which includes theft of, theft from and interference with vehicles has seen a significant reduction of 36.2%. This is down from 628 incidents in 2012 to a total of 401 for 2013.

In Merthyr Tydfil, Violence with Injury and Most Serious Violence against a Person experienced a notable increase of 7.5% in 2013 compared with 2012.

In comparison nationally violent crime according to police and health data is falling significantly. Most recent data for Merthyr Tydfil still shows signs of increasing with January to April 2014 showing a comparable increase of 17.7% to the previous in 2013.

Although crime in Merthyr Tydfil is decreasing and is expected to continue doing so, understanding people's fear and perception of crime is also important.

The Compass 2013/14 Survey (formerly known as "Police Community Satisfaction Survey") captures the following feedback across Cwm Taf. In 2013/14 the survey reported the following feedback from respondents:

- The perception of ASB in 2013/14 is now more definitive than in 2012/3 with a reduction (-4.2%) in those who believe it simply to be the same. This is coupled with a notable increase (+7.5%) in the perception that there is more ASB now than 12 months ago;
- There are some notable changes around the perception of crime; particularly the reduction in those that believe crime levels are the same, coupled with a 6% increase in those that believe that crime is now worse than it was 12 months ago;
- The perception of drug use/dealing as a problem locally has improved in 2013/14, with 4.6% fewer respondents now identifying it as an issue. There is no movement around the perception of drunk/rowdy behaviour;
- Each of the perception measures around police/police and partner performance exhibits some negative movement in comparison to 2012/13. There is little movement in the perception of the police dealing with local concerns but some notable decline in the perception of the partnership dealing with local issues and that the police do a good/excellent job.

Story behind the data

Overall crime has reduced significantly in recent years, and there is evidence to support that where geographical, temporal or crime specific hotspots have emerged, the targeted efforts of partnership agencies have been successful in reducing crime and disorder and minimising disruption for communities.

For example, geographical and temporal 'hotspots' around the Town Centre including 'Tesco's', Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre (vehicle related nuisance/nuisance behaviour) and other park areas where youths meet and congregate, have been a focus for targeted multi-agency operations, as well as increased policing and other agency input on key dates such as Halloween, Bonfire Night, Christmas and the Six Nations.

Partnership organisations have also joined forces to raise awareness of issues where data highlights emerging crime patterns such as vehicle crime, with work has being carried out through community safety roadshows and marketing campaigns.

However, whilst vehicle crime has significantly reduced in recent years, Merthyr Tydfil has historically, seen disproportionately higher levels of vehicle crime, when compared to other similar communities throughout the UK.

The area still experiences levels of vehicle crime above the average levels experienced by other similar, local authority areas and the issue, therefore remains a priority for local community safety partners.

During 2013 and early 2014 there has been an increase in violent crime, which is recognised as playing a key role on people's perception of overall crime and safety within local communities. However, spatial and temporal analysis undertaken to date, did not conclude or indicate specific reasons for the increase in violent crime.

To address this, we will be working with the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, to improve our understanding of the causes and patterns of violent crime, to enable us to target our available resources to address violent crime more effectively.

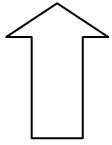
In recent years, there has also been a significant shift in the way that key agencies deal with ASB, with the focus changing from solely targeting perpetrators to also supporting victims requiring new approaches to be adopted. This has seen significant reductions in repeat incidents of ASB by our most prolific ASB perpetrators and less incidents experienced by those identified as priority victims.

Despite significant reductions in crime, responses to the Community Satisfaction Survey indicate that community perception of crime and community safety is a lot worse than the statistical reality. Over the next year, local partners will need to increase their efforts in communicating the statistical reality of how safe our local communities are.

What will we do?

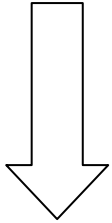
- Undertake multi-agency operations to target areas of crime that have been identified as priorities for Merthyr Tydfil.
- Undertake road shows and street briefings to raise community awareness and provide advice on how to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of crime.
- Continue our victim and perpetrator ASB programmes.
- Support the Police and Crime Commissioner's office to develop a data sharing programme with Cwm Taf University Health Board, to establish the key causes and patterns of violent crime
- Improve communication and referral pathways between agencies to improve access to early intervention and prevention programmes.

How will we measure success?



“Going up”

- Number of people who feel safe living in Merthyr Tydfil



“Coming Down”

- Anti-Social Behaviour rates
- Overall crime rates
- Acquisitive crime rates
- Violence rates

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

What do we want to achieve?

Fewer households within Merthyr Tydfil are affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence

What do we know?

In Merthyr Tydfil between January and September 2013, 31.04% of Violence with Injury Offences (VWI) were domestic violence; this exceeds South Wales Police's target that less than 22% of VWI will be domestic violence related.

In 2013 the Merthyr Tydfil's Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) still has the highest referral rate in Wales, although its UK ranking has moved from 2nd highest in the UK to 4th.

During the period April 2013 to March 2014 there were 1451 domestic abuse referrals into the Teulu Multi Agency Centre. This is an increase of 21% for the same time period in 2012/13 (these referrals only relate to incidents reported to community safety partner agencies).

Of the total number reported to Teulu in the period, January to December 2013 22.2% were repeat incidents. Compared with the same period in 2012 this equates to a 10% decrease.

For the year ending December 2013, 61% of domestic abuse referrals into Teulu Multi Agency Centre (MAC) involved families with children, representing a decrease of 2% on 2012 figures. (It is likely that a number of victims do not disclose they have children due to fear of intervention by Children Services.)

Statistics also show that the risk of domestic abuse rises by around a third during pregnancy; Merthyr Tydfil referrals involving a pregnant victim have shown an increase in 2013 in comparison to 2011 figures - 77 in 2013 (5.2%) compared to 41 in 2011 (2.8%).

From January to December 2013, 48.1% (709 cases) out of 1,472 referrals to the Teulu MAC indicated that an alcohol was involved as a factor for either the victim and/or perpetrator during the reported incident.

From January to December 2013, of the 163 referrals to MARAC, 19% (31) were repeat cases; this is an increase of 3% on the same period in 2012 but a reduction of 14% on 2011 figures.

In 2013, the number of Merthyr Tydfil cases escalated to MARAC per 10,000 of the adult female population is 66%. Whilst this is a 2.8% decrease from 2011-12 figures, MARAC referrals per 1000 of the population remain higher than the South Wales area (42.4%) and significantly higher than the UK national figure (27.4%).

Story behind the data

The increase in referrals to the Teulu Multi Agency Centre indicates that victims have increased confidence in reporting incidents to the police, whilst an 8% increase of self and non-police agency referrals in 2013, indicates a greater awareness of services as a result of raising, advertising, and community awareness raising events.

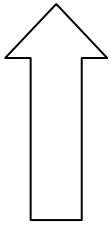
Domestic Abuse because of its very nature is recognised as being under reported and is often associated with high levels of repeat victimisation. Overall referrals into MARAC are decreasing, but repeat referrals to MARAC are slightly increasing compared with the same time period last year. Although, these levels are comparable to national averages and fall below national, recommended guidelines, (CAADA – Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse), it does not mean local agencies can be complacent; there is a need to review referral patterns and agency responses within the MARAC process.

This increase in referrals involving a pregnancy may be as a result of improved partnership working, but it does highlight the need to explore and further develop referral pathways to improve detection of domestic abuse.

What will we do?

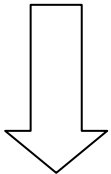
- Monitor and improve referral pathways where they already exist and explore opportunities for creating new referral pathways.
- Performance for the Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) and partnership referrals is currently demonstrating a positive trend, so maintain existing approaches in these areas.
- Review repeat referrals to both Teulu and MARAC with a view to reducing the level of repeat domestic abuse incidents.
- Engage with the Perpetrator work being progressed by the Police and Crime Commissioner at a regional level.
- Focus on undertaking early intervention for families and providing support for children and young people where domestic abuse is a factor.

How will we measure success?



“Going Up”

- Number of successful outcomes at Merthyr Tydfil Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC).
- Number of Teulu and MARAC referrals.



“Coming Down”

- Number of Children at risk of domestic abuse.
- Number of repeat incidents of domestic abuse.
- Number of families accepted as homeless due to domestic abuse.

Substance Misuse

What do we want to achieve?

A community where the harm caused by the misuse of drugs and alcohol is minimised

What do we know?

The Welsh Health Survey (2010 and 2011 combined) indicated that 43% of adults in Merthyr Tydfil binge drink which has decreased to 40% for 2011/12.

In 2011/12 Merthyr Tydfil had the highest rate for alcohol referrals and the second highest rate of referrals for drug misuse in Wales.

Hospital admission rates due to alcohol are higher in Cwm Taf than for Wales as a whole. Between 2007 and 2009, Merthyr Tydfil had the highest rate of alcohol-attributable admissions to hospital for males, and the second highest rate for females. Between 2003 and 2007, 110 deaths (70 men and 40 women) per year in Cwm Taf were caused by alcohol.

The Health Behaviour in School aged Children Survey (HBSC) undertaken in 2010 indicated that:

- 18 % of young people aged between 11-15 in Cwm Taf, reported drinking one or more alcoholic drinks at least weekly compared to Welsh average of 16%. Within this Health Board area the percentage of boys and girls were equal;
- 10% of respondents (7% boys, 13% girls) reported being drunk at least 4 times compared to a Welsh average of 12%;
- 8% of all respondents in Cwm Taf aged between 11 and 16 have used drugs in the last 12 months compared to a Welsh average of 9%.

Health Behaviour in School aged Children Survey (HBSC), 2010 (this data is not available at a Merthyr Tydfil level)

In 2013/14 substance misuse services received 742 referrals. Of these referrals 509 were male / 233 were female; the majority of referrals were for 30-39 year olds; of all referrals made, 506 received treatment.

The primary substance resulting in referrals to services were:

- Alcohol - 435 (59% of all referrals);
- Heroin - 93 (12.5% of all referrals);
- Cannabis - 59 (8% of referrals).

In terms of public perception towards drugs and alcohol misuse, 35.1% of respondents to the Police Community Satisfaction Survey 2013 stated that drug use / drug dealing was a very big / fairly big problem in their local area; this is a slight improvement on the 2012 survey, where 36% of respondents highlighted the issue as a very big / fairly big. The percentage of people who perceive drunk/rowdy behaviour to be a fairly / very big problem in their local area has reduced significantly this year in comparison to last year, with Merthyr seeing a decrease of 8.2% in poor perception.

Story behind the data

In Merthyr Tydfil the most commonly misused substance is alcohol. The use of new psychoactive substances such as Mephedrone (also known as Meow Meow or MCAT), has also increased over recent years.

Based on data from the Welsh Substance Misuse database (2012-2013), the typical person with substance misuse problems presenting for treatment in Merthyr Tydfil is British, male, aged between 30-39 and predominantly has problems with alcohol.

The influence of alcohol, illegal drugs and new psychoactive substances is a factor that cuts across a number of different areas that includes domestic abuse, violent crime, anti-social behaviour, health (including unwanted pregnancies), stranger violence and impacting on the night time economy.

Alcohol related liver disease, alcohol related deaths and other alcohol attributable illnesses are increasing (Public Health data) and there is often also a direct correlation between individuals and families presenting with other issues of vulnerability.

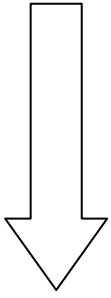
There are high incidences of co-occurring substance misuse and mental health issues.

Harm reduction advice is important to reduce the spread of blood borne viruses, alcohol related chronic health conditions, related hospital admissions and drug related deaths within our communities.

What will we do?

- Introduce Designated Public Protection Orders where appropriate.
- Explore and develop housing solutions for individuals with substance misuse issues.
- Review and further develop needle exchange services.
- Review and re-configure specialist substance misuse treatment services to provide more coordinated and integrated access to services.

How will we measure success?



“Coming Down”

- % of adults who drink above recommended guidelines.
- % of adults who report as binge drinking in preceding week.
- % of alcohol / drug attributable deaths.
- % of alcohol / drug related hospital admissions.
- % of young people who offend with alcohol as a contributory factor.

Community Cohesion

What do we want to achieve?

A community where people live alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect, where everyone values differences.

What do we know?

The current population of Merthyr Tydfil is 58,800 (2011 Census) which indicates an increase of 2593 people (4.5 %). Of that 58,800 people; 5.4% (3,167) are from a Minority Ethnic (ME) background; this represents an increase of more than 5% since the 2001 Census. 62 individuals identify their ethnicity as White Gypsy or Irish Traveller.

In 2010 approximately 5% of school aged children were from ME communities, with 4 in 5 of these pupils having English as an additional language.

A decade ago the minority ethnic population was sparse and dispersed. In contrast the 2011 Census shows that one fifth of non-UK Merthyr Tydfil residents live in Gurnos ward, accounting for 5.8 per cent of all Gurnos residents.

Story behind the data

The Community Cohesion Strategy for Wales, states that Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. This vision of a cohesive society is based on three foundations: people from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities; people knowing their rights and responsibilities and people trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly. It is also founded on local communities having a shared future vision and sense of belonging, what they have in common and a recognition of the value of diversity.

The growing population of Merthyr Tydfil is becoming increasingly diverse. The arrivals of new residents from across the world contribute to one community that is enriched with different cultures and customs, faiths, languages, skills and community members whose needs and rights differ enormously.

The focus of Community Cohesion is to strengthen the integration of individuals and groups in an attempt to achieve a greater sense of belonging with assurances of acceptance, appreciation and respect. Community Cohesion depends on a wide range of factors and the monitoring of data in equalities, community safety and all policy areas is important in attempts to measure levels of cohesion.

The Community Cohesion and Community Safety Survey 2014 will provide us with an up to date picture of perceived levels of cohesiveness by all residents of Merthyr Tydfil.

When the analysis is completed shortly, the data will enable us to compare and contrast against the results of the 2011 Community Safety and Cohesion Survey, helping us to build a picture of how local communities live and work together.

Whilst no distinct survey data is recorded in relation to far right, violent extremism or terrorism, Community Safety partners continue to monitor these areas of potential community tension in an appropriate and proportionate way.

A focus remains on raising awareness of hate crime which will result in a higher number of reports from victims and/or third parties. While tension monitoring and for example the increase in hate crime reporting is an effective indicator of low cohesion, similar to increased reporting of domestic violence, it positively signals higher levels of trust in local institutions to act fairly.

What will we do?

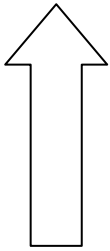
Welsh Government has set out several key policy areas for development and delivery within the Community Cohesion agenda across Wales. These policy areas, summarised below, will provide the wider context for local action to promote Community Cohesion at the local level:

- Hate Crime;
- Modern Slavery;
- Gypsy and Traveller Communities;
- Immigration;
- Communities First;
- Community Cohesion Mainstreaming;
- Community Mapping and Tension Monitoring.

To deliver against the above WG priorities, the following local actions will be progressed via the SIP:

- Undertake an up to date Community Cohesion and Safety Survey;
- Establish the Regional Cwm Taf Community Cohesion Board;
- Support initiatives prescribed by the new All Wales Hate Crime Framework;
- Develop and progress projects and initiatives to promote Community Cohesion and address inequalities;
- Support the Community Voice' MAGNET project;
- Develop opportunities for service users to influence and shape public policy and services.

How will we measure success?



“Going up”

- Amount of reported hate crimes.
- Improved public perception of communities.
- Number of participants of equalities and community cohesion-related training and workshops.
- Number of minority groups and individuals consulted by organisations.
- Utilisation of Merthyr Tydfil’s Community Cohesion Website.

Offender Management

What do we want to achieve?

People in Merthyr Tydfil are protected from the actions of repeat offenders

What do we know?

Thirty seven repeat offenders are managed by the Merthyr Tydfil Integrated Offender Management Team (IOMU); this number remains unchanged since the SIP was developed. Eighteen of these are Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPO's); a decrease of 2; 19 are Integrated Offenders (IO's) an increase of 2.

The average age of a PPO and IO has slightly increased from 24 for PPOs and 28 for IOs to an average of 31 for the both. Work is currently underway to refresh the Cohort so that available resources are targeted towards the offenders between the ages of 18 – 25. This is due to research identifying that the younger the cohort then the greater opportunity for success in reducing re-offending. Veterans within the system are less likely to change their offending habits.

From January to September 2013, 14 PPO's were arrested for a total of 49 offences (compared to 16 PPOs being arrested for 49 offences for the same period in 2012). From January -September 2013, 9 IOs were arrested for committing 20 offences (which is a decrease from 15 IOs being arrested for 25 offences for the same period in 2012).

For youths, the year-end figures for 2013/14 showed a rate of 50.7% and continue to be high compared to the South Wales average of 41.2% and Wales average of 36.7%. compared with 2012/13 this is an increase of 3.7% up from 47%.

Story behind the data

The majority of crimes are committed by a minority of offenders. Reducing reoffending by targeting offenders who cause greatest harm to their communities can have a significant impact on reducing crime and public confidence.

The IOM approach developed within Merthyr Tydfil (and Wales as a whole) is an offender management model which targets those offenders who may not be under statutory probation supervision, but who are known to be actively offending or at high risk of doing so, particularly non-statutory offenders (i.e. those released from prison after a sentence of less than 12 months who are not subject to probation supervision on release). It provides an overarching framework for bringing together agencies in local areas to prioritise interventions with offenders who cause crime in their locality.

It provides areas with the opportunity to target those offenders of most concern in a more structured and co-ordinated way. Building on an analysis of the crime and offending problems in an area, IOM will help to ensure coherent joint working across

partnership agencies to make the best use of local resources, to ensure that targeted offenders do not fall through the gaps between existing programmes and approaches, and that identified problems are addressed.

Effective management of repeat offenders reduces crime, but effective engagement is required from a range of agencies in order to do so. Local IOM arrangements will work best if they are not restricted to statutory or local criminal justice agencies, but involve a wide range of social agencies, including the voluntary sector that have a role to play in tackling risk factors associated with crime and offending.

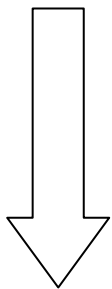
The IOM policy statement recognised the significant contribution that both the Prolific and other Priority Offender (PPO) and Drug Interventions Programmes (DIP) will make to local IOM arrangements, and these successful approaches should be firmly embedded within local IOM arrangements.

Non engagement of offenders with education, training and employment (ETE) continues to be a contributing factor to reoffending rates. Progress has, however, been made against first time entrants and custodial sentences, but reoffending rates remain a priority. The introduction of the Youth Bureau in April 2011 has produced a significant reduction in young first time entrants.

What will we do?

- Build on existing links between the IOMU and relevant agencies and develop new partnerships where a need is identified.
- Increase opportunities for individuals to engage in work experience and training.
- Establish effective monitoring arrangements.
- Pilot a prison in-reach housing service for offenders.

How will we measure success?



“Coming down”

- Re - offending rates (adults).
- Re - offending rates (youths).

Housing

What do we want to achieve?

A community where residents live in good quality, suitable and affordable housing

What do we know

There are 24,264 houses in Merthyr Tydfil; 49.6 % are terraced houses; 45.4 % of all dwellings were built pre 1919.

The dominant tenure in the County Borough is owner occupier, accounting for 65.3 % of the market; private renting accounts for 11.6 % of the total market, and social housing for 21.1 %.

In April 2011, 725 private sector dwellings had been vacant for 6 months or more.

In the past decade, there has been a 99.74% increase in the price of average houses within the County Borough.

There are 1,840 people on the Housing Register and an average of 361 social housing properties becoming available annually.

39.1 % of private stock (7,900 properties) are considered to contain a Category 1 hazard.

Population aged 65 in Merthyr Tydfil and over is predicted to increase by 50% by 2033.

992 young people in Merthyr Tydfil are living in overcrowded conditions.

Story behind the data

Increasing house prices, accompanied by increasing costs of living, are putting more and more pressure on people's ability to afford a home. At the same time, homes are in short supply. Changes in the property market over the last few years have significantly increased the level of housing need within the County Borough.

Numbers on the Common Housing Register for social housing significantly outweigh the availability of accommodation; the supply of social housing is likely to become increasingly oversubscribed in the short to medium term.

More new homes are needed not only for those who can afford to buy a home but for those who can't; more affordable homes need to be built in the area.

At the same time, it is important to make better use of existing homes, reducing the number of long term empty properties and enhancing the environmental fabric of local communities.

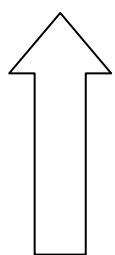
Whilst the incidence of 'homelessness acceptance' has gradually fallen over the last few years, the number of applications has remained approximately the same. Continued, targeted prevention in certain areas is vital if homelessness is to be prevented, particularly in light of the Welsh Housing Bill due to come into force in 2015.

A good home can also help people to be independent and give them the security to be active members of their communities. Many older, some young, vulnerable or disadvantaged people experience crises that affect their health or wellbeing; they need good quality housing and housing-related support to help them lead full and active lives.

What will we do?

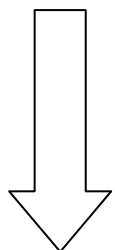
- Increase the number of good quality, affordable homes.
- Work with our local Housing Association partners to improve the standard of social housing, ensuring economic and employment opportunities are maximised.
- Provide effective housing advice services and housing solutions to reduce and prevent homelessness.
- Provide support to help owner occupiers to improve their properties.
- Increasing the range of adapted and supported housing, adaptations and support services for people to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible.

How will we measure success?



“Going up”

- Number of housing and affordable housing completions per annum.
- Households being prevented from becoming homeless for at least 6 months.



“Coming down”

- Waiting times for housing related support services.
- Number of households accepted as homeless.
- Empty properties as a % of total housing stock.

Safeguarding Vulnerable People

What do we want to achieve?

Greater public awareness of the need to protect vulnerable adults and children from harm

What do we know?

The level of safeguarding activity in Merthyr Tydfil, for both adults and children, has continued to rise.

During 2013/14 we received 329 adult safeguarding referrals. This is an increase of 44.9% on the 2012/13 figures of 227 referrals, which was in itself an increase of (96% on the 2011/12 figure of 116 referrals).

Of the 329 referrals received during 2013/14, 157 referrals met the threshold of significant harm, 158 referrals received did not meet the threshold of significant harm. These cases are subject to a response in collaboration with other agencies for vulnerable adults to reduce risk and increase independence. 14 were inappropriate referrals.

These are significant increases which we see as positive and as a result of the significant efforts of the Safeguarding Team in raising awareness of adult protection.

The percentage of adult protection referrals completed during 2013/14 where the risk has been managed was 99.2%. This is above the 2012/13 figure of 98.7% and is also greater than the 2012/13 Welsh average figure of 91.8%.

In terms of adult protection referrals, the main source of referral is still the provider agencies with 151 referrals (45.9% of the total number of referrals). About double the referrals as Social Services Department staff or providers. Across Wales there are still very low referrals from the person themselves, relatives and friends and or through other partners such as health and housing.

The highest service user group for closed referrals during 2013/14 is those with functional mental health issues, followed by those with a physical disability. The highest service user group during 2012/ 13 was those with a physical disability.

2011/12 saw a significant increase (69%) in the numbers of children in need of protection whose names are on the Merthyr Tydfil Child Protection Register. The trend data over the last 2 years indicates that numbers have remained at this higher level since this time with a further increase of 13% in 2013/14.

On the 31st March 2014 there were 134 children on Merthyr's Child Protection register, putting Merthyr Tydfil within the group of 5 local authorities in Wales that have the highest number of children's names placed on the Child Protection Register per 10,000 population.

During 2013 – 2014 both the Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards have continued to work on the development of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. This is a complex piece of work which will reconfigure the current arrangements bringing together key partner agencies to further improve the timeliness and quality of Child and Adult safeguarding decision making. It is likely that at the point of implementation there will be an impact on the number of Children and Adult protection referrals. However at this stage the precise impact is unclear. It is likely that arrangements for protection of adults will become operational first, possibly mid-way through 2014-15.

Story behind the data

Most instances of alleged abuse of adults during 2013/14 occurred in residential/ nursing care homes, the next group is own home in the community.

Adult protection activity during the year shows that the staff working in direct-care services are most frequently the person alleged to be responsible for abuse. This highlights the continuing need for collaboration in terms of safe recruitment, robust quality assurance systems and sound training delivery. It is evident that high quality contracts and contract monitoring with providers lies at the heart of this alongside an effective process for evaluating and continuously improving provider performance.

The highest category of abuse during 2013/14 was neglect.

Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Authorities , along with our key partners in the Cwm Taf University Health Board and the South Wales Police have established a joint Local Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) which has replaced the two existing Adult Area Protection Committees (AAPC's) in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The purpose of these arrangements is to provide strategic leadership for adult safeguarding, to develop and promote inter-agency joint working and effective working relationships between different services and across different authorities. The main focus of the Local Safeguarding Adults Board over the last year has been on the development of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

Children's names may be placed on the Child Protection Register because of concerns about either neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse or a combination of two or more. The majority of children on the register are under the category of neglect or emotional abuse which is closely linked to rises in domestic abuse. A similar profile exists in neighbouring authorities. All registered children have multiagency child protection plans which are regularly monitored at meetings involving the parents and professionals.

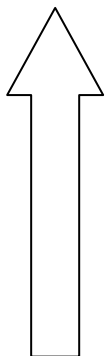
The new Social Services and Wellbeing Act requires us to have a LSCB and a LSAB. Both Boards are well supported by key local agencies, including Health, the Police, all local authority departments and representatives of the voluntary sector. They provide leadership and critical oversight of local safeguarding responsibilities.

Both Boards support all organisations that provide services for children and adults by ensuring that they have safeguarding policies that staff know and are appropriately trained to implement. It also monitors the safe recruitment of staff in all agencies.

What will we do?

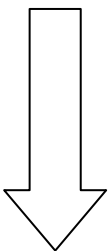
- Develop a web-site to inform the community of the role they can play in safeguarding children / young people and vulnerable adults together with the Safeguarding Children and Adult Boards.
- Work in partnership with Safeguarding Board partners to develop and deliver a Training Strategy and produce safeguarding policies, which are fit for purpose and can be adapted to fit a variety of settings.
- Improve multi agency safeguarding practice to ensure that adults and children at risk are protected and kept safe from significant harm and repeat significant harm.
- Implementation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.
- Undertake quality assurance activity to ensure there is a continuing process of learning and improvement.

How will we measure success?



“Going Up”

- Maintain the % of initial conferences held within 15 working days of the strategy discussion
- Maintain the % of Child Protection Reviews carried out within statutory timescales
- % of Adult Protection referrals completed where the risk has been managed increases
- Number of frontline staff trained in safeguarding awareness



“Coming down”

- % of re-registrations of children on the Child Protection Register.

Supporting Principles of the Single Integrated Plan

Prevention and Early Intervention

The LSB must focus its efforts on prevention and early intervention, in order to break cycles of dependency and prevent the persistence of poor outcomes from one generation to the next. As a Local Service Board, we appreciate and embrace the importance of this and the need to work differently.

Sustainable Development

The Local Service Board will take into account Sustainable Development principles when making decisions in relation to priorities.

Sustainable Development is about enhancing the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people and communities, achieving a better quality of life for our own and future generations. This is done:

- In ways which promote social justice and equality of opportunity;
- In ways which enhance the natural and cultural environment and respect its limits – using only our fair share of the earth's resources and sustaining out cultural legacy.

The overarching principles are:

- Living within environmental limits;
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- Achieving a sustainable economy;
- Promoting good governance; and
- Using sound science responsibly.

The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill 2014 (previously the Sustainable Development Bill) will be laid before Welsh Government in July 2014 and is due to be enacted in Spring 2015. The Bill will place sustainable development at the heart of the Welsh Government and organisations delivering public services in Wales. It will also contain proposals to put integrated planning on a single statutory footing, simplifying the framework within which local partners work together to improve well being and ensuring that such collaboration embodies the principles of sustainable development. It will also require the development of "Well Being Plans", to be in place by April 2018.

Financial Sustainability of Public Services

At a time of reducing budgets and rising expectations services need to be sustainable in the longer-term. The current financial pressures and the impact of welfare reforms pose many challenges for the area, its people and communities, and the organisations that serve them.

We need to ensure that we deliver efficient, effective and sustainable public services that are continuously improving within the given financial constraints. Decisions relating to service provision will need to give careful consideration to this principle.

Poverty

Poverty is a significant issue for the people of Merthyr Tydfil. The UK Government's Welfare Reforms will have a significant and adverse impact on communities, families and individuals resulting in pressures on public services and partners in the community. These changes are likely to increase demand for many public services and have an adverse impact on their finances.

The Welsh Government's Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-16 has 3 main objectives:

- Preventing Poverty;
- Helping People out of poverty;
- Mitigating the impact of poverty.

Collaboration and joint working between partners is crucial to tackling poverty so that efforts can be combined, prioritising the needs of the poorest and protecting those most at risk from poverty and exclusion.

Decisions relating to service provision will need to give careful consideration to these principles in order to mainstream the tackling of poverty through the work and decision making of public service partners.

Working with Communities

The Local Service Board embraces the role of communities working in partnership to help deliver the Single Integrated Plan. The Welsh Government's Communities First Programme and our Communities First clusters established in Merthyr Tydfil play a key role in helping to deliver the Vision and Priority outcomes for Merthyr Tydfil.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account - Article 12: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For Merthyr Tydfil this means increasing children's, young people's and their parents' and carers' involvement in the services they receive, and over the services which are designed for them-Supporting the three pillars of the UNCRC: Protection, Participation and Provision "having a voice having a choice".

The Local Service Board is committed to the UNCRC and to its implementation via the Participation Agenda ensuring overall coordination of the UNCRC across the County Borough.

We have identified this as a priority area within our Single Integrated Plan and it also supports the Welsh Government's core aims for children and young people, in particular:

Core Aim 5 - Children and young people are listened to, treated with respect and are able to have their race and cultural identity recognised.

Child Poverty Strategic Objective 3 - to reduce the inequalities that exist in health, education and economic outcomes for children living in poverty, by improving the outcomes of the poorest.

Equal Opportunities

We will promote equality throughout all aspects of the Plan. This is about ending discrimination, ensuring equality of opportunity and that all parts of our population can live together alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect, where every person has an equal chance to participate and has equal access to services.

Social Inclusion

Our plans will seek to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged because of poverty, geography or access to services.

The Welsh Language

We shall promote the Welsh language across the County Borough and ensure that the Welsh and English language are treated equally.

Our Enabling Strategies to support the Single Integrated Plan

Engagement Strategy

Our new Cwm Taf Public Engagement Strategy will provide one overarching strategy for the Cwm Taf area, requiring all partners to sign up to the commitments set out within the Strategy and support its implementation within their own organisations.

The production of this Strategy builds on the strong commitment from all partners to public engagement in Cwm Taf. It is one of the objectives of the European Social Funded joint Consultation and Engagement Project, which states that we will develop a joint strategy and action plan across the Cwm Taf region.

Baseline research undertaken for the new Cwm Taf Citizen Panel shows:

- 77% of the panel felt that they were never asked their views by public sector organisations.
- Only 15% stated that they felt listened to by public sector organisations.

Improving the way services engage with people in Wales remains a commitment of the Welsh Government:

"Creating the Wales of the future is something that involves all of us; we can achieve little without the input and partnership of the people of Wales ... at every level."

Carwyn Jones, First Minister (2011)

Significant Welsh Government policies, such as the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Bill and the Future Generations Bill, suggest that Welsh Government is directing public services to become more about citizen choice and control. The national conversation on 'The Wales We Want' aligned to the Future Generations Bill, will do this by putting the needs of communities, now and in the future, at the heart of the decisions that Welsh public services make. It encourages people, communities and public services to work in a more integrated way to address the challenges they face together.

Producing public engagement strategies were also part of the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) guidance, 'Shared Purpose, Shared Delivery'. Therefore, both Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Service Boards (LSB) have strategies for engagement already in place.

'Shared Purpose – Shared Delivery' (the Welsh Government guidance on integrating partnerships and plans) outlines the following:

'The Single Integrated Plan should include an engagement strategy setting out how partners intend to engage with people and communities, with a very clear focus on how this will best support service improvement and improve the experience of people using the services'.

'Public participation in the development of plans is now well established. However, detailed engagement with individuals, families, young people and front line staff, for instance, can provide an immensely powerful insight into some of the most intractable and complex issues that the planning process should be addressing'.

However, the annual review of the SIPs was seen as an opportunity to align the individual LSB engagement strategies and continue to improve public engagement across the region. The Strategy will develop a more effective and efficient way of engaging with people and communities in Cwm Taf and support the European Social Funded project and the Cwm Taf Engagement Hub.

The Strategy has been drafted collaboratively by the Cwm Taf Public Engagement Group, which has been expanded to include a range of partners, building on the existing LSB engagement strategies and organisational engagement strategies and policies.

The Public Engagement Group will co-produce an action plan with people and communities within Cwm Taf, including Regional Collaboration Board partners. People of all ages, in different communities (including those with protected characteristics and are identified as difficult to engage) will be encouraged to get involved.

Planned 'Community Voice' events in September / October 2014 will provide opportunities to co-produce a shared action plan.

Resources (such as training and development) will be available through the 'Making the Connections' and ESF Consultation & Engagement project to support implementation of the action plan. However, partner organisations also need to own this Strategy and drive forward improvements internally. Updates on progress and any barriers will be reported to the Regional Collaboration Board.

Progress on implementing the Strategy will be published alongside the Single Integrated Plan Annual Reviews, with development of the action plan completed by December 2014.

The new Engagement Strategy will support not only our Single Integrated Plan, but also on-going engagement and consultation with our citizens can be found www.cwmtafhub.co.uk and also on request - Partnership Team .

Performance Management- Monitoring the progress of our Single Integrated Plan

Progress on our Single Integrated Plan is monitored on a regular basis via the Local Service Board.

We have developed templates for each of our priority areas, adopting a Results Based Accountability (RBA) approach. Our templates identify the actions /projects that will be delivered and more importantly the impact the projects are actually having. Within each of our priority areas we have identified a number of key measures and we regularly monitor our measures to see if our actions are making a difference. A complete cycle of reporting both to the Local Service Board and our Single Integrated Plan Steering Group has taken place during 2013/14. These reporting cycles have been based on the four outcomes identified in our Single Integrated Plan. As part of the review of the Single Integrated Plan, the templates have been amended to include a risk register and a section to illustrate more clearly the links with our "Leaning for Life" underpinning priority.

The Local Service Board will rely on performance management support through Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's Partnership Team.

Our Single Integrated Plan will continue to take place on an annual basis, along with the publication of an Annual Report on progress and we will identify any changes that are needed to the Plan in order to reflect changing need.

A copy of our Annual Report for 2013/14 will be made available on partners websites and also on request through the Partnership Team at the Local Authority.

Our Information Strategy

The requirement for all LSBs to produce an Information Strategy to support delivery of their Single Integrated Plan (SIP) was laid down in Welsh Government's guidance note 'Shared Purpose, Purpose Delivery'. This guidance note set out the role of local government and their partners, through LSBs, in helping to achieve these outcomes by bringing together public service leaders to plan, work, deliver and improve. 'Shared Purpose – Shared Delivery' outlines the following:

"A Single Integrated Plan should include an Information Strategy setting out how partners will best make use of those resources available in order to provide the LSB with the right information at the right time to inform its work. The information available to partners should be a shared local resource for ongoing needs analysis, intervention design and impact evaluation across the whole single integrated plan".

As LSB partners, we need to agree to work together to share with each other, the information that we hold as individual organisations and the information we hold with each other. In order to do this it is important that we develop appropriate systems in order to identify, collect and analyse information on a regular basis.

This has been addressed as a priority for the Merthyr Tydfil LSB in the first year of the implementation of the Single Integrated Plan.

To prepare the Information Strategy, the research undertaken consisted of a literature review to gain an understanding of the legislation, guidance and research literature regarding LSBs, partnership working and information strategies. A review of information strategies produced by other agencies/organisations both within Wales and across England was undertaken to support the Strategy's development.

Our draft Information Strategy was produced with regular support from colleagues within the LSB Support Team. It offers an explanation of why the Information Strategy is needed whilst outlining how information could be used by Merthyr Tydfil LSB. It clarifies the role of LSB partners in information management and re-enforces the collaborative approach.

Input was also received from the relevant colleagues within Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Cwm Taf University Health Board; South Wales Police; Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil and Welsh Government to ensure all partners have opportunity to comment upon its content and offer amendments/additions to reflect their requirements of their own organisations. Advice and guidance was also sought from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Information Security department.

The final draft of the LSB Information Strategy was presented at the LSB meeting held on 27th March 2014 and given final approval.

A 'Task and Finish Group' is now to be established to ensure each key partner agency has an opportunity to fully discuss the Strategy and can link this to the current working practices of their agency/organisation. This Group will also look at key issues which could affect how actions contained within the Single Integrated Plan can be achieved (e.g.) data development areas; roadblocks encountered in securing needs data etc. Feedback will be provided bi-annually to the LSB on the implementation of the Information Strategy and its impact on designing appropriate interventions to meet identified need; as well as how this will support meaningful evaluation of the delivery of the SIP.

Local Development Plan

The Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out the Council's priorities for the development and use of land in the County Borough and its policies to implement them over the fifteen-year plan period between 2006 and 2021. All policies and proposals contained within the LDP are designed to interact and it is therefore important that the Plan is read as a whole. Whilst the LDP is a free standing document that aims to give clarity on a variety of issues pertaining to Merthyr's future development, its proposals invariably cascade from, and are inextricably linked to wider national, regional and sub-regional policies together with the plans and strategies of neighbouring local authority areas. Integrating the policy stance of the Plan is therefore paramount in ensuring that local development helps fulfil broader economic, social and environmental objectives whilst ensuring the effective delivery of local services and facilities that meet the needs of a 21st Century society.

Certain elements of the Single Integrated Plan have development and land use implications that will need to be facilitated through the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (2006-2021). It is therefore important to have an integrated approach between both plans and compatibility between objectives.

A number of the LDP's strategic objectives reflect the supporting principles and priority outcomes of the SIP, particularly sustainable development; early intervention and prevention; those relating to the economy and jobs, affordable housing and improvements to the wider environment to benefit healthy lifestyles and community safety.

Scrutiny

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 places a new requirement on local authority scrutiny committees to scrutinise designated public service providers.

Wider public service scrutiny will provide the necessary 'teeth' for elected members to hold both their own Council and the LSB partners to account for their contribution towards the delivery of the Single Integrated Plan. It is important to point out that scrutiny will focus on the LSB's performance as a whole rather than concentrating on individual member organisations of the LSB. It will need to focus on the added value brought about by collaborative working and how this translates to partnership performance and population outcomes. Scrutiny should be used as a means to improve performance through evidence-based challenge.

During 2013/14 a task and finish group was established to progress the development of appropriate scrutiny arrangements for Merthyr Tydfil LSB. This group was made up of selected members of the Local Authority's Chief Executive's Scrutiny Committee, members of the LSB Support and Partnership Team and was supported by the Team Leader of the Local Authority's Scrutiny Services. Work was undertaken to review the type of scrutiny undertaken in other local authority areas with regards to LSBs; as well as to enable those involved to develop their existing knowledge of rules and requirements regarding LSBs' partnership working and scrutiny.

As a result of this review; a briefing paper was prepared which included information on how other local authorities were dealing with this issue in other areas; the number of Scrutiny Committees operating across other local authorities; the frequency of meetings. Throughout this process, the ongoing scrutiny of the LSB-supported projects such as the Change Programme; Consultation and Engagement project; Hedfan 8-14 Out of School Learning programme etc. has continued to be undertaken by Chief Executive's Scrutiny Committee.

Throughout the development of the options report; regular verbal updates were presented at meetings of Merthyr Tydfil LSB to ensure all partners were brought up to date with ongoing development in this area and to seek the views/opinions of LSB members.

The finalised draft report outlined a number of options was considered by the full Chief Executive's Scrutiny Committee and subsequently by full Council.,

It was agreed that:

- The scrutiny of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board be the responsibility of the Chief Executive's Scrutiny Committee;
- Should there be occasion when the Chief Executive's Scrutiny Committee deems that subject matter would be best dealt with by one of the other Scrutiny Committees, the matter will be referred to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee;
- When an issue relating to the Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board could be best dealt with by two or more Scrutiny Committees, the option of Joint Scrutiny Committees is available;
- Delegated authority be granted to the Monitoring Officer to make any necessary amendments to the Constitution in respect of Scrutiny of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board and the setting up of Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees.