



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Well-being in Our Community

Annual Performance Report

2020 - 2021



Contents

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION.....	9
WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015 - SUMMARY.....	11
Seven well-being goals	11
Sustainable Development	11
Five Ways of Working.....	12
EXTERNAL REGULATORS.....	13
MEASURING AND DEFINING SUCCESS	15
PERFORMANCE SUMMARY	16
OUR PERFORMANCE - QUANTITATIVE DATA	17
Best Start to Life.....	17
Working Life.....	20
Environmental Well-being.....	24
Living Well	28
Corporate Centre	33
CASE STUDIES - QUALITATIVE DATA	38
Summary – Case Studies.....	39
CONTACT US	43
APPENDIX 1: Performance Key	44
Appendix 2: Examples of work done against our well-being objectives.....	45
Appendix 3 – Case Studies	49
Appendix 4 – The 7 National Well-being Goals.....	74

WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Last autumn we reviewed the Council's response to the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 for 2019/20. You will recall that to respond to the Act the Council approved its first Statement of Well-being along with its new Corporate Well-being Plan – Focus on the Future: Well-being in our Community for 2017 to 2022 in a Council meeting on the 26th July 2017. The document established the rationale for our well-being objectives and the steps to achieve them. Following this, the document has been strengthened year on year along with our changing working arrangements to better support delivery.

The Statement of Well-being and Corporate Well-being Plan – Focus on the Future: Well-being in our Community for 2017 to 2022 signify the steps in the journey to embed sustainable development across the Council. These documents set out our plans that look to achieve improvements across the four pillars of well-being, namely: economic; social; cultural; environmental. The Corporate Well-being Plan is the main plan for the Council. It sets out our objectives and outcomes, together with what we are going to do to deliver them.

I think we'll all agree that 2020/21 has been especially challenging. Together we have been delivering services to our residents, when responding firstly to major flooding and then a global pandemic. This has needed a joint effort of Elected Members, Officers and Partners. It has shown how we can work together to overcome major challenges; something we want to build on as we work together going forward.

We have continued to work with our 'Improvement and Assurance Board' (IAB), assigned to us by Welsh Government to support the Council. In doing so, the Council has produced a 'Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan' (RTI Plan), that forms part of our Corporate Well-being Plan. Our RTI Plan has enabled us to set priorities and ways in which we can recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, transform how we work and improve in delivering our outcomes.

Our Corporate Well-being Plan, as well as setting our objectives, prioritises areas for improvement. We have three areas for improvement, these are improving our education standards, increasing our resilience in social care and supporting economic recovery. We have also prioritised our outcomes to help us better understand our success and how we can keep improving.



During 2019-20 you will recall that we introduced the cross-cutting theme of 'Tackling Poverty' to our Corporate Well-being Plan. This is a very real issue for Merthyr Tydfil, especially due to impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and it is felt that it needs to be built into the work we undertake. We use the logo opposite to highlight where we are undertaking work to address this and a visual reminder of the importance.

Learning from previous years, we have become more focused on delivering our services through the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, especially in how we integrate our strategies and build on the collaboration that has been in place responding to the pandemic. This has enabled us to become far more focused on what needs to be done in delivering our objectives for our residents.

We have also placed a greater emphasis on how we monitor our performance against the needs of our communities. We are focusing on improving our understanding of our data and using it to make better informed decisions. We are also working with Members and partners to improve our scrutiny function. We have introduced quarterly performance and improvement reviews to ensure the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet monitor and challenge our performance, in addition to Member scrutiny.

This annual performance report sets out our performance for 2020/21. To ensure our well-being planning remains relevant to the needs of people living and working in Merthyr Tydfil. We will use the findings of this report to help us continuously improve. We want to be as efficient, effective and economical as we can be in meeting our outcomes for our residents.



Lisa Mytton
Council Leader



Ellis Cooper
Chief Executive

Our four well-being objectives

Well-being Theme

Objective



Best Start Children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals.



Working Life People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure which makes Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination.



Environmental Well-being Communities protect, enhance, and promote our environment and countryside.



Living Well People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health.





BEST START TO LIFE

Unsatisfactory

There have been a number of changes to the reporting of education data over the last 2-3 years. In 2018/19, Welsh Government introduced changes to published data, which removed school level data for Key Stage 2 & 3, and the Foundation Phase, which meant year on year comparative data could not be made. Subsequently, in 2020, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic meant there was no nationally collected or reported data for key stage 4 or attendance.

Despite these issues however, we are working with our stakeholders to develop a new accountability framework and new measures for monitoring our performance data. This will help us to deliver against our priority of 'Improving our Education Standards'.

At the end of the academic year 2019, outcomes were unsatisfactory. This judgement has been reached due to the overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. The only externally verified data, was unsatisfactory. Self-Evaluation shows we are seeing some improved outcomes and currently none of our schools are in an Estyn follow up. Our self-evaluation (a framework laid out by ESTYN), which has been challenged by the Learning & LGES Scrutiny Committee scrutiny committee, provides evidence of this improvement.

Improving rates of persistent absences remains a focus for the Council, and also reducing exclusion rates across all our schools.

Self-evaluation revealed that provision and service delivery (including service availability) and leadership and management were both 'adequate'. A judgement could not be reached for outcomes due to data being unavailable due to the impacts of the pandemic. These judgements have been challenged at scrutiny committees throughout 2020/21. They have also been challenged at quarterly performance and improvement reviews by corporate management and Cabinet Members.

Whilst our overall self-evaluation judgement for 2020/21 was Adequate, it must be noted that we could not report on standards (key question 1 – Outcomes) for the 2020-21 self-evaluation cycle due to the lack of reportable performance measures. Therefore, the overall judgement remains as **unsatisfactory**.



WORKING LIFE

Adequate

In 2020/21, we have seen 6 of the 9 measures met or exceeded the annual target, with 5 of the 9 measures reflecting an improvement on performance from 2019/20. The majority of measures are national indicators. This means the Council's services contribute to; but is not wholly accountable for the outcomes achieved. This shows how we need to continue to work with partners to deliver our outcomes.

The Council has increased its awareness of the business community during responding to the pandemic. Links have been made internally across departments to support businesses. For example, the Revenues and Benefits Teams have worked closely with the Economic Development Team to administer Welsh Government business support grants.

Our self-evaluation exercise revealed that judgements were made of 'adequate' against our outcomes (including service quality), 'good' against our service provision and delivery (including service availability) and 'good' against leadership and management. This was challenged at scrutiny committee meetings throughout 2020/21. It has also been challenged at quarterly performance and improvement reviews by corporate management and Cabinet Members.

We have therefore judged our performance to be adequate: our strengths outweigh our weaknesses, but there remain some important aspects that require improvement.



ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING

Adequate

Reducing the amount of waste that we produce and increasing recycling as much as possible brings economic and environmental benefits. During the period of 2020/21, the outcomes were deemed adequate in Merthyr Tydfil.

Neighbourhood Services have had to respond to the devastation caused by storm Dennis, storm Ciara and storm Jorge and the coronavirus pandemic during 2020/21. Responding to these events, placed many of the services under extreme pressure.

Year on year improvements in the rate of recycling continue to be achieved and we exceeded the Welsh Government target of 64% again. We have seen a positive impact on the recycling targets as they have increased to 66.82%, raising by almost 2% from 2019/20.

Notable improvements have been made in energy and carbon management with the Council adopting its first Carbon Management Plan in 2019. Work undertaken on the decarbonisation programmes and waste hierarchy have contributed to reducing environmental damage and biodiversity enhancements. Other changes implemented have had major benefits for pollinators and biodiversity and contributes to the Council's Nature Recovery Plan.

We have also seen a decrease in the kilograms of residual waste generated per person. In 2019/20 the annual figure was 178.45 and in 2020/21 we achieved 161.76. This is a significant improvement as there is less waste generated per person (the 2020/21 data has not been verified as yet by Waste Data Flow (WDF)). Our local target of 174 has been achieved beyond expectations. During the pandemic, the submission of the Public Accountabilities Measures for Wales (PAMs) was optional, and therefore, there is no published information available for 2019/20 and 2020/21. However, Merthyr Tydfil has worked hard to successfully reduce the kilograms of residual household waste generated during the year per person to below the Welsh average of 180 (the most recent Welsh average data published in 2018/19).

Self-evaluation outcomes showed that we are 'adequate' across our outcomes (including service quality), provision and service delivery (including service availability) and leadership and management of the service. This led to an overall judgement of 'adequate'. This was challenged at the Neighbourhood Services, Planning and Countryside Scrutiny Committee. Members provided officers feedback on the content of the report developed through completion of the self-evaluation process. All Members present voted and agreed that the outcome is adequate for the reasons provided in the Self-evaluation. This has also been challenged at quarterly performance and improvement reviews by corporate management and Cabinet Members.



LIVING WELL

Adequate

The Directorate monitors its performance closely. In relation to 2020/21, we have both quantitative and qualitative information which we use to support improvement of our services and this will be included in the Director of Social Services Annual report with case studies included below in this document.

Towards the end of February 2020, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, like all other organisations across Wales and the UK, was challenged with the devastating impact of the spread of the coronavirus. During this time, we worked with our statutory and commissioned partners to support people to stay at home with the support they needed, and provided support to the care home sector ensuring that we protected vulnerable residents as much as we could. We worked closely with health colleagues in planning the necessary actions needed to ensure that the NHS were able to respond to the anticipated increased pressure arising from the pandemic.

To address the priority of 'Increasing Resilience in Social Care', additional capacity was proposed in 2020/21 and included in the medium-term financial plan going forward. This capacity is within Social Services but also those areas supporting the service.

Of the 11 measures identified, four improved. These four are particularly relevant to the Living Well objective in terms of demonstrating supporting people to remain safe and impact on their mental health (children looked after, child protection and adult protection). Data was not available for the other seven measures due to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

A self-evaluation report was presented to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee in March 2021. Scrutiny members provided challenge around the judgements proposed together with identifying strengths. In summary the strengths being: clear evidence across Social Services of strong partnerships and collaborations working; strong examples of partnership and collaborative working with other Councils, public agencies and third party organisations; evidence of strong political engagement; Welsh Government Legislation plays a key part in the direction of the services delivered within the County Borough and use of good practice all areas within Social Services have clear strategic direction and many areas work to long-term plans.

Taking the above into consideration, we have therefore judged our performance as adequate.



Overall Judgement

Adequate

Based on the judgements identified in the four well-being themes above, our overall judgement for 2020/21 is **ADEQUATE**.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide the performance position for Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) relating 2020/21. Doing this we have strengthened how we evaluate our performance. We have a cycle of self-evaluation that runs throughout the year. Our findings and judgements are presented to our Scrutiny Committees (made up of Elected Members as well as other Members) where they are challenged. This has taken place for the judgements contained in this report. We have also developed ways to better monitor our performance. This includes the development of a quarterly performance and improvement reviews being fed by data. This was developed in 2020/21 and used into 2021/22. This report has also featured on the new 'Governance and Audit Committee' as a forerunner for the new self-assessment report that will be taken to that committee relating to 2021/22.

As this report relates to 2020/21, it contains information and data produced during the coronavirus pandemic. However, it should be noted that some data has not been presented (a national direction given to Councils) as focus was placed on responding to the impacts of the pandemic. This is especially true for, but not exclusive to, Education and Social Services.

This report focuses on performance against our well-being objectives, taking a corporate view but also considers how services operate and work together to deliver outcomes. The sections below summarise useful details to supplement the main body of this report.

Merthyr Tydfil has a population of around 60,000. It has:

- **more** people per square km than Wales as a whole;
- the **4th highest** percentage of people aged under 16 in Wales;
- the **3rd lowest** percentage of people aged over 65 in Wales;
- the **2nd highest** percentage of people claiming benefits in Wales;
- the **3rd highest** average band D council tax in Wales.

Source: MyLocalCouncil

Annual Performance Report

Our Annual Performance Report is a statutory requirement for Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (a document that we are required to publish in line with our regulations). We publish the Annual Performance Report to communicate our self-evaluation against delivery of our well-being objectives (improvement objectives). The intention of this document is to provide an overall assessment of Council performance during the year. This document relates to the year April 2020 to March 2021.

This report considers, amongst other things: service quality; fairness; strategic effectiveness; service availability; sustainability; innovation and efficiency.

To do this we will focus on quantitative and qualitative data (this is from our performance indicators and case studies). We will consider the findings from our self-evaluation process together with feedback from our regulators.

This will be the last year in which the Council will produce a report in this format. The introduction of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, means that in future years, the Council will produce a self-assessment report. Much of what is in this report will be included together with additional engagement with the public, staff, Trades Unions and businesses.

Corporate Well-being Plan - Focus on the Future: Well-being in our Community

Our Focus on the Future document sets out the Council's well-being objectives (2017 to 2022). The plan represents the Council's contribution to achieving the seven national well-being goals and sets out our main priorities over the five years. Having a clear set of corporate priorities ensures our Councillors have a robust framework to guide their decision making and monitor our plan to ensure it is succeeding. This plan is being reviewed in 2021 into 2022 with an updated plan due to be published in 2022.

External Regulators

Our work is scrutinised by external regulators to ensure that we use public money effectively to deliver outcomes for our communities. A summary of latest published audit and inspection reports can be found in the 'External Regulators' section below.

Improvement and Assurance Board

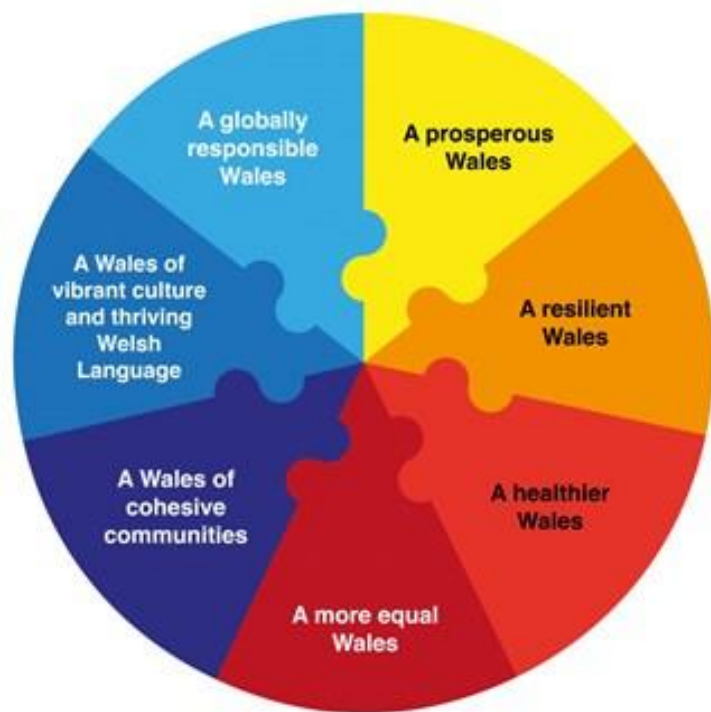
Following setting a balanced budget for 2019/2020, we took a proactive step and asked Welsh Government (WG) to support us in these challenging times. The Minister for Housing and Local Government appointed an Assurance and Improvement Board to carry out a rapid assessment exercise. How we address these findings has been built into our planning and delivery and will be referred to in this document.

WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015 - SUMMARY

Seven well-being goals

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out to improve the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being of Wales. For the first time in law, public bodies are working towards the same purpose. The Act puts in place seven national well-being goals which represent the shared vision for Wales and makes it clear the listed public bodies must work to achieve all of the goals and not just one or two. These seven national goals are listed in figure 1 with further detail in appendix 4.

Figure 1 – Seven Well-being Goals for Wales.



Sustainable Development

The Act places a legal duty on public bodies to adopt sustainable development as the central organising principle when setting well-being objectives and in taking steps to meet those objectives.

The Act confirms that sustainable development is the central organising principle that public bodies must apply when making decisions and taking steps to achieve their well-being objectives.

“public bodies in Wales must think about the long term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.”

(Future Generations Commissioner: Sophie Howe)

In the Act, sustainable development is exemplified by the five ways of working.

Five Ways of Working

There are five ways of working that public bodies must adopt to evidence how they have used sustainable development as their central organising principle. Following these ways of working offers a huge opportunity to make long-lasting, positive change to current and future generations.



Long term

The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.



Prevention

How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.



Integration

Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.



Collaboration

Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.



Involvement

The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.



EXTERNAL REGULATORS

Like all Councils in Wales, our work is scrutinised by external regulators to ensure that we use public money effectively to deliver benefits to our communities. Audit Wales (previously known as the Wales Audit Office (WAO)) has an annual programme of audit and assessment work which it undertakes in the Council. Other regulators undertake work relating to specific service areas. The conclusions from all this work are brought together in an Annual Improvement Report. The other primary regulators are Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) and the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW).

Audit Wales (previously Wales Audit Office)

Every year, Audit Wales reports on how well each Council is planning for improvement and delivering services. The Council successfully received its 'Audit of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's assessment of 2019-20 performance' certificate and the latest Annual Audit Summary Report for Merthyr Tydfil (2020) includes outcomes that are being included as part of the Council's improvement planning.

During the year, the Auditor General carried out work in areas across the Council, including working with other inspectorates and other local government studies. In summary, they include national and local (MTCBC) audit work:

- Well-being of Future Generations Examination – The delivery of the Flying Start Programme (February 2020)
- Continuous Improvement
- Assessment of progress to address key concerns (March 2021)
- Review of Public Services Boards (October 2019)
- Rough Sleeping in Wales – Everyone's Problem; No One's Responsibility (July 2020)
- Commercialisation in Local Government (October 2020)
- MTCBC - Assessment of progress to address key concerns
- MTCBC - Recovery planning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- MTCBC - A review of the Council's financial sustainability
- Audit of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's 2019-20 Accounts
- Financial Sustainability (March 2020)
- National Fraud Initiative
- Progress in implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (November 2019)
- Better Law Making (September 2020)
- MTCBC - Assurance and risk assessment
- MTCBC - Covid-learning project – helping to identify and share learning; from the way in which public bodies have responded to the pandemic

You can visit the Audit Wales website www.audit.wales/publications to view the latest reports for Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn)

Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. Estyn provides an independent inspection and advice service on quality and standards in education and training in Wales.

To search for the latest reports, please visit www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

CIW register, inspect and take action to improve the quality and safety of services for the well-being of the people of Wales. This includes the review of the Council's children and adult social services.

For the latest review and inspection reports on the effectiveness of our services, please visit the 'Our Reports' section of www.careinspectorate.wales

MEASURING AND DEFINING SUCCESS

When considering our performance, we need to consider our shared vision and well-being objectives.

Our shared vision states:

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

Measuring well-being

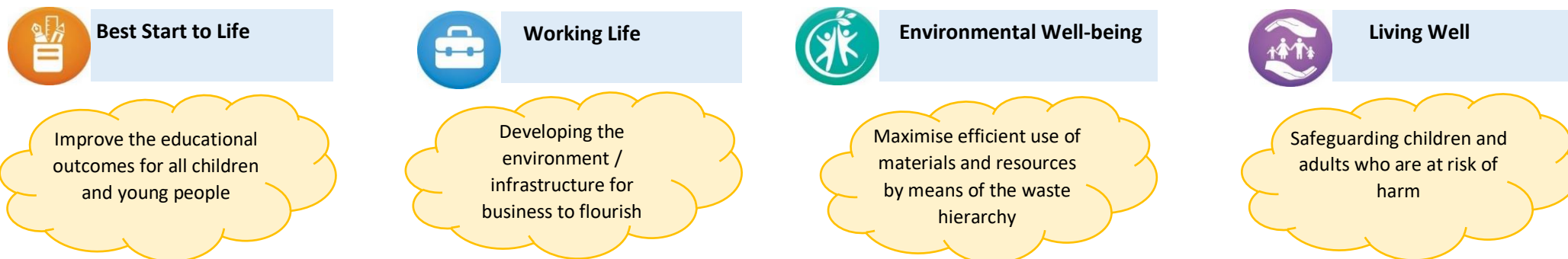
We are using two forms of data in this document: The first section uses quantitative data to measure the success of each well-being theme; the second section utilises qualitative evidence to demonstrate impact from the perspective of community members. This will allow us to better understand our performance and benefits of working in different ways. Appendix 1 sets out the descriptions used in this section.

- Quantitative data (population indicators, and local performance indicators)
- Qualitative data (case studies and community voice)

This report looks back over our performance during 2020-2021 and acknowledges that how we deliver is just as important as what we deliver. To make a real difference to people's lives and greatest possible contribution to the seven national well-being goals, we need to do different things and focus on outcomes to define success.

Defining Success

To maintain focus on providing the services our residents need, we have prioritised our outcomes.







PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

The overall position for the delivery of the well-being objectives in the Corporate Well-being Plan is **Adequate**. This means: 'some strengths where our comparative position is lower median, with some rates of improvement and/or evidence of some positive impact on change to outcomes'.

Of the four well-being objectives: 1 has been judged unsatisfactory and 3 have been judged adequate.

Summary of Performance

	Well-being Objective – Best Start	Judgement		Well-being Objective – Working Life	Judgement
Children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals		Unsatisfactory	People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses; with a developing, safe infrastructure making Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination		Adequate
	Well-being Objective – Environmental Well-being	Judgement		Well-being Objective – Living Well	Judgement
Communities protect, enhance and promote our environment and countryside		Adequate	People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health		Adequate



OUR PERFORMANCE - QUANTITATIVE DATA



Best Start to Life



Portfolio Member
Councillor Lisa Mytton

Objective	Children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals
Primary Outcome	Improve the educational outcomes for all children and young people
Lead Officer	Chief Officer - Learning
Improvement Focus	Improving our Education Standards

Background

Raising standards of attainment is a priority for the Council. Well-being is strongly linked to attainment. Pupils with better health and well-being are more likely to be ready to learn and achieve better academically.

Improving our Education Standards is a priority for the Council. This has been approved as part of the Council's Corporate Plan and Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan.

We recognise that early years are fundamental to a child's potential for learning and their future life chances as is the support of the family. We want all children to be equipped with the skills they need to reach their academic potential and contribute as responsible residents to their own development and that of the wider community.

In schools, our priorities are to drive improvement in standards of literacy and numeracy, through improving the quality of teaching and leadership, and to reduce the impact of socio-economic deprivation on educational attainment.

It is vitally important that the whole Council works together, and with its partners to achieve this objective. There are clear links to this objective from across our objectives. For example, how Living Well and the work undertaken by Social Services can support early years and families. Another example is how Working Life and Best Start to Life are linked. This means that skills can be gained to provide job opportunities but also how there is a need to ensure job opportunities exist.

Performance Indicators

There isn't data available for Education performance indicators for 2020/21 due to impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. However, we have used previous available data to support the rationale described below.

Rationale

The annual position of outcomes is **adequate**.

There have been a number of changes to the reporting of education data over the last 2-3 years. In 2018/19, Welsh Government introduced changes to published data, which removed school level data for Key Stage 2 & 3, and the Foundation Phase, which meant year on year comparative data could not be made. Subsequently, in 2020, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic meant there was no nationally collected or reported data for key stage 4 or attendance. Despite these issues however, we are working with CSC, and consulting with our key stakeholders including our elected members to develop a new accountability framework and new measures for monitoring our performance data. An update report concerning education data was presented to members at a joint committee workshop in June and this was followed up with further scrutiny and challenge at the Learning & LGES committee in July. The report contains further detail on the next steps and our proposed approach to developing the new accountability framework.

The limited data for key stage 4 as at 2019/20 indicates that across nearly all measures, performance at a local authority level is below national averages.

- Numeracy is the strongest subject area for the local authority with only a 0.4% gap at A*-C from the national average
- The gap between the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals and those not eligible for free school meals at A*-C is similar to the gap across Wales
- Literacy at A*-C is the weakest area across the local authority with a 14.1% gap at A*-C from the national average

2019
*Primary School Attendance: 94.33% (period September 2019 – February 2020)
*Secondary School Attendance: 93.32% (period September 2019 – February 2020)

* The attendance data available for 2019 shows that prior to the pandemic; progress was being made for our Secondary school attendance with an increase of 0.78% from the previous year. There was a slight decrease of 0.17% for Primary attendance but despite this, the figure for 2019 remained close to the 95% target.

In 2020/21, the Education Service completed the second round of corporate self-evaluation which aligns to the self-evaluation framework laid out by ESTYN. Whilst our overall judgement for 2020/21 was Adequate, it must be noted that we could not report on standards (key question 1 – Outcomes) for the 2020-21 self-evaluation cycle due to the lack of reportable performance measures. Therefore, the overall judgement remains as **unsatisfactory**. Scrutiny members who commended the work of Education services during 2020/21 and the work that has been carried out throughout the pandemic unanimously agreed this judgement. Scrutiny at all levels remains an integral function in improving our education services moving forward and continues to provide effective challenge and support.

Best Start – Judgement

Our evaluation says this well-being theme is:	Unsatisfactory
---	----------------

Objective	People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure which makes Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination
Primary Outcome	Developing the environment and infrastructure for businesses to flourish
Lead Officer	Deputy Chief Executive
Improvement Focus	Economic Recovery



Portfolio Member
Councillor Geraint Thomas



Portfolio Member
Councillor Kevin O'Neill

Background

The Working Life theme within the Corporate Well-being Plan has led to opportunities for a more inclusive approach to be developed to strengthen the wider work which supports the improvement of skills and the environment and infrastructure for business to flourish.

Work undertaken during 2020-21 sought to further integrate the wide range of activities undertaken which had a strategic focus on both economic and wider infrastructure; and aimed to improve the economic position in Merthyr Tydfil. Economic Recovery is a priority for the Council, especially as we recover from the coronavirus pandemic. This has formed part of the Councils Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan.

This has led to the development of the Economic Growth Partnership, made up of officer, Members and partners. Together with this, a substantial piece of work has been carried out to understand the economic position. This has led to an engagement excise being carried out into 2021/22. One of the outcomes from this work will be to determine how Merthyr Tydfil can use its assets and opportunities to position itself positively and proactively during the recovery phase from pandemic and beyond.

When looking at the Council's response in relation to the labour market and skills, we continued to embed a collaborative culture to tackling unemployment and to offer more co-ordinated programmes and interventions to support adults and young people (16 plus) in developing their skills for employment, self-employment or volunteering opportunities.

A 'Business Education Together Partnership' has been formed to strengthen the links between the Working Life and Best Start to Life objectives. This partnership will support our learners to gain the skills needed to enter the workforce and how businesses can be part of that. It will also mean the education sector will better understand skill gaps in the local business sector. This is aimed to provide greater opportunities for learners and school leavers.

Performance Indicators

Performance - Working Life



How did we judge ourselves? (2020/21)

Working Life

Adequate



Self Evaluation 2020/21

Overall

Question 1

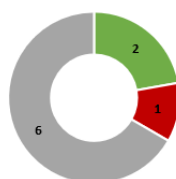
Question 2

Question 3

Working Life

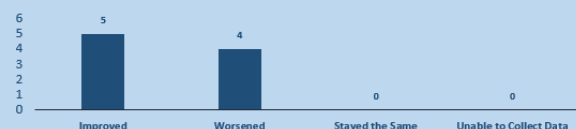


Have we met our targets?



■ Target Met ■ Target not Met ■ Unable to Collect Data

How did we do compared to last year?



Percentage of working age population in employment (Year ending March 2018)

MTCBC 65.8

Welsh average 72.2

Percentage of working age population who are qualified to NVQ level 2 and above

MTCBC 63.3

Welsh average 76.5

Percentage of population with no qualification

MTCBC 14.9

Welsh average 7.6

Source: NOMIS

Performance - Working Life

Key Performance Indicator	2019/20	2020/21 (Target)	2020/21	Did we meet our target?	How did we do compared to last year?
% of working age population in employment	68.9	-	65.8		▼
% of working age population who are qualified to NVQ level 2 and above	59.9	-	63.3		▲
% of population with no qualification	16	-	14.9		▼
% of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training	2.1	-	2.7		▲
Number of business births	170	-	190		▲
Number of business deaths	160	-	165		▲
% of participants in employment upon leaving the EU funded programmes	34	34	39	✓	▲
% of participants who gain a qualification on completion of an 'out of work' training programme	25	25	21	✗	▼
% of participants who gain a qualification on completion of an 'in work' training programme	74	75	84	✓	▲

Rationale

Summary

- 6 of the 9 measures above (67%) met or exceeded the annual target set; with 5 of the 9 measures above (56%) reflecting an improvement on performance from the previous year.
- It should be noted that the majority of the measures above are national indicators – this means the Council’s services contribute to; but is not wholly accountable for the outcomes achieved. Only the last 3 indicators in the list above are local measures which contains outcomes solely achieved by the Council’s Employability Services. Of these measures, 2 out of 3 (67%) achieved/exceeded their target despite the impact of the pandemic.
- The impact of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic meant that ‘business as usual’ was interrupted across all services due to the need to comply with emerging legislation; however, significant extra work was undertaken with a focus on supporting local businesses to survive the enforced lockdowns; with additional sources of funding accessed to ensure appropriate social distancing measures were in place to support re-opening and customer safety management in the longer term.

What is the reason for the findings?

- As stated above, the primary impact of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic was that ‘business as usual’ was interrupted due to the need to comply with emerging legislation.
- Both national and local lockdowns impacted local businesses; this led to an unprecedented demand for support from these local businesses to draw down grant funding to ensure businesses could remain sustainable during the period where they were unable to trade or had limited trading options. Funding was also secured to support local hospitality providers with equipment to offer service spaces outdoors; improving opportunities to trade. At the time of reporting, grant funding of £40+ million has been secured for businesses across the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.
- The inability to deliver face-to-face training impacted on performance against the local measures. Some issues around the ways in which external accreditation bodies were operating were also identified which further impacted on outcomes secured. However, the swift response of Employability Team members to design and develop ‘virtual courses’ being enabled project participants to access learning opportunities whilst remaining compliant with local restrictions – this helped minimise the negative impacts.
- The service areas’ self-evaluation was presented to Regeneration & Public Protection Scrutiny on 13th April; Scrutiny Committee Members approved the self-assessed judgements (Question 1 – Adequate / Question 2 – Good / Question 3 - Good); with the holistic self-assessed judgement being Adequate. Committee Members suggested this should be increased to Good; however, Officers agreed that as they had a clear plan for further improvement; Adequate would be appropriate in this instance.

What is being done and how?

- Support continues to be provided to local businesses to draw down grant funding to build back their businesses and to safely meet customer need. Ongoing advice, guidance and support is available to any business across the County Borough to support active businesses to remain active; and encourage new businesses and entrepreneurs to develop their ideas and deliver goods/services to meet demand.

- From 19th July 2021, the Employability Team has had sign off for our risk assessments from MTCBC's Health & Safety Team; and are able to go back to face to face meetings and delivery. This will be challenging and will take some time to get back to where we were before the pandemic; however, it's a first step forward for the Employability Teams.
- The ongoing development of a 15-year economic vision for the County Borough (being undertaken as part of the Council's Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan) is using lessons learned during the past 12 months to 'sense check' the proposals for future development. Large scale consultation continues to take place to ensure this has been viewed and tested by a cross section of people, businesses and delivery partners; with feedback received being used to shape future provision.

So what has the outcome been?

- Despite the challenges faced over the past 12 months; progress continues to be made against the targets set. Also, to meet new demand over this period; stronger working relationships have been developed which have supported sustained performance in the majority of cases; whilst improving cross-directorate working across the Council? When coupled with the corporate self-evaluation findings; priorities for improvement have been identified and will be progress to continue with the services' continuous improvement journey.

Working Life - Judgement

Our evaluation says this well-being theme is:

Adequate



Environmental Well-being



Portfolio Member
Councillor David Hughes

Objective	Communities protect, enhance and promote our environment and countryside
Primary Outcome	Maximise efficient use of materials and resources by means of the waste hierarchy
Lead Officer	Chief Officer – Neighbourhood Services
Improvement Focus	Environmental Well-being

Background

This well-being objective offers a holistic and sustainable approach to meeting the environmental well-being needs in Merthyr Tydfil.

A healthy natural environment and countryside provides multiple benefits for people and wildlife from improved air, water and land quality, habitat protection and enhanced biodiversity to beneficial implications for physical and mental health. Therefore, the focus of this well-being objective is the work we do with our communities to protect, enhance and promote the environment and countryside.

How we act toward the environment and countryside will be a critical factor of a sustainable future in Merthyr Tydfil because the benefits of improving our environment will be felt across all of our well-being objectives.

A focus has been around reducing the waste produced, reuse and recycling together with decarbonisation. This is set out as part of the Council Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan within the Corporate Well-being Plan. The priority is to work towards achieving the national vision of Wales becoming a Zero Waste country by 2050. The Welsh Government Net Zero Reporting (Public Sector) states:

Emissions in Wales have fallen by 31% since 1990 but they need to reduce dramatically in the next decade – the new target is 63% by 2030.

2030 target: 63% reduction

2040 target: 89% reduction

2050 target: 100% reduction (net zero)

Performance - Environmental Well-being



How did we judge ourselves? (2020/21)

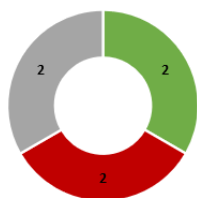
Environmental

Adequate



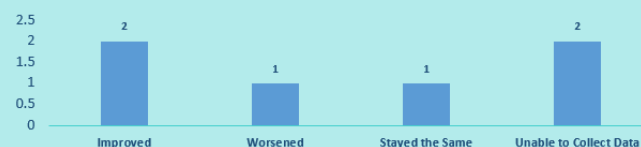
Self Evaluation 2020/21	Overall	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
Environmental Well-being	→	→	→	→

Have we met our targets?



■ Target Met ■ Target not Met ■ Unable to Collect Data

How did we do compared to last year?



Percentage of municipal waste collected by local authorities and prepared for reuse and/or recycled, including source segregated biowastes that are composted or treated biologically in another way

MTCBC 61.59

Welsh average 62.79

Source: 2018-19 Public Accountability Measures for Wales

Performance - Environmental Well-being

Key Performance Indicator	2019/20	2020/21 (Target)	2020/21	Did we meet our target?	How did we do compared to last year?
Average number of working days taken to clear fly-tipping incidents	2.12	2.2	2.5	✗	▲
% of highways inspected of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness	96.5	-	*		
% of municipal waste reused, recycled, or composted	64.98	64	66.82	✓	▲
Kilograms of residual waste generated per person ¹	178.5	174	161	✓	▼
Total carbon dioxide emissions from energy consumed by Council buildings	20773	-	*		
Number of Priority Open Spaces (out of 23 Priority Open Spaces) that meet or exceed the quality standard: Healthy, Safe and Secure	9	14	9	✗	▶

* This data is unavailable due to the impact of the pandemic

Rationale

Summary

Neighbourhood Services have had to respond to the devastation caused by storm Dennis, storm Ciara and storm Jorge and the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020/21. Responding to these events, placed many of the services under extreme pressure. Despite this they continued to operate their day-to-day business, ensuring the residents of Merthyr Tydfil continued to be served. Without the commitment of Neighbourhood Services staff, the rate of rebuilding and the recovery efforts would have been severely compromised.

Year on year improvements in the rate of recycling continue to be achieved and we exceeded the Welsh Government target of 64% again.

Notable improvements have been made in energy and carbon management with the Council adopting its first Carbon Management Plan in 2019. Work undertaken on the decarbonisation programmes and waste hierarchy have contributed to reducing environmental damage and biodiversity enhancements. Other changes implemented include reducing grass-cutting frequencies throughout the County Borough, which has major benefits for pollinators and biodiversity and contributes to the Council's Nature recovery plan.

What is the reason for the findings?

- The Waste Management service has contracts in place to maximise recycling, composting and preparation for reuse; these include regional contracts for certain materials that ensure value for money. We have opened a Re-use shop at Unit 20, which allows for good quality items to be diverted from landfill/energy from waste and resold at low prices. High levels of recycling, composting and preparation for reuse are being achieved in line with Welsh Government recycling targets. Having our own Waste transfer station allows us to treat material and sustain the best possible market price for our recycling. It also allows us to store high volumes of tonnages so in instances of haulage failure it does not impact on the residents of Merthyr Tydfil. In addition to this, a targeted campaign was undertaken to maximise recycling from household waste. All of which has had a positive impact on the recycling targets as they increased to 66.82%, raising by almost 2% from 2019/20.
- There has been a decrease in the kilograms of residual waste generated per person. In 2019/20 the annual figure was 178.45 and in 2020/21 this fell to 161.76 (the 2020/21 data has not been verified as yet by Waste Data Flow (WDF)). This is a significant improvement, going beyond our local target of 174. During the pandemic, the submission of the Public Accountabilities Measures for Wales (PAMs) was optional, and therefore no published information is available for 2019/20 and 2020/21. In 2018/19 the Welsh average data showed the kilograms of residual household waste generated during the year per person to be 180.
- The average number of working days taken to clear fly-tipping has predominantly stayed the same since 2019/20 (only increasing by 0.38). However, the amount of recorded incidents over the last year has increased by almost 200 incidents.
- The service has also been able to maintain the number of priority open spaces that meet or exceed the quality standard during this difficult time.
- Keep Wales Tidy were unable to undertake their street surveys during the pandemic. Therefore, there is no data to report for the percentage of highways inspected for 2020/21.

What is being done and how?

Our priority is to work towards the all-Wales target of becoming a zero-waste nation by 2050.

We are about to start a performance and efficiency review of Waste working with WRAP and WLGA in order to identify appropriate interventions to move us towards the 2024/25 recycling target of 70%.

The Net Zero Carbon Reporting Guide has been published by the Welsh Government to support consistent, transparent reporting. We will work towards ensuring decarbonisation action is embedded going forward by:

- Understanding our carbon footprint, in line with guidance for public sector greenhouse emissions reporting
- Closely monitoring and reporting current and future carbon emissions
- Work with the new Decarbonisation Board
- Agreeing to a set of net zero commitments/pledges for COP26
- Develop a robust, evidence based net zero action plan (as a living document)

Scrutiny response to Self -Evaluation

The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Committee Members acknowledge the recurring theme within the Neighbourhood Services is lack of money and with all the new initiatives introduced by Welsh Government, they commended the Neighbourhood Services Department for the good job being done by all. Scrutiny Committee Members provided officers feedback on the content of the report developed through completion of the self-evaluation process. All members present voted and agreed that the outcome is adequate for the reasons provided in the Self-Evaluation.

So what has the outcome been?

A healthy natural environment provides multiple benefits for people and wildlife from improved air, water and land quality, habitat protection and enhanced biodiversity to beneficial implications for physical and mental health (Chief Medical Officer Annual Report 2014-15; Life Course, Greenspace and Health, 2016). This will also support how we recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

Environmental Well-being - Judgement

Our evaluation says this well-being theme is:

Adequate



Portfolio Member
Councillor Tony Rogers

Objective	People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health
Primary Outcome	Ensure people are able to live independently and safely within their communities
Lead Officer	Chief Officer – Social Services
Improvement Focus	Increasing our resilience in Social Care

Background

Our main objective seeks to prioritise activities which focus on early intervention and prevention. The priority is to deliver services that support people to lead healthy independent lives in a safe environment. We want to motivate and support people to develop positive physical and mental health behaviours, build resilient communities where people live free from harm and have a good quality of life.

Under the 'Living Well Objective' we want to:

- Safeguard children and adults who are at risk of harm;
- Tackle adverse childhood experiences and developing community resilience;
- Promote health behaviours and increased levels of physical activity;
- Promote good emotional well-being and improved mental health;
- Provide clear and accessible information and advice; and
- Services that provide people with the ability to live in their own home.

These focus on early intervention and prevention, which is an area we want to improve on and continue to build on in the future. We want to help people to achieve a higher level of well-being; helping them to help themselves, to make better choices and access different types of support.

Our primary outcome is:

- People live safe and independent lives within their communities.

Our other outcomes are:

- Children and adults are safeguarded from harm and feel safe.
- Children and young people live safely with their family or close to home and have transitioned well into adulthood.

Increasing resilience in social care is a priority for the Council. This has been included in the Council recovery, transformation and improvement plan as part of the Councils Corporate Well-being Plan. This has meant that the Council has increased funding of the social services directorate, together with the support it receives from across the Council.

Performance - Living Well



How did we judge ourselves? (2020/21)

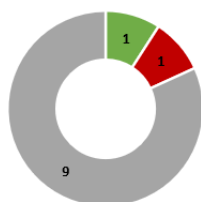
Living Well

Adequate



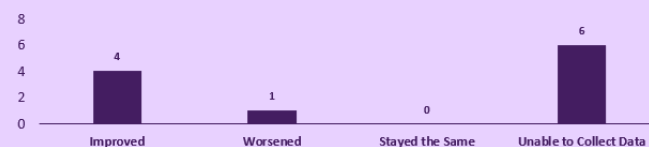
Self Evaluation 2020/21	Overall	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
Living Well				

Have we met our targets?



■ Target Met ■ Target not Met ■ Unable to Collect Data

How did we do compared to last year?



Performance - Living Well

Key Performance Indicator	2019/20	2020/21 (Target)	2020/21	Did we meet our target?	How did we do compared to last year?
No. of Children Looked After at 31 March	206	-	193		▼
Number of Children on the Child Protection Register at 31 March	167	-	101		▼
Percentage of children supported to remain living within their family (Measure 25)	69.75	78	-		
The percentage of looked after children on 31 March who have had three or more placements during the year (Measure 33)	6.31	10	5.18	✓	▼
Percentage of adult protection (Section 126) enquiries completed within statutory timescales (Measure 18)	75.67	92	84	✗	▲
The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 or over	3.09	-	-		
The percentage of adults who completed a period of reablement and have no package of care and support 6 months later (Measure 20b)	47.17	40	-		
Percentage of people in receipt of specialist domestic violence support reporting an improvement in quality of life	89	-	79		▼
The percentage of the adult population who can live independently	-	-	-		
People reporting they feel safe (Measure 3) *	-	-	-		
Number of visits to local authority sport and leisure facilities during the year per 1,000 population where the visitor will be participating in physical activity *	-	7808	-		

* Due to changes in Welsh Government legislation and the impacts of the pandemic, this data is not available

Rationale

In Merthyr Tydfil the annual judgement for outcomes is **Adequate**.

The Social Services and Well-being Act and the Well-being of Future Generations Act are now embedded into practice. Both require the Council to have strong governance arrangements and performance management. These pieces of legislation mean we will work more closely with our partners through collaboration. Excellent progress continued to be made on partnership working in 2020/21, especially how we have worked with partners to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

During 2020/21, demands within the service have increased with pressures evident in both Adult and Children's Services due to high demand for packages of care and how we responded to the pandemic. In addition to this, gathering performance data from the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) database still remains a challenge, although it is improving each year. The pandemic has also caused issues with the availability of some data. However, Safeguarding Adults and Children will always be our priority.

Early Intervention and Prevention is key to sustaining services in the longer term. With the Early Help Hub, the Council is committed to continuously developing this area of work to make sure those children and their families receive the right help at the right time to prevent unnecessary escalation of need. As reported last year, evaluation of the Hub has included feedback from families, which has been positive with the number of assessments leading to take up of preventative services being positive. Assessments undertaken by the Early help Hub has allowed more effective signposting and greater utilisation of preventative services within our community.

We continue to support adults within their own home and react promptly to safeguarding concerns for both children and adults. This is against a backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic. We have been supported by Welsh Government funding through the transformation fund.

Social Services monitors its performance closely. In relation to 2020/21, we have both quantitative and qualitative information which we use to support improvement of our services and this will be included in the Director of Social Services Annual report and self-evaluation.

The key performance indicators listed above were designed to meet our objective. The Performance Framework for Social Services forms part of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and has been the subject of a review with a number of key measures changing. This has, and will continue to have, an impact on target setting and trends for future years.

Of the 11 key PIs identified, four improved. These four are particularly relevant to the Well-being objective in terms of demonstrating supporting people to remain safe and impact on their mental health (children looked after, child protection and adult protection). Also, in terms of reablement, although the wording and calculation method has changed following review which meant we could not report in the format in the list, data is still captured on packages of reablement and the outcome in terms of reduced packages of support. Reablement is closely aligned to supporting people to remain independent.

The remaining measures fall into the category 'unable to collect data'. However, this is largely due to the pandemic, change in the statutory performance framework and the need to redesign forms and business processes to capture the new metrics for 2021/22 and future years.

A self-evaluation report went to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee in March 2021, where scrutiny members provided challenge around the judgements provided. The strengths identified were as follows:

- There is clear evidence across Social Services of strong partnerships and collaborations working (regional, private or third sector and public agencies) in order to set the right priorities and achieve joint outcomes
- There are strong examples of partnership and collaborative working with other Councils, public agencies and third-party organisations throughout all of the services areas.
- There is evidence of strong political engagement within the overall service area as the Cabinet/Portfolio member is active in the budget challenge process and seeks to support the development of new / reconfigured services wherever possible. He regularly visits services so as to be visible to staff and service users.
- Welsh Government Legislation plays a key part in the direction of the services delivered within the County Borough and the services continue to evolve in line with revised legislation and good practice.
- All of the areas within Social Services have clear strategic direction and many areas work to long-term plans.

Priorities for improvement are focused on by the Council as part of its plans for recovery, transformation and improvement. Social Services will review the list of measures to ensure that they are relevant and able to be captured during 2021/22. This will be in line with new Performance Framework.

Overall, we have made progress, and we will endeavour to continue this good work moving forward in 2021/22. Clearly as part of our improvement work, we will need to focus on recovery from the pandemic. This will mean we will need to review some service areas and may need to do things differently in future to meet people's needs in the community.

Living Well - Judgement

Our evaluation says this outcome is:

Adequate



Portfolio Member
Councillor Andrew Barry

Quote from the Portfolio Member	<i>"Good governance and continuously improving the way we work is a primary focus of MTCBC"</i>
Service Areas	Corporate and Support Services
Strategic Focus	Governance and Supporting the Plan

CORPORATE CENTRE

This section of the annual performance report focuses on key elements of the corporate centre of the Council that support the delivery of our four well-being objectives. This section will focus on finance and complaints.

As such we are using the feedback from the service areas supported in the self-evaluation exercise to form a judgement of performance. This will not impact on the judgements against the well-being objectives but will give an indication of how support can be changed to provide improved outcomes.

When reviewing the corporate well-being plan and when developing the Council's self-assessment report, focus will be placed on improving measures of success for the corporate centre.



We are continuing to promote the Welsh language and deliver our Welsh Language Strategy and Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. This supports how we are contributing to the national well-being goal of 'A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language'. Several events took place in 2020/21 despite the pandemic. New initiative ways to hold these events, using digital platforms and collaborating with partners, were implemented to ensure service availability.

Examples include:

- **Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae**

To build on the success on the Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae event organised in 2019 an event was organised again in partnership with members of the Welsh Education Forum. Due to the pandemic, the event took place online. The day promoted the use of the Welsh language from children and young people, the community, the workforce, Members and celebrities.

- **Welsh Language Carol Concert**

On 17th December, a Welsh Carol concert was shared on You-tube once again partnership with members of the Welsh Education Forum. There were items from the community and staff of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and eight schools also provided items. There were performances from young people of Merthyr Tydfil who have received Welsh medium education illustrating how they now use the language in their career and on a social basis. The event received 1,332 views.

- **#SHWMAERONMENT Event**

In March 2021 a #SHWMAERONMENT event was organised to promote the use of the Welsh Language across the County Borough, once again online due to the ongoing pandemic. The event started on St David's Day and ran over three weeks with videos each day being shown on the Facebook event page of the Council, with the Council's Welsh Language Strategy Officer being interviewed for television to promote the event. The number of views reached 3,400 and the event was seen by the public as far afield as America and Australia.

FINANCE INFORMATION

Revenue Budget

The Council sets a revenue budget each year. This revenue budget covers the costs of the services the Council provides, and is paid for by service users, Welsh Government Grants, Council Tax and Business Rate payers. For 2020-2021, the Council's revenue budget was **£127,533 million**.

Medium Term Financial Plan

The Medium Term Financial Plan was revised in 2020/21 to take account of increases to the monies received from the Welsh Government. The Council set its Medium Term Financial Plan to achieve the required savings resulting from the improved Settlements.

The provisional revenue outturn for 2020/21 was reported to Cabinet on 14th July 2021.

Table 1: The provisional revenue outturn for 2020/2021 by main service area

Revenue Outturn	£'000
Learning (including schools)	49,072
Social Services	31,492
Community Regeneration	4,093
Neighbourhood Services	10,263
Leisure Trust	2,423
All other Council Services (including Corporate Centre Costs)	25,726
Revenue Underspend	4,464
Total	127,533

CORPORATE COMPLAINTS

This section has been included as another aspect of viewing our performance and service quality. It should be noted that the chart opposite shows the number of Corporate Complaints made to the Council in 2020/21 broken down by service per quarter. There are informal complaints received by the Council that are resolved before becoming Corporate Complaints.

This data is being used to shape operational/service plans by being able to discover any underlying issues (root causes). This help improve efficiency and effectiveness and ensure service availability.

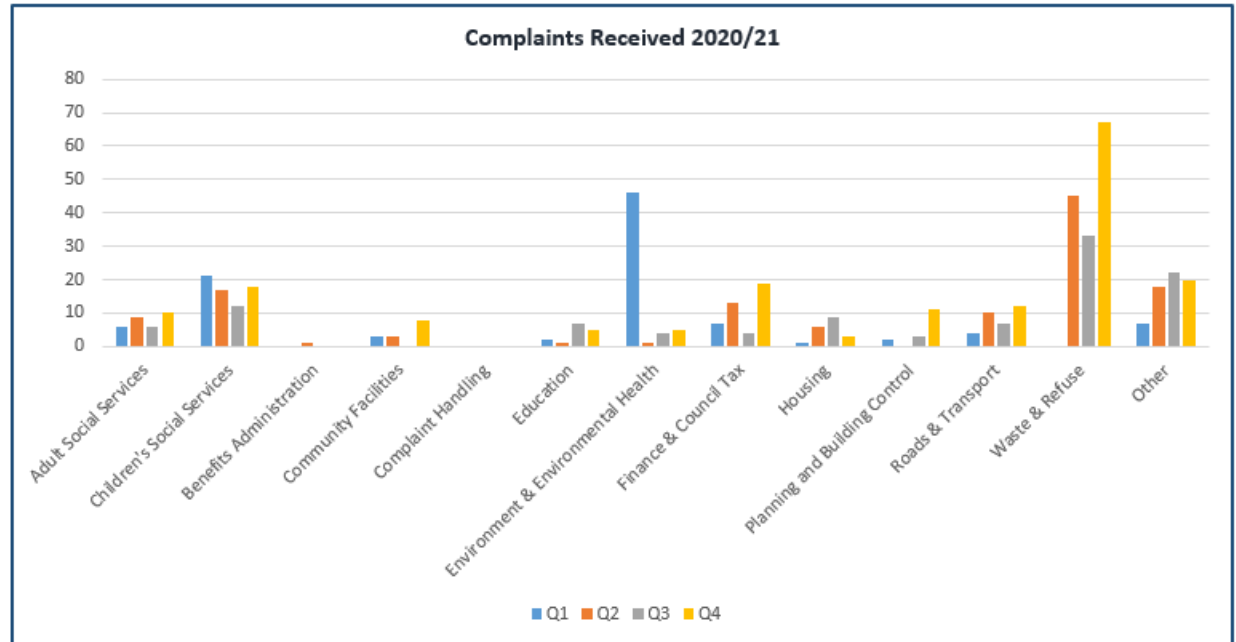
Addressing the issues helps the Council better achieve its outcomes and use its resource to fix the issue rather than constantly deal with complaints.

This data shows low level of overall complaints received.



Customer Service, Compliments & Complaints

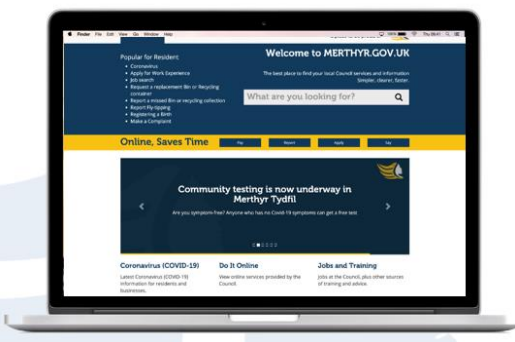
Compliments & Complaints



SELF-EVALUATION OUTCOMES

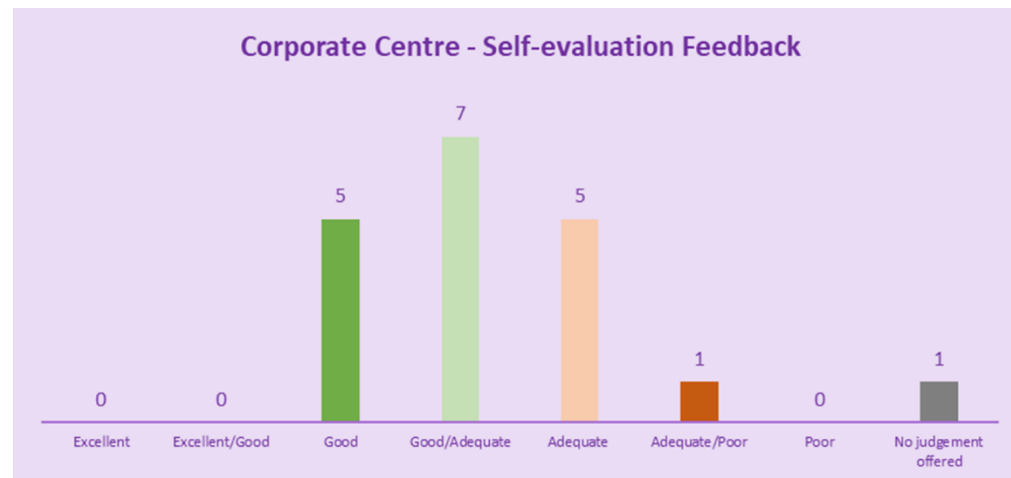
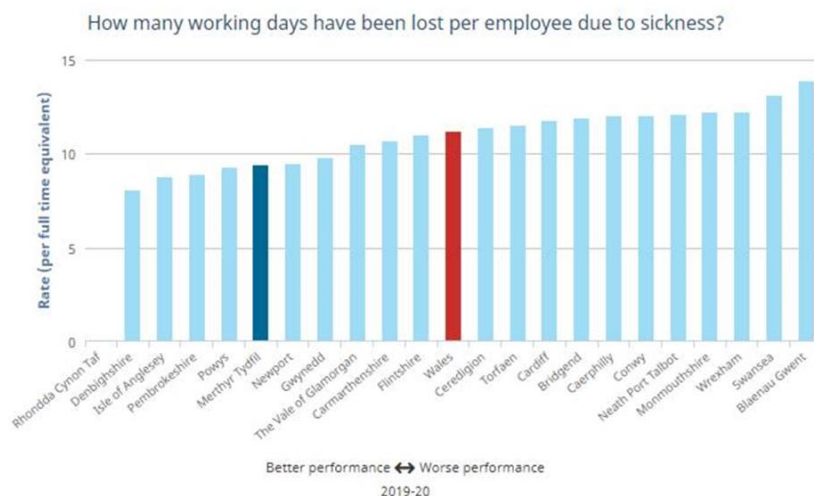
Feedback on how the corporate centre is supporting the delivery of the Councils objectives is generally good but there is an aspiration to continuously improve.

Findings from the self-evaluation carried out in 2019/20, findings have been used to improve the quality of corporate services. For example, managers have set up regular 'customer satisfaction' with teams across the Council to meet the need. This has led to changes and will be monitored going forward. This will be included as part of the quarterly performance and improvement review process.



Our **staff sickness** record is in the **top five** Councils in Wales (2019/20).

The Council has **invested in its workforce** following a capacity exercise in 2020/21. Approximately **£1.5million investment in 2021/22** has strengthened how we can deliver our objectives and priorities.



Despite reductions to face-to-face customer services, the Council has retained service availability by taking innovative alternative solutions have been put in place. The Council has had 379,000 website users with **4.7 million page views** (as at the 31st March 2021). The website has seen a **14% increase** in usage between March 2019/20 to March 2020/21.

In addition, the Council has had an increase of on average **4,972 telephone calls received per quarter**.







Source: MyLocalCouncil

Well-being of Future Generations Act – Self-Reflection

The Council has used the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner's self-reflection tool to review progress against our well-being objectives, as well considering how the Council has used the five ways. The tool considers where we are now and offers prompts for reflection. The Council has moved from 'getting started' in year one of the plan through 'making changes' and 'being more adventurous' to where it is now, i.e. 'owning our ambition'. This is true across all four well-being objectives.

The Well-being toolkit tells us that this means:

'Owning our ambition' can be a similar stage to 'being more adventurous' with initiatives developing and more people becoming involved. The organisation will be taking more well-managed risks, reaching out to other sectors to make progress and collaborating on funding or staffing. The organisation defines its approach as ambitious and staff feel empowered to work across sectors and influence change.

Well-being Objectives	<i>Getting started</i>	<i>Making simple changes</i>	<i>Being more adventurous</i>	<i>Owning our ambition</i>	<i>Leading the way</i>
 Best Start				✓	
 Working Life				✓	
 Environmental Well-being				✓	
 Living Well				✓	

To support this, the Council has produced a table of examples across all well-being objectives, please see appendix 2. These examples have been challenged as part of our RTI Plan and quarterly business monitoring.

Steps taken to achieve the seven well-being goals

As a public body the Council must take all necessary steps to demonstrate its contribution to achieving all seven national well-being goals. During 2020/21 there has been an array of services and activities that support improvements in the well-being of our communities. The way in which we demonstrate the impact of this work requires mixed approaches.

This section includes how we have applied the five ways of working to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and in doing so contribute to our objectives and the national goals.

Qualitative data can reveal the complexities involved in supporting well-being and provides a deeper understanding of the context within which our services exist. The way in which we do this is to outline the way we are supporting these improvements using case studies.

During 2020/21 we have developed case studies linked to all four well-being themes within our Corporate Well-being Plan. We have added a few additional examples of how we are doing different things – these link to our governance and ways of working. We have also included real examples of how we have applied the five ways of working in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

How have we reported our case studies?

Each case study has been assessed to show their contribution to the seven well-being goals based on the official descriptors as outlined in the Well-being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

A case study that impacts on a well-being goal will keep that goal colour, and the other goals grey scaled out. We've also shown where and how officers and partners have used the sustainable development principle (the five ways of working) when delivering the service/activity in the community. Again, where the subject of the case study can be seen to reflect the five ways of working, the icon appears in full colour, where this isn't the case, the icon has been grey-scaled out. This helps us to understand where we are collaborating, integrating our strategies and how we can further improve this.

We have done the same with our four well-being objectives. Ticks have been included on areas where the case study has contributed to help.

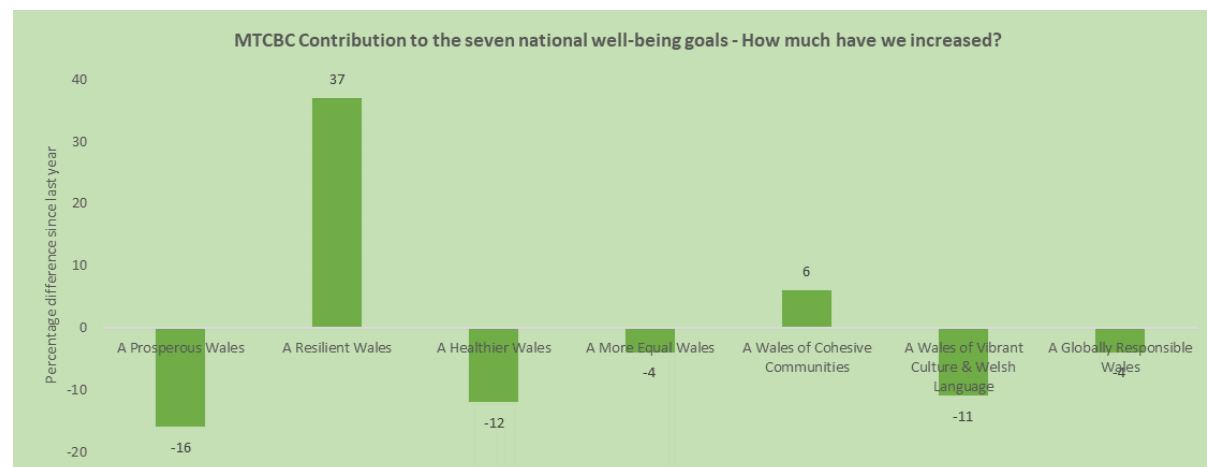
Summary – Case Studies

What have we learned from looking back at progress made during 2019-2020?

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is committed to support the achievement of the seven national well-being goals and uses the five ways of working in each of the activities and services it offers to the residents of Merthyr Tydfil.

Following completion of the process to produce this report (which looks back at 2019/20), we have been able to present a snapshot of what we have done.







We have considered a sample of 25 case studies in 2020-2021. On evaluation, we can see that there is a general improvement compared to 2018-2019 and within tolerance when compared to 2020-2021. There are other examples where we have contributed to 'A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language'. An analysis of our case studies has enabled us to identify the following:



Contribution to the seven national well-being goals

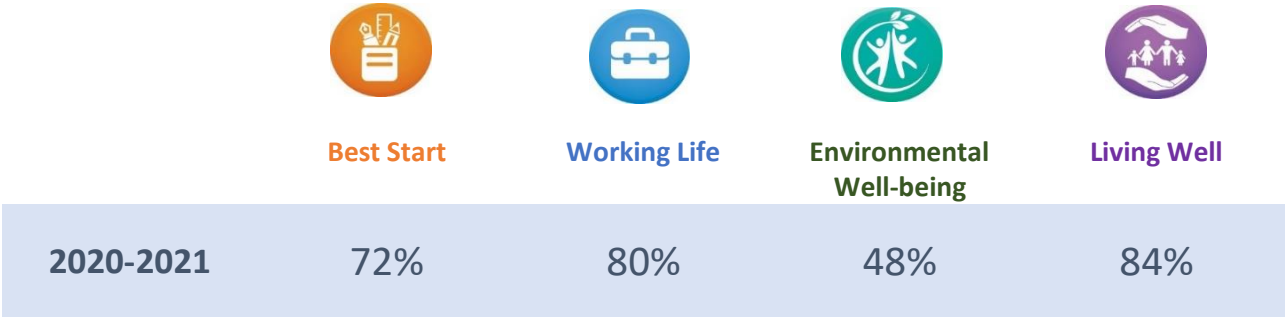
	 A Prosperous Wales	 A Resilient Wales	 A Healthier Wales	 A More Equal Wales	 A Wales of Cohesive Communities	 A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language	 A Globally Responsible Wales
2018-2019	48%	15%	96%	93%	89%	44%	100%
2019-2020	100%	31%	100%	100%	94%	63%	100%
2020-2021	84%	68%	88%	96%	100%	52%	96%
	-16	37	-12	-4	6	-11	-4

Contribution to the five ways of working and Tackling Poverty priority

						
	Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement	
2018-2019	81%	74%	74%	96%	96%	-
2019-2020	100%	100%	94%	100%	100%	100%
2020-2021	92%	100%	88%	100%	100%	96%
	-8	0	-6	0	0	-4

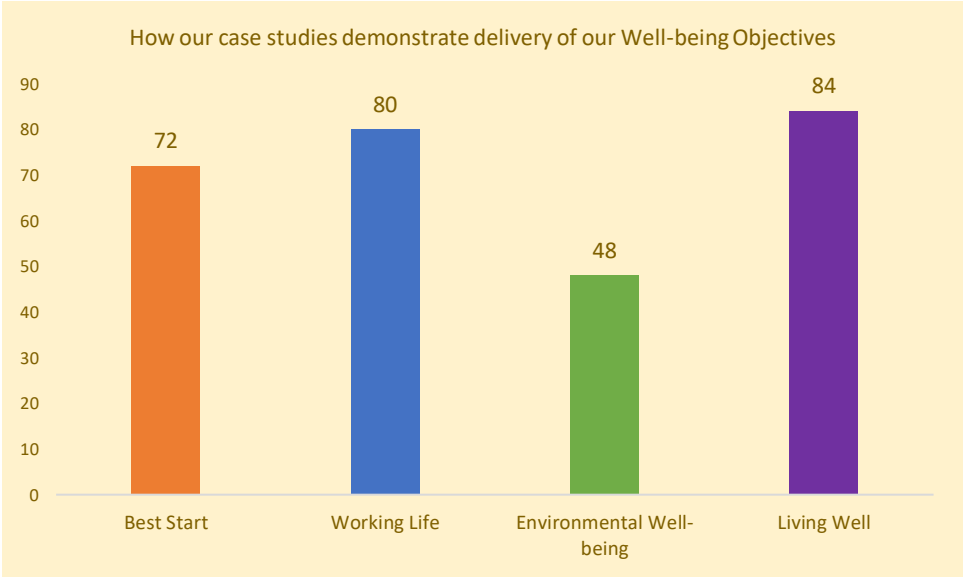
This shows how we are still applying the five ways of working to how we deliver services. It is encouraging to see how the national goals and five ways of working are being adopted and embedded in our work.

Delivering our four Well-being Objectives



Progress against the well-being objectives was recognised by the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet in the new quarterly performance and improvement review process. As with this report, evidence and data was provided.

Fairness - Our updated Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) plays a key role in how we assess the impact on these 7 national well-being goals as well as other part of the Act, protected characteristics, Welsh language, biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems and socio-economic disadvantage. The IIA also requested that data is used as part of the assessment along with how communication and engagement has been undertaken (where required).



Overall Judgement

Adequate

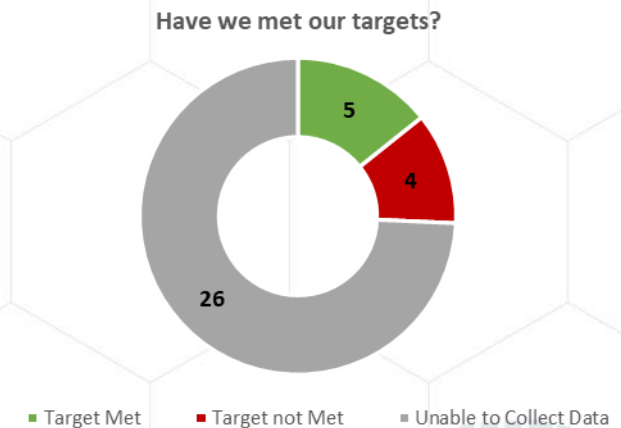
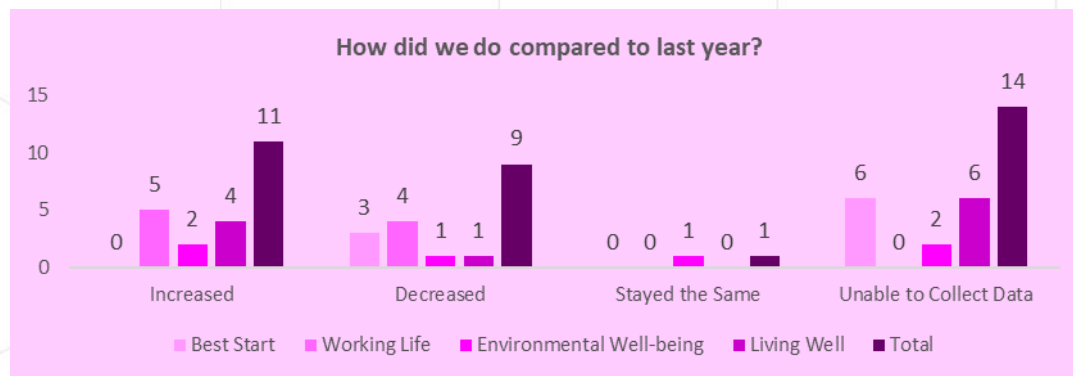
During 2020/21 we have improved in 11 of 35 indicators since last year. **However**, data was unavailable for 14 of the 35 indicators due to the coronavirus. Therefore, of the indicators that were available, we have **improved in 52%** (11 of 21).

We have **decreased in 26% of our indicators** (9 of 35) in 2020/21 when compared to 2019/20.

One indicator stayed the same.

This is an improvement when compared to last year which saw an improvement in 32% of our indicators. 10 of the 34 indicators were unavailable last year. When these were not counted, the Council had improved in 46% of its indicators in 2019/20 (when compared to the previous year).

Based on the judgements identified in the four well-being themes above, our overall judgement for 2020/21 is **ADEQUATE**.



CONTACT US

Have Your Say

This document is a summary performance report on the priority areas in the Corporate Well-being Plan during the 2020/2021 financial year.

We welcome your thoughts on this report and the work of the Council. You can contact us using the details below.

Address

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Civic Centre
Castle Street
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 8AN

Email

wellbeing@merthyr.gov.uk



APPENDIX 1: Performance Key

The following contains information that will help you to understand the analysis of our progress, particularly in relation to our priority areas.

Each priority area has an associated outcome, which describe the benefits we aim to deliver for our communities. An outcome is not in itself measureable, so in order to be accountable and to assess whether we are achieving the desired benefits we use indicators and improvement activity. This enables the Council to quantify achievement and understand its impact on outcomes.

Current Position

Our indicators are evaluated based on our ranked position when compared to the other Welsh local authorities. The purpose of using comparative data is to enable us to understand our relative performance across Wales.

By default, the status colour for each measure relates to our ranked position (the quartile range) within Wales. In some cases we are unable to compare that measure with other local authorities in Wales. In these instances the indicators are compared against Local Authority targets.

Indicator status definitions

Performance definition	Rank	Status
The current position is excellent	1-6	Excellent
The current position is good	7-11	Good
The current position is adequate	12-16	Adequate
The current position is unsatisfactory	17-22	Unsatisfactory
There is no comparable information or only local data	Not applicable	

Descriptor for each status

EXCELLENT	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
GOOD	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
ADEQUATE and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
UNSATISFACTORY and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

Appendix 2: Examples of work done against our well-being objectives



Best Start

The Council has collaborated with various partners to develop and implement its Raising Aspiration Raising Standards (RARS) Strategy as part of its recovery, transformation and improvement plans. This is integrated with other strategies and is a priority for the whole Council. This is a main feature of the corporate well-being plan.

Our Education Partnership Panel (EPP) was established to monitor progress of the RARS objectives and to support the direction and improvement of education services. The central south consortium (CSC) Challenge Framework has been developed which forms part of the EEP challenge sessions.

The ongoing restructure of Education services has led to additional resource to support multiple areas including data development, Additional Learning Needs Services and the requirements of the ALNET Act. Apprenticeship posts have been secured to enable succession planning.

The Council has established a Business and Education Together Partnership. The Council is involving and collaborating with businesses to address skill development and unemployment. This supports economic recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

A speech and language screening tool has been introduced to help support needs. A Vulnerable Learners Panel has been set up to support learners with complex needs during school closures (enforced as a result of the pandemic). Digitally excluded pupils have been provided with the technology and equipment they need to support their learning. Appropriate hardware has been provided for schools to deliver the curriculum.

A Headteacher forum has been established to focus on all non-financial aspects of the school system and its future development. A governor's steering group has been set-up across secondary governors and the college for consultation on collaborative activities to meet the new curriculum. Training has been provided to school staff to improve parental engagement. A bespoke recovery curriculum was developed for all schools, which was agreed by the respective governing bodies. Schools have also been supported to develop a hybrid approach to learning.



Solar panels have been installed in our Recycling Depots to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions, as part of our decarbonisation plans.

We have worked with a social enterprise/registered charity to open a 'Re-use Shop' which aims to minimise waste generated in Merthyr Tydfil by diverting useable household furniture and objects collected on the bulky waste collection scheme. These items will be cleaned, repaired and sold on at affordable prices.

Merthyr Tydfil families are being encouraged to make the most of the stunning landscape on their doorstep by using the outdoor/green spaces. For example, Parc Taf Bargoed sits on the site of disused coal mines and has been turned into a haven for wildlife has recently seen the launch of a new walking trail around the park. Working together across the Parks Department and the Regeneration Team, we have successfully obtained external funding which provided the community with a £100,000 project providing a new playground and multi-use games area (MUGA) Facility.

We are continuing to collaborate with teams from across the Council and partners to meet the needs of our communities. For example, we are working with Economic Regeneration on issues related to heritage and working with officers to develop understanding on decarbonisation to support discussions with businesses across the County Borough.

We are working together as a team across the Parks Department, Estates Department and Town Planning Department to share resources to support biodiversity across the County Borough. Gully waste is dispensed at the Caerphilly County Borough Council's reed bed filtration facility. This filters the waste to produce recycled clean water that is used again in the gully. The remaining solid waste is also recycled. This links in with our objective – a strong sustainable, diverse environment.

The Council has put in place a Carbon Management Board, that is made up of officers and Elected Members. This board oversees the delivery of the carbon management plan. Greater emphasis has been placed on recycling, with regular reviews of performance.

Apprenticeship posts have been secured to enable succession planning in a number of areas throughout Neighbourhood Services. The structure of services has been reviewed and changed to increase efficiency and effectiveness, at a service and corporate level.

We have improved the workflow regarding fly-tipping through the use of technology, e.g. using i-Pads to allow us to work more efficiently and respond to queries or complaints in a more timely manner. In addition to this, we have implemented a fly tipping 'Report It' e-form that links directly with the Council's complaints system. We have introduced fly tipping fixed penalty notices (FPN) as an extra enforcement tool.



During the pandemic, teams from across the Council have worked together to support local businesses to access £40+ million of Welsh government grant funding. This has enabled business to remain sustainable during periods of national and local lockdown. Again, departments have collaborated to support traders to adapt their business models to meet requirements around social distancing e.g. outdoor options for hospitality venues; floor markings, signage and PPE to support social distancing and pedestrian flow.

We have identified and further developed cross-service working between our Economic Development, Public Protection, Environmental Health, Revenues and Benefits teams to meet the needs of local businesses. Greater integration has existed between Community Regeneration services including colleagues within the Council and external stakeholders allowing further awareness of current skills requirements, particularly in light of the change in opportunities available to job seekers as a result of the ongoing the pandemic.

The Council has secured funding from the 'Transforming Towns' and 'Local Sustainable Transportable Measures' to fund support adaptations within the Town Centre (and Treharris) including public realm improvements, developed innovative opportunities linked to the digital agenda in Merthyr Tydfil.

We have provided targeted interventions to support Council and private care homes during the pandemic to ensure service availability. The first mass-testing centres in Wales were opened across Merthyr Tydfil ensuring fairness for everyone to have the opportunity to be tested.

The Council is developing a 15-year Economic Vision for Merthyr Tydfil, ensuring regular stakeholder consultation sits at the heart ensuring the needs of stakeholders have and will continue to be a key consideration. An Economic Recovery Board (officer and Elected Member) has been set up to monitor progress and provide direction. Economic Development and Education are working together to collaborate with partners such as training colleagues as part of the Business and Education Together Partnership.

Consideration has been made to improving Active Travel Links in and around the County Borough. This coincides with the development of a new Central Bus Interchange which has brought bus and train travel sites closer together. Consideration is being given to how the funding secured from the Local Transport Fund can include improving the local transport network, ultra-low emission vehicle transformation and Active Travel.

A strategic plan has been developed for the Cyfarthfa heritage area. This is a 20-year strategic plan that will reveal the global importance of Merthyr Tydfil's industrial past and work in harmony with its nature to transform the Cyfarthfa area. The project will grow in parallel with the lives of the town's youngest generation as they grow into adults.

We have continued to focus on improving efficiency and effectiveness of the service. Integration and streamlining of existing strategies for key projects and programmes, opening opportunities to maximise the contributions from partners.

Adult Services have worked to co-produce the Advocacy Strategy with service users and professionals including extensive collaboration and consultation with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Advocacy Forum. The Strategy was approved by Council on 24th February 2021.

Children's Services launched the 'Work opportunities for young people in our care or leaving our care' policy and the Pathway to Work policy. An Employment Mentoring & Support Officer role has been developed to support care experienced young people to enhance their opportunities in employments.

We have progressed the planning and development of key services to deliver better outcomes for example, Extra Care, Children's residential accommodation. The Stay Well @Home 2 service has been fully implemented and initial evaluation indicates that this has been effective in preventing admission to hospital through the provision of care and support. Families First has transferred into Children's Services Directorate which will support the very close working of preventative services and statutory services. We have developed regional implementation plan for the recruitment and retention of foster carers and implemented our placement commissioning strategy. We have strengthened engagement with the Third Sector to improve the range of community-based support available and progressed work to reconfigure day opportunities for people with a learning disability, older people and people with dementia.

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg transition plan has been approved, with the Transition Policy being approved by Council on the 3rd February 2021. Merthyr Tydfil's Preparation for Adulthood - Enabling children and young people to smoothly transition into adulthood is an important ongoing area of work. Children's and Adult's Services have worked with multi-agency partners to establish a Transition Planning Panel to bring relevant professionals together to enhance the transition process to achieve the best outcomes for young people who are transitioning to adulthood.

We have continued to work collaboratively with Voices from Care Cymru to ensure that Children's Services listen to, hear and consult with our looked after children in order to understand their experience of transition to further inform service developments. Merthyr Tydfil Children's Services, following consultation with care experienced young people, has produced a Care Leavers Strategy - 'Make My Own Decision'. This is focused on preparation for independence and includes elements such as training, employment, money management and access to support where needed.

As previously stated, one of the key areas of focus for Social Services is on preventative services. Closer to Home is a key preventative service to help ensure young people are placed in the most suitable provision for their well-being. During 2020/21, phase 2 of this development has been completed.

To ensure quality of service provision, a Quality Assurance framework has been agreed and audit tools developed in Adult Services. Quality Assurance processes are embedded in Children's Services.

In line with the overarching objective in the Council's Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan, we have increased the resilience of social care through reviewing capacity and structures and recruiting to essential posts.

Appendix 3 – Case Studies

Case Study: School and Multi-Agency Support for Vulnerable Children and Young People during COVID-19

The Coronavirus pandemic and the Stay-at-Home rules required a number of adjustments to services that support vulnerable families.

There was particular concern about the impact of these changes for children at risk and their families, as services and schools closed or reduced their visiting and intervention in the community in order to protect the public and staff.

The safeguarding of children at risk continued to be a priority for all partner agencies and as such, a process for supporting and keeping in touch with vulnerable learners was established straight away.

Throughout the period of school closure, schools would:

- 'Check-in' with vulnerable pupils and their families at least once a week via e-mail, telephone or other communication methods used by the school such as Class DoJo; and
- Monitor and record the wellbeing of vulnerable learners and their families following the usual processes i.e. Myconcerns and escalate any concerns around welfare, to enable appropriate action. All safeguarding concerns will be reported following the usual procedures

As we were working to different arrangements, and in some cases continue to do so, it was important that colleagues from different agencies and settings worked together now more so than ever in order to enable the safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable children.

The work carried out to support vulnerable learners led to a number of positive outcomes:

- Stronger working relationships have been developed between departments and with other agencies
- Stronger relationships have been forged with some of our families who Electively Home Educate (EHE) their children, for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) and with those who are part of the Gypsy Traveller community
- All those pupils with shielding letters were monitored and returned to school in September 2020; and
- Close identification and monitoring of support for the most vulnerable of learners



Case Study: Children with Disability Team

B is 17 years of age. She has mild learning disability and a diagnosis of anxious / disorganised attachment disorder and challenging behaviour. She also attends a specialist school. B resides with her mother and has regular contact with her father. B's mother requested an assessment for her to have a Children with Disabilities (CWD) social worker and further support. An Information, Advice and Assistance assessment was completed and accepted into the Children with Disabilities team.

B was presenting with self-harm and challenging behaviour with both verbal and physical aggression usually targeted at her mother but also other family members. There was limited family support as a result. B's mother requested a CWD support as she felt like she could not continue to manage B's behaviour and wanted her to be accommodated in a foster placement. There was a delay in accessing children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Due to B's learning disability, her mother felt unable to leave her alone for short periods where other 17 year olds would be able and therefore, there was very little break from care for mum.

B's General Practitioner prescribed medication to help her anxiety. CAMHS assessment was completed with updated diagnosis, a review of her medication was completed and the family agreed to a referral for family therapy. A care support plan was co-produced with B and her mum and it was agreed that B's personal outcomes would be to look at her being able to voice her feelings in a healthy way and move towards independence. Participants in this process were B, her parents, CAMHS, school and Health.

Since being under the Children and Disabilities team, B's anxieties appear to have eased and aggressive outbursts have subsided. B is happy to talk to her advocate and voice her views on matters in her life. B has remained home with her mother with a robust care and support plan in place that meets her needs and supports her mother to care for her. The most recent update from B's mother is that she is happy with the current plan for B and home life is now calm.



Case Study: Merthyr and the Valleys Mind

Ms D was referred from one of our partner organisations for advocacy support. She was living alone and was finding the current period of lockdown difficult. She was feeling lonely and increasingly isolated, which was negatively impacted on her mental health. She was also experiencing ongoing issues with her neighbour. He would often disturb her at night by coming home late and being very noisy and was leaving a mess in the shared garden area, which she strived to keep clean and tidy. Ms D was regularly kept awake at night and felt this situation was having an additional negative impact on her mental health. Furthermore, she was not happy with the care and treatment she had received from her GP practice during the period of lockdown.

An initial assessment was carried out over the telephone and a referral was made to the Mind telephone counselling service. Ms D had already spoken to her Housing Officer concerning the ongoing issues with her neighbour but she felt that they were slow to respond. The Housing Officer was contacted to clarify the extent of the issues with Ms D's neighbour and the extent of distress that the current situation was having on her. Once an authorisation to share document was completed, the advocate maintained regular contact with the Housing Officer to monitor progress and Ms D was advised to report any further incidents to the Police. In addition to this, Ms D had already raised her concerns with her GP practice but she felt that they were not listening to her. She gave permission to the practice for the advocate to speak with the Practice Manager to raise her concerns informally in the first instance. The Practice Manager was not very helpful at this stage and was angry that Ms D had raised these issues during the unprecedented period of lockdown. Following further discussion with Ms D, she decided to raise the complaint formally in writing and the advocate prepared a letter to the Practice Manager. The letter was agreed and amended before sending with a form of consent.

Throughout the period of support, contact was maintained via telephone and email as agreed with Ms D. She commenced the Mind telephone counselling which she found really helpful as she felt she was being listened to. Her Housing Provider was now paying attention to her and they were taking appropriate action to attempt to resolve the issues raised; eventually Ms D's neighbour moved out of the property and she was happy with the outcome. However, she was not happy with the response letter from the Practice Manager at her surgery and felt that they were only making excuses for their lack of care and concern. Following discussion in regards to Ms D's options, she decided not to proceed any further with the complaint at this time.

"The support I have received has been brilliant. I have found the process very helpful and worthwhile. I would not hesitate to contact Mind should I need any further support in the future and I would thoroughly recommend the service to others."



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



Case Study: Circular Economy Fund

Welsh Government's aim is to move to a circular economy in Wales. To achieve this we must avoid throwing our waste away and keep these items in use or circulation for as long as possible; this is an important recycling practise required to help improve climate change. Therefore, Welsh Government has stated that the public sector is central to Wales's move to a circular economy.

With the support and assistance from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's Waste Services team, Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council were able to secure £35k funding from Welsh Government as part of the Circular Economy Capital Fund. As a result of this help and support, the Community Council installed four water refill stations throughout Bedlinog and Trelewis, which will help reduce the number of drinks and water bottles discarded in the area. This grant has also been used to install solar panels at Bedlinog Community Centre and Bedlinog RFC to reduce the carbon footprint by becoming greener, more sustainable and reduce carbon emissions.

In order to raise recycling awareness, the Community Council has worked with a media company and local schools and pupils to launch a new social media campaign by creating a number of short videos detailing: how our residents should recycle; what items go in each bin; reducing single-use plastic; and, re-using food waste. As a further part of the awareness campaign, the Community Council undertook some filming at MTCBC's Waste depot to show what happens to the recycled waste. MTCBC Waste Services team also helped the Community Council purchase 61 compost bins, which they distributed to residents who expressed an interest in re-using their food waste in this manner.

By MTCBC and the Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council working together, this grant and the subsequent working undertaken will help drive towards further increases in recycling and decarbonisation within the Borough.



"We hope that this joint working will contribute to assisting MTCBC's recycling targets as well as moving to a circular economy in Wales."

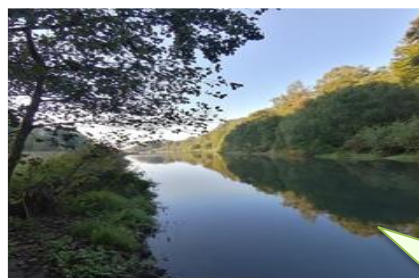
Ryan James, Clerk/Proper Officer to Bedlinog and Trelewis

Case Study: Green Flag Award

The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world. The Green Flag Award programme is delivered in Wales by environmental charity, Keep Wales Tidy, with support from Welsh Government. It is judged by green space experts, who volunteer their time to visit applicant sites and assess them against eight strict criteria, including biodiversity, cleanliness, environmental management and community involvement.

In 2020 Merthyr Tydfil celebrating or retained the prestigious 2020 Green Flag Awards for five of its green spaces and a further 10 community-run projects. The County Borough Council-owned Cyfarthfa Park, Parc Taf Bargoed and Aberfan Cemetery have all retained their awards, the international mark of a quality park or green space presented by Keep Wales Tidy. Thomastown Park has received an award for the first time, and Natural Resources Wales-owned Garwnant Forest Centre also received a full award. Dowlais and Pant Community Action Group has been given no fewer than three Green Flag Community Awards, the benchmark for parks and green spaces managed by volunteers. The full list of recognised Community Award projects is:

- Cilsanws Nature Reserve - Merthyr Tydfil and District Naturalists' Society
- Dowlais Community Centre Garden - Stephens & George Charitable Trust
- Dowlais Nature Garden by Ty Dysgu School - Dowlais & Pant Community Action Group
- The Hafod Community Nature Garden - Dowlais & Pant Community Action Group
- Muriel & Blanche Community Nature Garden - Dowlais & Pant Community Action Group
- Gurnos Men's Project's Community Garden
- Penywern Top Pond - Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association
- Pitwoods Park - Nant Llwynog Volunteers
- Pontsticill Village
- Woodland Walk - Royal Crescent Allotment Society



"We're also grateful to all the dedicated volunteers across the county borough who are continuing to create and sustain community projects that are also recognised annually."

"This particular past six months has proved how vital our parks and other green spaces are to people - often isolated in every other aspect - to be able to find somewhere they can connect with nature and forget about life's troubles for a while."

Councillor Geraint Thomas

"The pandemic has shown just how important high-quality parks and green spaces are to our communities. For many of us, they have been a haven on our doorstep, benefitting our health and well-being."

Green Flag Coordinator

Case Study: WellComm

Speech, language and communication (SLC) skills are essential for positive health, wellbeing, education and employment outcomes.

- 50% of children living in poverty may start school with SLC needs
- 1 in 4 children who struggle with language at age 5 are unlikely to reach the expected standard of English at the end of primary school
- 81% of children with emotional & behavioural disorders have significant language deficits
- Without effective help 1 in 3 children with SLC difficulties will need treatment for mental health
- 88% of long term unemployed young men have SLC needs
- Up to 60% of young people in the Youth Justice system have SLC needs

WellComm within Flying Start areas was initially piloted in 2014 following a report by Wavehill that indicated the need for preventative measures to be put in place, and a means of providing early identification of children experiencing SLC difficulties. WellComm is a complete speech, language and communication toolkit available to early year's practitioners and primary schools. The toolkit provides:

- Early identification of children with speech, language and social communication needs
- Focused activities to target those children with SLC difficulties
- Enhances skills for all children
- Progress and development tracking of children

As part of the pandemic recovery programme, and to support the Raising Aspiration Raising Standards (RARS) Strategy, WellComm was rolled out across our primary schools during the autumn term 2020.

WellComm training was delivered during the autumn term with 66 teaching staff trained across 19 Primary schools. A Speech & Language Therapist Helpline was established to support schools during the roll out.

By engaging in the WellComm toolkit, our primary schools have been able to work in a more preventative way by identifying children with SLC difficulties in order to work with them to support and improve their speech, language and communication skills. Whilst the full impact of the toolkit is yet to be established, schools are fully engaged in the concept and have reported positive outcomes in the early stages.



Case Study: Local Places for Nature

Local Places for Nature is a capital grant scheme intended to enable areas of highest deprivation, peri urban/urban communities and/or those with least access to nature in Wales to restore and enhance nature 'on your doorstep'. This funding is primarily for projects located or servicing the needs of communities in the 50% most deprived areas. With support from the Council's Landscape Architect and Biodiversity Officer, Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council were successful in obtaining a £50k grant from Welsh Government and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

By working collaboratively with MTCBC Officers, the Community Council were able to identify eight sites that would benefit from street planters and native plants and trees. The Council's Estates Department issued ten-year licences to the Community Council permitting the installation of the planters, and lamppost baskets were put in place with the support of the Council's Street Lighting Team. In addition to this, Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council were also able to regenerate the Bedlinog Allotments. Some of the works undertaken have been to create new easy access paths around the allotments, developed raised beds (which are accessible for community growing of fruit and vegetables) and built further raised beds for the local schools to use. The Community Council have installed an eco-toilet and wash facilities for the schoolchildren to use when they visit the allotments.

As a result of this Local Places for Nature grant and collaborative working people will be able to see improvements to the natural environment 'from their doorsteps' and the capacity and availability of community growing has increased in this area.



Case Study: Creative Arts Well-being and Environmental Awareness project

Funding was received from the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) In line with the Welsh Government's vision and mission for the future to support and nurture, the community and contribute to the improved health and well-being of a more vibrant Wales.

Objectives of the project were to engage school children of Troedyrhiw Year 5's in interactive, participatory creative arts workshops that brought in themes of the three R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and environmental awareness.

The children engaged well with the project from the beginning; attendance was high and all that were present participated fully. The children became invested in the programme and their creations, to the point that they personified their characters and performed in character. It was evident that the children enjoyed the activity and shared plenty of smiles and laughter; and showed confidence to respond and ask question even in an online scenario.

Comment from teaching assistant: I am amazed by how much the children got into the project and the effort they made. They enjoyed the project and loved the movement, and the characters they created were great.

Pupil's Comments:

The sessions made me feel happy because we made masks and played fun games and made stories. The part I enjoyed the most is playing the games and giving my mask a name and story. To make sessions better next time come to class.

The sessions made me feel happy. The part I enjoyed the most is the games and storyboard. To make the sessions better you could make the sessions longer.

The sessions made me feel good. The part I liked the most was the dancing.

The sessions made me feel positive. The part I enjoyed the most was when we created a character for the masks. It couldn't have been better. Thank you for the sessions.

The sessions made me feel happy because I got to play fun games and I got to make a mask which was fun. The part I enjoyed the most was playing jumping beans. To make sessions better make them longer so we can finish stuff.

The sessions made me feel positive. The part I enjoyed the most was making my mask. To make the sessions better you could attend in in person.



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



Case Study: New Lease of Life

The shop, which is based in Pentrebach, is operated by Wastesavers, a Third Sector Social Enterprise and registered charity based in south east Wales, dedicated to social, environmental, and economic sustainability. Working in partnership with the council, their aim is to divert as many items as possible from landfill by giving people somewhere to take their unwanted items and selling them on at a discounted price. The charity also makes sure that people in need have access to things such as furniture and IT by making donations through local organisations to families and individuals who need them.

The Council invited the public to think of a suitable name for the shop through a locally run competition; this was well responded too and we had many name options to choose from. The entries were whittled down to five suitable names and we ran a poll whereby the public would have the final say in what the shop was to be called. The most popular name choose from this pole was 'A New Lease of Life' and the person who submitted this name was awarded a £50 Tesco Voucher.

A New Lease of Life opened its doors in April 2021. In the first month, it saved over 2,500 items going to landfill. Alun Harries, Wastesavers Charity manager, said:

"We are really pleased A New Lease of Life has got off to such a good start, especially considering the covid restrictions. But this is not only about saving reusable items from going to landfill. We have created three new jobs and plenty of volunteering opportunities. This would not have been possible without the fantastic support and input from Merthyr Tydfil Council."

"We've had an amazing response from people since opening. Customers constantly tell us they just can't believe what people throw away. Residents also love the idea that their unwanted items have a chance of finding a new home rather than going in a skip."

Beth Rosser, Wastesavers Area Manager



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



Case Study: Inspire to Achieve Firebreak Activities

In response to the Welsh Government COVID -19 firebreak in October 2020, the Inspire2 Achieve (I2A) team adopted a blended learning approach through the development of an online programme of activities that ran over a 2-week period.

The programme aimed to engage the most vulnerable young people enrolled on the I2A project during school closures where staff could no longer meet with them face to face. Sessions were developed to be fun yet focused and to include disguised learning whilst tackling issues relevant to participants during lockdown. Staff adopted an informal, friendly and digital approach to their delivery for participants to access in the comfort and safety of their own homes. Furthermore, young people had the opportunity to meet others from different schools who were also facing the same barriers and isolation concerns.

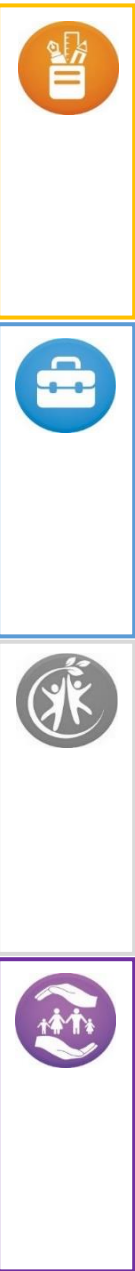
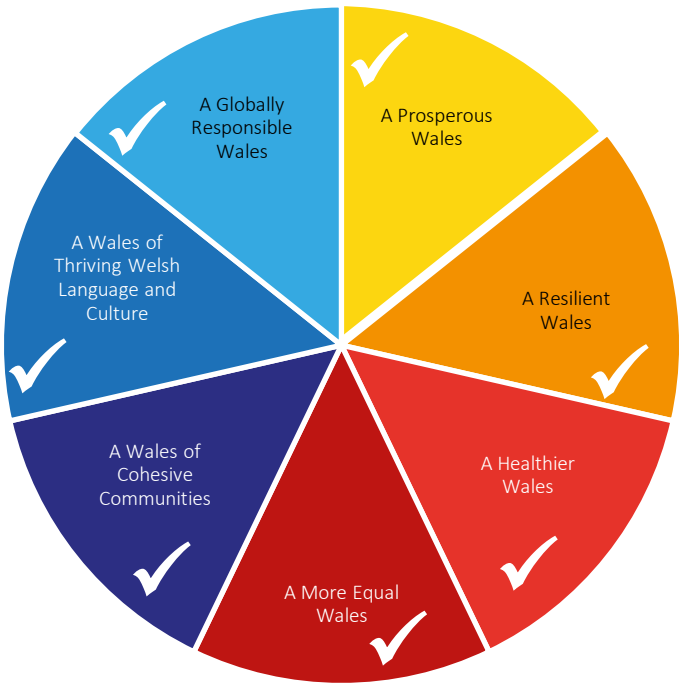
Through an analysis of participant needs, I2A Workers developed appropriate sessions that included; fake news/false information, well-being, online gambling (gaming) and cookery. The topics focused on current issues to aid the development of emotional intelligence, empowering them to use their critical thinking skills to assess real and fake news headlines - during a time where young people were exposed to a lot of unreliable information. The team used a holistic approach to ensure their experiences were both enjoyable and positive which in turn would encourage the young people to engage again.

Activity	Invited	Attended	Percentage
6 ways to cook an egg	3	2	67%
Gamers Quiz	3	3	100%
Spooky Cooking	6	5	83%
Calm Sessions	3	1	33%
Sporty Quiz	3	2	67%
Fake News Quiz	8	2	25%

This experience has aided in the development of a more digitally aware workforce who have created resources for future use. Engaging with participants in their homes has raised the profile of the project and given recognition to the work of the Youth Service amongst families. The blended learning approach can be applied to a range of circumstances with participants going forward.

Participant evaluations were collected using the online platform ‘Survey Monkey’, recording participant responses and gathering data in a contactless way. Overall, the feedback from young people from the online sessions was positive with 90% stating that they enjoyed the activities Over the seven workshops, 94% of the participants felt they learnt something new. This is a huge positive for the team as it demonstrated that the workshops were well prepared, interactive and relevant to the participants.

100% of young people reported that they had learnt something new demonstrating the rapport, respect and trust that has been built between the I2A Workers and their participants. The firebreak activities were a very positive experience for both the I2A staff and young people. On their return to school and after speaking to the young people, they stated that they have been using the skills they gained in the activities to help them in their daily lives.



Case Study: ESports Logo Project – Treharris Boys and Girls Club

The focus of the project was for young people to learn the basics of digital illustration and to design and create eSports logos. These are logos used by competitive video game players, characterised by a vibrant, neon graphic style. This project formed the skill section of the young people's Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award.

Five young people participated in the project and they came up with an eSports team name ("Freeze") and individual monikers, designing logos that reflected their moniker choices whilst ensuring that everyone's logos were cohesive and fit the theme of the team name. They expressed interest in using these logos for their online gaming profiles.

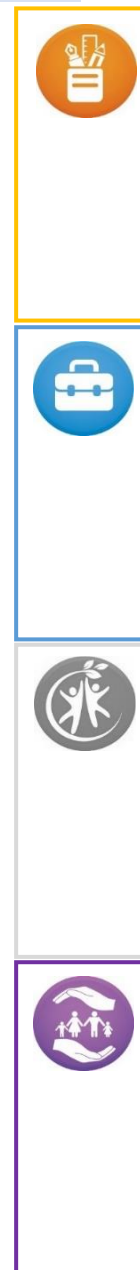
Every week for three months, the young people would meet with the youth worker online. During the 1.5-hour sessions the young people would work on their designs using Vectr.com, taking turns to share their screen with the group to show their progress.

When happy with their design, the young people sent them over to the youth worker who would load it onto the industry standard graphic design software, Adobe Illustrator, in order to add finishing touches which were not possible to achieve on Vectr.com. The youth worker would share their screen so that the young person had agency to control the design choices, and the group would collaborate in producing the final logo. An example of a finished eSports logo ("Freeze Fish") is included below:



This project coincided with lockdown and therefore was designed to operate online. Vectr.com, an online vector program, was chosen as the design software as it is simple and easy to use. It is also free and easy for the young people to access from home. This format helped young people grow in confidence, as they were able to design in private without worrying about judgement from their peers. Young people were encouraged to discuss design choices and work on providing and received constructive criticism. Each young person produced a finished eSports logo that fit the informal brief and demonstrated a skill improvement.

The eSports Logo Project improved the creative confidence of the five young people who took part. Each of them vastly improved their digital art and graphic design skills and learnt new techniques and use of new software. They experienced the workflow stages necessary to turn a concept into a finished illustration and collaborated effectively to ensure that all of the logos fit the shared theme. The project operated well during the limitations imposed by the coronavirus lockdown and in some ways benefited from them - young people who initially possessed low confidence in their ability were able to grow into the project from the comfort of being at home and were able to share their work with the staff and peers when ready.



Case Study: Digital Democracy – Moving to Virtual Committee Meetings

Scrutiny plays an important part in how the Council works.

MTCBC's scrutiny committees are made up of local councillors and co-opted members (local people or representatives from the voluntary sector). Scrutiny's role is to hold the Council's Cabinet to account to ensure that services delivered respond to the needs of the local community and are efficient, cost effective and easy to use. Scrutiny helps the Council develop new policies and plays an important role in monitoring organisational performance.

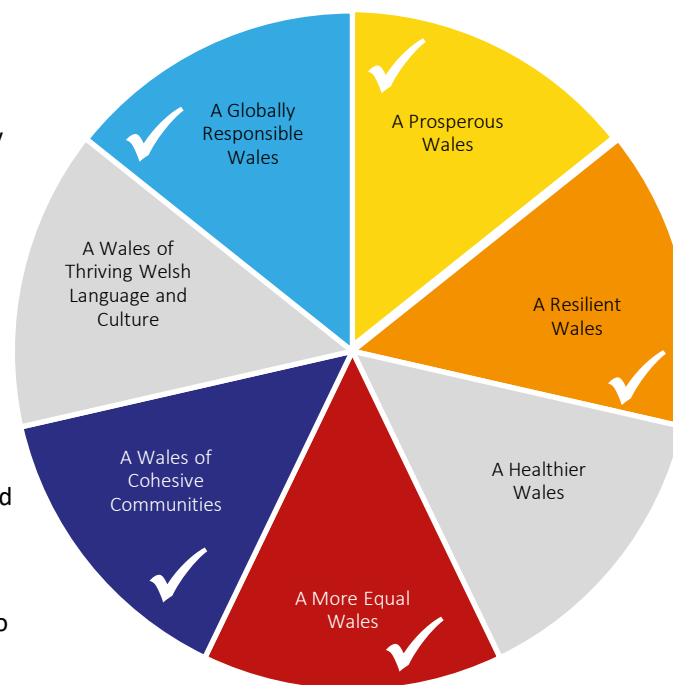
In March 2020, as the UK entered a period of lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Council's scrutiny committees were temporarily suspended not only to respond to the national lockdown requirements, but to ensure that all involved in the process stayed safe. At this time, Councils had to take some rapid decisions about how best to run their services to protect communities and individuals, using emergency powers granted to them to.

In order to positively respond to this situation, Welsh Government quickly introduced regulations that enabled Welsh Councils and their communities to meet 'virtually' – this meant planning could begin to reintroduce scrutiny meetings where business could continue without committee members needing to be physically present in a meeting room.

To begin the process of restarting democratic scrutiny; the Council invested in Microsoft Teams to enable meetings to restart. Although there were some challenges, with the help of support staff, training was designed to support members to manage the new requirements. Additionally, an online meeting protocol was developed that offered guidance on how virtual meetings could be successfully completed.

Many scrutiny members undertook additional training to enable them not only to join the meetings, but to actively participate in them once again, many committee members showing their adaptability in embracing the use of this technology. Working together, meetings were restarted. Webcasting of the meetings began, offering an opportunity for increased public accessibility with Council business and ensuring democratic oversight restarted.

In the longer term, virtual meetings might also offer benefits (e.g.) by reducing travel time, costs, while also helping manage the environmental impact 'in person' attendance might have. In looking at how to fully re-introduce democratic arrangements there are opportunities for councils to consider, and over time, to reflect on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of arrangements to explore options to ensure the use of digital technologies can not only continue to deliver scrutiny across the Council, but could be a tool we can use to continue to improve them.



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



Case Study: Free School Meals

In response to the outbreak of Covid-19, school closures were enforced across the U.K. on the 20th March 2020, and the Education Minister announced the repurposing of schools as emergency childcare provision for critical workers and facilities for vulnerable learners. The school closures meant that the provision of free school meals (FSM) needed to be changed.

M.T.C.B.C. was tasked with delivering FSM to those children that were eligible to receive them. There were over 2,000 children on the FSM list, a large proportion of which were reliant on FSM. The initiative took place between March 2020 and April 2020 with 7,779 meals being delivered in the first 2 weeks.

M.T.C.B.C was regarded as the best performing LA in Wales for this particular activity and was commended for its efforts in providing meals to children across the county borough. This was achieved by working with a number of stakeholders to help drive the initiative including staff from Merthyr Valleys Homes (MVH), Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association (MTHA), Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT), staff from the Leisure Trust, as well as volunteers and several other community groups.

After several weeks of providing meal deliveries, the Council adopted a new sustainable approach by providing supermarket vouchers to all parents, equivalent of £3.90 per day per child.

As of the 4th May 2020, the Council moved to a system of either direct payments or vouchers depending on choice, with approximately 12% choosing vouchers. These payments ended on Friday 11th September 2020 when schools fully reopened but were continued for October half term.

The free school meal deliveries and subsequent voucher or payment scheme helped support children within our communities throughout the spring term and summer holidays of 2020; the initiative also supported the Council's poverty agenda.



Case Study: Funding secured to develop a Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre and cultural venue on site of Merthyr Tydfil's Synagogue

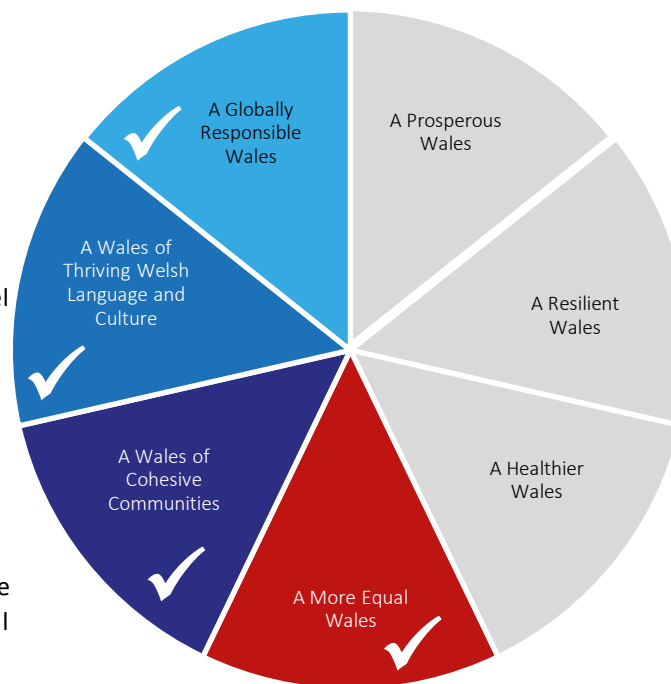
Plans to turn Merthyr Tydfil's Synagogue into a Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre and cultural venue have taken a step forward as a result of grants from Cadw - the Welsh Government's heritage agency - and three major charitable foundations.

Funding for urgently needed repairs to the building has also been secured from The Pilgrim Trust, the Los Angeles-based GRoW@Annenberg and the Philip King Charitable Trust.

The Grade II-listed stone building, designed in Gothic Revival style, has been empty since 2006 and needed urgent structural repair work when it was bought by the Foundation for Jewish Heritage last year. Comedian David Baddiel and Welsh Jewish billionaire philanthropist Sir Michael Moritz have both agreed to become Patrons of the project.

CLlr Geraint Thomas, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Public Protection, said: "The Council has long been in talks with the Foundation of Jewish Heritage about the future of the Synagogue. "Our officers have worked with the Foundation to provide support and advice, and will continue to do so throughout the restoration project".

CLlr Thomas continued "The Synagogue is a prominent landmark building within the Thomastown Conservation Area and an extremely important part of the town centres historic landscape. We're delighted that funding has been secured to ensure its future is looking very bright - and that it will become another feature in our ever-growing tourism offer."



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



Case Study: Mass Testing Pilot Scheme

In November 2020, Merthyr Tydfil launched its mass testing scheme in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council was the first of the local authorities in Wales to take part in the initiative; and only the second authority in the U.K. (Liverpool being the first). The scheme was aimed at residents of Merthyr Tydfil as well as people that work within the County Borough.

The purpose of the exercise was to help lessen the spread of the virus by identifying positive cases amongst asymptomatic people (people with no clear symptoms); encouraging those that tested positive, to follow the self-isolation protocols.

Testing sites were setup across the County Borough to allow easy access for those looking to undertake a test, and to limit the use of public transport during the pandemic.

The target was to undertake 41,600 tests. Over the initial period of testing (run between 21st November - 18th December 2020) – a total of 38,589 tests were carried out, achieving 93% of our target. Of the tests conducted, 759 positive cases were identified (1.97%).

The number of people that engaged in the mass testing scheme was positive with well over half of the County Borough's population taking part. This played a huge part in helping keep people safe by identifying 759 people who tested positive for the virus having to isolate along with those who they had been in close contact with.

Throughout the pilot, we worked closely with a number of stakeholders including Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust, The College of Merthyr Tydfil and a number of local community groups and volunteers. We also worked closely with Health Services, South Wales Police and UK Military Forces.

Feedback from residents on the initiative was positive with many residents returning for multiple tests to show their support and dedication to keeping Merthyr Tydfil safe.



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



Case Study: Project Penderyn / Safer Streets

The South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner has been successful in securing more than half a million pounds for Merthyr Tydfil from the Home Office's Safer Streets Fund.

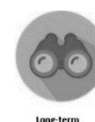
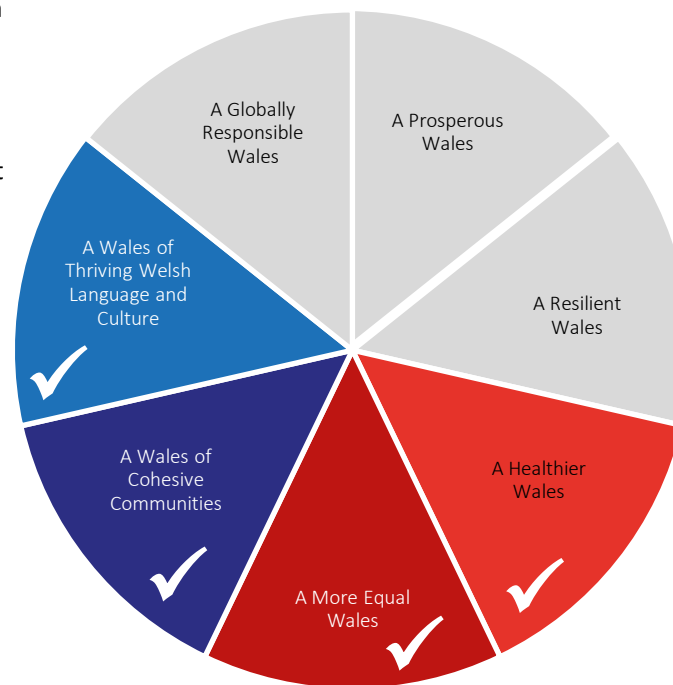
The £25 million fund was launched in January to enable bids from Police and Crime Commissioners across England and Wales to fund initiatives aimed at tackling crime and preventing acquisitive crime (driven for the desire of money/possessions) and other offences that have a real impact on the community.

The Commissioner and his team worked closely with MTCBC to identify things which would make a real difference to the town, helping both the Police and Council officers to work together to increase public confidence and encouraging activity in the Town Centre.

A range of measures are being taken forward by Community Safety Partnership with Inspector Mike Ruddall of South Wales Police leading the implementation phase of the project. These measures include a CCTV upgrade; improved street lighting; the installation of alley gates and a property marking scheme for local residents of the Town ward.

Welcoming the announcement, Police and Crime Commissioner Alun Michael said: "This is a fantastic boost for Merthyr Tydfil and wonderful news for the area. We have been awarded a total of £513,410 which will be invested in the installation of alley gates, improved street lighting and CCTV provision as well as new signage. We will also be enhancing community engagement with community clean-up days and information leafleting to residents and local businesses."

This is fantastic news for the Community Safety Partnership and the residents of Merthyr Tydfil. Local Councillors listened to the concerns of our residents and have sought funding to enable us to put robust infrastructure in place, making Merthyr Tydfil a safer place to live and visit".



Long-term



Prevention



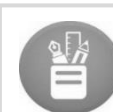
Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



Case Study: Public Protection Services Role in Policing the Pandemic

The Council's Public Protection and Safety Services have always played a key role in keeping our communities safe and are well established within the Council with clear links to the communities it serves.

In March 2020, Covid-19 became a factor affecting everyone's lives, not only in Merthyr Tydfil or Wales, but globally. When this happened, the Public Protection Services (Licensing, Trading Standards and Environmental Health) were given responsibility to enforce Covid Regulations aimed at preventing transmission of the virus.

Officers from these teams discharged this responsibility through 'engage and explain' education initiatives. The offered advice, guidance and practical support to citizens and businesses across the County Borough, and where necessary, they took taking robust enforcement action.

In order to reach as many businesses as possible, the teams used social media as a key tool to get messages into our communities. A bespoke 'closed group' business sector pages were created on Facebook. The role of these bespoke groups was to allow quick dissemination of information along with online virtual seminars explaining guidelines and best practice as business reopened.

During the first year of the pandemic:

- 6,104 pieces of business advice was given.
- 1,852 inspections conducted.
- 767 business enquiries dealt with.
- 74 warning/improvement notices issued.
- 8 business closures issued.

Collaboration was key to making this activity happen; Public Protection Services working with other departments across the Council; and externally with key partners who supported the delivery. For example, we worked with South Wales Police as part of Joint Enforcement Teams; this enabled us to ensure the protection of Merthyr Tydfil residents and visitors whilst also supporting business in complying with the regulations.

Regular briefings were also held with local councillors to keep them up-to-date with progress made and any changes pending. We also worked with the local MS and MP who were also in attendance at business seminars.



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



Case Study: “Renaissance” Project continues to restore Merthyr Tydfil’s Pontmorlais Area

A £2.1m programme to restore some of Merthyr Tydfil’s most historic buildings, while also providing jobs and training in building skills for local people, has seen the completion of its latest project.

The Victorian era Vulcan Inn now looks more like it did in the 1800s after the restoration of early decorative features which were lost when alterations were carried out in recent years, thanks to the Pontmorlais Townscape Heritage Quarter “Continuing the Renaissance” project. The public house has undergone a £215,600 facelift with match funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) towards investment from the Council.

“This project is preserving the unique landscape character of the oldest and most architecturally impressive part of the town centre, protecting or reintroducing the features that make each building special,” said Cllr Geraint Thomas. “It involves sympathetic restoration using traditional methods and materials of surviving examples of the town centre’s earliest stages of urban development.”

Over the past decade, a total £5 million has been invested in the area and seen the restoration of 16 buildings including the Grade II listed St David’s Hall, Redhouse Cymru and Canolfan Soar. Typically, work includes reinstatement of traditional shopfronts, timber sash windows, traditional renders, natural slate roof coverings, cast iron rainwater goods and chimneys.

The Vulcan Inn is thought to be early Victorian, as it appears on the 1850s Tithe map of the area - although there is a building with a similar footprint shown on an 1836 OS map, so parts of the existing building could be even older. The refurbishment work was carried out by local construction company, Murphy & Sons.

A partnership project between the Council and The Wales National Roof Training Group to provide training in traditional building skills saw three of the company’s employees complete a lead-working course.



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



Case Study: Shielding

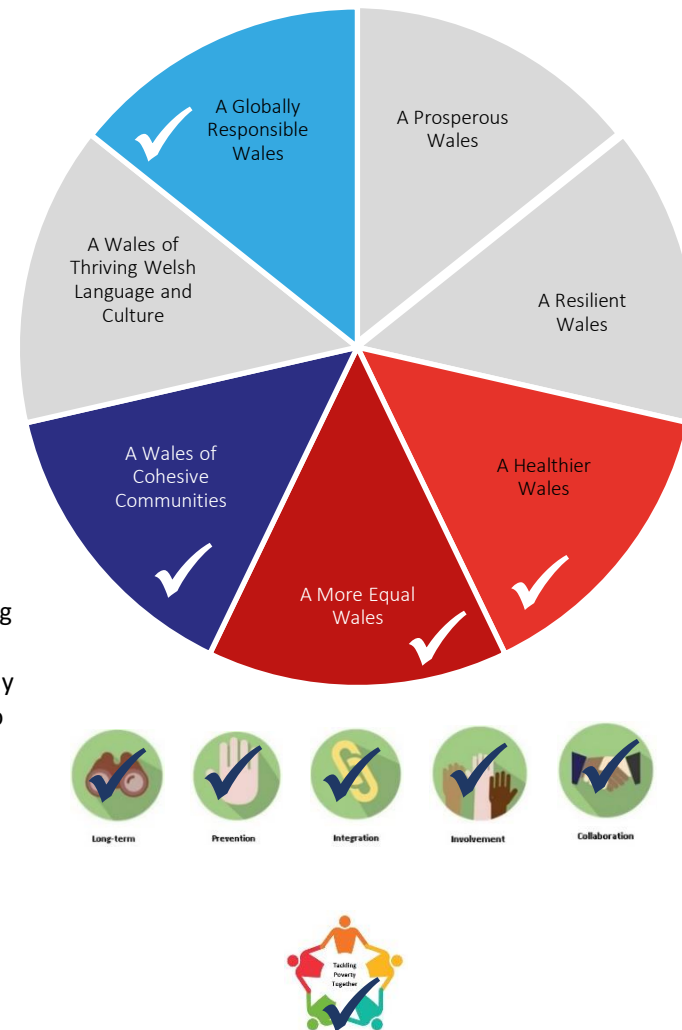
Shielding was initially introduced between March and August 2020 when the virus was new and the Chief Medical Officer for Wales advised those most at risk to serious harm from coronavirus to stay at home to protect themselves. This referred to people, including a small number of children, who are 'clinically extremely vulnerable' to developing serious illness if they were exposed to coronavirus because they have a particular serious underlying health condition. Therefore, the clinically extremely vulnerable were asked to isolate and stay at home to protect themselves and minimise the risk of contracting Covid-19.

The Welsh Government organised for each of the Welsh Local Authority to receive a copy of the Shielding Patient List (SPL). This is a list of complied of people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to serious illness if they catch coronavirus. It was the duty of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to contact each any every person on the SPL list to establish if they required extra help during this shielding period; there were 2,877 people on Merthyr Tydfil's SPL.

In order to undertake this crucial and immediate initiative, a number of council staff were redeployed to support this function at short notice. Some staff also balanced this role on top of their substantive duties. In addition to this, many voluntary groups, community hubs etc. and Councillors across the wards worked together to undertake this urgent initiative. An example of these groups include: Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT); Twyn Action Group (TAG); Gellideg Foundation; Care and Repair; and Stephens & George Print Group. Throughout this initiative Merthyr Tydfil CBC worked continuously with Welsh Government to ensure no clinically extremely vulnerable person would go unaccounted for, and to ensure that MTCBC acted on any changes to the scheme; for example, if the eligibility criteria changed or new information was required etc.

MTCBC contacted all of the clinically extremely vulnerable persons and a picture of their specific needs and requirements was established. Over the next five months, with the collaborative and unwavering help of numerous voluntary groups, community hubs and individuals throughout the Borough, we supported:

- 1,595 weekly referrals for food parcels and support with shopping
- On average provided 3,150 hours of domiciliary care per week with the help from our Social Services department, and
- 2,534 welfare calls were made to residents throughout this period to ensure they were safe and cared for.



Case Study: Active Merthyr Community Grant Support

As with all sectors, sport and physical activity was significantly impacted by the pandemic. Sports clubs, gyms and other physical activity providers faced long spells with little to no membership and income, putting them at risk of not being able to return.

Throughout 2020/21 Active Merthyr provided bespoke support and guidance to sport and physical activity providers across the County Borough to access a range of grants. This support included:-

- The development of an internal grant, designed and administered by Active Merthyr, to support organisations to move their offer online in the early stages of the pandemic.
- Liaising with grant providers to understand the grant requirements and communicating this to local organisations.
- Meeting with organisations to understand the issues being faced and identify best use of grant support.
- Support in the writing of applications and, when needed, supporting additional discussions with applicants and the grant provider.

Over 2020/21, a total of **88 providers** were supported to varying levels across 5 main grants. These providers included sports clubs, gyms, freelancers, private businesses, social enterprises, housing associations and a range of community groups. In total, just over **£360,000** of grant funding was allocated to sport and physical activity providers in Merthyr in 2020/21 supported by Active Merthyr.

As well as this, Active Merthyr also successfully applied for a further £125,000 for the redevelopment of Afon Taf running track into the newly refurbished John Sellwood Community track, with the facility now open to the community and hosting a range of activities. This brings the total additional grant funding brought into Merthyr for sport and physical activity in 2020/21 to £485,000.

Absolutely over the moon with our new artificial pitch. Many thanks to @sportwales for the funding and to @ActiveMerthyr and @ACMSEwales for their support. Our thanks to @SCSlatter for the work and Julian for overseeing the project. This completes Phase 1 of our strategic plan 🙌

Merthyr Cricket Club @Merth... · 28/04/2021

And its complete. The finishing touches were made to our artificial pitch today. Thank you to everyone who was involved in securing the funding and @SCSlatter for their professionalism when completing the work



Merthyr Squash
@MerthyrSquash

Great meeting with Active Merthyr and Squash Wales today. Although we are still not back on court, the future is bright and exciting. Thanks Emma, Sarah, Dan and Sam.



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



"Since lockdown began the physical and mental wellbeing of our children has been extremely vulnerable. They have been looking forward to Ashley's Zoom classes every week and they have undoubtedly helped them through such unknown times"

"The Zoom karate lessons have given my daughter an invaluable sense of normality & routine in strange times"

"The Zoom karate lessons have given my daughter an invaluable sense of normality & routine in strange times"
"Since lockdown began the physical and mental wellbeing of our children has been extremely vulnerable. They have been looking forward to Zoom classes every week and they have undoubtedly helped them through such unknown times"

Quotes from club members supported by the online engagement fund



Case Study: Supporting Businesses across Merthyr Tydfil to continue to meet Customer Needs

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented challenges to people and communities across Merthyr Tydfil. The national and local lockdowns which everyone was required to stick to was unknown and brought different types of pressure to the people living and working in Merthyr Tydfil. A key focus for the Council's Economic Development Team was the impact enforced closure for businesses could have on their ability to remain trading.

More than 1,000 Merthyr Tydfil businesses with premises affected by coronavirus were identified as qualifying for and received funding. In addition, 120 businesses took part in a survey aimed at building a picture of Covid-19's impact on their trading and recovery planning, the results of which were used to determine what further support is needed.

The survey results showed a high percentage of those responses were from town centre businesses. Some of the key things identified included:

- 96% of responders said they had suffered income loss;
- 47% had furloughed staff;
- 66% had received grants; and
- 27% had coronavirus recovery plans.

Council officers at Merthyr Tydfil CBC worked closely with local businesses to try to limit the damage they faced as a result of the coronavirus lockdown. As well helping companies access over £30 million in Welsh Government grants and business rates 'holidays', the Council's Revenues and Community Regeneration teams helped them plan for recovery using a business health check questionnaire.

As well as supporting business to receive grant funding and benefit from the rates relief; the Council secured Transforming Towns Thematic Covid-19 response grant funding from Welsh Government. This funding helped businesses (where they were able) to be provided with outdoor equipment such as awnings/ canopies; tables and chairs etc.; enabling them to use their outside spaces to develop their offer and continue to meet customers' needs. Working with Merthyr Tydfil's Business Improvement District; there was also an opportunity for local businesses to access Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); signage to re-enforce rules around social distancing etc.

Councillor Andrew Barry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance, said: "We were delighted with the way in which we were able to quickly get the financial support out to our businesses."

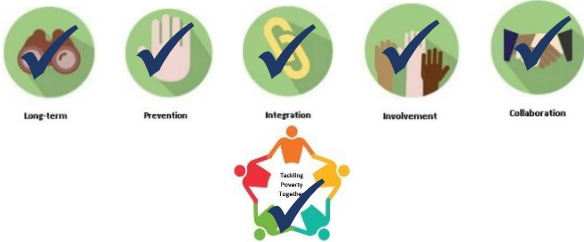
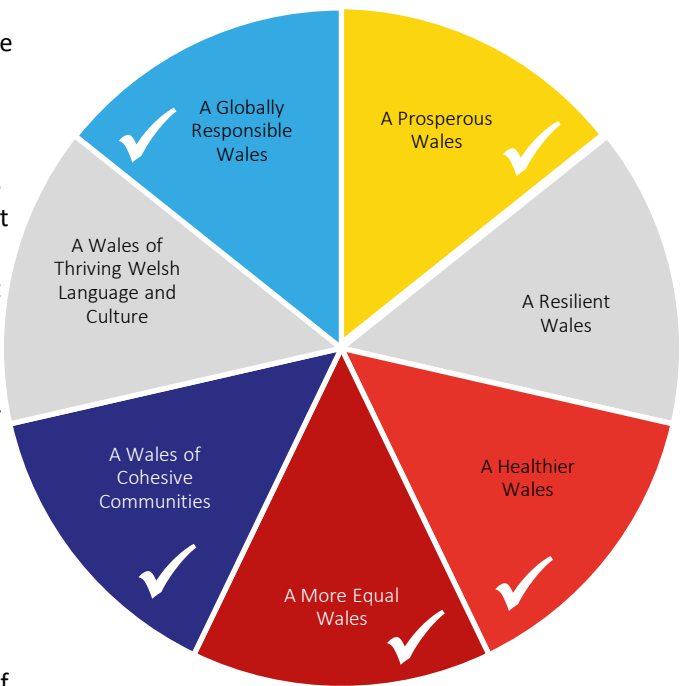


Case Study: Test, Trace, and Protect

The Welsh Governments Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) strategy is to enhance health surveillance in the community, undertake effective and extensive contact tracing, and support people to self-isolate where required to do so. Anyone who tests positive for Coronavirus must self-isolate for 10 days. Under the Government’s Test, Trace and Protect strategy, any person who have tested positive for Covid-19 will be asked for details of the people they have come into contact with up to 14 days before their symptoms started so these people can be advised to self-isolate if necessary (however, the parameters did change later in 2021). Contact tracing identifies people in the community who have come in contact with someone who has tested positive for Coronavirus. They may be at risk of getting Coronavirus themselves. A Contact Tracer will give them advice to reduce the spread of the virus to other people. It is really important that people take part in the testing and contact tracing process so the spread of the virus can be reduced.

The TTP approach adopted by MTCBC is a regional model based on the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board footprint, which is Rhondda Cynnon Taf (RCT), Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil. At the beginning of the pandemic MTCBC started a contact tracing service by employing/redeploying staff as contact tracers and advisors at local level, with our Environmental Health Officers (EHO) acting as professional leads. Prior to the introduction of the national Test, Track and Protect system, MTCBC’s IT department worked in collaboration with Powys CBC to develop a regional system in order to meet the demands from Welsh Government.

A core TTP workforce has been established and is flexed to meet demand with the peaks and troughs of the pandemic. In addition to this, a joint enforcement team has been founded to enforce the legislative restrictions across the region. Performance of the regional TTP service is discussed at regional Incident Management Team and the Regional Oversight Group meetings, which are attended by key officers (representatives from the Health Board, Public Health Wales and LA’s); they acts as forums for identifying risks and issues that need to be escalated. Whereas, the operational workstream meeting attended by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg LA’s deals with the day-to-day running of the service. Regional TTP now undertake the bulk of the contact tracing but in certain settings, MTCBCs EHOs are still involved in giving infection, prevention and control advice notably to health and social care and education. TTP continues to operate on a regional footprint (hosted by RCT) where there is a regional team comprised of EHOs from Rhondda Cynnon Taf (RCT), Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil. MTCBC still has one EHO seconded to the team until March 2022; this team continues to deal with the more complex cases and clusters escalated up from the contact tracers.



33,609 eligible cases introduced into the Cwm Taf Morgannwg contact tracing teams (27/06/2020 - 03/04/2021)

94,058 close contacts eligible for follow-up by Cwm Taf Morgannwg contact tracing teams (27/06/2020 - 03/04/2021)



Case Study: Mass Vaccination across Merthyr Tydfil

2020 was a very difficult year for everyone. Coronavirus has meant that the way people lived across the globe has had to change, and many of us have had our lives disrupted. Cases of the virus were recorded in all areas across Wales.

Merthyr Tydfil experienced high infection levels; and in November 2020, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council was the first of the local authorities in Wales to launch its mass testing scheme in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The scheme was aimed at residents of Merthyr Tydfil as well as people that work within the County Borough.

To ensure that people across Merthyr Tydfil were able to receive their vaccinations close to where they live, a series of Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) were established at venues across the County Borough. This could not have been achieved without the Council working closely with key partners.

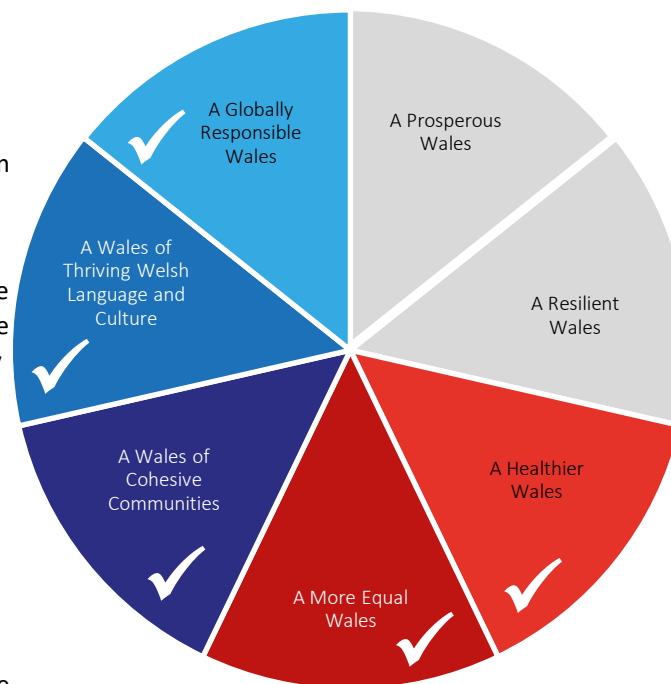
At the early stages, staff from the Council and 'Wellbeing@Merthyr' worked together with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board on the mass vaccination programme. The first site to open was based in the main hall at Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre.

Wellbeing@Merthyr Chief Executive Jane Sellwood said: "The Council and Trust staff have ensured the vaccination centre runs smoothly, helping to direct people to the right areas (e.g.) Leisure staff on site (at the vaccination centre) make sure all compliance testing is undertaken and fire evacuation could happen if required. Wellbeing@Merthyr are proud to be supporting the efforts of the NHS through the use of our facility to hopefully speed a return to normal activities before the tragedy of the pandemic hit".

A series of CVCs were opened across the County Borough at sites such as Dowlais Engine House; Cefn Community Centre etc. as well as via GP surgeries; at hospitals and in care homes. By the end of March 2021; 151,315 people had received their Covid-19 vaccination across Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board; with 35,206 people having received their second dose.

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Transformation and Commercialisation Cllr Geraint Thomas said: "The Council is proud that the leisure centre has been at the heart of both the mass testing and vaccination programmes in Merthyr Tydfil.

"Both our and the Wellbeing @Merthyr's staff take their roles very seriously and are again supporting an operation that is an exemplar in how to run an emergency health facility."



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



Case Study: Young People Influencing Council Services

A young team of budding politicians convinced the Council to install a water bottle filling machine in Merthyr Tydfil's new bus station after pitching their idea in an online presentation. Seven members of the School Council at St Mary's Catholic Primary School's took part in a virtual meeting with Mayor Cllr Howard Barrett and the Council's Cabinet, persuading them that the availability of fresh drinking water was essential to people's health and wellbeing. The 10 and 11-year-old pupils were impressive in their impassioned arguments for the dispenser.

School Council members reasoned that:

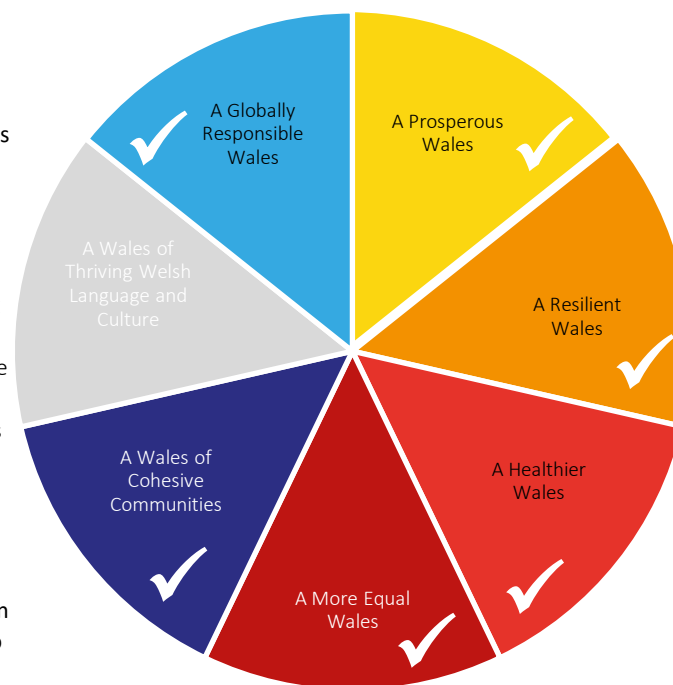
- water should be free and accessible to homeless and less fortunate people
- there should be an effort to change 'attitudes of grabbing and go' by offering an alternative to buying bottles and damaging the environment
- people travelling into and out of Merthyr Tydfil should be able to stay hydrated when travelling on the bus
- people should be encouraged to reduce their sugar intake by drinking water rather than sugary drinks
- the installation of the bottle filling machine would be good for local tourism, with visitors to local attractions and those out walking able to quench their thirst
- when cafés are closed, people should be easily able to get water without having to go home

At the end of the presentation, the Cabinet voted overwhelmingly in favour of the bottle filling station. Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Learning Cllr Lisa Mytton said she and her fellow Councillors had been 'seriously impressed' by the pupils' pitch. "They were so knowledgeable and articulate and we couldn't fail to be persuaded by their arguments," she added. "It's so reassuring to know that these kind and compassionate children are Merthyr Tydfil's future. We're all in very good hands!"

The Project Manager with main contractor for the bus station Morgan Sindall, said: "There wasn't provision in the original Station plans for a water dispenser; but after listening to the School Council's extremely well-presented appeal, how could we not oblige and provide one? The pupils had initially asked for a water fountain, although we all later agreed a bottle filling station would be more hygienic in view of the current situation. It will also be better for the environment, reducing plastic waste."

St Mary's teacher and 'very proud leader' of the School Council, said: "I would like to thank the Cabinet for offering this fantastic opportunity for the School Council to pitch their idea for a water dispenser. I can't even describe how proud I am of the children - they make us proud every day in school. I could see the children's faces were beaming when their names were mentioned."

The active involvement of the project team with the school throughout the bus station construction period was recognised. "Many of our pupils have been very fortunate to participate in a range of engaging activities, providing them with a real life local context of construction and engineering". Welsh Government awarded the County Borough Council £11m funding for the station, which will be located closer to the town's railway station, to complement its significant investment in the Core Valley Lines Rail Network.



Long-term



Prevention



Integration



Involvement



Collaboration



Case Study: Younger Generation MUST be at the heart of the Cyfarthfa Plan

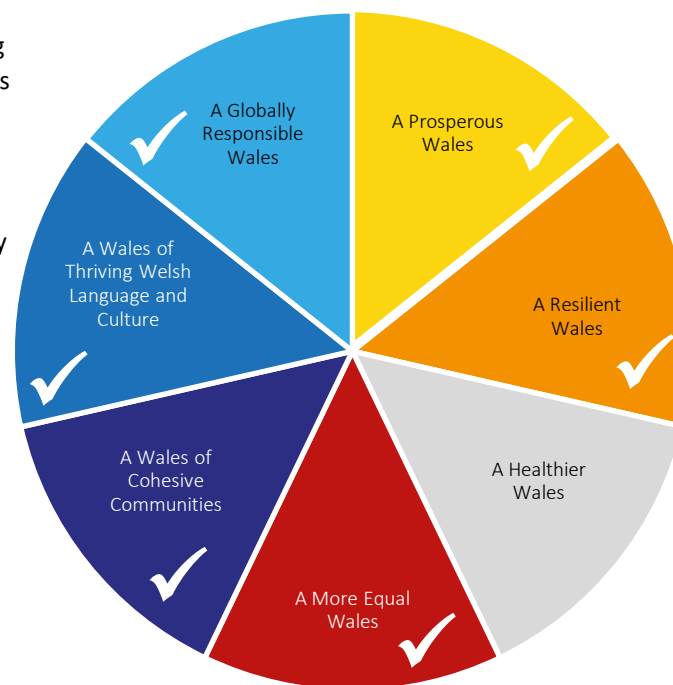
Following nearly 60 consultation meetings and workshops carried out across the County Borough; the message from the team of consultants working on developing the 25-year plan for transforming Merthyr Tydfil's extensive historical assets is "the younger generation must be our focus if the plans for transforming Merthyr Tydfil's Cyfarthfa Heritage Area are to succeed".

Meetings and creative workshops have been held with primary and secondary school pupils and teachers; college students and lecturers; community groups; Council officers; Welsh Government officials; and conservation organisation CADW. "We have reached far and wide to speak to as many groups; organisations and members of the public as possible" said project leader, Jonathan Shaw from Ian Ritchie Architects (iRAL). "The willingness of everyone to engage with us has been exceptional".








"We've had very honest and open discussions with all participants about Cyfarthfa, Merthyr Tydfil: its history; environment; culture; and the future. There is a clear pride in the town, with a real affection for its history, and an enthusiasm to bring about real change. We couldn't have wished for a better outcome."

Mr Shaw said the project was a long-term one, which meant that the voices, actions and involvement of younger generations must be part of shaping it. He added: "Future generations have a real stake in making a bold and imaginative impact, not only in the way the town's rich history and heritage could be interpreted, but also in protecting and enhancing its natural environment, and ensuring its diverse creativity flows."

Cllr Geraint Thomas said Merthyr Tydfil's wealth of heritage assets included 223 listed buildings, one of which - Cyfarthfa Castle – is in the exceptional, national interest Grade 1 category. Councillor Thomas said "Ian Ritchie Architects were selected by the Council, working closely with the Design Commission for Wales, to lead the team to develop the Cyfarthfa Plan - not only for Cyfarthfa Castle and its 190-acre park, but also an area west of the River Taff that includes historic furnaces - we agree that the younger generation **must** be encouraged to play a leading role in the Plan: after all, it's they who will benefit from it, and hopefully be caretakers of the opportunities implementing it will bring".



Appendix 4 – The 7 National Well-being Goals

	National Goals	How our priorities improve how we contribute to the National Goals
	A Prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	Improving our Education Standards Economic Recovery Environmental Well-being Healthy Organisation Commercial Programme
	A Resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	Environmental Well-being Digital Transformation
	A Healthier Wales People's physical and mental well-being is maximised and health impacts are understood	Improving our Education Standards Increasing our resilience in Social Care Healthy Organisation
	A More Equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	Economic Recovery Healthy Organisation Digital Transformation
	A Wales of Cohesive Communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	Economic Recovery Environmental Well-being
	A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language The Welsh language and culture are an integral part of our communities, and contribute to the rich heritage of the country	Economic Recovery Governance Improvement Improving our Education Standards
	A Globally Responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being	Improving our Education Standards Increasing our resilience in Social Care Economic Recovery Environmental Well-being