

# Neath Port Talbot Early Years, Children & Young People's Plan



BWRDD GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS  
CASTELL-NEDD PORT TALBOT



NEATH PORT TALBOT  
PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD

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## Section 1

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, LEISURE & LIFELONG LEARNING



Children and young people across Neath Port Talbot are capable, compassionate and ambitious for their future lives. Their drive and motivation is evident daily and I am proud of their achievements and the progress they make in our schools, wider educational settings and communities. They have shown incredible resilience during and following the pandemic, adapting to new ways of living and learning in an ever changing society. However, we recognise that children and young people's opportunities to develop and learn has been affected. We want our children and young people to live fulfilling lives and we are committed to ensuring all our children and young people have the best start in life.

This new Children and Young People's Plan 2024-2029 is for all children and young people aged 0-25, living in Neath Port Talbot. The plan has been developed through engagement and consultation with Neath Port Talbot children, young people, families, and partnership organisations in the Neath Port Talbot Children and Young People's Leadership Group. It sets out partnership priorities and ambitions for the next five years. It provides a clear framework for working together to give our children and young people the support they need to thrive and succeed. We know that working in partnership will support us all to address the challenges we are facing and deliver better outcomes for our children, young people and families.

I am grateful to all of the children, young people, families and partners who have supported the development of this plan. Your continued participation will be key to its success.

**ANDREW THOMAS**

Director of Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning

*Neath Port Talbot Council*



## Section 2

# WHY WE NEED A CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

**This Children and Young People's Plan is the way in which we will ensure all children have the best start in life. It is the roadmap for working in partnership and sets out what the Children & Young People's Leadership Group wants to achieve over the next 5 years.**

To develop this plan we listened to children, young people, their families and the people who care for them. We also talked to the people who work with and support them, and those who make decisions about the services we provide. Based on those conversations we developed a shared vision that...



**Neath Port Talbot will be a place where all children & young people, regardless of their circumstances, are part of a community that meets their needs and supports them to thrive in a way that works best for them".**

A shared vision gives us a clear understanding of what we are trying to achieve. This plan sets out our priorities for the next 5 years and how we will monitor the impact of what we are doing.

In our engagement events we talked to people about issues that are important to them. These important issues are reflected in each of the priority outcomes that make up this plan.



## Who Will Be Accountable For Delivering the Plan?

The Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board Well-Being Plan 2023–28 sets out ‘to ensure all children get the best start in life’, this plan explains how that goal will be achieved. The Public Services Board Governance structure gives the Children and Young People’s Leadership Group the responsibility for ‘best start in life’ and they will be accountable for delivering change and monitoring the impact of this plan. We will produce an update on progress, and continue to engage with children, young people and their families. Alongside this we will commit to exploring ways to work with young people directly to evaluate the impact of this plan. This plan will be kept under review.

## How Does This Plan Relate To Other Strategies?

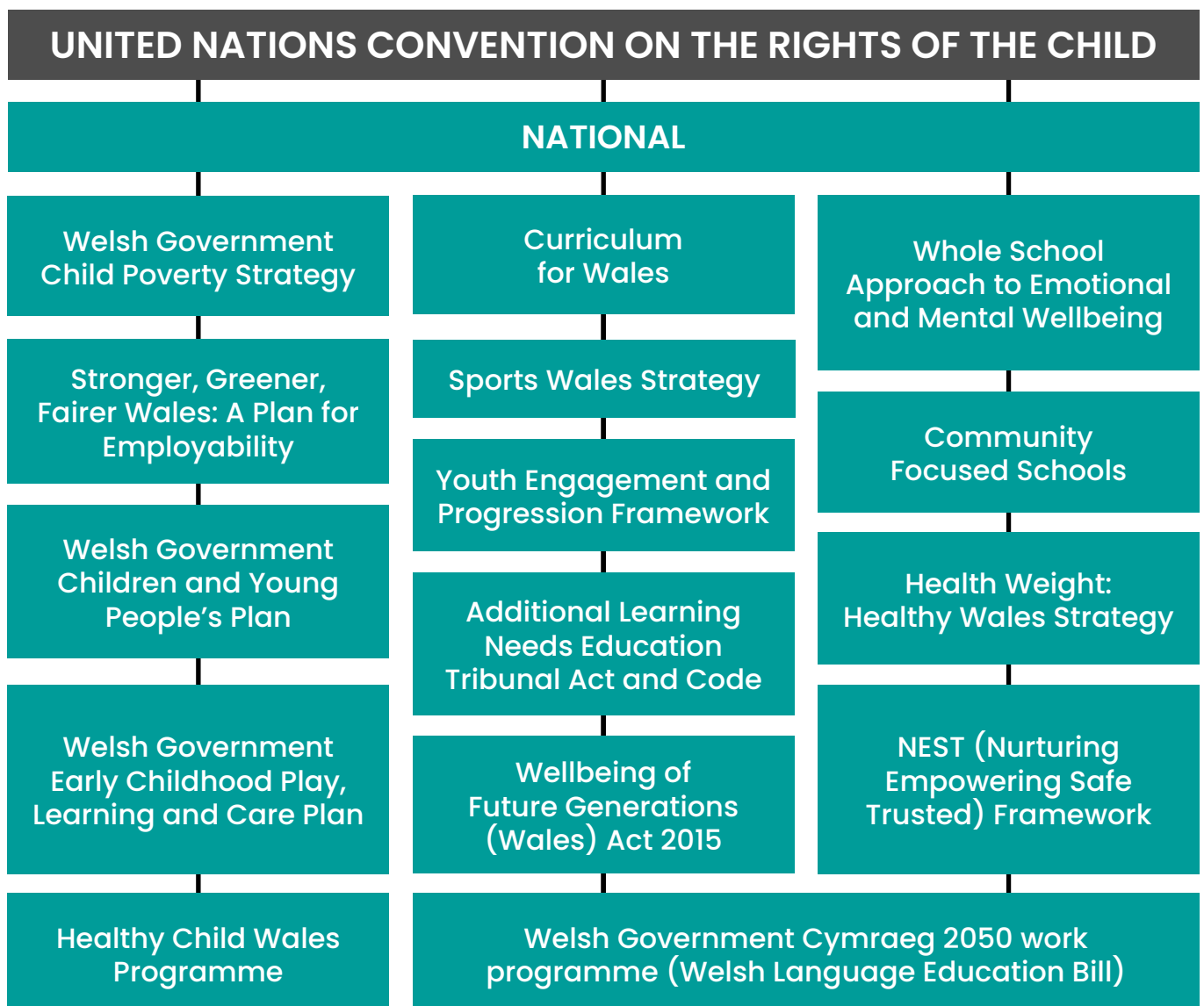
This plan will impact on and has been informed by a range of international, national, regional and local strategies. These strategies will also inform the work of the Children and Young People’s Leadership Group. This will be continually reviewed throughout the lifetime of the plan. The following diagram summarises this context at the time of publication.

## Section 2

# WHY WE NEED A CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN



## Cross-cutting Plans and Strategies



## UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

### REGIONAL

A Better Future for All:  
A Population Health Strategy  
for Swansea Bay

Swansea Bay University  
Health Board Children's  
Services 2024/25 Recovery a  
Sustainability Plan

Swansea Bay University  
Health Board Early Years  
Strategic Principles

South West Wales Regional  
Learning and Skills Partnership  
Employment and Skills Plan

West Glamorgan Regional  
Partnership Board Children  
& Young People's Emotional  
Mental Health & Wellbeing  
Delivery Plan

### LOCAL

Neath Port  
Talbot Culture  
Strategy

Neath Port Talbot  
Public Services  
Board Well-being  
Plan 2023-28

Neath Port  
Talbot Council's  
Equality Plan  
2020-2024

Neath Port Talbot  
Employability & Skills  
Strategy

Children and  
Young People  
Social Care  
Strategic Plan  
2023-26

Neath Port Talbot  
Council Corporate  
Plan 2022 - 2027

Play Sufficiency Assessment

Neath Port  
Talbot Youth  
Engagement  
Strategy

Children & Young  
People Participation  
and Engagement  
Strategy

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

Welsh In Education Strategic  
Plan 2022 - 2032

## Section 3

# A SHARED VISION AND PRIORITIES

Neath Port Talbot will be a place where all children and young people aged 0–25, regardless of their circumstances, are part of a community that meets their needs and supports them to thrive in a way that works best for them.

## OUR PRIORITY OUTCOMES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WILL BE:

### PRIORITY 1.

Supporting our youngest children to be healthy and ready to learn.

### PRIORITY 2.

Children, young people and their families are able to access the right support at the right time with positive outcomes.

### PRIORITY 3.

Children and young people access an education that inspires them to learn and develop the skills they need for the future they want.

### PRIORITY 4.

Children and young people are listened to, and they have opportunities to be actively involved in decision-making.

### PRIORITY 5.

All children and young people are supported to be physically healthy and feel mentally and emotionally strong.

**The change children, young people and their families need cannot be delivered by organisations working in isolation. We commit to working together in partnership to deliver our priority outcomes by:**

Supporting and empowering families and carers to become more resilient and capable.

Taking a needs-based approach to ensure that support is equitable and accessible.

Collaborating with all stakeholders to ensure a community-based approach that enables shared working, avoids duplication and makes the best use of available funding and resources.

Adopting a long-term, outcomes-focused approach, using data and evaluation to learn and improve.

Valuing and developing our workforce, ensuring they have the skills and knowledge they need to work with our children, young people and their families.



## Section 4

# HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

**This plan is for children and young people. We needed to learn from their experiences, understand their priorities and talk to them about what they think could be done better.**

**Our approach to engagement consisted of:**

- » Reviewing extensive previous engagement with children and young people and their families that had informed other

plans, for example Let's Keep Talking, the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board Wellbeing Assessment, School Health Research Network Wellbeing Study, Youth Engagement Strategy, Employability and Skills Strategy, Pupil Voice, Play Sufficiency Assessment and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

- » Conversations with over 200 children and young people living across Neath Port Talbot. We undertook a programme of focus groups, 1-2-1 conversations and workshop sessions in schools and colleges to explore what children and young people think is important to a good life. We also talked to them about their ideas for improving services and support. We made sure to talk to children and young people from seldom heard groups including children with experience of care, young carers, LGBTQ+ young people, children and young people with additional learning needs and young people living in supported accommodation.



- » Conversations with over 75 parents and carers about their aspirations for their children, their experiences of support and their ideas for what could be done better. Again, we spent time speaking to harder to reach groups including families with experience of domestic violence, parents and carers with additional learning needs, and parents and carers with mental ill health.
- » Undertaking a programme of 8 workshops listening to the people who work with, and make the decisions that affect, Neath Port Talbot's children and young people. This included people from across the Local Authority, Health Board, Third Sector and Head Teachers. These workshop sessions focused on bringing stakeholders together to understand the challenges facing

our children and young people. We also explored aspirations for the future, the barriers to implementing change, and identified where the Children and Young People's Leadership Group, and this plan, could have the most impact.

It was important that children, young people and their parents and carers could feel comfortable and speak openly when working with us. We therefore designed activities to suit how each group wanted to engage.



## WHAT WE HEARD FROM... CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**There were common themes that came out of our conversations with children and young people. These included mental health and emotional wellbeing, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on children and young people, choices in education, support for parents and carers, and how we can make sure that people who need more help get it.**

Children and young people across Neath Port Talbot explained that their mental

health can be a barrier to them participating in education in a meaningful way, impact on their relationship with their family and their friendships, stop them from enjoying play, they explained that it can affect every aspect of their life. They think more needs to be done, and sooner, to help children and young people who are struggling with their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Children and young people spoke about their experiences of the cost-of-living crisis; this ranged from families using food banks, to struggling to afford travel to college, to having to cut back on leisure and recreation. Young people spoke to us about the importance of having choices in their education, and what they will do after education and training.

They spoke to us about wanting to feel they could make a choice, and that while everybody wants to learn not everyone can learn in the same way. Some children



and young people felt their parents and carers would benefit from more support to help them be the parents they want to be. Equity was important to the children and young people we spoke to; they want this plan to acknowledge that some people need more help than others for a variety of reasons.

**Supporting children and young people with their mental health and emotional wellbeing was the most commonly held priority, followed by providing choices in education and making sure people can access the help they need when they need it.**



"Well-being days does feel like you don't understand how complex our mental health needs are."

"You need good qualifications to get a good job, but not everyone likes school so where else can they do their exams?"

"There are some things that should be equal, for example, every school should have a careers advisor and a school nurse. But support should be meeting the needs of that person, and some people need more help."

"Some people just need more help to be parents."



## WHAT WE HEARD FROM... PARENTS AND CARERS

**As with children and young people, support for mental health and emotional wellbeing was a priority for parents and carers. They want to be sure their children can get the help they need and to know how to support them best. They were particularly concerned about the high thresholds that have to be met to access mental health support.**

The cost-of-living, and its impact on families, was a big concern in terms of the challenges they are facing and the impact on their families. They all talked about wanting their children to be happy, be healthy and feel safe. They want their children and young people to be able to access opportunity, and “do better than us”.

Parents and carers concerns centred on how difficult it can be to ask for help and concerns about being judged or stigmatised when asking for support. Some parents and carers had experienced other barriers that had prevented them from accessing help, for example, transport and the availability of support sessions around working hours.

**Knowing what support is available, how to access support, and ensuring that support is equitable is the priority for parents and carers. They also want their children and young people to be mentally and emotionally strong. Meeting the needs of children with additional learning needs, and vulnerable children, is a priority.**



"I don't live in a Flying Start area, but because I've experienced domestic abuse, I've been able to access it. The difference has been huge for me and my little girl. It's helping me be a better mum for her."

"He's on a waiting list for CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services), but what can we be doing in the meantime? What can we be doing to help him at home?"

"Flying Start has been great for my little ones, and for me. I do think it should be available to everyone."

"It is hard being a parent, sometimes you need someone to give you some advice and you don't know who ask or where to start."



## WIDER ENGAGEMENT WITH PARTNERS

**We undertook a programme of workshops with stakeholders to understand and explore partners perspectives of what should be prioritised to make a difference in the lives of our children and young people. A clear priority for stakeholders is ensuring equity of support, taking an approach that acknowledges that some children, young people, and their families need more help than others. In addition, stakeholders wanted this plan to think about how we can build resilience in our families, giving them the strength and skills they need to positively meet the challenges of life.**

Across the board there was a belief that children and young people are experiencing the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the continuing effect of the cost of living crisis, and that more needs to be done to understand and mitigate this impact. As with young people, parents, and carers the need for mental health and emotional wellbeing support was highlighted, stakeholders place this in the context of strategic approaches for example the Curriculum for Wales and NEST (nurturing, empowering, safe and trusted) Framework. The stakeholders we heard from value the opportunity, this plan offers, to coordinate services and support to meet need and ensure best use of resources. Ensuring we can retain, develop and upskill the workforce was also a priority for stakeholders. The early years, children and young people workforce is essential to meeting the needs of our children and young people.





**Services working in partnership is vital to meeting the needs of our children and young people. Stakeholders believe collaboration will enable the best use of resources and enable equity of support.**

"When services work together, we can create the safe, nurturing communities."

"Enabling children and young people to grow up happy and healthy is everybody's business."

"Without joined up working services will be inconsistent and undermine each other."

"We need to take the opportunity that the NEST Framework, the whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing and other strategies offer us to better support the emotional wellbeing of our children and young people."

"Improving the quality of our support, means investing in and retaining our workforce."

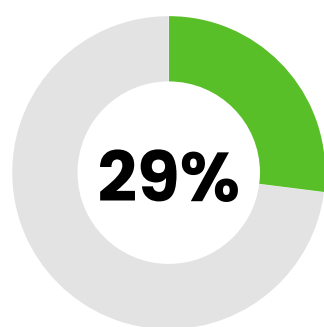
"Access to services should be universal, and based on need not postcodes."

## NEATH PORT TALBOT'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### Our Population of Children and Young People.

What does the data tell us about the children and young people living in Neath Port Talbot and how they're doing?

(Data source: 2021 Census)



of the local population



**52%**  
are male



**48%**  
are female

### AGE 0-25 IN NEATH PORT TALBOT

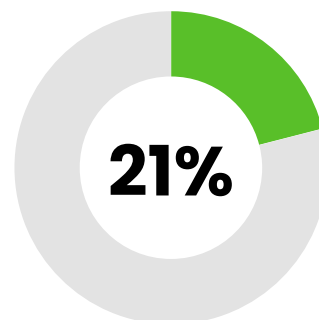
**41,508**

people live in  
Neath Port Talbot

(Data source: 2021 Census)

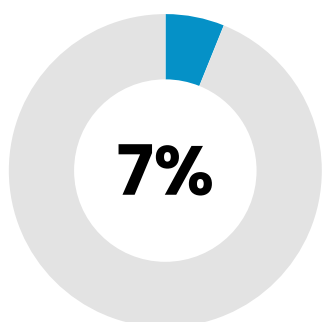
(Date source: Pupil Level Annual School Census 2023 and Stat Xplore: Households Below Average Income 2022/2023)

**8,594**  
children in  
their early  
years (0 – 5  
years) are  
living in Neath  
Port Talbot



aged 0–15 live  
in relative low-  
income families

**IN 2022/23**



of statutory  
school aged  
pupils were from  
ethnic minority  
backgrounds

**3,510**

pupils were  
taught Welsh as  
a first language

**5,321**

pupils were  
eligible for free  
school meals

**756**  
**PUPILS**

over the  
age of 5  
have a first  
language  
other than  
English or  
Welsh

# NEATH PORT TALBOT'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## Their Health.

- **97%** of children aged 0-15 in Neath Port Talbot are in good health, around the same as the Welsh average. (2021 Census, note: data available in limited age groupings)
- **5.5%** of singleton live births in Neath Port Talbot were with a low birth weight in 2022. (StatsWales)
- **29.9%** of children aged 4-5 years were overweight or obese in Neath Port Talbot in 2021/22. (Child Measurement Programme via Public Health Wales Observatory, note: data available for this age group by default)
- **95.1%** of 1-year-olds in Neath Port Talbot had received their '6 in 1' vaccine in 2022/23, higher than the Wales average of 94.5%. (Public Health Wales COVER Annual Report 2023)
- **94.2%** of 2-year-olds in Neath Port Talbot had received their MMR1 vaccination in 2022/23, higher than the Wales average of 92.9%. (Public Health Wales COVER Annual Report 2023)
- **84.3%** of 4-year-olds in Neath Port Talbot were 'up to date in schedule' in 2022/23, i.e. had completed their '4 in 1' preschool booster, the Hib / MenC booster and second MMR dose by four years of age, around the same as across Wales (84.5%). (Public Health Wales COVER Annual Report 2023)

## Their Emotional Health and Wellbeing.

- In Neath Port Talbot the mental wellbeing of young people aged 11-16 is slightly **lower** (average wellbeing score 22.8) than the Wales average (average wellbeing score 23) and is declining. (Public Health Wales, School Health Research Network Data Dashboard 2021-2022)
- Additionally, **78%** of students reported being satisfied with their life, which was the same as the national average. (Public Health Wales, School Health Research Network Data Dashboard 2021-2022)
- Nationally **23.3%** of those aged 16-24 reported being lonely, compared to 10.5% of those aged 75+. (Wales Centre for Public Policy: Who is Lonely in Wales, published 11 October 2021 based on analysis of data from the 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2019/20 National Survey of Wales)



# NEATH PORT TALBOT'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## Their Learning.

- At PLASC 2023 **15.7%** of Neath Port Talbot's school population had Additional Learning Needs compared with **13.4%** nationally. These figures are not fully representative of the level of need, due to the implementation of new legislation across Wales.
- Almost **20% (279)** of reception aged pupils attend a Welsh-medium school.
- People leave education less qualified than average, with **68.7%** qualified to L2 and above compared with **75.3%** in Wales.
- In 2021/22 Neath Port Talbot had an early drop-out rate (vocational qualifications) of **11%**, this is lower than the Welsh average (14%) but a considerable increase on the 2018/19 rate of **3%**. (Welsh Government: Post 16 Statistics based on Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR), Post-16 data collection, Welsh Examinations Database (WED), Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), school attendance data)
- There is more unauthorised absence (**12%** of sessions in maintained schools) than in Wales (**10.5%**). (Welsh Government: Average % of sessions of unauthorised absence in maintained schools, pupils aged 5-15 (2022/23 academic year))

- The School Health Research Network Neath Port Talbot Primary School Students Health and Wellbeing 2022–2023 survey, completed by **1,414** of pupils (year 3 to year 6), reported that **44%** of children said that they had been bullied or cyberbullied (**27%**) in the few months before the survey, slightly less than the national average of **48%** and **28%** respectively.
- The School Health Research Network Neath Port Talbot Secondary School Students Health and Wellbeing 2021/2022 survey, completed by **6,778** of pupils (year 7 to year 11), reported that **33%** of children said that they had been bullied or cyberbullied (**11%**) in the few months before the survey, slightly higher than the national average of **32%** and **10%** respectively.
- The Neath Port Talbot Youth Council's 'Change Starts with You Survey', completed by **1,173** children and young people highlighted racism as the top issue for young people. Racism is a recent issue highlighted through the survey and has not been evident through other engagement. The Youth Council have advised that young people from ethnic minorities have suffered racism in Neath Port Talbot and other Youth Council members have witnessed some forms of racism. These issues will be further explored with the Youth Council.

# NEATH PORT TALBOT'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## Our Most Vulnerable Children and Young People.

- **2,359** (19%) young people aged 16–24 in Neath Port Talbot were disabled under the Equality Act in 2021. (Stat Wales)
- **8** 18–24 year olds were threatened with homelessness in 2021, **42** were homeless and **12** unintentionally homeless in priority need. (Stat Wales)
- On 31 March 2022 there were **295** children being looked after. (Stat Wales)
- **6%** of children in Neath Port Talbot have caring responsibilities. (Census 2021 ONS)
- **7%** of young residents in NPT are gay, lesbian or bisexual and 102 identify as a different gender to sex at birth. (Census 2021 ONS)
- **516** 16–19 and **640** 20–24 year olds in Neath Port Talbot receive Personal Independence Payments.
- **2.2%** of year 11 school leavers in Neath Port Talbot were categorised as NEET (not in education, employment or training), a decrease from the **2.4%** in 2022 and just **0.1%** higher than the national average. (WG NEET figures July 2023)



# OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS



## Introduction.

The Early Years, Children and Young People's Plan explains why each of our five priorities are important, how we work differently and what will happen as a result.

The Children and Young People's Leadership Group will work collaboratively to create robust action plans for each priority.

## PRIORITY OUTCOME 1:

### Supporting our youngest children to be healthy and ready to learn

#### What We Have Heard

Parents and carers told us that the early years of their children and young people are important to them. Parents and carers want equitable access to support from conception through their children's early years, with linked up services that work together and are easy to access. They want to be able to access help and build relationships with other families in their communities, creating support networks that can support them to raise their children.

Parents and carers want their children to reach developmental milestones and build the skills they need for a lifetime of learning. They need early advice, and access to support if their child has speech, language and communication, disabilities, or other needs.

**"We all know that supporting children in their early years sets them off on the right path, it will only have benefits in the longer term."**

Swansea  
University Bay  
Health Visitor

#### What We Will Do



We will learn from our early integration pilots and work together to create an equitable support system that meets the needs of our children from pre-birth to 7 years of age.



We will work with families and communities to encourage engagement in childcare and early education to help more children prepare for a lifetime of learning.



We will ensure families are aware of the help that can make childcare more affordable and how to access it.

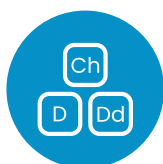
## What We Will Do

- ✓ We will work together with families, carers and partner organisations to support children's transition into education.
- ✓ We will enable all children to reach their speech, language and communication milestones in their early years as part of their wider developmental journey.
- ✓ We will continue to build on the Healthy Child Wales programme to support the health and welfare of all children in their early years.
- ✓ We will provide opportunities for children in their early years to learn, socialise and play in Welsh.
- ✓ We will ensure our early years workforce has the training and professional development they need to support children to make progress and achieve their developmental milestones.

## How Will We Know?



More early years workforce engaged in training and CPD opportunities.



More children accessing Welsh medium education.



More children aged 4 – 5 years of age are a healthy weight.



Improved attendance rates in nursery education.



More families taking up Welsh Government funded childcare.



## PRIORITY OUTCOME 2:

**Children, Young People and their families are able to access the right support at the right time with positive outcomes**

### What We Have Heard

Children, young people and their families in Neath Port Talbot have told us that it needs to be easier to find information and help, and to access support services. They also want to be sure that they can get the help they need before problems get too big for them and cannot be reversed.

They have told us that fear of judgement and stigma can prevent them from asking for help, and that it can be frustrating to have to tell their stories to multiple services. Waiting lists can also cause frustration, resulting in some children, young people and / or families 'giving up' preventing them from getting the help they need. They want services to work in a joined-up way that works for them.

**"I'm really grateful for Flying Start childcare, it's helped my daughter learn to play and socialise. It also means I can ask them about parenting classes and other things. From my experience, if I could change one thing about the system, it would be to know who to ask, so I don't get passed around. I don't want to keep asking for help and finding it's not there."**

**- Single Parent & Domestic Abuse Survivor**

### What We Will Do

- ✓ Children, young people and families will be able to access the help they need from services.
- ✓ We will work together, and listen to children, young people and their families, to think about what early help and support they need.
- ✓ We will ensure our early intervention services work together, in partnership, to meet the needs of our children, young people and their families.

## What We Will Do

- ✓ We will work with existing partnership programmes and initiatives to look for ways to tackle barriers to accessing help, by putting support into communities.
- ✓ We will continue to explore how we can better share information and data, so that people who ask for help only need to tell their story once.
- ✓ We will ensure that information for children, young people and families is easy to find and easy to understand.

## How Will We Know?



Services share relevant information and data appropriately, for effective support.



Children, young people and families access early support services at the right time.



Suitable access to information for children and young people.



Support services meet the needs of children, young people and families.



Services plan collaboratively to provide co-ordinated support in communities.



Increased engagement with the Family Information Service by families and professionals.



## PRIORITY OUTCOME 3:

**Children and Young People access an education that inspires them to learn and develop the skills they need for the future they want**

### What We Have Heard

Parents and carers want their children to have access to opportunity, to be able to develop the skills they need to have a successful life and value education. We acknowledge that there are challenges around attendance and exclusion rates in Neath Port Talbot. When we listened to children and young people about the reasons that children do not attend school, they talked about mental health, meeting their additional needs, and bullying including cyber bullying.

Children and young people want to be engaged in learning, to be empowered to make choices about their future and to find the pathway that works for them. Children and young people told us that choice and opportunity is limited in Neath Port Talbot. We need to work together to tackle this, inspiring our children to learn and addressing their concerns.

**"It's hard being a young carer, some people don't understand young carers and the emotional challenges we have. The school environment is not for everyone... Where I'm at now I'm trying a little bit of everything. I've just started my GCSEs and I feel like it works for me. I have a better support plan, where I don't need to keep talking about what's happened and can look forward to my future."**

- 16-year-old young carer

### What We Will Do



We will work together with children, young people and families to remove barriers to education.



We will ensure that all learners are able to learn in Welsh and English to enable them to have the confidence to use both languages in everyday life, and ensuring our children and young people value bilingual communication.

## What We Will Do

- ✓ We will ensure children and young people access high quality experiences to develop the knowledge and skills they need to make informed choices.
- ✓ We will create clear and well-planned pathways for young people to transition out of school into college, employment or training.
- ✓ We will encourage more children to learn Welsh and provide more opportunities for them to learn in Welsh.
- ✓ We will work together to ensure the workforce has the training and professional development they need to deliver high quality and inclusive teaching.
- ✓ We will implement the Neath Port Talbot Youth Engagement Strategy.

## How Will We Know?



Development of children and young people's communication skills in Welsh and English.



Improved educational attainment when children leave school at 16.



More children and young people understand the factors and decisions that impact their health and wellbeing.



Increased number of post-16 young people continuing with education, employment or training.



Improved engagement and attendance with education.



## PRIORITY OUTCOME 4:

**Children and Young People are listened to, and they have opportunities to be actively involved in decision making**

### What We Have Heard

Children and young people told us that an important part of becoming an adult is learning to make your own decisions and sharing your ideas and perspectives. They think it's important that they are able to tell their school, their Council, their GP, and others in their community if they think things can be done better. They want to be able to share their experiences to help other children and young people.

In addition, they want us to explain the decisions we make and why we make them, in a way they can understand. They want to learn about what we need to consider when making decisions. Our services have to work for children, young people and their families; to do this we have to listen to them and where possible allow them to influence what we do.

**"Being part of the youth council gives me a chance to talk about what young people need. I think sometimes we're too often forgotten because we don't vote... It's really important for young people to have a voice, particularly when it comes to the things that don't just affect us now but in the future, like our education and our health... We should know how and why decisions are made."**

– Youth Council Member

### What We Will Do



We will implement and embed the Children and Young People's Participation and Engagement Strategy.



We will put the rights of children into every aspect of our decision-making, policy and practice.



We will work in partnership to strengthen systems that enable participation, ensuring the voices of children and young people are central to decision-making.

## What We Will Do

- ✓ We will ensure wider representation of seldom heard children and young people, and those with protected characteristics, providing the support they need to participate.
- ✓ We will build the capacity of children and young people to participate, sharing knowledge and power with them so that they can shape decision-making.
- ✓ We will build the capacity of our workforce, ensuring they have the skills they need to engage with children and young people.
- ✓ We will ensure that all information we produce is understandable and accessible for children and young people.
- ✓ We will involve children and young people in the evaluation of this plan.

## How Will We Know?



More children and young people, engaging in consultation, decision making and evaluation.



Increased opportunities for children, young people and their families to influence decision-making and evaluate impact.



Increased opportunities for children and young people to co-design policies which affect their lives.



Decision making, policy and practice is underpinned by a commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

EARLY YEARS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



## PRIORITY OUTCOME 5:

**All Children and Young People are supported to be physically healthy and feel mentally and emotionally strong**

### What We Have Heard

Children and young people are concerned about poor mental health and the impact it has on their lives. The children and young people we spoke to believe the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis have had a big impact on mental health. Parents and carers want to know what they can do to help their children feel mentally and emotionally strong. For some children poor mental health is a barrier to them participating in their education, for others it stops them from having fun and spending time with family and friends. Sometimes they don't know how to ask for help, and we need to make it easier for them to understand what help is available. They also think it's important for the people who work with children and young people to understand mental health and emotional wellbeing, and to

have an appreciation of why vulnerable children and young people might need additional support.

Physical health is also important to our children and young people; they want to be fit and healthy. However, there is a perception that it is expensive to exercise. They also want more options for those who do not like sports. Being able to spend time with friends somewhere safe and having fun is seen as an important part of emotional wellbeing.

**"Our mental health needs to be taken seriously. There needs to be more help for young people – now I've left school I can't speak to my school counsellor anymore. This group (LGBTQ youth group) helps but I think I need more support."**

**– 19-year-old LGBTQ young person**



## What We Will Do

- ✓ We will create a well-planned pathway for children and young people to access a range of emotional wellbeing and mental health support.
- ✓ We will build on the strengths of our youth services and provide a broad range of support for young people up to the age of 25.
- ✓ We will work with partners to develop a high-quality and diverse range of play, physical activities and recreation opportunities.
- ✓ We will encourage and enable our children and young people to enjoy the green, natural and open spaces in their communities for the benefit of their physical health and emotional wellbeing.
- ✓ We will support our workforce, including volunteers, providing the training and professional development they need to support children and young people's physical, emotional and mental health.
- ✓ We will recognise the environmental factors that impact on our children and young people, when thinking about service design and delivery.

## How Will We Know?



Children and young people access support for their emotional wellbeing and mental health via a clearly planned pathway of support.



More children are a healthy weight.



Children, young people and families have a better understanding of factors that affect their health and wellbeing.



More children and young people make healthy lifestyle choices.



Increased range of high quality, accessible and diverse play, physical activity and recreational opportunities for children and young people.

## HOW WE WILL KNOW IF WE ARE HAVING AN IMPACT

### How will we measure the success of our plan?

#### Delivering Change

The Children and Young People's Leadership Group will work collaboratively to co-design and deliver action plans for each of the five priority outcomes. These actions plans, which will be informed by community engagement and data, will set out how partners will work together to meet the aspirations of this plan.

#### Evaluating Impact

The voices of children and young people have shaped this plan, and it's important that they participate in evaluating the priorities and their impact.

A Children and Young People's dashboard will be created to set out performance data, and this will be shared with our community to highlight progress towards our objectives.

By working together, we will implement the priorities of this plan and we have created the governance structure we need to make this approach work. We will build on existing positive collaboration between partners. We will ensure the priorities are embedded in how we support children and young people across Neath Port Talbot.

#### Accountability

The Children and Young People's Leadership Group will be accountable for the success of this plan. The Group will report progress to the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board.



# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

### Data Sources.

#### OUR POPULATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 2021 Census Office of National Statistics
- Stat Xplore: Households Below Average Income 2022/2023
- Pupil Level Annual Schools Census 2023

#### HEALTH

- 2021 Census Office of National Statistics
- StatsWales: Singleton live births with low birth weight by area 2022
- Child Measurement Programme via Public Health Wales Observatory, note: data available for this age group by default
- Public Health Wales, School Health Research Network Data Dashboard 2021-2022
- Public Health Wales, School Health Research Network Data Dashboard 2021-2022

- Wales Centre for Public Policy: Who is Lonely in Wales, published 11 October 2021 based on analysis of data from the 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2019/20 National Survey of Wales

#### EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Schools Health Research Network (SHRN) Data Dashboard 2021/2022

#### THEIR LEARNING

- Pupil Level Annual Schools Census 2023
- Welsh Government: Post 16 Statistics based on Lifelong Learning Wales Record Post-16 data collection, Welsh Examinations Database
- Pupil Level Annual School Census 2023
- Welsh Government: Average % of sessions of unauthorised absence in maintained schools, pupils aged 5-15 (2022/23 academic year)
- Public Health Wales, School Health Research Network Data Dashboard 2021-2022
- The Neath Port Talbot Youth Council's 'Change Starts with You Survey 2023

## **SOCIAL CARE**

- Neath Port Talbot Council: Social Services, Health and Housing (Data for 31 January 2024)

## **OUR MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

- StatsWales: Physically/sensory disabled persons by local authority, disability and age range
- StatsWales: Households for which assistance has been provided by outcome, age and gender
- StatsWales: Children looked after at 31 March by local authority and placement type (2022)
- 2021 Census Office of National Statistics
- Personal Independence Payments Dashboard: Stat-Xplore
- Welsh Government Not in Education, Employment or Training Figures July 2023

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 2

### **Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board Partners.**

Neath Port Talbot CBC

Swansea Bay University Health Board

Natural Resources Wales

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

NPT CVS

Tai Tarian

Coastal Housing

Pobl Group

South Wales Police

Police and Crime Commissioner

NPTC Group of Colleges

Town and Community Councils

National Probation Service

Welsh Government

Department of Work and Pensions



BWRDD GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS  
CASTELL-NEDD PORT TALBOT



NEATH PORT TALBOT  
PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD