



CYFLAWNI TEGWCH A RHAGORIAETH
MEWN ADDYSG A GWELL LLES I BAWB
EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION
AND ENHANCED WELLBEING FOR ALL

Education and Inclusion Services Directorate



Strategic Plan for Wellbeing 2022-2025

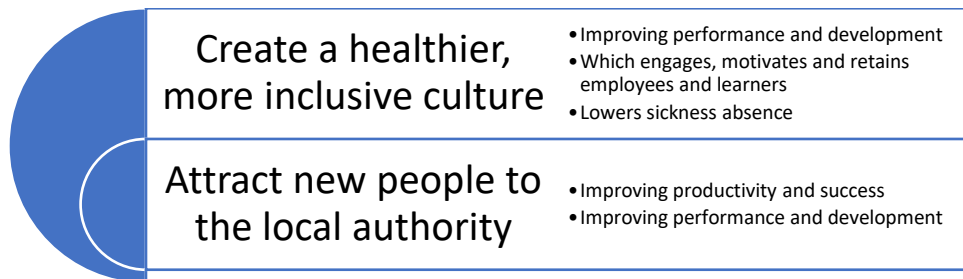
Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg
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Section 1: Introduction

This wellbeing strategy outlines the local authority's plan to promote positive wellbeing in our schools and the wider service areas that support them. The Education and Inclusion Services Directorate and partner agencies work individually and collaboratively to promote staff and pupil well-being to:



Our core aim is to place individual wellbeing at the core of school improvement, in line with the Framework for Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing, published March 2021. Wellbeing is vitally important, it affects the physical health, cognitive functioning, social relationships and behaviour of individuals across the life course.

This strategy sets out actions for Education and Inclusion Services and partners to ensure that all children and young people in RCT develop the knowledge and skills they need to live healthy lives both now and in the future. Services should work together to help to improve the health and wellbeing of all children in RCT and partnership working will form a core part of this strategy.

Within Rhondda Cynon Taf, we strive to use a common approach to wellbeing that is: psychologically informed; rights based and valued led; equitable, diverse and inclusive; and rooted in child development. The expectation is that:

- the strategy will promote effective whole school approaches;
- improving the health and wellbeing of learners is everyone's business, not just individuals who may have accessed specific training;
- interventions are proactive - they use the evidence available to the school to inform choices and avoid reactive responses;
- the needs of all learners will be considered, schools will analyse and respond to data collected in relation to all learners but with a focus on those who may be vulnerable.
- wellbeing interventions will be:
 - collaborative and include action research
 - rooted in a strong evidence base.

- the wellbeing of the education workforce will also be of critical importance for improving learner outcomes.

1.1 Defining Wellbeing

The plan underpinnings remain the same as the previous Rhondda Cynon Taf plan (2019-2022,

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/SchoolsandLearning/AccessandInclusiontoEducation/relateddocs/WellbeingStrategy20192022.pdf>) and is aligned with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board Wellbeing Plan, where wellbeing is described in terms of assets and challenges. The idea being that if an individual has the assets that they need to deal with life's challenges, they will have balance and therefore, good mental wellbeing. However, if an individual has more challenges than assets, they will become unbalanced, and their wellbeing will be affected. Life's challenges could be poor relationships, neglect, bullying or violence in the home. In terms of what are outlined as assets, these could be positive relationships, education, and family support (Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan, 2018-2023). (ourcwmtaf.wales)



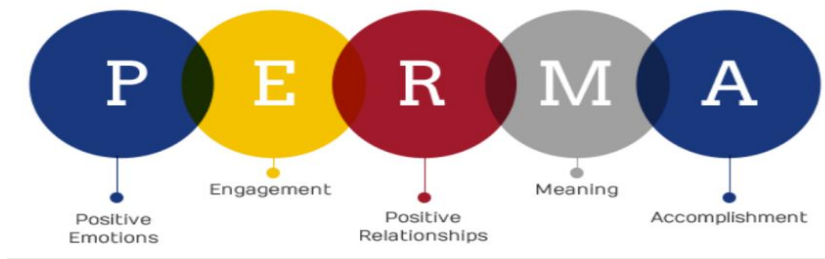
Figure 1: Model of wellbeing (Dodge et al., 2012)*

1.2 Theoretical Models

There are a number of wellbeing theories proposed in research that conceptualise wellbeing. Within Rhondda Cynon Taf, we have chosen Martin Seligman's PERMA theory (2011)**, as our core theoretical model. This model is based in the study of flourishing and what makes life good and positive. Other theoretical models study what has gone wrong, whereas Seligman's theory identifies things that make life worth living, enable individuals to flourish, and attempts to define and quantify wellbeing. The theory identifies 5 components that contribute to wellbeing that are defined and measured independently of each other and are intrinsically motivated (pursued for their own sake). This model has become known as the PERMA model.

*Dodge, R., Daly, A. P., Huyton, J., & Sanders, L. D. (2012). The challenge of defining wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 2 (3), 222- 235

**Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

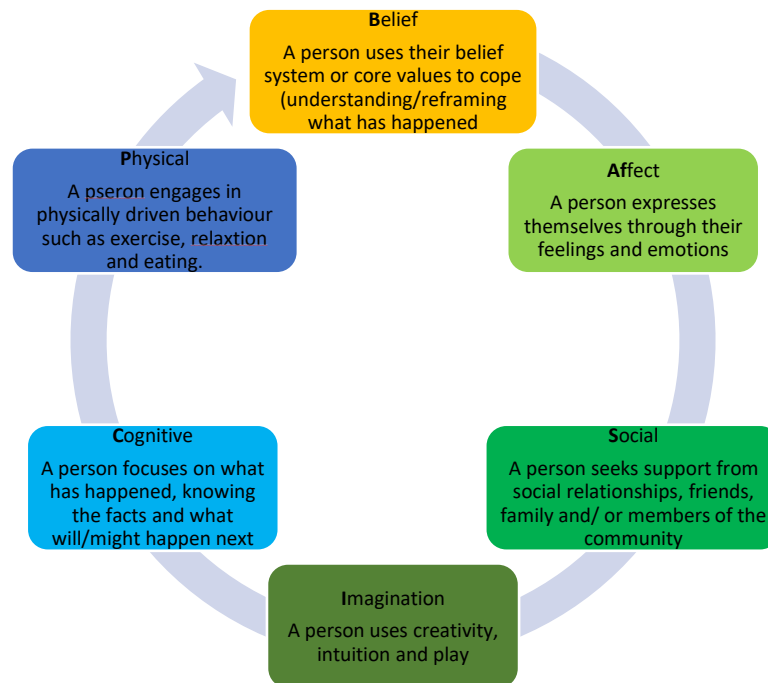


Seligman also identified optimism as critical to building resilience and wellbeing, stating people who are optimistic are more likely to be resilient to stressful life events (Carver, Scheier & Segerston, 2010*).

1.3 Models of Delivery in RCT

Other approaches to wellbeing within RCT and nationally sit well within this theory, for example:

- **The Basic Ph model** of coping and resiliency (Shacham, M., Lahad, M., & Ayalon A., 1992) used within the critical incident response team. Underpinning the model is the suggestion that every person has internal powers, or coping resources, which can be mobilised in stressful situations; the effort to survive coming from a healthy rather than a pathological instinct.



*Carver, S. C., Scheier, M. F., & Segerstrom, S. C. (2010). Optimism. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30, 879-889. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2010.01.006>

** Shacham, M., Lahad, M., & Ayalon A., (1992). *The Basic PH model of coping and resiliency*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- **SPICES model** (Jenny Mosely <https://www.circle-time.co.uk/our-approach/staff-wellbeing/>) for staff wellbeing. The model encourages adults to metaphorically 'visit their wells' providing energy, balance and perspective. The 5 wells spell out 'SPICE' – spiritual, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional.

The Wellness Model (SPICES)



- **Spiritual:** Seeking meaning and purpose in human existence; self, reflection, organized religion, community service
- **Physical:** Exercise, diet, maintenance, stress reduction, relaxation
- **Intellectual:** Expanding knowledge, reading, writing, exploration, listening, observing, questioning
- **Career:** Finding satisfaction and worth in your work, professional development
- **Emotional:** Positivity, feelings towards yourself and others
- **Social:** Interaction with others, developing relationships, fun!

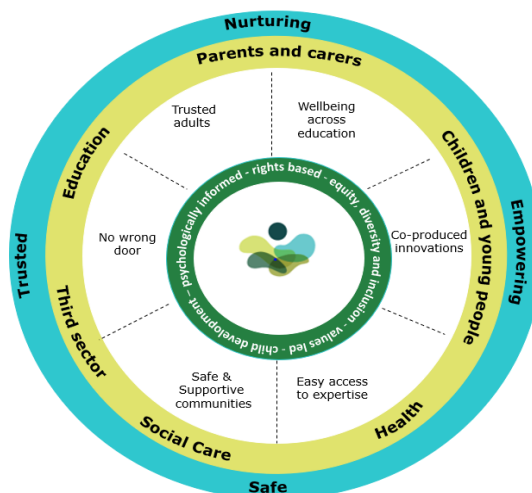
- CARI, the wellbeing tool, used by RCT Occupational Health Team, identifies the **5 Pillars of Wellbeing model** when measuring staff wellbeing (<https://www.cariwellbeing.co.uk/>). This includes a focus on mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing.



- The **five ways to wellbeing** promoted by Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board [Project 5 Ways to Wellbeing - Cwm Taf Morgannwg Mind \(ctmmind.org.uk\)](http://ctmmind.org.uk)



- NHS Wales NYTH/NEST Framework** is a planning tool for Regional Partnership Boards that aims to ensure a 'whole system' approach for developing mental health, wellbeing and support services for babies, children, young people, parents, carers and their wider families across Wales. It has been co-produced by the Together for Children and Young People (T4CYP2) network and a wide range of stakeholders. <https://collaborative.nhs.wales/networks/wales-mental-health-network/together-for-children-and-young-people-2/the-nest-framework/>



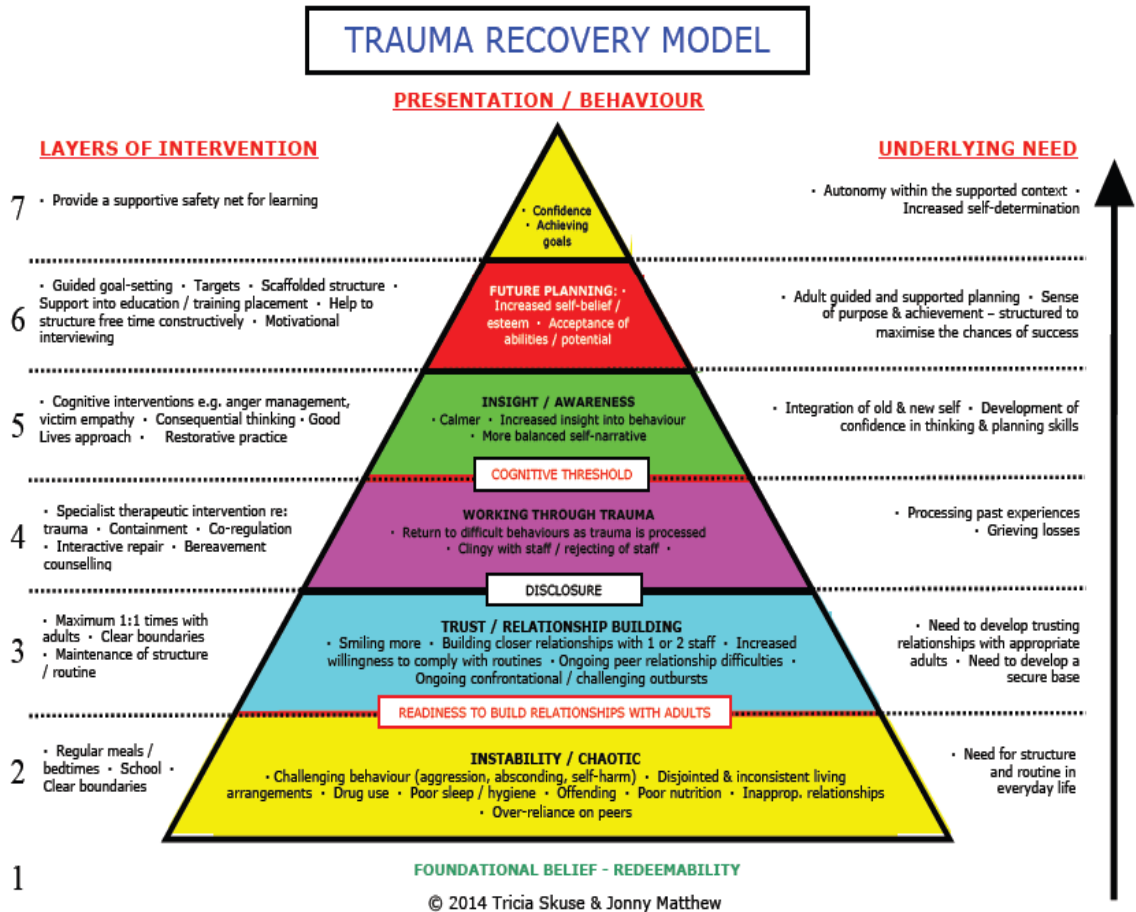
- Trauma Informed Schools** (<https://www.traumainformedschools.co.uk/>) are underpinned by trauma informed core principles that help to create mentally health environments for all. These can include a focus on:



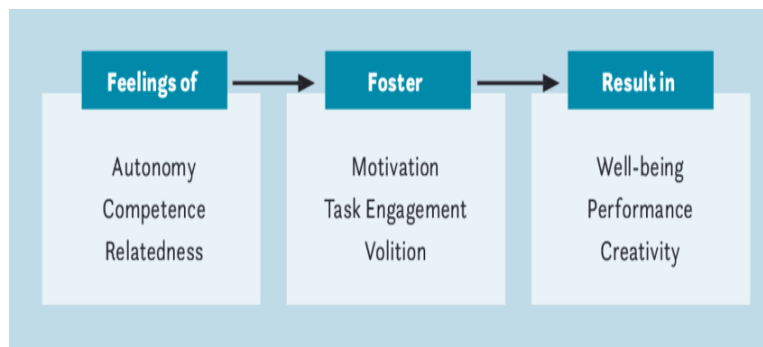
- Trauma Recovery Model*** Used by RCT Children’s Services sits alongside the Trauma Informed Schools approach. The Trauma Recovery Model is a road map to help professionals care for and guide troubled people towards recovery. It's a composite model; combing theories of child development, attachment, and

neuroscience with hands on practitioner skills. This model is useful to consider in response to the COVID pandemic.

*Skuse, T. & Matthew, J. (2015). The Trauma Recovery Model: Sequencing youth justice interventions for young people with complex needs. Prison Service Journal, 220, 16-25. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014). Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at https://www.nasmhpd.org/sites/default/files/SAMHSA_Concept_of_Trauma_and_Guidance.pdf



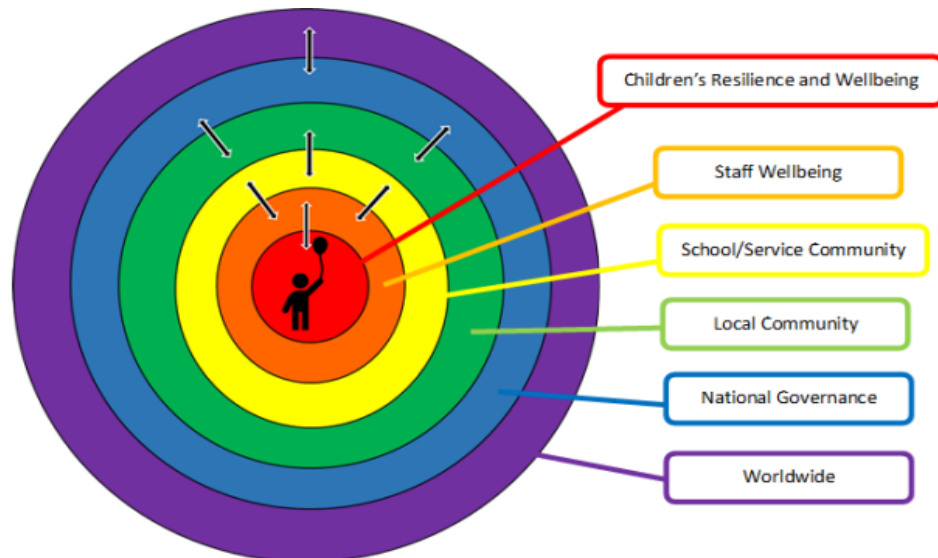
Trauma Informed Schools and the Trauma Recovery Model prepares children to learn by fostering:



- There are many influences on the health and wellbeing of learners, such as government policy, media influence, family and friends, and where they live and

what school they go to. The **ecological theory perspective** (Bronfenbrenner 2006*) recognises that learners' wellbeing and resilience is affected at a number of levels.

*Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The bioecological model of human development. In W. Damon (Series Ed.) & R. M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.), Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development (pp. 793–828). New York, NY: Wiley.



It is generally accepted that schools are well positioned to influence the health and wellbeing of young people in a positive way when they work in partnership with others.

Given the rising mental health challenges faced by learners, our workforce and society in general, it is important that educational professionals have access to research-informed, evidence-based knowledge and practice in order to effectively support the mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people.

Section 2: Our Local Context

2.1 Council's Corporate Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan for 2020-2024 is guided by the vision of making Rhondda Cynon Taf **“the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy and prosperous”**.

Its main purpose is: **“To provide strong community leadership and create the environment for people and businesses to be independent, healthy and prosperous”**.

The Corporate Plan sets out a vision, priorities and principles that continue to maximise the Council's contribution to the seven national wellbeing goals outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Effective early intervention and preventative approaches are central to the Corporate Plan so that we overcome the barriers commonly associated with disadvantage and avoid the need for the involvement of statutory services. A clear focus on providing the right support at the right time is imperative if we are to give our children the best start and chances in life.

2.2. Education Directorate's Strategic Plan for 2022-2025

The Education Directorate's Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 reflects these overarching priorities and a golden thread runs through the Corporate, Directorate and Service Plans to ensure that there is alignment in strategic developments.

As an Education Directorate, ensuring that every learner in Rhondda Cynon Taf has access to excellent schools and positive and enriching educational experiences that enable them to achieve the very best possible outcomes that they are capable of is our core purpose. The Education Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 sets out the direction for the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate for the next 3 years, describing its mission, vision and ambition for our schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Our mission quite simply is: **'To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced wellbeing for all'**. The robust partnerships that have been forged between the local authority and non-maintained settings, schools and PRUs throughout the pandemic have strengthened our collective drive and purpose to ensure that all learners access the highest quality teaching and learning experiences, so that they are able to progress and grow as lifelong learners. The strategic plan and this wellbeing plan reaffirm our commitment to learner and staff wellbeing and mental health, and the vital importance of ensuring that everyone's emotional needs are well supported.

Our mission will be achieved by us realising our vision: **'To inspire and support excellent leadership and professional practice so that all learners in Rhondda Cynon Taf make good progress and become ambitious, capable, creative and ethically informed'**. Excellent leadership and professional practice are critical to ensuring that we create an effective culture of equity and excellence in education and high expectations, so that we can ensure the success of all schools and learners across the County Borough.

It is recognised that the pandemic has placed the education system under immense pressure and impacted on the health and wellbeing of our learners, workforce and communities. The economic, social and emotional impact of COVID-19 on our communities has been considerable and we have seen a significant growth in families living in poverty. We know that deprivation can cause inequalities and some families have faced multiple adverse experiences, including financial hardship, bereavement, loss, trauma, poor mental and physical ill-health. In RCT we believe it is important to focus on our population's basic wellbeing needs after the pandemic, those of connection, purpose,

accomplishment, and hope using a Trauma Recovery Model and what we have learned about Childhood Adverse Experiences (ACES).

Section 3: The National Context

The strategy has been written to take into account current national priorities and agendas, which includes:

3.1 Guiding Frameworks and Legislation

- Wellbeing and Future Generations Act (2015)
<https://gov.wales/wellbeing-future-generations>
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989)
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>
- ALN Act (2018)
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2018/2/contents/enacted>
- Curriculum for Wales
<https://gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>
- Estyn Framework
[Our new inspection arrangements for schools and PRUs | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/our-new-inspection-arrangements-for-schools-and-prus)
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014)
[Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/contents)
- Schools in Wales as Learning Organisations (SLO) (2018)
<https://gov.wales/schools-learning-organisations-slo-overview>
- National Framework a 'Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing' (2021)
<https://gov.wales/framework-embedding-whole-school-approach-emotional-and-mental-wellbeing>
- Welsh Network of Healthy School Scheme
[Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](https://www.welshnetworkofhealthyschoolschemes.org.uk)
- No Wong Door: bringing services together to meet Children's Needs
<https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/publications/no-wrong-door-bringing-services-together-to-meet-childrens-needs/>

- NHS Wales NYTH/ NEST framework
<https://collaborative.nhs.wales/networks/wales-mental-health-network/together-for-children-and-young-people-2/the-nest-framework/>
- Curriculum for Wales Guidance and Code for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
[Curriculum for Wales: Relationships and Sexuality Education \(RSE\) Code | GOV.WALES](#)
- Sport Wales
[Sport Wales | Sport Wales](#)

3.2 Whole School Approaches to Promoting Wellbeing

The recent publication of the statutory Framework for Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing (2021) is aimed at the needs of school-age learners and the workforce supporting their learning and wellbeing needs. This statutory Framework is intended to support schools, including pupil referral units (PRUs) and education settings in reviewing and self-evaluating their own wellbeing landscape and performance so that they build on strengths and identify areas for improvement.

The Framework recognises that schools alone cannot meet all the needs of a complex population of children and young people. It highlights the role of regional bodies, local health boards and third sector providers in supporting schools to enhance mental health and wellbeing. The Framework aims to support and complement the new national Curriculum for Wales and in particular the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience.

RCT strives to ensure that all learners are engaging in positive learning experiences which develop into improved health and wellbeing for all. This strategy aims to reduce inequalities which lead to poorer health and outcomes by combining universal health education and targeted support.

3.3 The New Curriculum for Wales

The Curriculum for Wales will serve as an important driver for improving health and wellbeing in schools. The Health and Wellbeing Area for Learning and Experience (AoLE) will be best achieved through a whole school approach. Partnerships should put the child at the centre and ensure that holistic approaches are adopted for all children and young people.

The essential components of the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience includes physical health and development, mental health, and emotional and social wellbeing. The curriculum delivered and the teaching and learning approaches adopted should support learners to understand and appreciate how the different components of health and wellbeing are interconnected, and how good health and wellbeing are central to successful learning.

Research tells us that how we process and respond to our experiences affects our mental health and emotional wellbeing. It is evident that developing learners' understanding of the positive physical health and wellbeing has potential lifelong benefits as our decision-making impacts on the quality of our lives and the lives of others. Furthermore, how we engage with social influences shapes who we are and affects our health and wellbeing.

The promotion of health, wellbeing and positive relationships and the development of relevant knowledge and skills should be set out and underpinned by the four core purposes as set out in the Curriculum for Wales. Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience can be taught through discrete health lessons, personal and social education, home economics, and physical education. However, it should be the responsibility of all members of the school community to deliver on this agenda and ensure that health and wellbeing is developed through the teaching of life skills and by supporting children and young people in their mental, emotional, social and physical development. It is important to include learning outdoors when planning health and wellbeing activities.

Learning in health and wellbeing should take place across the curriculum through interdisciplinary learning. This can enable teachers and learners to make connections in their learning through exploring clear and relevant links across areas of the curriculum. It is important that learning within and outside of the school day is recognised as a way of encouraging personal achievement through working with local community partners.

Everyone should be clear about their areas of responsibility and their roles in assessment across teaching and learning. In health and wellbeing, assessment has to take account of the breadth and purpose of the wide range of learning experienced by children and young people within this area of learning experience. It should focus on children and young people's knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes in relation to physical activity, including but not limited to sport; balanced diet; personal care and hygiene; sleep; and protection from infection. It also includes an understanding of health-harming behaviours.

Progression in many aspects of health and wellbeing will depend upon the developmental stage of learners as well as their social environment. It is important, therefore, that all adults involved in the learner's education contribute to a holistic picture of the child or young person. Guidance on evaluating progress can be found in [Health and Wellbeing: Principles of progression - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#). It is important that children and young people have the opportunities to reflect on their own learning and identify next steps. In doing so children and young people should have a supportive relationship with a key member of staff who knows them well and with whom they can have regular dialogue.

Central to the success of whole school approaches to promoting health and wellbeing will be effective quality assurance. School senior leadership teams should evaluate the effectiveness of their strategic plans as part of wider school improvement to ensure it is meeting their requirements, involving all parts of the school population of learners and staff in the evaluation. Learners should not be considered as passive recipients of whole school approaches to health and wellbeing but as valued contributors to the development and implementation of the strategic approaches adopted.

Quality assurance is crucial to continuous improvement in health and wellbeing. Improvement planning should take account of national and local priorities, alongside available public health data, to effectively develop plans that aim to achieve the strategic outcomes that have been agreed for the school, local authority and Welsh Government.

It is important to evaluate progress and impact on health and wellbeing and to identify strengths and areas for development by utilising a range of information and data sources. Establishments are now required to include health and wellbeing in their improvement plan which will be reviewed by the regional service. Strengths and areas for development and impact on learners can also be recorded through the use of the local authority's and Local Health Board's toolkits Supporting the Whole School Approach to Wellbeing, enabling impact to be demonstrated in health and wellbeing. It can also be used as a vehicle for discussion within schools and with authority representatives as part of the authority monitoring process. Establishments are expected to use the process of self-evaluation, including consideration of local data, to ensure continuous improvement.

3.4 Effective Leadership of Wellbeing

Positive relationships between school staff and learners are at the heart of ensuring a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing and to creating a positive culture and ethos in a school. It can often be the everyday small acts and gestures that teachers do that have surprisingly far-reaching outcomes for learner wellbeing and can make learners feel valued members of their school community.

Improvement in health and wellbeing requires strong, collaborative leadership which takes account of local health needs, champions national and local health priorities and establishes a shared vision. This requires leaders to:

- Make clear links between policy and practice in order to secure improvements.
- Work strategically to engage and inspire others to take forward all aspects of health and wellbeing in relation to national and local authority guidelines.
- Communicate a common strategy effectively so that it is shared with the whole establishment and its partners.
- Develop systems to capture the views of all stakeholders and encourage everyone to be involved in improving the health and wellbeing of the establishment and wider community.
- Develop the scope for distributed leadership at all levels including through membership of health and wellbeing committees and working parties.

Health and wellbeing is promoted by leaders who look after their own health and wellbeing, model a positive approach to change and encourage and support well-judged trial and innovation. Such leadership implicitly supports better health and wellbeing.

3.5 Partnership Working

Partnership working describes the way services, groups and the community work together to secure improvements for learners, their families and the local area.

Parents and carers have a key role in supporting and planning for learning and building and sustaining positive relationships with parents will ensure that children and young people are presented with improved opportunities to support and meet their specific needs.

The main aims of partnership working are to build community capacity and promote social cohesion, social inclusion, regeneration and economic development.

Education Services and schools work with third sector organisations and a range of other partners to create opportunities and pathways for children and young people to progress into positive destinations. This work links directly to reducing inequalities by developing and supporting achievement and employability skills and opportunities.

Partnership working also enables the health and wellbeing curriculum to be extended into the community, making good use of local resources and facilities. This includes opportunities to develop physical activity and sport, for example in partnership with [Sport Wales | Sport Wales](#), National Governing Bodies and community clubs and groups. Our Community Sport Programme aims to provide a range of opportunities for all ages and abilities, across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes ([Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#)) plays an important role in promoting the health of everyone associated with schools and aims to teach learners to lead healthy lives. It also empowers all members of the school community to take control over aspects of the school environments which can impact on their physical, mental, social health and wellbeing.

Education Services also works closely with a range of partners to ensure that all educational establishments are health improving and have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of learners and the education workforce. Our ambitious 21st century school investment programme and the Council's capital programme aims to create schools and sporting facilities that enhances mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Public Health and School Health Services provide information, training and specialist medical support. Schools and nurseries also work in partnership with NHS Wales to ensure that national legislation on public health is implemented. This work includes active engagement in national child health screening, immunisation and vaccination programmes.

Partnership working should aim to reinforce and complement the development of the Curriculum for Wales and ensure, through careful planning and communication, that contributions from partners support coherence and progression for the learners. Through prior review and evaluation, partnerships should provide learners with materials that are current and factually accurate, and that are age and stage appropriate.

Headteachers should aim to ensure that appropriate security screening has been undertaken when engaging with wider partners and that they have a sound understanding of the values and entitlements of Curriculum for Wales. Details relating to any programmes planned for delivery should be reviewed prior to implementation and any previous evaluations scrutinised prior to delivery of the planned input.

Where appropriate, the class teacher or early years' practitioner should be present throughout any curriculum contribution by a partner.

3.6 Learner Voice

Estyn's (Estyn, 2019) highlights the importance that staff and leaders place on listening to learners, not just on having systems in place for pupil representation. We strive for children and young people within RCT to reach level 8 on the children and young people's participation ladder below:



Children and young people should be given the widest possible opportunities to develop leadership skills within the establishment and in the local community. These activities will enable them to develop, demonstrate and apply a broad range of skills for learning, life and work.

They should have regular dialogue with staff about their learning, including planned opportunities to evaluate their own progress and identify next steps. They should be

supported to actively contribute their opinions and views, and these should be considered in improvement planning.

To help facilitate learner voice we have developed pathways for participation across services in RCT. These are explored in wider detail in the YEPS Participation Strategy 2022-24 and the Education Services Strategy for Learner and Family Voice which is currently under development.

Section 4: Self-Evaluation

Rhondda Cynon Taf's Wellbeing and Behaviour Strategy 2019-2022 set out the local authority's plan to promote positive wellbeing and behaviour in our schools. An evaluation of this strategy is detailed in Appendix 1.

As part of our ongoing self-evaluation, a range of datasets are routinely analysed including attendance, exclusion and wellbeing data (e.g., PERMA). Key developments include:

- a common understanding of the wellbeing framework continues to grow across RCT schools, with increased use of wellbeing tools across educational settings. This includes PERMA and the Boxall Profile, as a tool for measuring the impact of schools' intervention work;
- Other service areas are collaborating and using information to enhance their work. For example, the Attendance and Wellbeing Service uses PERMA to support open case referrals;
- A multi-agency collaboration and partnership planning group has been introduced within RCT where partners are considering efficient pupil access to services and interventions;
- The sharing of practices to support a whole school approach to wellbeing is enabling effective partnership working, between schools and external partners;
- The development and effective use of resources to ensure robust self-evaluation;
- Effective promotion and the development of staff wellbeing through the use of CARI;
- Improve communication between schools and families through the use of the family engagement officers;
- The needs of vulnerable learners across RCT are more effectively met as a consequence of a more robust self-evaluation and strategic initiatives at local authority and whole school level.
- Considerable investment in Step 4 provisions over a 2-year period are beginning to impact on whole school priorities such as reducing exclusion rates and attitudes to learning;
- Consultation with external agencies, school staff and learners regarding perceptions around racism and promoting anti-racism in schools has been conducted. A plan has been created and progressed, with the development of curriculum resources now being piloted.

Whilst progress has been made, there is still scope for further improvement as outlined in the Strategic Priorities Section (Section 5).

Section 5: Our Strategic Priorities

Our key strategic priorities for 2022 to 2025 are informed by our self-evaluation, local and national priorities. These include:

- Priority 1:** Ensuring effective leadership, governance and professional learning for wellbeing
- Priority 2:** Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum for health and wellbeing.
- Priority 3:** Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families.
- Priority 4:** Enhancing the wellbeing of our learners and the workforce through effective whole school approaches.

Strategic Priority 1:	Ensuring effective leadership, governance and professional learning for wellbeing
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This priority focuses on developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership and governance by:

- Ensuring school governance is strong through high quality training, support and challenge in relation to wellbeing, engagement and attendance;
- Ensuring effective self-evaluation and the collation of regular stakeholder feedback in relation to mental health and wellbeing, including learner voice, to shape strategic improvement plans at local authority and school level;
- Establishing an effective stakeholder group to assist with strategic wellbeing developments;
- In partnership with CSC, further developing our schools as learning organisations as a means of realising the new Emotional and Mental Wellbeing Framework;
- Providing excellent professional learning for staff in relation to whole school approaches to wellbeing;
- Improving the quality of teachers’ pedagogy and research informed practice in relation to wellbeing;
- Ensuring school leaders develop effective plans to keep their school communities safe;

- Supporting schools to self-evaluate against the framework for embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing and to deliver effective strategic plans aimed at improving staff and learner wellbeing;
- To provide comprehensive guidance to all school leaders and governing bodies regarding the expectations of schools to the Emotional and Mental Wellbeing framework;
- Provide schools with updated guidance on Strategic Equality Plan; and
- Continue to provide comprehensive and informed strategies through the established wellbeing forums held at least once a term for all school-based wellbeing leads.

Strategic Priority 2:	Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum for health and wellbeing
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Strategic priority 2 focuses on supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum for health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring that our commissioned school improvement service reflects our unique local context and supports our schools to continuously improve and deliver improved learner engagement and wellbeing;
- Strengthening the development of a self-improving system, effective school to school support and the sharing of best practice in relation to wellbeing;
- Ensuring that teaching and learning in all schools and PRUs is improved and aligned with the new requirements of the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE), which focuses on promoting resilience;
- Ensuring that the schools with the greatest needs access bespoke and effective support to deliver the AoLE for Health and Wellbeing;
- Ensuring that the Health and Wellbeing AoLE from the new curriculum for Wales highlights the importance of mental health and emotional wellbeing and its links with physical wellbeing and resilience within our schools. These should include:
 - outdoor learning
 - relationship and sex education
 - the ability for learners to recognise, understand and speak out about discrimination and violence;
- Ensuring that children and young people develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing;
- Ensuring a fully integrated cross directorate early years strategic plan for 0-7 year olds that promotes the access of children and families in RCT to high quality services and early intervention and prevention support throughout the Early Years. Parents and carers are actively engaged in their child's development and learning from the ante-natal period to the age of 7;

- Effective collaboration between Children’s Services, Education, Health and wider partners upholds a strong Early Years system across the County Borough that facilitates smooth transitions for all 0-7 year olds that is understood and promoted by an appropriately trained wider workforce;
- Ensuring that non-maintained and maintained early years settings provide the necessary development of appropriate social, emotional and behavioural skills and the necessary pre-requisite skills for learning and progression;
- Ensuring that there is synergy between the Health and Wellbeing AoLE and the Framework for Embedding A Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing;
- Strengthening cluster-based approaches to improving curriculum planning and provision for health and wellbeing;
- Exploring cross sector partnerships to develop the new curriculum with a view to improving learning and wellbeing and longer-term health, prosperity and employment benefits;
- Improving evaluation approaches at all levels to understand the progress made by all learners in relation to health and wellbeing;
- Ensuring that schools effectively track outcomes in relation to wellbeing, and robustly evaluate targeted strategies and interventions;
- Ensuring that schools are supported to be research-informed and apply local, national and international evidence based best practice to their own settings;
- Ensuring that schools have a shared understanding of Equity and Excellence in Education;
- Ensuring that all schools have a programme of cultural, sporting, creative and recreational enrichment activities for learners throughout their statutory schooling;
- Ensuring that parents/carers are kept informed about key reforms and are supported to enhance their child’s learning; and
- Working in partnership with CSC to ensure that schools are supported to develop bilingual competence and the development of Welsh language skills.

Strategic Priority 3:	Ensuring timely support for vulnerable learners and their families
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Strategic priority 3 focuses on ensuring the right learning pathway and support for vulnerable learners and their families. This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring that all school staff have received appropriate professional learning on the ALNET Act and are fully aware of their statutory duties and the principles of person centred practice;

- Supporting schools to effectively self-evaluate ALN provision and strategically plan for improving the mental health and wellbeing of learners;
- Strengthening partnership working with schools, health, social care and FEIs in order to deliver improved outcomes for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged;
- Continuing to improve the quality of targeted support for improving wellbeing so that the educational outcomes of all vulnerable groups, including learners eligible for free school meals, with ALN, ethnic minority groups and children that are looked after are improved;
- Ensuring that the wellbeing needs of those most adversely affected by the pandemic are identified and access enhanced support to make measurable progress;
- Implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of strategic programmes and interventions aimed at overcoming the barriers to attendance and engagement for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable;
- Further improving outcomes for children that are looked after by piloting a Virtual School for looked after children;
- Ensuring that elective home education processes, procedures and provision are effective in meeting the needs of learners;
- Developing more extensive alternative learning pathways for 14-19 year olds and evaluating the effectiveness of step 4 provision development across key schools;
- Supporting effective family engagement and partnership working across the Resilient Families Service, families and schools;
- Mapping services and provision that support mental health and emotional wellbeing within a local authority footprint;
- Providing, in collaboration, clarity on relationships and protocols with other agencies, particularly health, social care and the police, and acting as a source of support for schools with concerns and issues over implementation; and
- Ensuring in reference to key partner agencies that resources, financial and otherwise, are strategically managed to maximise their impact on learners' mental health and emotional wellbeing needs.

Strategic Priority 4:	Enhancing the wellbeing of our learners and the workforce
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Priority 4 focuses on enhancing the wellbeing of our learners and the workforce. This will be delivered by:

- Supporting schools to self-evaluate against the 'Framework on Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing' and to deliver effective strategic plans aimed at improving staff and learner wellbeing;
- Developing professional learning to support effective implementation of the Framework, in partnership with our regional school improvement service;

- Extending trauma informed practice across all schools, including train the trainer models;
- Establishing cluster wellbeing champions and effective cluster initiatives and practice;
- Using evidence-based research to inform best practice in the support of vulnerable learners and enquiry-based research and intervention;
- Further extending family engagement roles across the County Borough and evaluating the impact of funding on outcomes;
- Ensuring that the continuum of support for learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is fit for purpose and delivers improved outcomes for learners;
- Re-aligning the Attendance and Wellbeing Service to ensure effective support for schools and learners to overcome barriers to attendance and engagement;
- Ensuring enhanced wellbeing support is in place for learners and staff which is clearly defined and accessible (e.g., counselling services, mentoring schemes);
- Developing integrated wellbeing pathways for learners in partnership with Children's Services, Youth Services and CAMHS;
- Extending PERMA across schools and evaluating impact;
- Developing consistent and holistic measures of wellbeing and data packs;
- Listening to and acting upon the views of children and young people, and staff, including those with lived experience of mental health and wellbeing needs, when implementing the approach;
- Ensuring that approaches relating to children's rights are embedded across all schools and that learner's voices are listened to and inform strategic developments;
- Promoting access to breakfast clubs and free school meals for eligible learners;
- Ensuring that schools are proactively involved in healthy schools' schemes and actively promote physical activity and lifestyles;
- Promoting opportunities for learners to actively engage in their communities, through active participation in sport, leisure and play activities;
- Implementing an effective anti-bullying strategy;
- Developing effective community schools, that create opportunities for family engagement and learning;
- Developing effective multi-agency approaches to meeting the wellbeing needs of learners and their families;
- Developing effective partnership approaches to promoting community cohesion and safety; and

- Supporting staff wellbeing at all levels and ensuring clear pathways for support at corporate level including Human Resources and Occupational Health, along with links to national supports.

Section 6: How will our success be measured?

A delivery plan has been developed and this is detailed in Appendix B. This plan will have quarterly monitoring to ensure effective delivery.

Success in achieving our priorities will result in:

- strong leadership and professional practice for wellbeing across our schools resulting in the improved educational attainment, attendance, and exclusion rates of learners, particularly in targeted cohorts of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners;
- effective approaches to creating a whole school approach to wellbeing;
- improved teaching and learning across our schools, and a curriculum that is both innovative and strongly aligned with the Areas of Learning and Experience for Health and Wellbeing;
- improved strategic planning and provision for wellbeing across all schools, inclusive schools and improved outcomes for learners;
- improved mental and emotional well-being for the workforce and learners;
- more learners and parents/carers reporting high levels of satisfaction in relation to the education and wellbeing support provided for them;
- more stakeholders valuing the specialist support provided by the local authority; and
- more partners actively involved and engaged in the delivery of our strategic plan, working collaboratively for the benefit of our communities.

Section 7: Conclusion

It is vital to maintain our emotional and mental wellbeing, particularly after the challenges society has endured over the last 2 years. None of us could have foreseen the way COVID-19 would affect our lives and even the most resilient have struggled and experienced poor wellbeing at times.

While the virus continues to present challenges, there is hope that our lives are slowly but surely, returning to normal. However, evidence has shown that normal may not be the

same and the impact of the pandemic is likely to remain with us for some time. This will require focused activity and work on emotional and mental wellbeing and the role of schools in supporting and building positive wellbeing.

We must work in partnership to achieve our shared mission, vision, and priorities for improvement for wellbeing across the education system. A clear and cohesive strategy is central to that progress, and supports schools, local authorities and partners in developing consistent and equitable whole-school approaches to achieve this. There is a need to address the emotional and mental wellbeing needs of all children and young people, as well as school staff, as part of the whole-school community. This should not be about medicalising wellbeing but about taking account of the continuum of need. Primarily it is about building resilience and ensuring preventative action is appropriate and timely. However, there is also a need to recognise the signs of poor wellbeing when it arises and to ensure effective support for schools and the learner when a learner experiences more severe distress. Effective learning is most likely to occur in an environment where all are engaged.

We cannot be certain what challenges we will be presented with for the duration of this plan. However, we can be confident that by working collaboratively across services, directorates, schools and agencies we will be better placed to make a difference and achieve our mission of achieving Equity and Excellent in Education and Enhanced Wellbeing for All.

Section 8: Resources

Mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing	WG42005 (gov.wales)
Physical Education, physical activity and sport	Health and Wellbeing: Introduction - Hwb (gov.wales) cr-ld12369-e.pdf (senedd.wales)
Food and health	healthy-eating-in-maintained-schools-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities-and-governing-bodies.pdf Health and Wellbeing: Introduction - Hwb (gov.wales)
Relationships, sexual health and parenting	Curriculum for Wales: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Code GOV.WALES Health and Wellbeing: Introduction - Hwb (gov.wales)
Substance misuse	Substance misuse delivery plan: 2019 to 2022 GOV.WALES
Responsibility of all	Wellbeing of Wales: 2021 GOV.WALES

Section 9: Appendices

Appendix A - Evaluation of Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2022

Consistent Wellbeing Framework

The PERMA wellbeing tool has been embedded within 95 schools in RCT. All RCT schools have now received training in the underlying model and framework of PERMA as well as the practical application of the Online Wellbeing Tool. (See Wellbeing Plans for evaluation data). The PERMA framework is beginning to be used to underpin some of the work of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service. However, further work is required to develop a consistent use of this model across schools/settings. Training will be offered to settings on the recent developments to the PERMA tool and the inclusion of a mood tracking system.

Identification of need (Effective Measurement Tools)

Teacher/Staff Perception

Boxall Profile training has been delivered to all schools in RCT and it is forming a central measurement tool used by the BSS. Evaluation and involvement in the roll out of initiatives. End of year reviews conducted by Access and Inclusion teams such as the Educational Psychology team. Emerging themes identified by key wellbeing staff such as ELSAs via regular supervision.

Pupil Voice

PERMA Profile is being increasingly used by schools to monitor pupil wellbeing. Increased use of PCP approaches is also improving pupil voice data. Children and young people have been involved in evaluating initiatives using pre and post measure questionnaires and focus groups.

Teacher Voice

Evaluation of initiatives and pilots has included teachers completing pre and post measures and being involved in focus/reflective groups to identify strengths, areas for development, barriers and solutions. This information has been shared in headteacher, wellbeing leads and ALNCo meetings and forums, where further discussion takes place. The introduction of CARI, a wellbeing tool for staff and reflective sessions for staff have also helped inform our processes.

Objective Wellbeing Data

The LA continues to gather objective wellbeing data via the wellbeing data pack. The pandemic has made it difficult to meaningfully evaluate trend data.

Multi-Agency Collaboration and Partnership Planning

Collaborative Planning and Innovation plans have not yet been fully established. Progress on this was hampered due to COVID restrictions.

Key Priorities in Wellbeing Strategy 2019-22

Strategic Priority 1: *To develop more effective strategic and collaborative approaches to meeting the wellbeing needs of learners, their families and their schools.*

- This has been established in line with Framework for embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing (2021). Wellbeing leads have been established and a strategic planning group has been created.
- The CARI wellbeing tool is being implemented in RCT and has been shared to central staff. This allows staff to 'self-serve' wellbeing support such as online resources as well as signposting to additional support and provides managers with an overall picture of staff wellbeing so support can be targeted at areas of need. The tool has also been presented in various Headteachers forums as well as during a Wellbeing Leads day in October 2021. A recent pilot in six schools has provided strategies on how to use this tool to inform whole school planning to improve staff wellbeing. The results have been shared with leads for wellbeing and headteachers. As a consequence of this work, occupational health are now reviewing and offering bitesize sessions in line with the need identified from the pilot and information gathered from other users, for example sleep patterns.
- The Framework for Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing (2021) has been mapped against all service areas across the directorate to ensure all officers were aware of their roles and responsibilities to support the implementation of the whole school approach to wellbeing.
- All schools attended an introductory session to highlight the expectations of schools to the framework. Leaders are clear of their expectations and roles.
- Approximately 16% of schools in RCT joined the Health Board pilot for self-evaluating wellbeing. All schools involved have effectively planned their approach – evidenced in the RCT report from the implementation lead. The LA also provided a toolkit for schools to use for self-evaluation. Feedback has been positive.
- There were training sessions for well-being leads in schools to support the implementation of this framework with 96 delegates regularly attending, nearly all reporting the sessions were informative and impactful on their school processes. Each session includes updates from service areas including data driven priorities in line with the Framework for embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing. Evaluations cite the usefulness of the sessions, with average ratings of 4.7 out of 5 for each session.
- As a consequence of these effective forums, practices deemed to be good have been shared, a working party with 22 members has been created, a toolkit to support self-evaluation and improvement planning designed and disseminated to schools as well as the purchase of the CARI tool. Pilot work on an appreciative enquiry model, the use of PERMA by the AWS team to support open cases, a whole school approach to the use of CARI and sharing action plans has started. It is too soon to evaluate impact as yet.

- There is a good understanding of the needs of vulnerable learners and families, as reflected by Cabinet's support for funding family engagement officers. This has led to improved communication between schools and families.

Strategic Priority 2: *To improve the outcomes for all cohorts of learners by effectively utilising all data sets to inform decision making.*

- During the development of the stage 4 provisions schools have been encouraged to consider school wide data to formulate exit and entry criteria, consider the impact of the provision for example, on attendance, number of exclusions and wellbeing data collected, as well as considering the data on an individual level to monitor impact and assess need dynamically.
- Developments have been made to the use of wellbeing data. Particularly through the use of PERMA. The system has been updated to include:
 - a new improved log in and interface system;
 - a full export functionality for schools to track data and longitudinal data can be captured of the PERMA profile;
 - the capacity for schools to create their own groups to track progress in relation to specific interventions (e.g., ELSA interventions);
 - a mood tracker function which will track pupils' mood and capture the reasons for these changes;
 - The MiSpace Game which is now available via a web browser in response to issues with iPad/Chromebook.
 - There is good engagement with PERMA 99 schools in RCT have signed up to use the PERMA wellbeing tool. The tool has been used creatively in many schools to monitor the impact of wellbeing interventions and approaches;
 - The use of the tool as part of a research project into the Gatsby initiative in RCT schools;
 - Its use to evaluate an ELSA fidelity intervention project.
- Evaluation data from Grant funded projects: Peer to Peer Emotional Support, Trauma Informed School diploma initiative and the Healthy Relationships project have informed the current priorities within this plan for example:
 - Identifying and exploring healthy and unhealthy relationships by supporting schools to develop these areas by planning projects and developing tool kits;
 - Creating a safe space for students to talk about feeling and experiences by continuing to explore trauma informed practices within the authority;
 - Presenting and promoting help seeking behaviour develop a pupil-led approach to monitoring and increasing wellbeing across the whole school by continuing to develop the use of the PERMA tool; and
 - Promote a whole-school approach to pupil wellbeing, inclusivity and developing friendships by continuing to develop wellbeing forums, cluster working and supporting the implementation of the EHW framework.

Strategic Priority 3: To review and improve continuum of provision for all learners particularly vulnerable groups.

- The swift identification of vulnerable learners, including regular data reports being provided for schools on a range of vulnerable learners thus ensuring effective identification, targeted wellbeing support and intelligence on service support for vulnerable learners.
- There is a good understanding of the needs of vulnerable learners and families, as reflected by Cabinet's support for funding bespoke step 4 provision for learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Despite the complexities surrounding direct data comparisons relating to attendance during the pandemic, Step 4 schools have identified some improvement in attendance for pupils accessing their Step 4 provisions.
- Schools have observed an overall improvement in the quality of pupil engagement during lessons, with an increase in the number of positive behaviour points awarded to Step 4 pupils during lessons/school-based activities.
- In addition, many schools reported that the Step 4 provisions provided them with enhanced capacity to maintain a high level of contact with Step 4 learners and their parents during periods of school closure. This ensured their continued engagement in learning and enabled schools to support any reported wellbeing concerns.
- As a consequence of these actions, together with intensive wellbeing support to improve attitudes to learning and attendance, schools have reported that the Step 4 provisions have supported schools to plan clear pathways and post-16 destinations for pupils, with nearly all key stage 4 learners gaining at least level 1 in all qualifications undertaken.
- Proactive steps have been taken to enhance Welsh medium learning support class provision in the County Borough. [RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk)
[Consultation to enhance WM LSC provision report.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/consultation/consultation-to-enhance-wm-lsc-provision-report)

Equality and diversity

- No Boundaries consultation has taken place to gain the perspectives of community members, school staff and pupils regarding racism and actions to promote anti racism in schools.
- An Anti-Racist Action Plan has been created and progressed, curriculum resources have been developed and 11 secondary schools and 18 primary schools have attended training sessions covering 4 AOLEs and 10 reflective sessions have been offered.
- LGBTQ+ guidance document produced by EPS, 14 LA staff attended Stonewall training programme.

ALN

- The Boxall Profile is being used to inform interventions for vulnerable learners in ALN provisions and training has been provided.

- To support this nurture UK training has been provided for LSC staff.
- Provision for learners with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) have had the SCERTS model (SC- social communication, ER – Emotional Regulation, TS – transactional support) training to support learner progression.

Strategic Priority 4: *To work with schools to mitigate against the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).*

- Ongoing ACEs and Reduction in Self Harm and Suicide Training delivered to schools twice a term, by the safeguarding board and EP service.
- There has been a significant investment in Trauma Informed Approaches in schools. To date there has been 28 participants from 27 schools (25 primary, 2 secondary) across 12 clusters and 1 special school. Training evaluation suggested wide ranging improvements including: staff gaining a robust understanding of the breadth of trauma, including hidden trauma; enhanced confidence and understanding which improved the support provided; improved understanding of the need for a whole school approach was cemented; and enhanced recognition that it was everybody's business and that 'little things can make a big difference'.
- Nurture UK training has been provided to all teachers in Nurture, SEBD classes and the Primary PRU and 20 schools.
- Breakfast club provision take place in all primary schools and the majority of secondary schools in order to encourage all pupils to eat a healthy breakfast and help promote early arrival in schools.
- Family Engagement Officer (FEO) pilot in 6 secondary/through settings (implemented in 2020) and 13 primary settings (implemented Sept 2021) based on historic attendance and deprivation statistics (WIMD) to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.