

SUMMARY OF OUR ANNUAL SELF ASSESSMENT AND WELL-BEING REPORT 2024/25

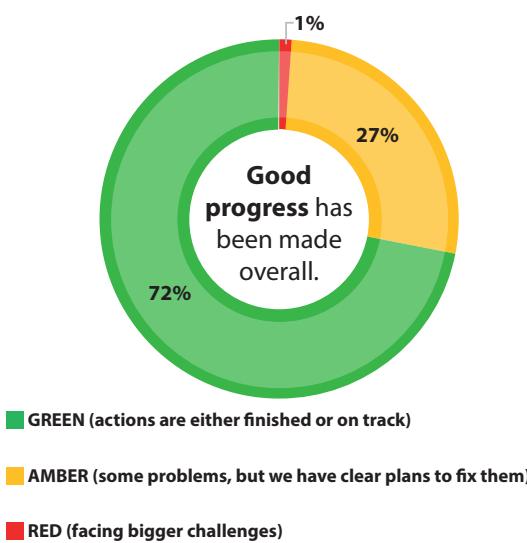
The purpose of this document is to provide a high-level summary of our Self-Assessment and Well-Being (SAWB) Report 2024–25. Our high-level overview sets out in brief the progress we have made against our agreed priorities. However, for a more detailed review of progress the full report is available to view here.

We use our 'County Plan' and our 'Characteristics of an Outstanding Council' as a route map for delivering upon our legal responsibilities and council's ambitions.

The report is structured around our nine Well-being Objectives from our Council Plan 2022–2027, each with detailed updates. The key themes of our well-being objectives, are as follows:

- raise educational attainment
- children and families to thrive
- reduce inequalities
- connect people and communities
- improve the local environment and increase recycling rates
- new businesses start-up
- people choose healthier lifestyles
- make communities safe and attractive
- deliver citizen focused services.

We've looked at how well we're doing with the key actions linked to our **Well-Being Objectives for 2024/25**.



Our success is thanks to the hard work of our staff and the new ways we track and manage progress across the Council.

A full report showing detailed progress was shared with the Council in July 2025. You can view the report online here: <https://moderngov.torfaen.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=7391&Ver=4>

This summary provides an overview of how we're doing across all our well-being goals, describing what we've achieved, what challenges remain, and where we need to focus next.

Wellbeing objective 1

– raise educational attainment, helping young people and adults to gain the qualifications and skills needed to lead positive lives

Delivered in 2024/25:

- £15 million committed on new, extended and refurbished schools
- Education Service removed from Estyn's list of authorities causing significant concern
- No mainstream schools currently in Estyn statutory categories
- Reduced Not in Education, Employment or Training rate further to 1.8%
- Continued offering work experience to youth's at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training within our café and bike maintenance
- Delivered accredited qualifications to targeted secondary pupils
- Overall rates of attendance continue to improve
- Increased qualifications from employability programmes from 1,050 to 1,431, exceeding targets
- Supported 402 economically inactive and long-term unemployed individuals into employment

Challenges for the year ahead:

- Improve learner outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and reduce the attainment gap for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners
- Ensure effective targeted and specialist provision for learners with Additional Learning Needs

Wellbeing objective 2

- encourage and champion children, young people, and families so they can thrive

Delivered in 2024/25:

- Designed & built new 3G pitch at Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllwyd
- Launched our Torfaen Youth Forum to ensure young people have their say on decisions which affect them
- Lowest levels of children looked after, since November 2017
- Continued to carry out various campaigns to promote and increase our in-house foster carers
- Supported 97 children and young people with complex mental health needs, and their friends and families, as well as providing psychological support to another 130 young people involved with Children's Services.
- Opened our own children's residential provision – Greenhill Bungalow

Challenges for the year ahead:

- Develop a new Youth Offer and Strategy and increase open access and targeted Youth provision
- Safely reduce our children looked after population, at pace
- Develop a broad range of accommodation to meet the needs of children looked after
- Enhance our overall commissioning model, as it relates to accommodation and other commissioned services, so as to have greater control over the market

needs of the community.

- Collaborated with local and regional partners to develop and sustain a range of specialist services
- Consulted with residents to shape the delivery of our new community-focused approach
- Implemented our Plan to Support Communities, placing well-being and prevention at the heart of service delivery
- Launched our: Information, Advice & Assistance, Front Door and Reablement Services
- Developed a Community Offer to promote early intervention and provide support directly within communities
- Introduced an early intervention and prevention model to build resilience and improve long-term health and well-being

Challenges for the year ahead:

- Ensure early intervention and prevention is a key consideration to our approach in delivering housing support and reducing housing demand
- Increase the supply of affordable housing through new developments and programmes to bring void properties back into use quickly
- Review our preventative commissioning arrangements to ensure services are co-ordinated and responsive to a persons need, inclusive of housing support

Wellbeing objective 4

- make Torfaen more sustainable by connecting people and communities, socially, digitally, and physically

Delivered in 2024/25:

- tackle inequality by focusing on early identification and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives

Delivered in 2024/25:

- Finalised our Housing Support Programme Strategy and accompanying 3-year Delivery Plan, setting a clear strategic direction for housing services in Torfaen, ensuring effective planning and delivery
- Increased the availability of supported accommodation by working with Housing Providers and local providers to develop tailored services for young people
- Reconfigured and recommissioned Support for Domestic Abuse and Violence (Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) and accommodation services to better meet the evolving

- Completed remedial work to address historical issues with the platform at Pontypool and New Inn Railway Station

- Supported 16 schools in developing individual Active Travel Plans
- Launched our new veterans' support hub in Cwmbran
- Launched "Connecting Torfaen," a new partnership programme designed to increase funding opportunities for Third Sector organisations

Challenges for the year ahead:

- Increase opportunities for our residents to digitally engage with us and provide support for those who are not digitally engaged
- Work more closely with our Community Councils to prioritise activity at a Community Council level around



what will make the biggest difference to community wellbeing

- To research and understand what impact our different activities / decisions will have on wellbeing, at a local level

Wellbeing objective 5

- **address our climate and nature emergencies, recycle more and make improvements to the local environment**

Delivered in 2024/25:

- Introduced a new red bag recycling system for plastics, cans, tins, and cartons
- Finalised our Waste Education and Enforcement Policy
- Reviewed our current Public Space Protection Orders (Public Space Rules) in consultation with residents
- Continued joint initiatives with partners and communities to identify individuals involved in fly-tipping
- Invited residents to take part in a consultation to help shape new management plans for protecting and enhancing our local parks
- Continued to hold Annual Spring Clean events across the borough
- Successfully supported Blaenserchan valley plans to become a Local Nature Reserve (Local Nature Reserve)
- Improved biodiversity at Coed Meyric Moel, including planting new hedging and developing natural wildlife corridors

Challenges for the year ahead:

- Continue to reduce food waste within our school kitchens
- To achieve 70 percent recycling rate. Failing to reach 70 percent by 2025 could have a financial impact on all of our council services through potential fines.

Wellbeing objective 6

- **we will make Torfaen a great place to do business delivering fair work for all by working with local employers & trade unions, encouraging new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activities**

Delivered in 2024/25:

- Hosted an event with business leaders, training providers, and council representatives to explore ways of training the local workforce for a competitive and innovative economy

- Provided free digital business support, through a partnership between the council and a local digital solutions company
- Awarded grants to eight social enterprises to help secure their long-term financial stability
- Offered business start-up courses to support individuals setting up their own ventures
- Increased occupancy at our Springboard Business Innovation Centre, supporting high-growth science and technology businesses
- Reviewed business plan for Pontypool Indoor Market, inviting residents to participate in a survey to help shape its future and enhance the market

Challenges for the year ahead:

- UK inflation rate is at 2.2%; Bank Base Rate is 5%. Global economic volatility throughout 2023–2024 has created uncertainty. Future performance in Torfaen and the wider region will be influenced by UK economic trends. Continued volatility may challenge business growth and expansion, despite local resilience efforts.
- UK Competitiveness Index (UKCI) shows improvement across Northern Valleys authorities—except Torfaen, which dropped from 336th to 346th (2019–2023). Priority areas for Torfaen: Increase technology-based business start-ups and to enhance skills development at Advanced Qualifications and above
- UK Government Levelling Up Programme and Government Funding for Local Projects (SPF) will end in March 2025. Interim funding provided for 2025–2026, but future funding remains uncertain. Many regional economic growth and business support programmes rely on these funds.

Wellbeing objective 7

- **promote healthier lifestyles in Torfaen to improve mental and physical well-being**

Delivered in 2024/25:

- Opened a new play facility at the Civic Centre to support parents and children
- Transformed a derelict site in Pontnewynydd into an inclusive play park, creating a welcoming space for all children
- Completed a new 3G pitch at Abersychan School for school and community use
- Launched an innovative sports programme to support dementia sufferers, helping them relive favourite sports and lead more active, fulfilling lives
- Introduced the 'Thrive – Live Long and Prosper' campaign, encouraging residents aged 60+ to stay



healthy and active

- Created a 'Lending Library' to promote physical activity by offering easy access to sports equipment for residents of all ages
- Partnered with Blaenavon and Cwmbran Community Councils to launch 'Free Sports Equipment Centres', providing free sports equipment and clothing to low-income families
- Progressed plans to transform disused tennis courts in Blaenavon into a multi-use sports facility
- Conducted resident consultations to gather views on local sports, leisure, and fitness activities, that shaped our Communities Well-being Sports and Leisure Strategy

Challenges for the year ahead:

- Complete the school and community 3G facilities in Trevethin, Llantarnam and Abersychan
- Developing a clearer strategic framework for our investment in sport & leisure in Torfaen
- Consider our approach to commissioning sport and leisure services

Wellbeing objective 8

– support our local culture and heritage and make Torfaen a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit

Delivered in 2024/25:

- Began construction work on the redevelopment of Greenmeadow Community Farm
- Invited residents to attend community workshops to share ideas on transforming Pontypool Town and Cwmbran Centre
- Established the Cwmbran Town Investment Board to develop a long-term plan for the future of Cwmbran Town Centre

Challenges for the year ahead:

- Progressing Levelling Up Fund projects to delivery stage and ensuring that they deliver the intended benefits for Pontypool
- The British - Developing a viable scheme to planning stage
- Producing a Masterplan for 5 locks canal basin, alongside implementing the wider volunteer programmes

Wellbeing objective 9

- provide efficient customer focussed services that reflect the way people live their lives and wish to access services

Delivered in 2024/25:

- Continued to encourage and support digital self-service through the council's website and app, helping customers access services more efficiently

Challenges for the year ahead:

- Investment will be required to deliver upon our Improving Online Services strategy, through either invest to save basis or through the realisation and re-distribution of efficiencies.

PRIORITIES & CHALLENGES

We have big goals for the future. To reach them, we need to deal with the challenges linked to each of our Well-Being Objectives. We've created a Delivery Plan for 2025/26. This plan looks at:

- the progress we made in 2024/25,
- the challenges we still face,
- and what we need to do next.

The 2025/26 Delivery Plan was agreed by the Council and published in March 2025. It helps us move from ideas to action, as we enter the next phase of our County Plan. We will update our plans every year.

This means we can:

- respond to new challenges,
- take advantage of new opportunities,
- and stay flexible.

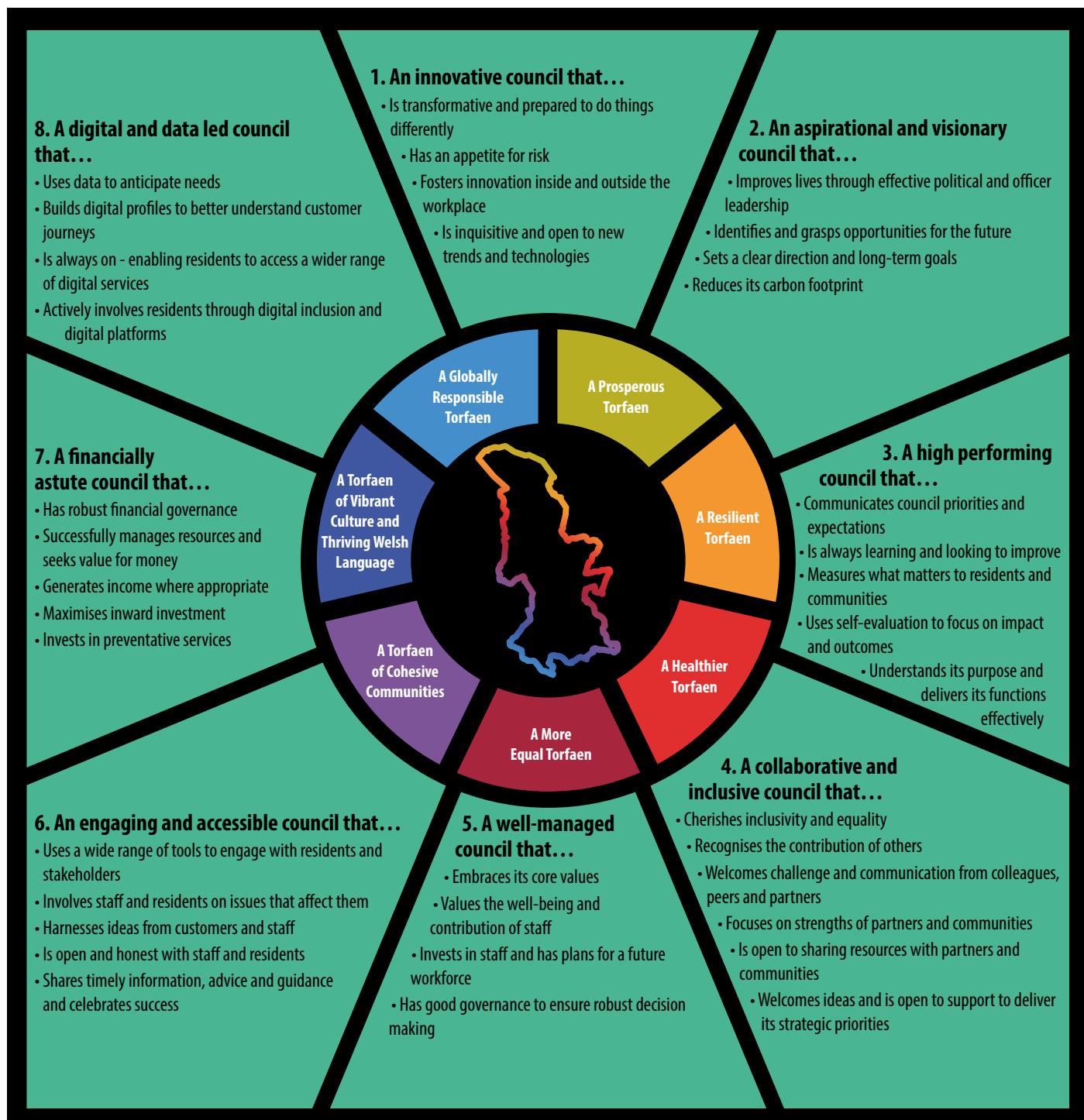
We will keep checking how we're doing throughout the year. This helps us show what's working and what needs to improve. It's a key part of making sure we achieve our goals and improve lives for people in Torfaen.



TORFAEN: AN OUTSTANDING COUNCIL:

We have developed our own internal framework for driving improvement within Torfaen Council – our ‘Characteristics of an Outstanding Council’. Our County Plan shows how we will improve life for people who live and work in Torfaen. Our framework for an Outstanding Council explains how we will make the council work better, so we can deliver those improvements more efficiently and effectively.

Just like we do with the County Plan, we keep track of the key actions that help us become an Outstanding Council. Below is a simple summary of how we've done so far, based on our 8 characteristics, during the year 2024/25.



An innovative council that, has:

- Demonstrated agility and positivity in adapting to new challenges and initiatives
- Took part in a whole Council Review, which praised the Council's ambitious strategies i.e. to Federate with Blaenau Gwent and our strategy to reduce Health Inequality
- Focussed on Early Intervention and Prevention aimed at tackling health inequality and sustainability that was recognised as innovative and of national interest
- Launched our 'Rebel Torfaen' initiative, as a new way working aimed to provide broader, more diverse perspectives on Council challenges
- Focused on enhancing staff skills, knowledge, and experience of our staff
- Implemented a new online recruitment and induction process
- Rolled out a new Learning and Development platform for our staff

An aspirational and visionary council that, has:

- Set a clear organisational direction with long-term goals to improve well-being across Torfaen
- Continued our collaboration with Gwent Public Service Board to become a Marmot region, focusing on reducing inequalities and improving well-being
- Secured £5 million investment from National Institute for Health and Care Research to tackle health inequalities over 5 years. As part of this investment, we have created a new Health Research Centre that brings together research and data experts and helps us to target resources effectively and address root causes of inequality

A high performing council that, has:

- Reviewed our approach to more efficiently capturing resident and customer feedback
- Participated in developing a national resident survey with WLGA and Data Cymru
- Recognised the need to become more data and intelligence driven to achieve high performance
- Targeted intensive support for key projects, to:
 - Safely reduce the number of children looked after
 - Remodeled Early Intervention and Prevention services
 - Understood energy usage and carbon emissions
 - Improved waste and recycling service performance
- Developed a new strategy to ensure efficient and appropriate use of Council buildings

A collaborative and inclusive council that, has:

4

- Strong commitment to inclusivity and equalities across the organisation
- Established 'Diverse Minds' in January 2025, that focuses on workplace experiences, strategies, and positive aspects of neurodiversity
- Adopted our Plan to Support Communities, in April 2024, that puts communities, well-being, and prevention at the heart of service design
- Embedded our Participation Strategy across all Directorates
- Formed a staff Participatory Group to improve planning and inclusivity of future consultations
- Increased our engagement through social media campaigns and rising registrations on our 'Get Involved' portal
- Strengthened partnership with Blaenau Gwent to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability



A well-managed council that, has:

5

- Strengthened our Workforce Strategy to support delivery of our Council Plan and legal duties
- Implemented a Training Programme and Wellbeing programme for our staff
- Introduced a new performance appraisal system, shaped by staff input
- Received significant positive improvements, within our Staff Survey
- Named one of the best UK employers by the Financial Times (March 2025)
- Implemented structural changes to support new federated working model
- Ensured governance arrangements remain strong and robust.

An engaging and accessible council that, has:

6

- Well-established forums and networks (e.g. Citizens Panel, Youth Forum) actively involved in decision-making
- Member Champions (e.g. Equalities & Diversity, Carers, Sustainability, Mental Health) play a key role in representing specific areas
- Frequent, multi-channel communication with residents and Members
- Launched a Residents Survey which provided residents with an opportunity to share views on life in Torfaen and experiences with council services.
- Introduced new mechanisms by which the council can engage with more young people

A financially astute council that, has:

7

- Financially well governed processes with sound budgets and systems
- Confirmed compliance and proper use of public funds through our Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
- Identified scope to strengthen commissioning arrangements
- Developed a commissioning framework to improve value for money and consistency
- Developed a project management team - Project Apollo to address medium-term financial shortfalls and support strategic programme and project delivery
- Strengthened our procurement function, via collaboration with the procurement service run by Cardiff City Council
- Continued success in attracting inward investment and securing external funding

A digital and data led council that, has:

8

- Developed a clear strategic vision through our Online Services Plan
- Designed a digital skills programme to build workforce capabilities
- Focussed on increasing online transaction rates
- Used customer feedback to improve services (e.g. Bulky Waste bookings)
- Continued to progress the automating and streamlining of our business processes



THE YEAR AHEAD & BEYOND:

We want to change how we work. We want to make our communities, wellbeing, and prevention the most important parts of our services. This means helping people to:

- live healthier lives,
- feel more connected,
- and have fairer opportunities.

We believe our communities should have more say in decisions. We want to share power and build trust.

This means:

- letting local people help decide how money is spent,
- working together to design and run services,
- and making sure services meet real local needs.

We want residents, partners, and the council to work together as equal partners. This helps build stronger communities that can deal with challenges and grow. We will give communities more control over things like:

- budgets (money),
- buildings and spaces (assets), and
- how services are planned and delivered.

We've already started making changes. We now focus more on early help and prevention—stopping problems before they start. But we know the council can't do this alone. We need to work with: our staff, our partners, and our communities to make prevention part of everything we do.

Every part of the council will look for ways to:

- stop problems before they grow,
- help people stay well,
- and make things fairer.

We will measure success by what we prevent and not just what we fix. We are creating a new way of working called the Torfaen Deal. It's not just a plan - it's a promise to work differently. This agreement is about:

- sharing power,
- making decisions together,
- and trusting communities to know what works best.

Together, we will:

- reduce health problems,
- improve wellbeing,
- and build strong, proud, and empowered communities.

Our 'Agreement with Communities' will be delivered through 5 shared missions:

Mission One: Early Years - Building Bright Futures

Support every child to thrive by laying strong foundations for lifelong learning and development - addressing cognitive, emotional, social, and physical wellbeing

Mission Two: Inspiring Lifelong Learning, Ambition and Resilience

Empower people of all ages to lead informed, independent, and healthy lives, fostering ambition and resilience throughout life

Mission Three: Wellbeing Through Community Leadership

Partner with communities to harness local strengths and improve wellbeing, reducing reliance on statutory services through proactive, community-led solutions

Mission Four: Thriving Economy, Vibrant Places

Drive sustainable economic growth and create well-connected, vibrant communities where people and businesses can flourish

Mission Five: Empowered Communities, Shared Power and Success

Work alongside communities to capture their energy and ambition, working together to plan services and creating conditions for resilience, self-reliance, and shared success

One year ago, the Council promised to become a **Fairer and Healthier Council**. This means we want to **reduce inequality** and **make lives better for everyone** in Torfaen.

We know that health and wellbeing are not just about personal choices or medical care. Things like where people are born, live, work, and grow older have a big effect on their health. So, we need to look at the **whole system** - not just healthcare—to fix problems and create long-term, fair solutions.



We are using the Torfaen Deal to help make this happen. We want to be a learning council—listening to feedback from:

- the public,
- our partners, and
- service reviews.

We will keep checking if our actions are making a real difference. We will use a new way to evaluate our work. This will help us:

- keep improving,
- make better decisions,
- and have a bigger impact on people's wellbeing.

We want a future where everyone is treated fairly so they can thrive in strong and inclusive communities. We will build trust, share responsibility, and work together with residents and partners to make lasting change. Our plans are bold, and our work with Blaenau Gwent Council shows we are leading the way in Wales.

A full copy of our Annual Report can be found [here](#).

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