

New Look Education Service Newsletter



Welcome to the new look Education Service Newsletter, I am Cllr. Richard Clark the Executive Member for Education. I have previously shared a regular newsletter with Torfaen Elected Members to update on some of the activities and information from the Education Service, including some of the portfolio of my colleague, Cllr. Fiona Cross the Cabinet member for children, families and communities. From this month, we are widening the audience for the newsletter to include our colleagues in the Education Service and schools. The information contained in the newsletter is some of the good news stories and information on upcoming activities and events. It's just some of the highlights of activities and future events in a wide variety of services. We hope you will find it informative; we would value your feedback on the content and any suggestions for future topics you would like to see included, please find contact details at the end of newsletter to make suggestions.

Estyn Improvement Conference Feedback

Reminder of the Background

Estyn issued the Local Authority with written feedback on the recent Improvement Conference where the Education Service Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) was discussed.

- Estyn noted the following strengths of work taken to date:
- The local authority demonstrated that it has identified and understood the current issues appropriately.
- The local authority has developed a post-inspection action plan that generally considers the breadth of the recommendations.
- The local authority has recently strengthened its leadership capacity.
- The local authority is developing a better understanding of its schools and is implementing systems to further strengthen this.
- [The LA] reports that it has clearer expectations of the regional school improvement service and that the relationship between itself, and the school improvement service has very recently improved.
- the local authority has improved its reporting and accountability arrangements through the monitoring evaluation and review process.

Estyn noted further developments to strengthen the PIAP:

- Overall, the authority's approach to evaluating the impact of its work is at an early stage of development.
- The post-inspection action plan is activity heavy and that expected outcomes, or impact of this activity is limited and needs strengthening.

Next Steps

Having reviewed the letter, the Education Service will take the following actions

- Ensure appropriate links between the County Plan and the PIAP
- Distribute actions detailed in the PIAP across the senior and middle leadership team within Education Services
- Use individual team plans as appendices to the PIAP. The individual team plans capture progress against specific impact measures and will be routinely reviewed through the Monitoring, Evaluation and Review cycle.

Professional Learning for Elected Members

Thanks to all the Members that completed the online survey on the Members Professional Learning Offer. Following your feedback, there will be three sessions offered to Members starting in the spring, jointly facilitated by the EAS and Education Services, on the following:

1. The role of the EAS in supporting LAs to deliver the statutory functions of school improvement
 - Regional strategies for Schools Causing Concern (Team Around the School)
 - Understanding changes to national accountability arrangements
 - Understanding the Estyn Framework
 - The role of governors in supporting school improvement
2. ALN Transformation
3. Curriculum for Wales and Regional Support, including for literacy and numeracy and professional learning for teachers

Dates and times will be issued shortly.

New Campaign to Encourage Children to Attend School Regularly

Pupils from four schools in Torfaen have become the faces of a new campaign to encourage children to attend school regularly. The #NotInMissOut campaign aims to celebrate the many benefits of going to school every day including a great education, fun activities and spending time with friends. Torfaen schools are at the heart of the campaign by using images of real pupils, from real schools. It encourages and supports schools to create their own content for their social media channels, digital class and parent platforms and websites.

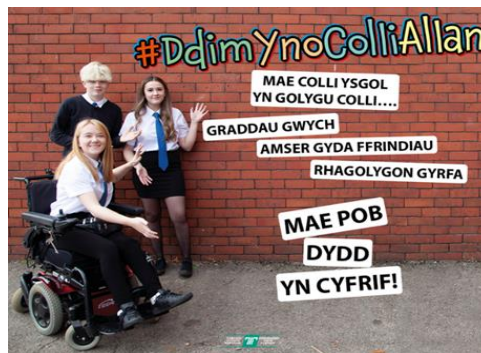


The communications team have worked with staff and pupils at Llanyrafon Primary and Ysgol Bryn Onnen, as well as Abersychan School and Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw to film bilingual videos highlighting just some of the things they love about going to school. The videos can be viewed on the Council's YouTube page. There will be weekly TCBC #NotInMissOut social media posts. monthly posts linked to the campaign from every school and a

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monthly press release focused on individual primary and secondary schools.

Scrutiny members backed the #NotInMissOut campaign and championed the aim to reduce unauthorised days off with positive messages, rather than focusing on 100% attendance. The Education Welfare Service provided several case studies for Scrutiny to demonstrate their multi-agency working approach to improve attendance and reduce the number of persistent absentees in the borough and members praised these as it helped them to understand the hard work which is going on behind the scenes.



Torfaen Council is now working with other schools to promote their exciting curricular and extra-curricular activities over the coming months which will appear on school's websites and social media channels.



Year 11 pupils from Cwmbran High School: left to right: Peter Lawrence, Georgie Maddox, Iris Howell-Smith (Head Girl), Lewis Day (Head boy), Ben Pritchard, Thomas Simmons and Ethan Pole

Year 4 from Griffithstown Primary School (right). They are in non-uniform as they won the award for best overall class attendance and they chose to wear their own clothes as their reward. Certificates were also awarded for most improved attendance. Year 6 are pictured below #NotInMissOut



What's Next for Attendance in Torfaen

Prior to the pandemic, school attendance in Torfaen was broadly similar to average attendance rates across Wales. Between October 2019 and October 2022, average primary school attendance in the borough fell by three per cent, from 95 to 92 per cent. Average secondary school attendance reduced by six per cent, from 94 to 88 per cent. The target attendance rate for primary and secondary schools in Torfaen is 95 per cent. Pupils who take off an average of half a day off a week will have an attendance rate of 90 per cent. Those who take off an average of one day off a week will have an attendance rate of 80 per cent. Allowing children to take time off for reasons other than illness could be classed as unauthorised absences and could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice which is now being introduced in the borough. The Welsh Government, along with Torfaen, is currently updating their policy and guidance around school attendance.

Admissions Timetable

Key Admissions Dates 2023/24

Nursery (January, April & September)

Offer of places – Friday 25th November 2022 (September 2023 4 year olds and January 2023 rising 3')

Offer of places - Friday 27th January 2023 (April rising 3's)

Primary

Applications sent to parents Wednesday 26th October 2022 – Online application will go live on Wednesday 2nd November 2022 (9.00am)

Closing date for applications Wednesday 11th January 2023 (12.00pm noon)

Offer of places – Monday 17th April 2023*

Primary appeals will be held during May/June 2023 for applications received by the closing date and in accordance with the appeal time frame.

Secondary

Closing date for applications Wednesday 23 November 2022 (12pm noon)

Offer of places – Wednesday 1st March 2023*

Secondary appeals will be held during May/June 2023 for applications received by the closing date and in accordance with the appeal time

Faith Schools

Closing date for Primary applications Wednesday 11th January 2023

Closing date for Secondary applications is Wednesday 23rd November 2022

Offer of places for Primary – Monday 17th April 2023*

Offer of places for Secondary - Wednesday 1st March 2023*

*This is a common offer date across all Welsh admission authorities.

#NotInMissOut

#DdimYnoColliAllan

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Celebrating Diversity in Sport

Nineteen primary schools took part in the event at Cwmbran stadium and were asked to represent one of the countries taking part in the World Cup. The festival, which celebrated diversity in sport, was filmed for the FC Cymru programme, available on the FAW's new streaming service the Red Wall+. FC Cymru captures how communities over Wales are using football to promote Welsh culture. The pupils from years four, five and six wore the colours of their chosen countries and were tasked with designing a fact file and posters. It was a day of non-competitive football, with all the teams divided into two groups for a series of round robin games.



The children also took part in a Q and A workshop delivered by No Boundaries – a company that specialises in diversity and inclusion awareness and education, where they learned about the negative impacts of racism from those that have experienced it. If you would like to watch the coverage from FA Wales/Eat Sleep media from the festival you can watch that [here](#)

Young Volunteers Become the Sports Coaches of the Future

The Torfaen Sport Development Team have supported some young volunteers through the Coach of the future programme at Blaenavon Netball Club to gain Level 1 Coaching. The club report "the girls started coaching as they were the older girls at the club at the time, so transitioning into the coaching side of netball allowed them to stay with the club, helping others grow and improve in their netball skills. The girls have completed their; Netball Leaders, Intro into Umpiring and Level 1 Coaching Course. They have also attended a Safeguarding Course and the club is looking to put them through their First Aid Course in the near future. They are able to share their knowledge and skills with the club members which is allowing the girls to continue learning and to become more versatile as coaches by coaching and volunteering at Blaenavon Netball for 2 and half hours a week with around 50 participants. As a result of their commitment for the first time ever; Blaenavon Netball Club has been able to enter 2 teams into the South East Wales Netball League. This is a huge step forward for the club".

National Youth Worker Awards and Appointment of Members of Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board

Congratulations to Hannah Lewis (Hwb) who was nominated and shortlisted in the category of Outstanding Youth Worker at the National Youth Work Awards, and Congratulations! to David Williams who won in the leadership category.



Further Congratulations! to David as he has also been appointed to the Welsh Government Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board, if you would like to read more about the Board please click [here](#).

Youth Service Supporting Young People at their families at Christmas

Torfaen Youth Service will be distributing 30 Christmas hampers to young people and their families throughout December packed full of goodies for the Christmas period. Young people and families have been identified as a result of engaging in Youth Service provision throughout the last year and who will find this time challenging as a result of cost of living increases and energy bill increases.

Torfaen Youth Service will be hosting the Torfaen Youth Persons Support Service Christmas meal on the 22nd of December. This is an opportunity for 16+ care experienced young people to have a Christmas dinner with all the trimmings with their friends and social work staff, have fun, enjoy a quiz or two where otherwise they may not over this period.

Play Half Term Fun

More than 750 children have taken part in a fun-filled week of play activities this half term with Torfaen Play Service. The children were able to take part in arts and crafts, games, sports, swimming and spooky Halloween activities. Children who attended the wellbeing camps at six schools across the borough, received a free packed lunch and snacks throughout the day, provided by Torfaen Catering.

Feedback from a parent, whose daughters attended the Garnteg School wellbeing camp, said: "The camps have really benefited the whole family - my younger children can maintain an active social life and my eldest has gained valuable experience whilst volunteering with the scheme. Having lunch provided is a big help for everyone with the current cost of living."

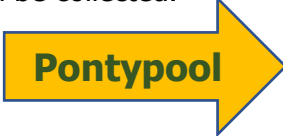
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Around 90 playworkers and volunteers delivered the range of play activities across all provisions, with Specialist play and respite sessions also delivered to more than 60 children with disabilities.

Free Festive Play Resource Packs

Torfaen Play are delighted to be working in partnership with the Blaenavon Town Council, Cwmbran Community Council and Pontypool Community Council and offering free play resource packs again this year for families in Torfaen.

Please see the flyer for each area with detail of when and where the packs can be collected.



Torfaen Play & Short Breaks Services

PLAY RESOURCE PACKS

FESTIVE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES IN TORFAEN

Torfaen Play Service are working in partnership with Pontypool Community Council to provide free festive play bags to the community.

10:00AM-3:00PM

PLEASE COME ALONG AND COLLECT YOUR FREE PLAY RESOURCE PACK AT THE FOLLOWING VENUE.

PONTYPOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL
35 Commercial Street,
Pontypool,
NP4 6JQ

Thursday 8th December
Tuesday 13th December
Thursday 15th December
Tuesday 20th December
Thursday 22nd December

Chwarae Torfaen Torfaen Play @chwaraetorfaentorfaenplay @torfaenplayservice

Torfaen Play & Short Breaks Services

PLAY RESOURCE PACKS

FESTIVE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES IN TORFAEN

Torfaen Play Service are working in partnership with Blaenavon Town Council to provide free festive play bags to the community.

10:00AM-3:00PM

PLEASE COME ALONG AND COLLECT YOUR FREE PLAY RESOURCE PACK AT THE FOLLOWING VENUE.

BLAENAVON TOWN COUNCIL
101 High Street,
Blaenavon,
NP4 9PT

Wednesday 14th December
Thursday 15th December
Monday 19th December
Tuesday 20th December

Chwarae Torfaen Torfaen Play @chwaraetorfaentorfaenplay @torfaenplayservice



Torfaen Play & Short Breaks Services

PLAY RESOURCE PACKS

FESTIVE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES IN TORFAEN

Torfaen Play Service are working in partnership with Cwmbran Community Council to provide free festive play bags to the community.

10:00AM-3:00PM

PLEASE COME ALONG AND COLLECT YOUR FREE PLAY RESOURCE PACK AT THE FOLLOWING VENUE.

CWMBRAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL
The Council House,
Ventnor Road, Cwmbran
NP44 3JY

Wednesday 7th December
Friday 9th December
Monday 12th December
Wednesday 14th December
Friday 16th December
Monday 19th December
Wednesday 21st December

Chwarae Torfaen Torfaen Play @chwaraetorfaentorfaenplay @torfaenplayservice

Egin Ysgol Seedling School officially opens / Egin Ysgol yn agor yn swyddogol

In October, Jeremy Miles MS, the Welsh Government Minister for Education and Welsh Language, officially opened the 'Gwladys Block' at Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw in Pontypool.

The £8.8million facility was funded by the Welsh Government through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme and contributes towards its target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

The council received funding of £8.1million to extend the age range at the Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw site, increasing the pupil age range from 3 to 18. This has been achieved by a 210 pupil primary and nursery department which opened in September 2022. The new extended school is now called Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw.



Capital grant funding to support learners with Additional Learning Needs.

The Minister for Education and Welsh Language has approved up to £20 million capital funding across Wales to support learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

The aim of the grant is to optimise pre-16 learning environments for those with ALN and increase accessibility to promote inclusive practice, support learning and pupil wellbeing. This will support the implementation of the ALN and Education Tribunal Act Wales 2018 and Curriculum for Wales.

Grant funding of £572k has been awarded to Torfaen.

The funding is for expenditure to support learners with ALN in both mainstream and special schools (pre-16 Schools and PRU's) for use in the 2022-23 financial year.

Allocations have been given to Torfaen ALN provisions at the following schools:

Abersychan School
Crownbridge School
Cwmbran High School
Maendy Primary School
Nant Celyn Primary School
Pontnewydd Primary School
Pupil Referral Unit

Eligible expenditure includes the following capital costs:

Upgrading facilities, learning environments, equipment and physical resources

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Purchasing new equipment or physical resources
Works to improve inclusivity of facilities and learning environments

Phase 1 Expansion of Flying Start

Welsh Government asked all Local Authorities to expand the Flying Start programme in September 2022 as part of their commitment to support 2 year olds with part time childcare places. They asked us to target an additional 88 children aged 0-4. Looking at the WIMD data, we opted to target Abersychan 4 (Talywain and Victoria Village area). We have exceeded our target and have taken on an additional 162 children into the Flying Start programme as part of the expansion. 39 of those children were eligible for childcare (aged 2 years), so far 24 have taken up their place, 5 of which have opted to take up their childcare through medium of Welsh

Early Years Swap Don't Shop



SWAPDON'T SHOP

**DO YOU HATE WASTE?
WE DO AND BABIES AND TODDLERS GROW OUT OF THINGS SO QUICKLY!**

When visiting our centres, please call in to see if there are any bits you can make use of. There are 'Swap Don't Shop' schemes for pre-schoolers at:

- Cwmbran Integrated Children's Centre**
Ton Road, Cwmbran, NP44 7LE
- Penygarth Integrated Children's Centre**
Penygarth Road, Penygarth, Pontypool, NP4 8JR
- Blaenavon Integrated Children's Centre**
Middle Coed Cae Road, Blaenavon, NP4 9AW

9am – 3pm, Monday to Friday

Have nothing to swap? Don't worry, help yourself and swap when you can. If donating or swapping, please ensure that item is in good, clean condition. We can't accept anything damaged.

  TorfaenEarlyYears  EarlyYearsTorfaen

Over the summer we trialled some events to encourage families to swap clothes rather than buying new. This is an environmentally friendly option with young children outgrowing clothes so quickly, but it also supports families with costs as they do not have to swap if they are unable, and we re-iterate this regularly. As a result, we have stands at Cwmbran, Penygarth and Blaenavon ICC which are well stocked with pre-school aged clothes for families to help themselves to as they are passing. Some of our families that attend group sessions, leave with a bag full of clothes every week. We ran events again over the October half term and our next one is the 7th December. We have been inundated with donations and for December's event, we have asked that people just take what they need and not swap. We were also very lucky to have some bikes donated from Changing Gearz. We've had lots of lovely feedback via our social media pages including

the following which was from a lady that had just that week had 2 children placed in foster care with her: " Thank you for the two bikes and scooter, much appreciated and the clothing items. I got two happy little girls this afternoon seeing the scooter and bikes arrive! After a good clean up and stabilisers they will be fab thanks again for keeping for me".

Healthy and Sustainable Pre School, Gold Standard Healthy Snack Award



Congratulations to Little Ducklings, Cold Barn Farm for successfully completing the Gwent Gold Standard Healthy Snack Award. The Award recognises and celebrates high quality snack provision within childcare settings across Gwent, promoting positive eating habits from the earliest age.

The award encourages children to develop independence and social skills. They have the opportunity to self-serve, peel and chop, pour water or milk, set up and clear away the table and try new foods.

Little Ducklings, Garnteg have also completed the award. Congratulations to both settings, well deserved!

Childcare Offer for Wales - New Digital Service

The Childcare Offer for Wales could allow parents to claim up to 30 hours of early education and childcare a week, for up to 48 weeks of the year. This government-funded childcare scheme aims to lessen the burden of childcare costs so that you can spend the money you've saved on the things that matter most to your family.

This Autumn, the Childcare Offer for Wales will launch its new digital service. Parents already accessing the Offer won't need to do anything, but those who wish to receive funding from January 2023 will need to apply online via the new service.

<https://gov.wales/childcare-offer-for-wales-campaign>

ALN Training for Early Years

The last ALNET Act module childcare setting training was rolled out this term, covering the Role of the ALNCO and ALN file launch. Teamwork was key in achieving this module training which included Early Years, ALN and the Inclusion team, well done to those involved and the Childcare Team who did a great job in preparing the files and delivered the training/launching the files. Further ALN training will be available to those childcare settings who have not booked on. For further information please contact Dawn Evans -

Dawn.Evans@torfaen.gov.uk

ComIT Priority: Workforce Development in the Early Years

The ComIT Early Years Speech, Language and Communication Guidance for Practitioners is now fully published in both Welsh and English and is being distributed to settings through the EY Teams in each Local Authority. The guidance and recorded training sessions can be accessed in our [ComIT HWB Network](#) and [ComIT EY SLC MS Team](#)

We are continuing to offer live training for schools and settings and had nearly 200 practitioners in our recent evening session for EY settings, demonstrating that the demand for support in this area remains high. Local Early Years teams are actively promoting our training and guidance as part of their Universal and Targeted offer for Early Years.

Welsh Government Siarad Gyda Fi / Talk with Me

Siarad Gyda Fi / Talk With Me is the key Welsh Government programme and campaign which sets out their commitment to promoting and supporting children's speech language and communication needs. Visit [Talk with me | GOV.WALES](#) to see the information and resources available for practitioners and parents - in English and Welsh. You may have already seen some of the Talk With Me Key Messages promoted on the Secom Facebook and Twitter pages - thanks to Beki Palfrey for her hard work with this. Look out for the Talk With Me adverts on TV too!

WG Professional Learning Module on HWB

ComIT worked collaboratively to provide content for a professional learning module linked to the Communication developmental pathway in the [Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings](#), recently published by Welsh Government. You can access this module here: [Understanding the 5 Developmental Pathways and Pedagogy](#)

From SEN to ALN: Parent and Carer Forums

SNAP Cymru are running a series of free parent and carer forums for families of children with ALN/Disabilities aged 0-25 across Wales starting this month and running until April 2023.

The sessions offer parents and carers the chance to

- find out more about the implementation of the ALN system in Wales
- share their views and experiences
- access support and advice from the SNAP Cymru team

Feedback from the sessions will help Welsh Government to develop future resources and support for families.

The forums will run online and in person, in various locations across Wales.

Please help us to promote the events with parents, and carers:

[Twitter post](#)

[Eventbrite sign up](#)

[SNAP Cymru blog post](#)

You can also email SNAP Cymru with any questions about the event: fromsenttoaln@snapcymru.org

Welsh Governments “Parenting – Give it Time Campaign”

Since March this year, the law in Wales has changed and it became illegal to physically punish a child in any way. Under the Children (Abolition of Defense of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020, all types of physical punishment, such as smacking, hitting, slapping and shaking, are now illegal. Children now have the same protection from assault as adults. The new law aims to protect children and their rights, to give them the best start in life.

[Ending physical punishment campaign leaflet \(gov.wales\)](#)

Parenting. Give it time is a Welsh Government campaign offering parents positive practical hints, tips and expert advice to encourage good behaviour from children (of all ages) and alternatives to physical punishment. Click the link below to view campaign details, including video and other resources aimed at parents. Also, information and leaflets on the recent change in law, which practitioners and agencies can use to support raising awareness of the change (and positive approaches to parenting)

[Parenting. Give it time. | GOV.WALES](#)

Trauma Informed Schools

A trauma informed school (TIS) is one that is able to support children and teenagers who suffer with trauma or mental health problems and whose troubled behaviour acts as a barrier to learning. All Educational Psychologists have now successfully completed the TIS Diploma and can support schools to embed TIS approaches. Senior Leaders TIS training will also be commencing shortly.

The Gypsy Roma Traveller Youth Forum and Business Buddies Group Remembrance Day Project.

The Gypsy Roma Traveller Youth Forum and Business Buddies group have undertaken a project to make and sell poppies for Remembrance Day. Pupils planned and made the poppies and then sold them to make money to donate to the Blaenavon British legion poppy appeal. In addition to selling to friends and family they had a stall at Pontypool market to sell the poppies. They made over £200 which was donated to the appeal.

A poppy was presented to Major PA Harrison at a recent council meeting. The Major and colleague Captain David Matthews attended the remembrance service held at West Monmouth School on 17th November where the funding raised was donated to Blaenavon British legion.

The Traveller pupils and staff have received a thank you email from the Major which stated, 'I have been bowled over with your support and that from the students - I feel extremely privileged.'

Torfaen Member of UK Youth Parliament Chosen as the Debate Lead for Wales



In the recent UK Youth Parliament sitting in the House of Commons. Abigail Edwards was chosen as the debate lead for Wales. In the links below you will see Abi being interviewed for various news channels.

Abi has run a year long campaign researching what issues matter to young people in Torfaen. At the House of Commons debate young people voted that the 'Cost of living crisis' is the top issue facing young

people going forward. This means Abi will carry out local research on this issue and how it impacts young people in Torfaen. She will then propose ways we can help address and minimise the impact.

[BBC News](#)

https://twitter.com/dcms/status/1592079900952797184?s=46&t=k8--BzFzINi01mVfL_K4pw&fbclid=IwAR3VcZACP92F07nN1-0Ep0H9ocze75yCRMt0bZxoO_tqJcOSNyNmav1OTjk

Energy Efficiency Best Practice

Ceri Williams, TCBC's Education Energy Finance Officer has been asked to speak at a Wales regional event, sharing Torfaen best practice and details of what we have achieved in energy saving measures, raising awareness, monitoring of energy consumption and costs and pipeline projects to work towards Wales net zero target.

TCBC has supported schools by installing a range of energy efficiency measures, collectively reducing emissions by 672,360 tonnes of carbon and £151,760 per year.

A Net-Zero Future

Future plans for the council involve installing several exciting projects along with on-going training for new staff and pupils. Over the next twelve months and beyond Torfaen will be implementing Solar PV across 14 schools, calculating the viability of Loft Insulation throughout schools, combined with battery storage, electrical vehicle charging, heat pumps, ground source and air source which has the potential to provide significant savings and address heat decarbonisation

The Next Newsletter

The next newsletter will be circulated at the end of January 2023, if you would like to feedback on this edition or suggest topics you would like to see in the future please contact Jessica.gabriel@torfaen.gov.uk