

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



March 2024-29



CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION	4
WHY WE NEED A CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN	6
A SHARED VISION AND PRIORITIES	8
HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED	10
NEATH PORT TALBOT'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - DATA	18
OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS	
PRIORITY OUTCOME 1	26
PRIORITY OUTCOME 2	30
PRIORITY OUTCOME 3	34
PRIORITY OUTCOME 4	38
PRIORITY OUTCOME 5	42
HOW WE WILL KNOW IF WE'RE HAVING AN IMPACT	46

Section 1

INTRODUCTION: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION.

Section 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who Will Be Accountable For Delivering the Plan?

The Children and Young People's Leadership Group are responsible for delivering change and monitoring the impact of this plan. We will produce an update on progress, and continue to engage with children, young people and their families. Alongside this we will commit to exploring ways to work with young people directly to evaluate the impact of this plan.

Neath Port Talbot Early Years, Children and Young People Plan

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

National	Regional	Local
Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015	West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board	Neath Port Talbot Public Service Board Wellbeing Plan 2023-28
Curriculum for Wales	A Population Health Strategy for Swansea Bay	Neath Port Talbot Council Corporate Plan 2022-27
Healthy Child Wales Programme		Children and Young People Social Care Strategic Plan 2023-26
Welsh Government Children and Young People's Plan		Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme		Play Sufficiency Assessment
Youth Engagement and Progression Framework		Welsh Education Strategic Plan 2022-32
NEST (Nurturing Empowering Safe Trusted) Framework		Neath Port Talbot Council's Equility Plan 2022-24
Community Focused Schools		Children & Young People Participation and Engagement Strategy
Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing		Neath Port Talbot Youth Engagement Strategy
Welsh Government Child Poverty Strategy		Neath Port Talbot Employability & Skills Strategy

Section 3

A SHARED VISION AND PRIORITIES.

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

OUR PRIORITY OUTCOMES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WILL BE:

PRIORITY 1.
Supporting our youngest children to be healthy and ready to learn.

PRIORITY 2.
Children, young people and their families are able to access the right support at the right time with positive outcomes.

PRIORITY 3.
Children and young people can access education that inspires them to learn and develop the skills they need for the future they want.

PRIORITY 4.
Children and young people are listened to, and they have opportunities to be actively involved in decision-making.

PRIORITY 5.
All children and young people should be supported to help themselves be physically healthy and feel mentally and emotionally strong.

We commit to working together in partnership to deliver these priority outcomes by:



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

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

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

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

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

Section 4

HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED.

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

Our approach to engagement consisted of:

- » **Conversations with over 200 children and young people living across Neath Port Talbot.**
We undertook a

programme of focus groups, 1-2-1 conversations and workshop sessions in schools and colleges to explore what children and young people think is important to a good life. We also talked to them about their ideas for improving services and support. We made sure to talk to children and young people from hard to reach groups including children with experience of care, young carers, LGBTQ+ young people, children and young people with additional needs and young people living in support accommodation.

- » **Conversations with over 75 parents and carers about their aspirations for their children, their experiences of support and their ideas for what could be done better.** Again, we spent time speaking to harder to reach groups including families with experience of domestic violence, parents and carers with additional learning needs, and parents with mental health issues.



- » We reviewed previous engagement with children and young people and their families that had informed other plans, for example Let's Keep Talking, the Neath Port Talbot Public Service Board Wellbeing Assessment, School Health Research Network Wellbeing Study, Youth Engagement Strategy, Employability and Skills Strategy, Pupil Voice, Play Sufficiency Assessment and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.
- » We undertook a programme of 8 workshops listening to the people who work with, and make the decisions that affect, Neath Port Talbot's children and young people. This included people from across the Local Authority,

Health Board, Third Sector and Head Teachers. These workshop sessions focused on bringing stakeholders together to understand the challenges facing our children and young people. We also explored aspirations for the future, the barriers to implementing change, and identified where the Children and Young People's Partnership, and this plan, could have the most impact.

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



Section 4

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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



WHAT WE HEARD FROM... PARENTS AND CARERS.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

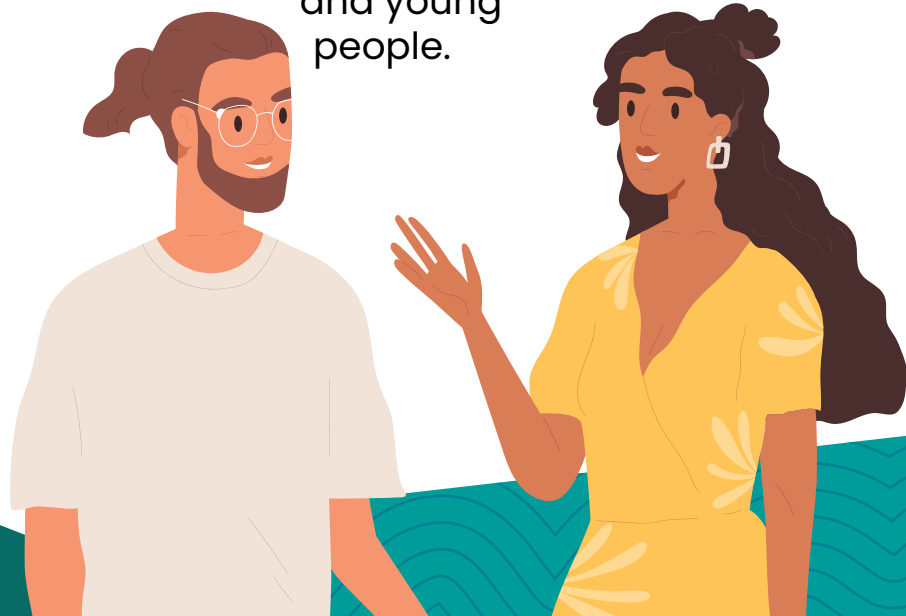


WIDER ENGAGEMENT WITH PARTNERS.

We undertook a programme of workshops with stakeholders to understand and explore partners perspectives of what should be prioritised to make a difference in the lives of our children and young people. A clear priority for stakeholders is ensuring equity of support, taking an approach that acknowledges that some children, young people, and their families need more help than others.

In addition, stakeholders wanted this strategy to think about how we can build resilience in our families, giving them the strength and skills they need to positively meet the challenges of life.

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NEATH PORT TALBOT'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

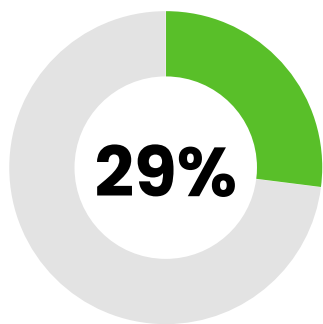
Our Population of Children and Young People.

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

AGE 0-25 IN NEATH PORT TALBOT

41,508

people live in Neath Port Talbot



of the local population

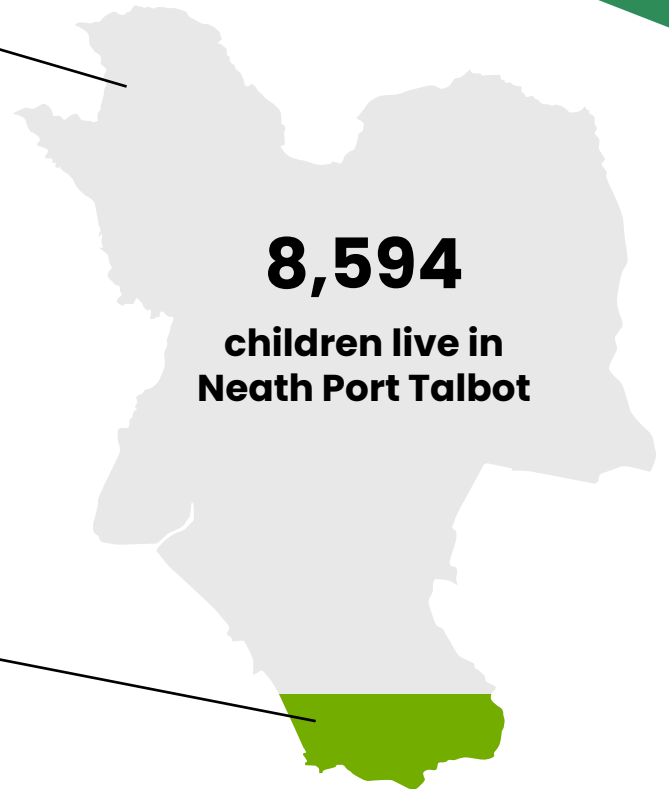
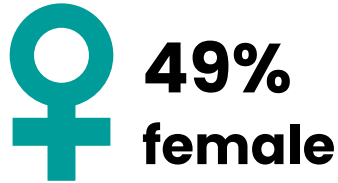


52%
are male



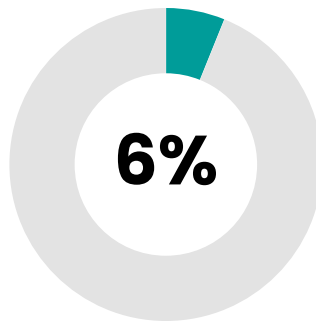
48%
are female

AGE 0-5 IN NEATH PORT TALBOT

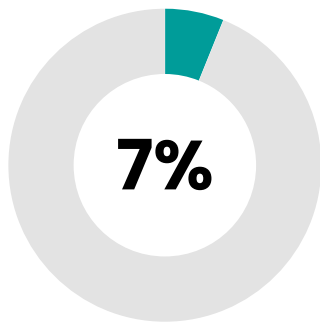


756
PUPILS

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

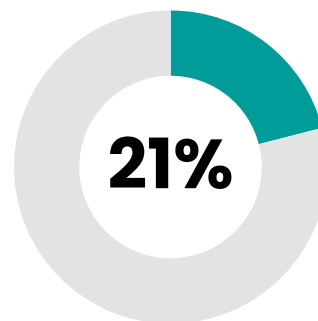


of the local
population



of statutory
school aged
pupils were from
ethnic minority
backgrounds

3,510
pupils were
taught Welsh as
a first language



aged 0-15
live in
relative
low-
income
families

5,321
pupils were
eligible for free
school meals

IN 2022/23

NEATH PORT TALBOT'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

Their Health.

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

Their Emotional Health and Wellbeing.

- In Neath Port Talbot the mental wellbeing of young people aged 11-16 is slightly lower (average wellbeing score 22.8) than the Wales average (average wellbeing score 23) and is declining. (Public Health Wales, School Health Research Network Data Dashboard 2021-2022)
- Additionally, 78% of students reported being satisfied with their life, which was the same as the national average (Public Health Wales, School Health Research Network Data Dashboard 2021-2022)
- Of the 1,413 pupils participating in the Primary School Students Health and Wellbeing Survey, 29% of primary children (year 3 to year 6) in Neath Port Talbot met the threshold for elevated or clinically significant emotional difficulties, slightly more than the national average of 28%. (Warch Network Neath Port Talbot Primary School Students Health and Wellbeing 2022-2023)
- Nationally 23.3% of those aged 16-24 reported being lonely, compared to 10.5% of those aged 75+. Wales Centre for Public Policy: Who is Lonely in Wales, published 11 October 2021 based on analysis of data from the 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2019/20 National Survey of Wales

NEATH PORT TALBOT'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

Their Learning.

- At PLASC 2023 there were 352 school and 60 local authority Individual Development Plans (IDP's) across Neath Port Talbot schools. This was 1.7% and 0.3% of the school population respectively so 2% in total.
- At PLASC 2023, 15.7% of Neath Port Talbot's school population had special educational needs compared with 13.4% nationally. 5.3% of Neath Port Talbot pupils were statemented, the highest in Wales and more than double the Welsh authority average of 2.6%. Due to the current conversion of statements of SEN to Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for mandated cohorts, in line with new Welsh Government legislation for ALN, these figures are not fully representative of the % of additional learning need in NPT and should therefore be viewed with caution. Services continue to report a rise in requests for support and an increase in complexity of need. As the local authority transfers to the new system of ALN, these figures are likely to continue to rise.
- Almost 20% (279) of reception aged pupils attend a Welsh-medium school.
- People leave education less qualified than average, with 68.7% qualified to L2 and above compared with 75.3% in Wales.
- In 2021/22 Neath Port Talbot had an early drop-out rate (vocational qualifications) of 11%, this is lower than the Welsh average (14%) but a considerable increase on the 2018/19 rate of 3%. Welsh Government: Post 16 Statistics based on Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR), Post-16 data collection, Welsh Examinations Database (WED), Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), school attendance data)

- There is more unauthorised absence (12% of sessions in maintained schools) than in Wales (10.5%). (Welsh Government: Average % of sessions of unauthorised absence in maintained schools, pupils aged 5-15 (2022/23 academic year))
- The School Health Research Network Neath Port Talbot Primary School Students Health and Wellbeing 2022-2023 survey, completed by 1,414 of pupils (year 3 to year 6), reported that 44% of children said that they had been bullied or cyberbullied (27%) in the few months before the survey, slightly less than the national average of 48% and 28% respectively.
- The School Health Research Network Neath Port Talbot Secondary School Students Health and Wellbeing 2021/2022 survey, completed by 6,778 of pupils (year 7 to year 11), reported that 33% of children said that they had been bullied or cyberbullied (11%) in the few months before the survey, slightly higher than the national average of 32% and 10% respectively.
- The Neath Port Talbot Youth Council's 'Change Starts with You Survey', completed by 1,173 children and young people highlighted racism as the top issue for young people. Racism is a recent issue highlighted through the survey and has not been evident through other engagement. The Youth Council have advised that young people from ethnic minorities have suffered racism in Neath Port Talbot and other Youth Council members have witnessed some forms of racism. These issues will be further explored with the Youth Council.

NEATH PORT TALBOT'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

Our Most Vulnerable Children and Young People.

- 2,359 (19%) young people aged 16-24 in Neath Port Talbot were disabled under the Equality Act in 2021. (Stat Wales)
- 8 18-24 year olds were threatened with homelessness in 2021, 42 were homeless and 12 unintentionally homeless in priority need (Stat Wales).
- On 31 March 2022 there were 295 children being looked after (Stat Wales).
- 6% of children in Neath Port Talbot have caring responsibilities (Census 2021 ONS).

- 7% of young residents in NPT are gay, lesbian or bisexual and 102 identify as a different gender to sex at birth (Census 2021 ONS)
- 516 16-19 and 640 20-24 year olds in Neath Port Talbot receive Personal Independence Payments.
- 2.2% of year 11 school leavers in Neath Port Talbot were categorised as NEET (not in education, employment or training), a decrease from the 2.4% in 2022 and just 0.1% higher than the national average. (WG NEET figures July 2023).

Our priorities for the next 5 years.

PRIORITY OUTCOME 1:

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

What We Have Heard

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

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

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

Swansea University Bay
Health Visitor

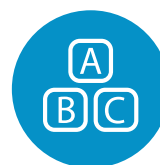
How Will We Know?



More early years workforce engaged in training and CPD opportunities.



Improved attendance rates in nursery education.



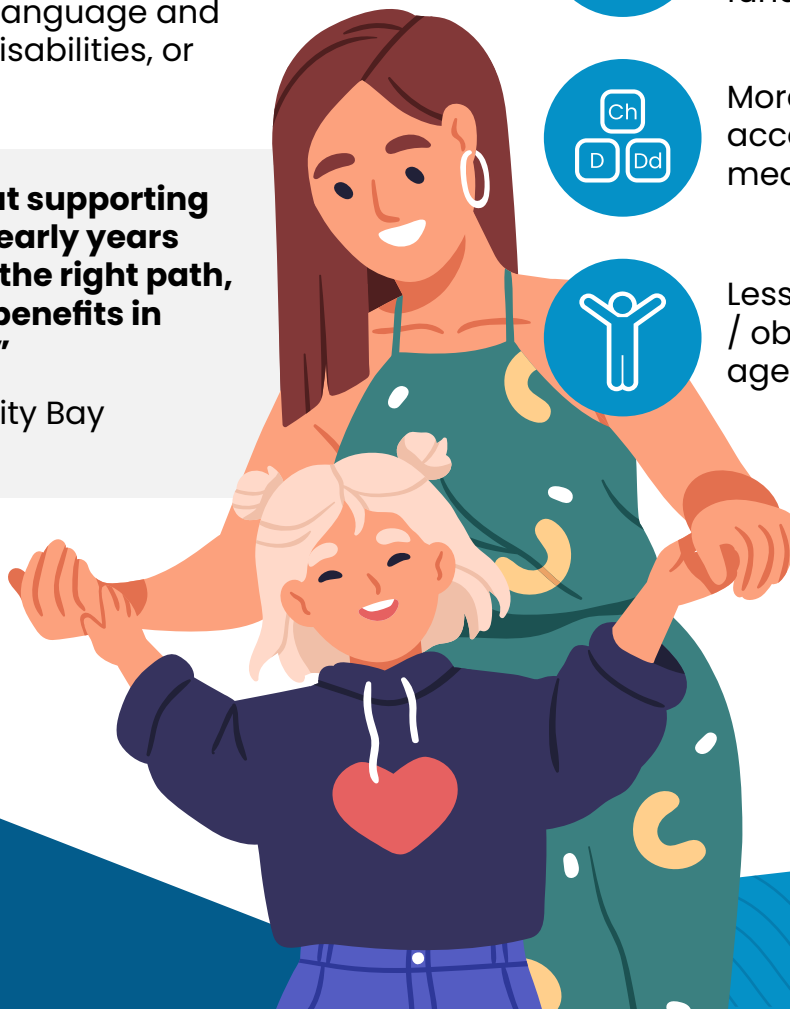
More families taking up Welsh Government funded childcare.



More children accessing Welsh medium education.



Less overweight / obese children aged 4-5 years.



What We Will Do

- ✓ We will learn from our early integration pilots and work together to create an equitable support system that meets the needs of our children from pre-birth to 7 years of age.
- ✓ We will work with families and communities to encourage engagement in childcare and early education to help more children prepare for a lifetime of learning.
- ✓ We will ensure families are aware of the help that can make childcare more affordable and how to access it.
- ✓ We will work together with families, carers and partner organisations to support children's transition into education.
- ✓ We will enable all children to reach their speech, language and communication milestones in their early years as part of their wider developmental journey.
- ✓ We will continue to build on the Healthy Child Wales programme to support the health and welfare of all children in their early years.
- ✓ We will provide opportunities for children in their early years to learn, socialise and play in Welsh.
- ✓ We will ensure our early years workforce has the training and professional development they need to support children to make progress and achieve their developmental milestones.

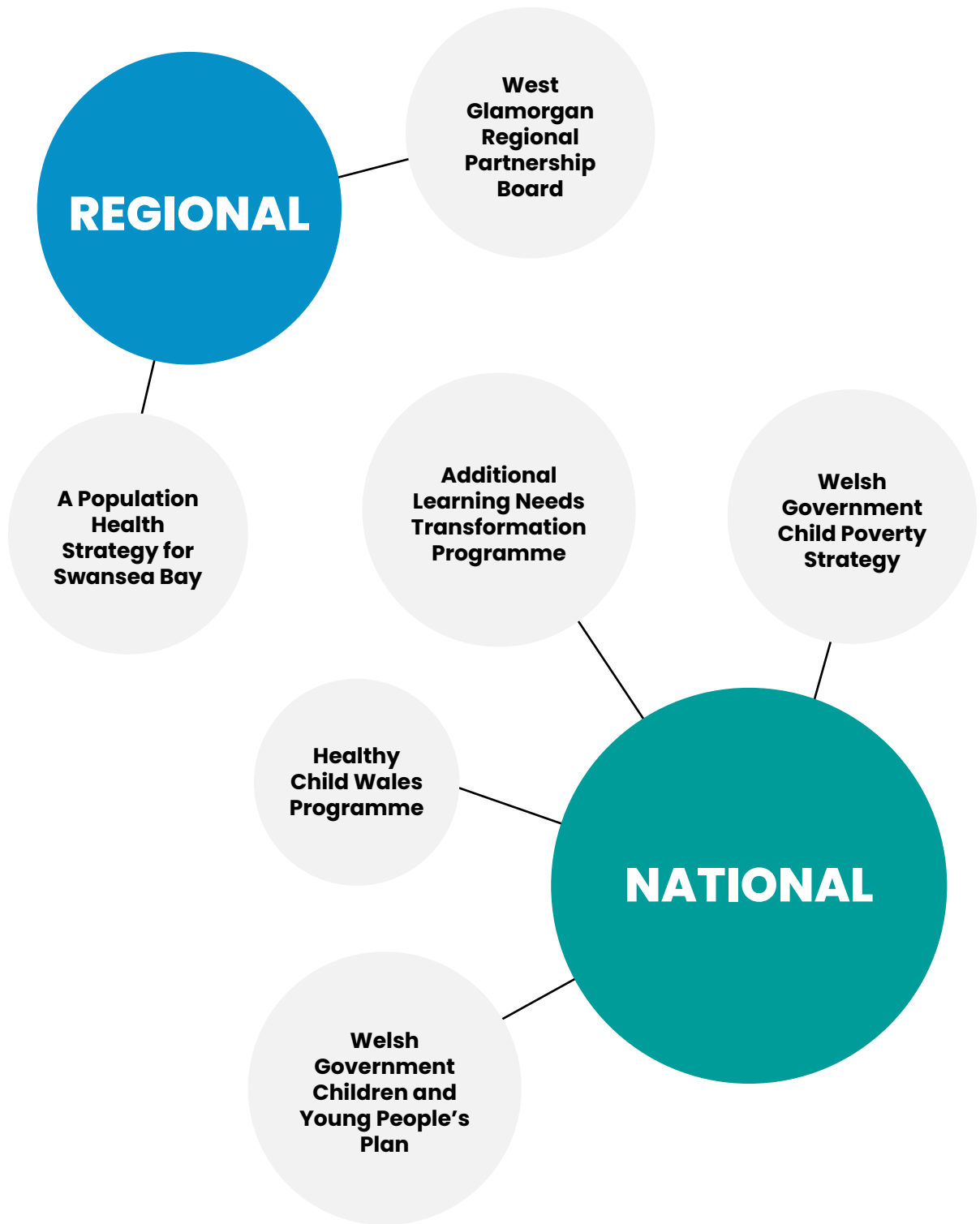
Our priorities for the next 5 years.

PRIORITY OUTCOME 1:

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

Links to Other Strategies





Our priorities for the next 5 years.

PRIORITY OUTCOME 2:

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

What We Have Heard

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

They've told us that fear of judgement and stigma can prevent them from asking for help, and that it can be frustrating to have to tell their stories to multiple services. They want us to work in a joined-up way that works for them.

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

- Single Parent & Domestic Abuse Survivor

How Will We Know?



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



Suitable access to information for children and young people.



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



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



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



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

What We Will Do

- ✓ Children, young people and families will be able to access the help they need from services.
- ✓ We will work together, and listen to children, young people and their families, to think about what early help and support they need.
- ✓ We will ensure our early intervention services work together, in partnership, to meet the needs of our children, young people and their families.
- ✓ We will work with existing partnership programmes and initiatives to look for ways to tackle barriers to accessing help, by putting support into communities.
- ✓ We will continue to explore how we can better share information and data, so that people who ask for help only need to tell their story once.
- ✓ We will ensure that information for children, young people and families is easy to find and easy to understand.

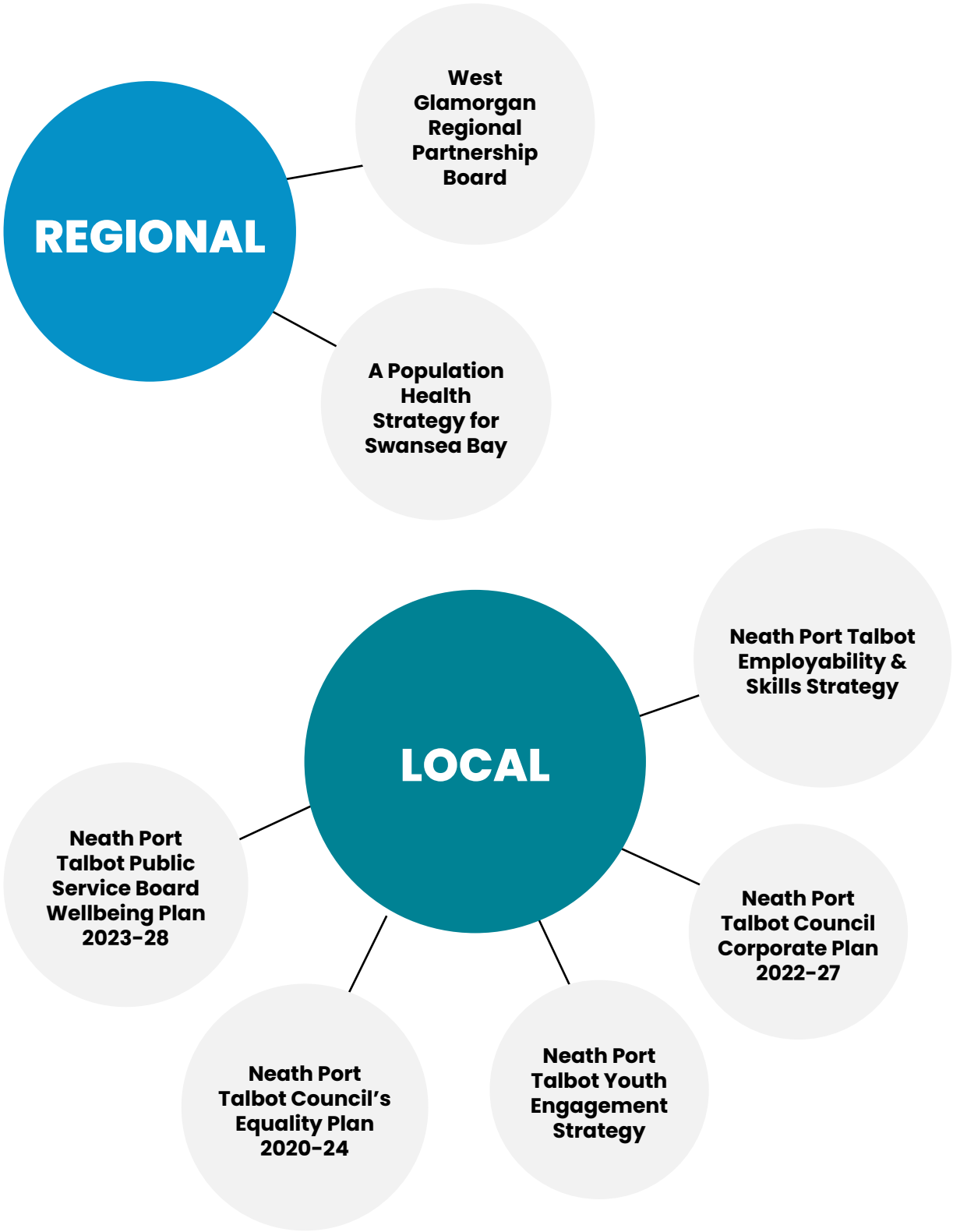
Our priorities for the next 5 years.

PRIORITY OUTCOME 2:

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

Links to Other Strategies





Our priorities for the next 5 years.

PRIORITY OUTCOME 3:

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

What We Have Heard

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

meeting their additional needs, and bullying including cyber bullying.

Children and young people want to be empowered to make choices about their future and to find the pathway that works for them. There is a perception that choice and opportunity is limited in Neath Port Talbot. We need to work together to tackle this perception, inspire our children to learn and address their concerns.

How Will We Know?



Improved engagement and attendance with education.



Improved educational attainment when children leave school at 16.



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



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



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

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

- 16-year-old young carer

What We Will Do

- ✓ We will work together with children, young people and families to remove barriers to education.
- ✓ We will ensure that all learners are able to learn in Welsh and English to enable them to have the confidence to use both languages in everyday life, and ensuring our children and young people value bilingual communication.
- ✓ We will ensure children and young people experience high quality health and wellbeing learning experiences to develop the knowledge and skills they need to make informed choices.
- ✓ We will create clear and well-planned pathways for young people to transition out of school into college, employment or training.
- ✓ We will encourage more children to learn Welsh and provide more opportunities for them to learn in Welsh.
- ✓ We will work together to ensure the workforce has the training and professional development they need to deliver high quality and inclusive teaching.
- ✓ We will implement the Neath Port Talbot Youth Engagement Strategy.

Our priorities for the next 5 years.

PRIORITY OUTCOME 3:

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

Links to Other Strategies





Our priorities for the next 5 years.

PRIORITY OUTCOME 4:

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

What We Have Heard

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

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

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

– Youth Council Member

How Will We Know?



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



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



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



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

What We Will Do

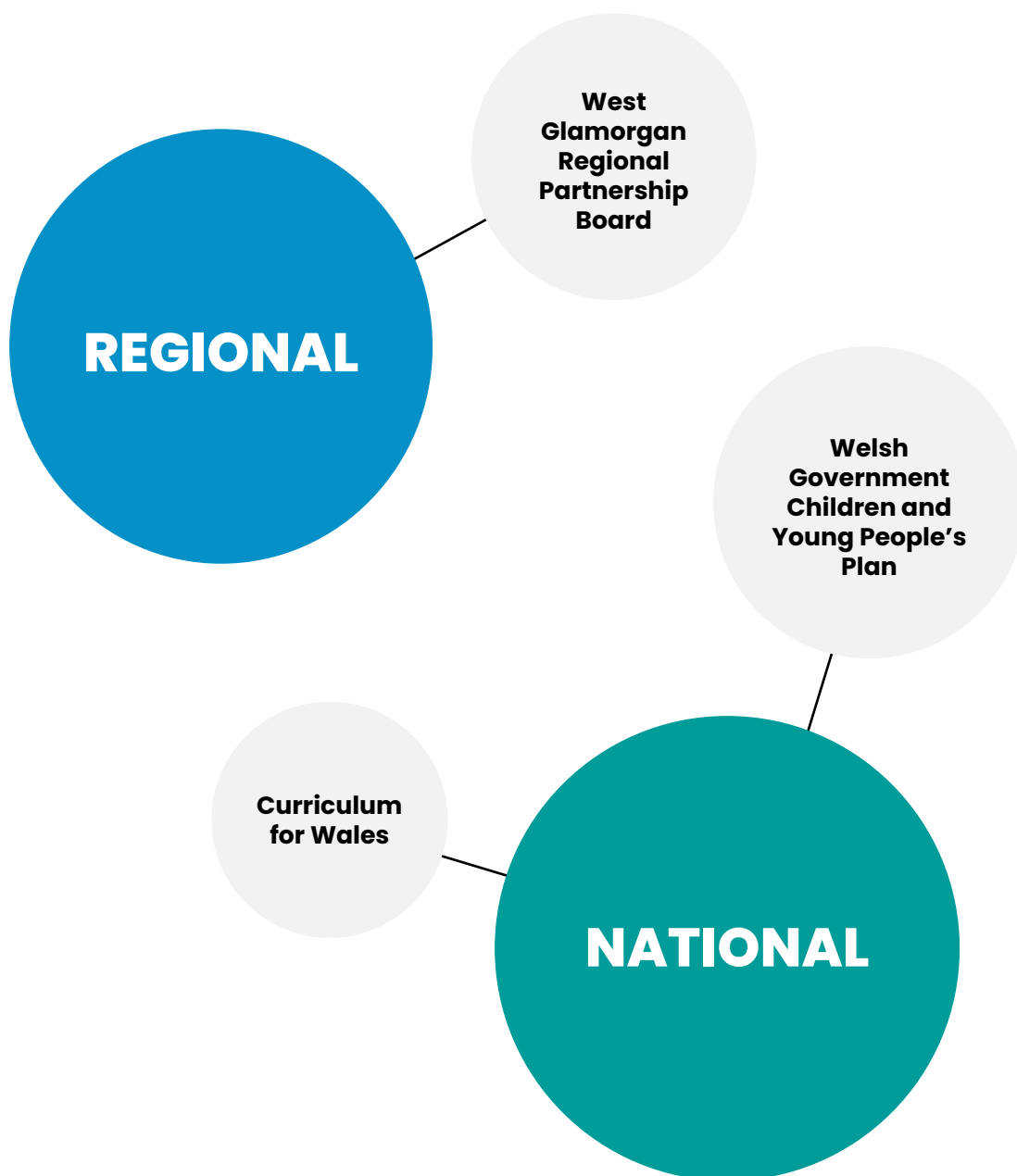
- ✓ We will implement and embed the Children and Young People's Participation and Engagement Strategy.
- ✓ We will put the rights of children into every aspect of our decision-making, policy and practice.
- ✓ We will work in partnership to strengthen systems that enable participation, ensuring the voices of children and young people are central to decision-making.
- ✓ We will ensure wider representation of children and young people with protected characteristics and provide the support they need to participate.
- ✓ We will build the capacity of children and young people to participate, sharing knowledge and power with them so that they can shape decision-making.
- ✓ We will build the capacity of our workforce, ensuring they have the skills they need to engage with children and young people.
- ✓ We will ensure that all information we produce is understandable and accessible for children and young people.
- ✓ We will listen to our children and young people to obtain their views and ideas on promoting and celebrating the Welsh language, contemporary culture and history. Creating a feeling of belonging.

Our priorities for the next 5 years.

PRIORITY OUTCOME 4:

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

Links to Other Strategies





Our priorities for the next 5 years.

PRIORITY OUTCOME 5:

All Children and Young People should be supported to help them be physically healthy and feel mentally and emotionally strong.

What We Have Heard

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

mental health and emotional wellbeing, and to have an appreciation of why vulnerable children and young people might need additional support.

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

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

- 19-year-old LGBTQ young person



What We Will Do

- ✓ We will create a well-planned pathway for children and young people to access a range of emotional wellbeing and mental health support.
- ✓ We will build on the strengths of our youth services and provide a broad range of support for young people up to the age of 25.
- ✓ We will work with partners to develop a high-quality and diverse range of play and recreation opportunities.
- ✓ We will encourage and enable our children and young people to enjoy the green, natural and open spaces in their communities for the benefit of their physical health and emotional wellbeing.
- ✓ We will ensure our workforce has the training and professional development they need to support children and young people's physical, emotional and mental health.

How Will We Know?



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



Less children and young people who are overweight or obese.



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



More children and young people make healthy lifestyle choices.



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

Our priorities for the next 5 years.

PRIORITY OUTCOME 5:

All Children and Young People should be supported to help them be physically healthy and feel mentally and emotionally strong.

Links to Other Strategies





Section 7

HOW WE WILL KNOW IF WE'RE HAVING AN IMPACT.

How will we measure the success of our plan?

Evaluating Impact

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

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

We will implement the priorities of this plan with partners. We have created the governance structure we need to make this approach work. We will ensure the priorities are embedded in how we support children and young people across Neath Port Talbot.

Accountability

The Children and Young People's Leadership Group will be accountable for the success of this plan.



