

Blaenau gwent cORPORATE plan annual Delivery plan progress report 2024/2025

**Introduction**

The Council has developed a five-year Corporate Plan [2022](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/media/dgajcfiv/corporate-plan-2022-2027.pdf)/27 that sets out an ambitious programme of activity for the Council. The priorities, also referred to as Well-being Objectives, have been developed to support communities to thrive. This Plan represents the Council’s commitment to delivering modern, high-quality services that underpin economic growth and well-being across Blaenau Gwent.

The four Well-being Objectives in the Council’s Corporate Plan are:

* Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent
* Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities
* An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place
* Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient

An annual delivery plan supports the implementation of the Corporate Plan, ensuring that daily operations align with the long-term Well-being Objectives outlined within the Plan.

This Annual Delivery Plan Progress Report 2024/25 aims to provide an overview of progress against all 60 actions within the delivery plan, highlighting focus areas marked as amber or red, showing performance against identified performance indicators, and demonstrating progress against each Well-being Objective. The report uses a Blue, Red, Amber, Green (BRAG) status to describe progress as outlined below:

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AI-generated content may be incorrect.

BRAG provides the service area and the ‘reader’ with an instant understanding of how the objective is performing. Narrative is then provided to give detail of progress or concerns.

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| **Corporate Plan Delivery Plan:** Overall progress against Blaenau Gwent’s implementation plan.  The Table and pie chart below provides an overall summary of progress against all of the activity across the Council’s four Well-being Objectives:   |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **RED** | **AMBER** | **GREEN** | **BLUE (action completed)** | **Total Number of actions** | | **No.** | **3** | **16** | **36** | **5** | **60** | | **%** | **5** | **27** | **60** | **8** | **100** | |
| **BRAG STATUS OVERVIEW:** |

**Well-being Objective 1**

***Maximise learning and skill******s for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent***

**Why This Is Important as an Area of Focus -** Improving the quality and provision of teaching and learning is vitally important to ensure the service is achieving ambitious outcomes for all. The Council will continue to invest in services in order to support economic development and regeneration in order to provide opportunities for local people and businesses.

**What We Aim to Achieve –** An increase in the resilience of the community, providing high quality educational and skills opportunities to create a thriving economy from birth onwards, minimising dependence and maximising independence. The authority aims to ensure that all children and young people are given the best start in life, enabling them to grow into fruitful adults living a healthy and fulfilling life whilst contributing to society and forming a valuable part of their community.

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| **BRAG Status Against Each Action:** |
| |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **RED** | **AMBER** | **GREEN** | **BLUE (action completed)** | **Total Number of actions** | | **No.** | **2** | **3** | **18** | **2** | **25** | | **%** | **8** | **12** | **72** | **8** | **100** | |
| **BRAG Status Overview:** |

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| **Performance Indicator** |  | | **Data** | | | | | |
| **2019/20** | **2020/21** | | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** | **Performance** |
| % of Pupils entitled to Free Schools Meals (eFSM) BG | 25.5 | 31.4 | | 33.3 | 24.6 | 24.1 | 23.2 | N/A |
| % Attendance – Primary  % Attendance – Secondary  ***(Higher Figure is Better)*** | N/A | 89.9%  84.8% | | 89.0%  84.8% | 90.4%  85.8% | 91.4%  86.8% | 92.1%  89.6% | Improving |
| Improving |
| Number of Pupils being Electively Home Educated in BG  ***(Lower Figure is Better)*** | 70 | 89 | | 132 | 137 | 193 | 218 | Declining |
| Number of Schools in the category of Causing Concern (out of a total of 25)  ***Target is 0*** | 4 | 2 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | Declining |
| Number and % of young people that are NEET leaving year 11 *\*Data gathered June and verification in October*  ***(Lower Figure is Better)*** | Not captured due to Covid | 9  1.5% | | 9  1.6% | 31  5% | 14  2.5% | 14  2.1% | Maintaining |
| Aspire Internal Apprentices - LA Apprenticeships  ***(Higher Figure is Better)*** | N/A | 5 | | 10 | 12 | 8 | 8 | Maintaining |
| Aspire External Apprentices- Apprenticeship offered in industry  ***(Higher Figure is Better)*** | 13 | 9 | | 8 | 17 | 16 | 15 | Small decline |
| % Occupancy of Blaenau Gwent Industrial Units  ***(Higher Figure is Better)*** | 89% | 88% | | 87% | 85% | 89% | 86% | Declining but above target |
| % Occupancy floorspace of Blaenau Gwent Industrial Units  ***Target 70%***  ***(Higher Figure is Better)*** | 81% | 92% | | 93% | 93% | 93% | 96% | Improving |

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| **2024/25 Activity** | **Activity Progress Commentary** | **2024/25**  **BRAG** |
| Improve attendance and attainment rates and reduce school exclusions in both Primary and Secondary to pre covid levels, including addressing the reasons for exclusions | Attendance has improved compared to last year and compared to the rest of Wales, with the area slightly moving up in the league table. In-depth conversations about attendance are occurring in schools, supported by an ongoing media campaign emphasising the benefits of attending school. Family Engagement Officers are focusing on Emotionally Based School Avoidance and working with the most disengaged young people. Illness-related absences are being scrutinised, and key messages about correct coding usage have been communicated through the weekly bulletin. There is an increase in the number of permanent exclusion pupils this term compared to the autumn term.  The Vulnerable Learner Panel is open for referrals from schools once all support available in school has been exhausted. The Inclusion Service commissions a well-being officer, hosted by Brynmawr Foundation School to provide support to learners who may require support to maintain placement or return to school.  The EOTAS (Educated other than at school) was established as a pilot project for January 2025 and will continue to operate under monitoring and review. This has seen a positive impact on learners from the pilot returning to mainstream settings and continued support from the youth service to maintain placement.  Youth workers are based across all mainstream secondary settings and the River Centre, providing support to remain in school, to overcome challenges and provide enhanced transition support to post 16 settings. The EOTAS youth workers work closely with the school based youth workers to enable a smooth supported transition back into school. |  |
| Focus on improving the pace of change for Schools Causing Concern. | A report on schools causing concern has been produced, highlighting successes, particularly in relation to The Regional Consortium. Partnership meetings continue to support professional dialogue around priorities for our schools, especially those causing concern. Strategies for reporting and use of the My Concern system are still underway. Weekly comparative information continues, which is shared with the directorate and all schools. The increase in comparison with other Local Authorities across Wales is noted. The partnership document shared for School Improvement discussions at Southeast Wales |  |
| Monitor Home to school transport funding issues. | Monthly meetings are regularly held between the Inclusion and Transport Team to address any arising issues.  During this quarter, no appeals were made. Efforts are continuing to explore alternative service delivery methods. A consultation will commence to revert to statutory distance measures, which will result in a significant level of savings  Additionally, the budget continues to show an underspend. |  |
| Monitor closely school place and sufficiency of all schools, use data more effectively to inform long term planning. | Surplus and sufficiency information is provided twice yearly to Welsh Government. This information is used to inform the Sustainable Communities for Learning 9 year rolling programme |  |
| Address the financial pressures within the education budget such as home to school transport and schools in deficit | Council have agreed to a significant uplift to school budgets in 2025/26 and to support schools to reduce their deficits over the 25/26 and 26/27 financial years. Council have also agreed to meet the cost of school pay pressures. This has had a significant positive impact on school budgets with most schools now projecting an end of year balanced budget or a very small deficit. This compares to 22 schools projecting a deficit budget at the start of the financial year 24/25. However, the two middle schools still have projected significant deficit budgets. The LA are supporting the schools with creating deficit recovery plans. A consultation on reducing Home to School transport distances to statutory figures is being considered. |  |
| Increase capacity at Pen-Y-Cwm and River Centre and reduce out of county placements, reducing annual financial loss | The development of Vision House will allow the capacity of Pen y Cwm Special School to increase in line with the current demand and a consultation exercise will be undertaken in the Autum term to look at the longer-term planning for the provision |  |
| Work to reduce the number of EHEs | The number of learners becoming EHE continues to increase. This is a national issue. There has been a need to increase capacity for the EHE learners and an additional EWO has been deployed to support learners at the point of becoming EHE, in an attempt to encourage a return to school. This has had impact in a few cases. The Inclusion Service has set up a panel with professionals to make decisions in regard to suitable education provided and steps to take if this is not evident.  There are a number of learners becoming EHE in the upper years of secondary, including those at risk of prosecution for nonattendance. |  |
| Use ALN Data more effectively to inform long term planning | Resource Bases have systems to monitor inclusion in mainstream settings. All specialist settings use a tracking tool to monitor progress and impact. Training on the tool has been provided, and baselines for learners are being established. The Local Authority will have access to progress data via a dashboard.  Data collection from Early Years and through to maintained settings in order to inform capacity planning.  Review of curriculum provision across all mainstream, resource bases and special schools for meeting the needs of all learners including those with ALN. Review of Additional Learning Provision maps (ALP). |  |
| Work with Bryn Bach Primary School as part of its Estyn Follow Up | Bryn Bach Primary School has been removed from Estyn follow up March 2025 |  |
| Work with the River Centre to support its removal from an Estyn Category | The River Centre has made significant progress against its Post Inspection Action Plan. |  |
| Respond to the recommendations from the recent Estyn Inspection. | R1 Improve the Corporate Leadership of education services  There has been significant progress in relation to corporate leadership. There is a stable and strong leadership, with a new joint CEO leading the development of a federated approach, a consistent and experienced Exec Member for Education and a permanent appointment to the Corporate Director of Education role.  R2 Improve the quality of self evaluation, strategic planning and performance management  Improved strategic planning, performance management and self evaluation processes have been embedded across the directorate.    R3 Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concerns  Focussed work is ongoing in this area, which has lead to accelerated improvements. One school has been removed from a category, another has secured stable leadership and is gathering pace on its improvement journey. |  |
| Continue to monitor and improve on attainment levels. | Monitoring of KS4 data has been undertaken. New systems for self-evaluation are being developed to ensure that the data is used more effectively to improve standards. |  |
| Work with Coleg Gwent to support pupils to perform at within the Further Education sector. | A review of the Post 16 Partnership arrangements has commenced this year. The Memorandum of Understanding with Coleg Gwent has been revised and the review of the Post 16 Partnership Board is ongoing, due to be completed end of Spring term. Next phase of development is to explore, within the newly federated model, a joint partnership approach to Post 16 between Torfaen and BGCBC. This will enable to greater offer to all post 16 learners, through streamlined transition between school and Coleg Gwent campuses and other Post 16 settings. |  |
| Continue to ensure the industrial portfolio is fit to let to local businesses | External funding identified for capital investment in the following areas: -  1). Security gates/bollards  2). Roller Shutter doors  3). Steel pedestrian doors  Project rollout quarter 4 (24/25) and 1 (25/26).  Note we require a sinking fund to manage IRI leases and a capital programme. |  |
| Support the community to gain the right skills for a changing world and build capacity for lifelong learning | Local Employability and Skills Group has been established and is reviewing delivery across authority.  A number of projects have been developed to support this area of work including:   * Aspire SAP * STEM Facilitation * Quickstart * C4W+   Alongside ongoing engagement with local businesses to help shape and inform the programmes. |  |
| Progress with the development of CiNER to support growth and investment into the area. | Task Force created to support inward investment project |  |
| Continue to examine the opportunity for new industrial space across the borough. | Exploring new build opportunities and looking at acquisitions within the private sector |  |
| Work with the UK Competitiveness Index data to improve BGs standing for a second year. | **Areas of focus: -**  1). Attract, grow, retain knowledge-based businesses  2). Increase business Registrations  9.8% more businesses start-ups in Blaenau Gwent during the first three months of this year compared with the corresponding period of last year, according to latest data from BankSearch. This growth rate ranks Blaenau Gwent at 3 out of the 22 Welsh district. Source: Bank Search |  |
| Increase the number of apprenticeships, including Local Authority Apprenticeships | The external apprenticeships are reliant on funding with 15-20 opportunities provided this year.  There has been a slight decrease in internal apprenticeships this year. |  |
| Ensure the Local Development Plan delivery agreement is progressed | There has been slippage on Revised DA timetable for the Deposit Plan public consultation which was scheduled for Feb-April 2025.  It is anticipated the required RLDP documents will be finalised by end of July for a Deposit Plan consultation in September/October |  |
| Work with limited resources develop one key project in each town placemaking plan | Each town has one key project under development. Some have already been completed others are larger and will take longer to complete. |  |
| Work to get the Hybrid Units on Lime Avenue operational | We commissioned an independent contractor to address the ongoing situation.  The works at Unit 9 (detached unit) involved re-installing the pressure plates, perimeter pressings and face caps on each roof light.  To date no further water ingress being reported, so we’ve planned to roll out the fix to the following units -1-4 and 4-8. |  |
| Address the current staffing capacity and projects that are reliant on grant funding | This is an ongoing challenge given the range of projects being developed and delivered. Staff are at capacity from a workload perspective with no further capacity within the respective teams to take on additional work.  Funding via SPF supports delivery for projects but also add additional workload to the respective teams.  As well as funding some staff members within Regeneration, SPF also funds staff across the Authority for example the Youth Service.  Regular updates have been provided to Trade Unions on the funding for staff across the Authority via OD. |  |
| Open Goldworks and begin to build entrepreneurship capabilities in BG | Officially launched on 6th October 2024.  Goldworks (GW) provides flexible workspace solutions and services to entrepreneurs, freelancers, startups, and established businesses. GW offers co-working spaces, hot-desking options, and fully equipped training/meeting rooms. GW serves as a hub for collaboration, innovation, and professional development |  |
| Focus on Higher levels of language acquisition and reading across the board, but particularly in our very young children in early years | Schools across the LA are working with the EAS literacy team to develop reading across the local authority. The outcome of the work of this group will be to develop a local authority wide approach to teaching and learning, with a specific focus on the development of reading. Additional prompts will be developed and integrated into the guidance where appropriate, again with a focus on encouraging consistent approaches to the teaching of reading across the LA. Schools can make the best use diagnostic reading assessments (since all schools have access to GL assessment). |  |

**Well- being Objective 2**

***Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities***

**Why This Is Important as an Area of Focus:**

Blaenau Gwent has a rich heritage, and its buildings and countryside are what make it an attractive place to live, work and visit. The local environment should be used to help improve the health and well-being of families and communities and be enhanced for future generations to continue to enjoy. There is a real desire to see the communities where people live kept clean, tidy and useable, creating areas that people can be proud of.

**What We Aim to Achieve –** For Blaenau Gwent Council to greatly reduce its carbon emissions, and provides an environment which supports growth and well-being and connects communities.

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| **BRAG status against each section** |
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| **BRAG STATUS OVERVIEW** |

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| **Performance Indicator** |  | | **Data** | | | | | |
| **2019/20** | **2020/21** | | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** | **Performance** |
| The percentage of municipal waste collected by local authorities sent to landfill  ***Target - 2%***  ***(Lower Figure is Better)*** | 0.3 | 0.6 | | 1.3 | 0.31 | 0.17 | 0.29  (unverified available August) | Declining |
| The percentage of municipal waste incinerated with energy recovery  ***Target 45%***  ***(Lower Figure is Better)*** | 44.3 | 46.7 | | 45.2 | 44.20 | 44.0 | 41.9  (Unverified available august) | Improving |
| Amount invested into active travel routes (£)  ***( Higher figure is Better)*** | - | 234,000 | | 295,000 | 766,154.73 | 756,296.62 | 968,989.40 | Improving |
| Average % of planning applications determined on time (cumulative average over a year)  ***Target 95%***  ***Higher Figure is Better*** | - | 96% | | 91% | 93% | 95% | 98% | Improving |
| % of procurements that consider Social and Well-being objectives (including Decarbonisation and Foundation Economy etc.)  ***Target 100%***  ***(Higher Figure is Better)*** | - | - | | - | 70 | 100 | 100 | Maintaining |
| Carbon Footprint associated with the Council’s Commissioning and Procurement activities  Target 0  ***(Lower Figure is Better)*** | - | - | | - | 33548 | 39701 | Tbc – available mid-august 25 |  |

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| **2024/25 Activity** | **Activity Progress Commentary** | **2024/25**  **BRAG** |
| Our Climate group will work to prioritise key actions from the Decarbonisation plan in reaching Net Zero by 2030 | There are 5 key actions to help achieve Net Zero by 2030 these are:   * Fleet Decarbonisation – Due to limits on ULEV alternatives available, following trials, and the need to replace existing fleet was decided to replace existing refuse fleet with more efficient ICE vehicles. ULEV vehicles continue to be procured for smaller vehicle categories. * Schools – Assessment of solar potential on schools completed. * Local Renewables – see above. * Nature Based Solutions – Nature Emergency Declaration (more details about projects in biodiversity section?) * Procurement- Greener framework to be implemented, further update on this provided |  |
| Continue to work towards the recommendations made by our climate assembly. | Held Citizens’ Forum on the Future of Travel in Blaenau Gwent to further develop two climate assembly recommendations relating to transport. The Forum produced 10 recommendations for action in next 5 years and a set of fairness principles on how these should be delivered. |  |
| Continue with the delivery of the Energy Prospectus to interest in energy development across the borough to facilitate a supply of renewable energy to meet the future energy needs of the area including consideration of wind and hydro generation projects | We are continuing to develop and explore implementation of energy generation projects to facilitate a supply of renewable energy to meet future energy needs of the area.  This includes key projects including Silent Valley Wind Turbine, Hydro generation at Silent Valley and further solar generation opportunities. |  |
| Work to identify how partners can support us in order to work towards achieving the Welsh Government Net Zero Targets of reaching a 63% reduction by 2030, an 89% reduction by 2040 and a 100% reduction by 2050 | Worked with partners on Local Well-being Partnership to form advisory group to the Citizens’ Forum.  Joined CCR Solar Together project to offer residents opportunity to purchase home solar panels. |  |
| Work to address the number of fly tipping incidents across the borough and target ‘hot spot’ areas | Deployment of CCTV units across the County Borough continues to target highway lay-bys and rural locations subject to prolific fly tipping. For 2024/25 a total of 98 incidents captured on CCTV and 117 £400 fly tipping fixed penalty notices issued. |  |
| Implement actions to reduce the amount of residual [black bag] waste being collected and increase kerbside recycling with the aim of meeting the Welsh Government target of 70%. | The campaign "Keeping up with the Joneses" has continued to ensure that every household in Blaenau Gwent participates in recycling. The objective of the campaign is to address the small minority of residents who either do not engage in recycling or recycle very minimally. Households that fail to commence recycling and continue to dispose of recyclable items in their black bins and bags may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Fine of £100.  By the end of the year 2024/25, due to the efforts of the “Keeping up with the Joneses” campaign and other enforcement initiatives, a total of **8,068** domestic properties were revisited, resulting in **2,275** warning letters, **392** Section 46 notices and **129** fixed penalty notices being issued. |  |
| Continue to implement our litter and fly tipping strategy to radically reduce litter and fly-tipping across the Borough | The Council’s Litter & Fly Tipping Strategy continues to be implemented throughout the year through its action plan. The focus of the plan is to drastically reduce litter, protect natural habitats, and boost community pride. The plan is divided into four themes: Influence, Engage, Empower, and Adopt Best Practice. An LEQ officer has been appointed through SPF funding to drive this work forward. The strategy focuses on educating and engaging stakeholders to implement best practices and collaborate with agencies for effective results. [BG litter Strategy 21- 26](https://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/documents/s15071/Appendix%202.pdf?LLL=0)  **2024-25 progression**  With the support of SPF funding until 31st March 2025, the LEQ officer continued the delivery the 4 themes of the Strategy Action Plan with the following objectives and outcomes:  • Increase and establish new engagement events and projects with stakeholders to raise awareness of the impact litter & fly tipping has on the environment and community   * + Number of joint collaborative litter-picking projects **20**   + Number of group events carried out  **11**   • Influence stakeholders to change behaviour and adopt best practice with their litter and waste.   * + Number of pupils/adults worked engaged with  **5363**   • Empower with support pride in local communities and a sense of ownership.   * + Number of litter champions supported **450**   + Number of public events attended **4**   (Public events include hosting Litter Champion recognition/appreciation evenings where litter champions are invited to local venues to meet officers and ward members and discuss informally any issues or suggestions to improve support. A buffet is provided and awards/gifts provided to show the councils appreciation for their continued efforts. These have been extremely successful with positive feedback.  • Reduce Litter & Fly tipping   * + Proposal to launch a Blaenau Gwent Anti-Litter campaign in 2025/26.   + Engagement progress to include a members’ briefing to establish the parameters of the campaign   + Once the parameters are set, stakeholder forum to be established including all those impacted/effected by Litter e.g. Volunteers, Internal council depts (Education, Youth Services, community safety, Comms etc), LHB.   + The stakeholder forum will in line with the parameters set, design a public campaign to raise awareness and change behaviour.   Although the Strategy was devised prior to the Council adopting the MARMOT principles it is believed that the themes of the strategy aligns to the principles of MARMOT.  Funding for both the staffing and delivery support of the Strategy is 100% funded by via an external SPF grant secured only until 31st March 2026.  There is no existing internal revenue budget capacity to fund the project beyond 31st March 2026. Therefore, should SPF funding be unavailable then the future delivery will likely cease |  |
| Implement the Greener Framework to support the Council to reach Net Zero. | Working in collaboration with SEW LA’s, we are looking to develop a consistent approach to how we collect and report carbon performance data from our supply chain. The toolkit is currently under trial with the intention of wider adoption early 2025/26; wider adoption has been slightly delayed as a number of alternative tools also being developed by the wider Welsh public sector have been identified and considered as part of the trial to ensure the final solution represents best practice; |  |

**Well-being Objective 3**

***Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, indepe******ndent and resilient***

**Why This Is Important as an Area of Focus -** The Council wants to encourage and support people to make healthy lifestyle choices to enable children, young people and families to thrive. Research has proven people demonstrating positive health behaviours from birth throughout their life will lead to greater independence, and people being free from complicated health conditions later in life. This in turn could reduce demand on services and ensure the services that are provided are high quality, efficient and responsive to local people’s needs. With reduced funding and increasing demand on services the Council can no longer do everything it has done in the past. The focus must be on those actions that will have the greatest impact. Safeguarding the most vulnerable people in the community continues to be a top priority for the Council alongside transforming the aspirations of residents and valuing fairness and equality in everything we do.

**What We Aim to Achieve -** An increase in the resilience of communities, where everyone is welcome and safe and which minimises dependency and maximises independence.

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| **BRAG status against each section** |
| |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **RED** | **AMBER** | **GREEN** | **BLUE (action completed)** | **Total Number of actions** | | **No.** | **0** | **5** | **7** | **1** | **13** | | **%** | **0** | **38** | **54** | **8** | **100** | |
| **BRAG STATUS OVERVIEW** |

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| **Performance Indicator** |  | | **Data** | | | | | |
| **2019/20** | **2020/21** | | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** | **Performance** |
| The number of adults provided with electronic assistive technology during the year  ***(Higher Figure is Better)*** | 245 | 169 | | 216 | 210 | 221 | 204 | Declining |
| The total number of adult clients currently in receipt of electronic assistive technology.  ***(Higher Figure is Better)*** | 1264 | 1353 | | 1527 | 1639 | 1768 | 859 | Declining |
| % of adults that requested assistive technology where equipment was installed  ***(Higher Figure is Better)*** | 80.3% | 65.0% | | 61.9% | 66.9% | 64.8% | 65.0% | Increasing |
| Number of children on Child Protection Register  ***(Lower Figure is Better)*** | 61 | 52 | | 64 | 62 | 103 | 99 | Improving |
| Number of Children becoming Looked After (During the Year)  ***(Lower Figure is Better)*** | 62 | 38 | | 47 | 63 | 54 | 53 | Improving |
| Total number of CLA who are placed within Wales, but outside of the responsible LA (excluding those in adoption placements) (as at 31st March)  ***(Lower Figure is Better)*** | Not available | 65 | | 51 | 52 | 46 | 52 | Declining |
| The total number of CLA at the end of the collection year who are placed outside of Wales (as at 31st March)  ***(Lower Figure is Better)*** | Not available | 5 | | 6 | 12 | 16 | 15 | Improving |
| % households successfully prevented from homelessness (section 66)  ***Target 60***  ***(Lower Figure is Better)*** | 72 | 59 | | 75.2 | 63.5 | 55.2 | 54 | Improving |
| Number of additional affordable housing units delivered  ***Housing units can only be built depending on the amount of grant received by the local authority from WG . All funding is allocated to support the development of additional affordable housing units annually*** | 7 | 67 | | 43 | 6 units Total  (5 units delivered via Social Housing Grant  1 unit delivered via S106) | 25 units Total  (25 units delivered via Social Housing Grant  0 units delivered via S106) | 35 units delivered via Social Housing Grant)  1 Unit delivered via Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) | In line with Welsh Government grant |
| Numbers waiting on the social housing register  ***( Lower Figure is Better)*** | 2,151 | 1,218 | | 4,191 | 4,688 | 2735 | 2617 | Improving |
| Number of disabled facilities grants completed  ***(Higher Figure is Better)*** | N/A | 30 | | 31 | 63 | 91 | 53 | Declining |
| Homes for Ukraine Scheme:  Guests  Population Share  ***Higher Figure is Better*** | - | - | | - | 57  74% | 72  91% | 70  89% | Declining |

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| **2024/25 Activity** | **Activity Progress Commentary** | **2024/25**  **BRAG** |
| Re-establish and strengthen existing engagement networks as well as establish new opportunities for people to get involved | A lived experience engagement strategy is in development, which will create a model to continuously engage, gather feedback, and improve support and services for vulnerable individuals in BG. Various engagement groups focused on learning disabilities, mental health, prevention, older adults, young adults with physical disabilities, ASD/ND, carers, and transitions have been established. These groups meet every four weeks to help co produce and develop the strategy, with some making significant progress while others are still developing. The goal is to have third-sector organizations lead the engagement, supported by the local authority, ensuring independence. Engagement methods will be tailored to meet the specific needs of the individuals and groups involved. |  |
| Continue to implement the regional action plan to meet the needs identified within the population needs assessment | RPB/ Welsh Government priorities for 50 day challenge / Service sustainability delivered on during 24/25 by increasing reablement and domiciliary care options. Increased assessment capacity to address NHS escalations and increased service pressures. |  |
| Take forward any learning from the outcome report requested by Care Inspectorate Wales on Public Law process | The Action Plan formulated following the self-evaluation on Public Law process via CIW was fully completed in December 2024. |  |
| Provide support to those impacted by the cost-of-living crisis via actions identified by the Cost-of-Living Member and Officer Groups. | Funding continued during 24/25 for the Unpaid carers costs of living support fund. One off grants have been given to carers to assist them with essential items. Application has been submitted to Carers Wales for the extension of funding for 25/26 and additional funding (slippage ) also awarded for 24/25 to increase the numbers of carers who can access the funding during 24/25.  All social work teams continue to support vulnerable adults in relation to cost of living and financial pressures. Social workers work closely with advice agencies to signpost people to specialist advice and debt management services. |  |
| Ensure the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020 – 2025 actions are regularly monitored, implemented and reviewed. | The current strategy is coming to an end in 2025 and a new one will be developed by the Head of Service. Over the past 12 months regular monitoring meetings have taken place to ensure progress with the Action Plan within the strategy. While the number of children looked after remains static (around 200), this is a positive given the steep consistent increase in referrals into Children Social Services and child protection registration (100% increase in the past 5 years). |  |
| Ensure that preventative support is available for adults and their unpaid carers, that promote and maintain personal independence. | Prevention continues to be a key element of our proportionate assessment for all people supported by the AS division. We have continued to promote a number of preventative options to reduce reliance on traditional service provision during 24/25 including:   * Our assistive technology offer/ SMART flat etc * Reablement as opposed to traditional dom care * IAA assessments based on strength-based conversations / balancing rights and responsibilities * Use of Promoting Independence PODS as part of transition assessments * Use of CARIAD assessment flats to assess people prior to long term care placements and avoid unnecessary hospital stays * Employment/ volunteering and training opportunities within Community Options (Café etc) and Transition planning (0-25 team) * Partnership working with t third sector organisations to promoted preventative support including:  1. Dementia hubs 2. Dementia support workers at front doors 3. Carers support – NEWCIS / Adferiad etc 4. Carers support workers x 2 (LA posts) |  |
| To improve safeguarding performance, we will strive to ensure that the number of registered children visited within 10 days of registration increases. | Performance regarding visiting children on Child Protection Register has improved significantly over the past few quarters since the introduction of monthly Performance Meetings across the service as the main issue identified was recording due to lack of capacity for social workers rather than poor practice |  |
| Efforts to be made to reduce the number of Children Looked After who are placed outside of Wales | Ongoing work has been done on reduction of children looked after placed with Independent Fostering Agencies and residential providers outside Wales. The numbers have reduced slightly but allocation of UASC via the National Transfer Scheme is outside of our control as the large majority of these children are accommodated within placements in large cities in England where their cultural, religious and language needs can be appropriately met. Moving forward, Blaenau Gwent has been working on developing their own residential provision which will go live from May 2025 and this will accommodate locally children looked after with complex needs. Furthermore, we started work on development of supporting living options for UASC within Ebbw Vale and this will, in time, reduce the use of placements outside Wales. |  |
| Address the current staffing capacity that is reliant on grant funding and the impact this may have | This is one of the priorities to be taken forward over the next few years within the new structure of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate. It is expected that as the costings of residential placements for children looked after will reduce due to the development of own LA provision this will release funding to support financially the current grant funded posts from the core budget.  Adults Report presented to Scrutiny in January 25 outlining current position for grant funded posts from April 25 onwards. Work continues to review grant funded services as part of Regional Partnership Board priorities and exit strategies will be developed during 25/26 and 26/27 as appropriate.  From an adult’s service perspective this would be seen as green (on target) |  |
| Implement actions from the Social Services Staff Survey and repeat the survey to assess progress | Repeat of staff survey was postponed by CLT as it was decided that the corporate survey would be circulated. Work has continued during 24/25 to address some of the outcomes of the previous survey including improving communication and supporting all staff to be included in the development of the vision for the division. |  |
| Continue to deliver DFGs in private homes linked to available budget and demand | 53 grants were provided in 2024/25. Additional capital funding was awarded to support further applications. However, there is not enough funding available to support all applications and therefore a waiting list has developed. |  |
| Identify the required funding to support people on housing benefit or universal benefit to prevent people from becoming homeless | Funding is provided from the Discretionary Housing Payment fund. Although, the number of applications received has seen this budget spent by the end of Q2 and so internal capital funding has been accessed.  Funding has also been provided from Welsh Governments ‘No One Left Funding’.  The funding provided above isn’t sufficient to support all applications. |  |
| Aim for lowering the number of families that are placed in B&B | Accommodation repurposed in homeless hostel to provide further family units.  Earlier prevention works ongoing to identify suitable accommodation with private and social landlords. |  |

**Well-being Objective 4**

***An amb******itious and innovative council delive******ring the quality services at the right time and in the right place***

**Why This Is Important as an Area of Focus -** The Corporate Plan provides the focus for delivering lasting change for the area. It also provides the platform for transforming Blaenau Gwent into a more confident and capable Council. The ambition is to deliver better outcomes for the people of Blaenau Gwent and that ambition is underpinned by solid and sustainable plans, ensuring the Council can be held to account for what it has promised to deliver. Maximising the impact of resources to deliver those outcomes sits at the heart of this priority, including; understanding costs, controlling expenditure, maximising income and aligning resources to the needs of residents, businesses and visitors to build a Blaenau Gwent for the future.

**What We Aim to Achieve –** Blaenau Gwent Council works in partnership to provide high quality services to meet local need, and improve the quality of life and well-being within the community

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| |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **RED** | **AMBER** | **GREEN** | **BLUE (action completed)** | **Total Number of actions** | | **No.** | **1** | **3** | **8** | **2** | **14** | | **%** | **7** | **22** | **57** | **14** | **100** | |
| **BRAG STATUS OVERVIEW** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Performance Indicator** |  | | **Data** | | | | | |
| **2019/20** | **2020/21** | | **2021/22** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** | **Performance** |
| Number of complaints received by Blaenau Gwent Council  ***Lower Figure is Better*** | - | - | | 105 | 133 | 93 | 144 | Declining |
| Number of Complaints Closed at Stage 1 during the period  ***Higher Figure is Better*** | - | - | | 100 | 123 | 86 | 125 | Improving |
| Number of Complaints Closed at Stage 2 during the period  ***Lower Figure is Better*** | - | - | | 1 | 7 | 4 | 17 | Declining |
| Total Number of Complaints Closed during the period  ***Higher Figure is Better*** | - | - | | 101 | 130 | 90 | 142 | Improving |
| Number of Compliments received by Blaenau Gwent Council  ***Higher Figure is Better*** | - | - | | 29 | 28 | 46 | 69 | Improving |
| Council attendance and sickness  The number of working days / shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence  ***10 days per FTE***  ***Lower Figure is Better*** | 13.9 | 11.67 | | 16.74 | 15.5 | 11.8 | 13.85 | Declining |
| Total employee headcount  Council  Schools  ***N/A*** | 2777  1565  1212 | 2,854  1,648  1,206 | | 2896  1673  1223 | 2,953  1650  1303 | 3208.50  1902  1272.50 | 3198  1952  1246 | N/A |
| Labour turnover:   * Council * Schools   ***N/A*** | 7.96%  9.67% | 5.2%  3.7% | | 8.68%  7.13% | 15.05%  8.55% | 6.35%  7.78% | 3.28%  1.02% | N/A |
| Revenue outturn expenditure  £ per thousand  £ per head  ***N/A*** | 177,300  2,543 | 178,616  2,557 | | 193,776  2,767 | 199,583  2,850 | 179,940  2,690 | Not available yet | N/A |
| % of external expenditure placed with Local and Regional Suppliers (i.e. Registered within the Greater Gwent area)  ***Higher Figure is Better*** |  |  | |  | 52.5% | 24.38% | 33.24% | Improving |
| % of external expenditure placed with Local Suppliers (i.e. Registered within Blaenau Gwent)  ***Higher Figure is Better*** |  |  | |  | 21.4% | 15.28% | 16.06% | Improving |
| % of external expenditure placed with Blaenau Gwent SME's  ***Higher Figure is Better*** |  |  | |  | 8.28% | 9.08% | 9.79% | Improving |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **2024/25 Activity** | **Activity Progress Commentary** | **2024/25**  **BRAG** |
| Gain a greater understanding of the barriers to access digital solutions within our communities and develop support for those who wish to improve their digital skills | The Community Hub model captures data in respect of number of residents who are unable to self-serve and also what the barriers are. Residents are often referred to the Digital Exclusion Officer to provide tailored support centred around the individual barriers identified. These range from skills development to affordability – i.e. unable to pay for data etc. Solutions are put in place i.e. digital bite sessions to improve technology knowledge to access to free data sims. |  |
| Progress the Workforce Strategy including consideration of recruitment and retention across the Directorates. | * Review of Workforce Strategy - report to Scrutiny February 2025 – includes delivery plan for 2025/26. Work will begin this year in preparation for a new workforce strategy. * Workforce Profiles for the Corporate Council and directorates published in 2024 to inform workforce planning   Review of Workforce Planning presented to CLT – decision to push forward implementation to the new financial year 2025 |  |
| Further embed safeguarding arrangements across the whole Council. | Following a further review from Audit Wales on Safeguarding across the Council, an action plan is in development to address all areas identified.  This action plan will be reported to Governance and Audit Committee as part of the new 2025/26 cycle and will then be included on the Council’s recommendation tracker for updating and monitoring through the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee.  Limited progress has been evidenced by the LA to Audit Wales in relation to the previous reviews undertaken in the LA since 2014. Progress and actions need to be implemented at pace. |  |
| Work to reduce the sickness levels across the Council | * Review of sickness absence report to Scrutiny November 2024 * Quarterly reporting of sickness absence and sickness absence identified as a Corporate Risk on the risk register – risk and updates attached below   Plans to develop a corporate working group to be led by the Corporate Director of Social Services |  |
| Prioritise the financial challenges being faced including budget pressures and service delivery requirements | The Bridging the Gap programme have been reviewed, and a number of strategic themes have been developed to support the Medium Term Financial Strategy and provide a focus for developing efficiency proposals / service change proposals in line with delivering the Community approach.  As part of the Executive Leadership Team, an Apollo meeting has been established fortnightly, to discuss finance including cost pressures, MTFS , delivery against agreed efficiency proposals, the in year budget, business cases/proposals and the financial impact. |  |
| Identify budget saving proposals that address the budget shortfall and not rely on the use of reserves | The 2025/2026 Budget has been approved with no planned draw from Reserves to balance the budget. The Bridging the Gap programme identified proposals under strategic themes to support the 2025/2026 budget. |  |
| Work to complete the sign off of the 2022/23 and 2023/24 accounts and report these through Governance and Audit Committee | 2022/ 23 signed off, 2023/ 2024 draft accounts signed off Tuesday, final signed off in summer |  |
| Work with the Gwent Digital Exclusion Network to address the gap in resident’s digital capabilities before moving services online digital | Mapping exercise has been undertaken with the group to identify where digital support / provisions exists across the borough. This has enabled gaps to be identified / support provided where needed to be.  Supporting the Customer / Digital Strategies and LA ambitions of 21C Council. The Digital and Transformation team are actively working to support more services to offer self-serve were able to. |  |
| Manage the increase in Subject Access Requests being received | In 2024/25 we received 47 valid SAR requests compared to 54 in 2023/24. Due to the relative low number’s percentage comparison are unhelpful especially as not all SARs are equal and can vary from 10 pages to 1000 pages as a response.  During this period however we have managed to reduce the numbers of SARs which were provided late to 7. |  |
| Improve response rates to all FOIs received | Response rates for 2024/25 are currently at 90.4% compared to 88% in the 2023/24 period |  |
| Improve response rates to all complaints received | 75.6% of all complaints received were responded to within 10 working days for 2024/2025 – compared to 79.5% for 2023/ 2024.  Due to the complexity of certain complaints, some will exceed the 10-day statutory period, there was also an increase in number of complaints received which impacted response rates.  Regular system checks have now been introduced which now forms business as usual, this has improved response rates to 87.1% as of Qtr 4 for 2024/ 2025 |  |
| Reduce the number of data breaches across the Council | Data Breaches across the council rose to 42 for the 2024/25 period compared to 34 in the previous period. However, prior to that the number was 45 in the 2022/23 period.  A reduction in breaches does not necessarily mean that we are experiencing less breaches but can often mean that the organisation is better at identifying them and responding to them appropriately. |  |
| Respond to the Audit Wales Service User Perspective recommendations | Meeting with CEX 20th Jan 2025 on back of Storm Bert – discussed capturing views from residents across LA as a whole. Discussed staff survey and how this only captures residents views at that point in time and often lends itself to what is important at that specific point in time (i.e. Council Tax bill issued, waste / recycling not collected etc.) needed to look at an alternative way of engagement with residents so that we can meet the needs of service users, not meet the need of what we feel is important to them.  Update to WCLT February 2025 – approach to Service User Feedback / Engagement discussed.  Email to Directors February 2025 around residents survey and offer to attend DMT sessions focussing on how services get feedback from residents, surveys, questionnaires, feedback forms, telephony, etc. – this will give us a focus on where services are collecting information / intelligence as opposed what have they done for communication purposes  Offer to attend DMTs paused for moment due to change in structures, to enable CLT / Leadership to look at what we want service areas to focus on at moment – some individual services have been in touch for when this is resurrected |  |
| Implement the final actions from the Welsh Language Commissioner’s Office Investigation Audit recommendations | Our online training portal Thinqi is now available to staff, as such the outstanding actions (S132.1B a S132.2A) are now completed and have been acknowledged and signed off by WLCO 06/02/2025. Welsh Language Awareness Module is now available to all staff under Essential Learning element of Thinqi. |  |