



Wales Centre for Public Policy
Canolfan Polisi Cyhoeddus Cymru

Multi-Agency Working in Cwm Taf Morgannwg

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What Works Centre for Children & Families

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Summary

The number and rates of looked after children in Wales continues to be a source of policy concern. Children who are taken into care have poorer outcomes in terms of educational attainment, health, unemployment, homelessness, and criminal justice.

Certain factors make children more likely to need care, including deprivation and the trigger trio of domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health issues in parents and carers. Responsibility for supporting families who present with these characteristics is shared across different government departments, agencies and partnerships and therefore requires effective multi-agency working.

The Welsh Government has actively sought to promote multi-agency working through a suite of policy initiatives, legislation and funding, and regional structures are key to this. We were interested in exploring how regions respond to the policy environment.

To explore this the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) and Foundations - What Works Centre for Children and Families collaborated with local and regional stakeholders delivering multi-agency working for vulnerable children and families within Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) region. CTM encompasses three Local Authorities of Merthyr Tydfil, Bridgend and

Rhondda Cynon Taf, and includes some of the most deprived areas in Wales. There is both motivation and need within CTM to deliver effective multi-agency response to children and families' needs.

We used the EIF Maternity and Early Years Maturity Matrix to understand the maturity of multi-agency working in CTM. The Matrix is a self-assessment tool used commonly across Wales to understand system strengths and areas for improvement.

The aim was to understand the:

1. Statutory responsibilities held at a regional level which relate to delivery of services for children and families
2. "Maturity" of multi-agency working within and across the region
3. Steps that could be taken at a regional level to support multi-agency working

To achieve this we conducted a **desk review**; had **informal discussions** with 11 people involved in coordinating and delivering services across CTM; and ran two **workshops**, attended by 34 participants working across social services, safeguarding, community safety, police, third sector, the health board, joint commissioning, social care, the third sector, police and the three local authorities.

Statutory responsibilities in the region

are complex and multifaceted. The national policy, funding and legislative framework has led to the development of a range of strategic boards with overlapping remits to support vulnerable families, such as Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs), Public Service Boards (PSBs), Safeguarding Boards and Community Safety Partnerships.

Welsh Government (2021) recognise this and have allowed regions to develop local definitions of distinctiveness and / or areas for collaboration across these strategic partnerships. As a result, agencies providing services for vulnerable children and families within CTM, as well as within other regions in Wales, are operating within a complex landscape.

Workshop participants shared positive examples of multi-agency working within CTM. The work that has gone in to defining the priorities of the Regional Integration Fund (RIF), and the associated programmes of activity developed, demonstrates efforts to integrate across organisational boundaries to develop key models of care. There are also efforts to define partnership working in various legislative frameworks.

Participants identified key areas for improvement, to build on existing successes:

- **Shared leadership, vision and clarity.** This exists within existing structures (e.g. the RPB have defined

this) but not across structures (i.e. across RPB and PSB).

- **Time and resources to ‘do’ community ownership well.** There are examples of well-regarded community engagement work, but lack of time and resource means this is not the norm.
- **Shared understanding of need across the Local Authorities and other agencies.** There are examples of work to develop a shared picture, for example through the Population Needs Assessment, but data and intelligence is often siloed within policy domains or regional structures.

In exploring how the region can build on this, workshop participants identified three interlinked areas of focus for further improving multi-agency working:

- Further developing partnership arrangements and associated strategy for vulnerable children and families;
- Developing a consistent methodology for community involvement and engagement across the region;
- Developing a more joined up method to understand need.

These findings refer to the work needed across the geographical region of CTM, stretching across the boundaries of the Regional Partnership Board and Public Service Boards, and the strategic boards that sit within these structures.

Introduction

The number and rates of looked after children in Wales continues to be a source of policy concern. Children who are taken into care have poorer outcomes in terms of educational attainment, health, unemployment, homelessness, and criminal justice. Certain factors make children more likely to need care, including deprivation and the trigger trio of domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health issues in parents and carers. The greater the number of these experiences that a child is exposed to, the more likely they are to be taken into care. In Wales a 72% variation in number and rates of children in care is correlated with the combination of deprivation and trigger trio (Hodges, 2020). Responsibility for supporting families who present with these characteristics is shared across different government departments, agencies and partnerships. Delivering support to families to prevent children going into care therefore requires effective multi-agency working at local, regional and national levels.

Levels of deprivation in Wales are greater than in England and Scotland (Abel et al, 2016). Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) region is an area in South Wales covering the three Local Authorities of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil, which includes some of the most deprived areas in Wales. Merthyr Tydfil has the highest percentage of people living in households in material deprivation of any Welsh Local Authority (21%; Wales=13%) (National Survey for Wales, 2020). Compared to the Welsh national average, CTM has a higher percentage of low birth weight births, a lower percentage of children with healthy weight at 5 years (Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2016), and the local authorities have 3 of the 5 highest rates of child protection registration within Wales. There is both motivation and need within this area to deliver effective multi-agency response to children and families' needs.

WCPP and Foundations – What Works Centre for Children and Families (formerly Early Intervention Foundation) have a long-standing interest in the effectiveness of multi-agency working in children's services. WCPP has worked on understanding the rising number of children in care in Wales and effective approaches to addressing this trend, including conducting a review on how multi-agency working in children's services can lead to positive outcomes (Wales Centre for Public Policy, 2021). WCPP had established links with representatives in CTM. Foundations have worked across England and Wales, supporting local areas to use evidence to improve effective early intervention for children in their early years. In response to identified challenges, Foundations developed a maternity and early years matrix: a framework

to support a system-wide approach for identifying areas for improvement and working together to deliver positive changes.

WCPP and Foundations collaborated with local and regional stakeholders delivering multi-agency working for vulnerable children and families within CTM region on the design and delivery of this project, which aimed to understand how multi-agency working was operating in CTM region and to identify actionable recommendations.

Review questions and method

An initial planning meeting took place with WCPP and Foundations in April 2022 to scope the project outcomes using a theory of change, roles of each organisation and timescales for delivery. The two organisations wanted to understand more about the role of regional governance structures in Wales, how they are implemented in line with Government legislation as well as how they align and interact with local partnerships with regards to supporting children who are 'at risk'.

WCPP and Foundations developed a series of research questions which would enable greater understanding both from policy and practice perspectives, which could be tested with regional representatives. They wanted to understand more about the legislative framework and how this had led to regional development of a range of strategic boards who have responsibility for overseeing provision for children who are at risk. WCPP and Foundations also wanted to understand local area perspectives about regional arrangements and their relationship with local planning, as well as how issues that are problematic to resolve at the local level are escalated and actioned at the regional level.

The project developed organically, informed by learning from each research question. This created opportunities for iteration as knowledge levels increased. A review of the legislation and mapping of all regional strategic boards informed decisions about questions to ask local and regional stakeholders at two workshops, as well as informal conversations with local stakeholders. Outputs from these conversations led to discussions with regional stakeholders about findings and what the region would like to do with the new information gained, linking into existing governance structures.

Review questions

The project focused on understanding the experience of those trying to deliver multi-agency working for vulnerable children and families within Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) region, and aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the statutory responsibilities held at a regional level which relate to delivery of services for children and families?
 - a. How are these currently discharged in the CTM region?
 - b. Which groups have a remit to ensure coordinated provision of services to support children and families with additional and more complex needs?
2. How 'mature' is multi-agency working within and across these groups in the CTM region?
 - a. What are the challenges to multi-agency working that cannot be solved at the local level and require a regional approach?
 - b. What are the areas of effective working, and how have these developed?
3. What steps could be taken at a regional level to improve multi-agency working? How do the statutory duties of regional bodies facilitate multi-agency working? What could Welsh Government do to support effective multi-agency working?

Methods

The review questions were addressed using the following methods:

- **Desk review:** Publicly available information on the policies and guidelines were reviewed to develop a map of statutory and operational requirements across groups and subgroups.
- **Informal discussions:** Findings from the desk review were sense-checked in discussion with 11 people involved in coordinating and delivering services in CTM, held between September-December 2022.
- **Workshops:** Practitioners, service providers and decision makers attended two workshops.
 - The first workshop aimed to test the key themes identified from the desk review, assess the maturity of regional working in CTM at the local level, and identify challenges. This 2-hour workshop took place in December 2022, and was attended by 20 people operating in CTM, across social services, safeguarding, community safety, police, third sector and the health board. Questions used are presented in Annex A.
 - The second workshop focused on developing recommendations for solutions to address challenges identified in workshop 1. Workshop 2

took place in March 2023. This 2-hour workshop was attended by 14 representatives, covering health, joint commissioning, social care, the third sector, the police and the three local authorities. Four of the participants operating at senior levels across the region had also attended Workshop 1. Questions used are presented in Annex B.

Framework: Maternity and Early Years Maturity Matrix

An adapted version of the Early Intervention Foundation's (2021) Maternity and Early Years Maturity Matrix was used as an overarching framework for the desk review, informal discussions and workshops. The Maternity and Early Years Maturity Matrix is a self-evaluation tool which helps local areas to measure progress in creating a local system to help children to thrive and to guide planning to make the local system more effective. It can also be used to set a baseline to measure progress over time. The matrix can be completed individually, or as a structure for a group discussion, or both. Participants rate the local area against descriptors within 10 key elements, and consider barriers to change and priorities for action based on the maturity level identified for each key element. The matrix works best when a range of people with different experiences and perspectives take part, and when they can hear and moderate each other's contributions to build a fuller picture. The four dimensions are as follows:

Plan: The arrangements for planning the local support system, using data on population needs, and financial and human resources.

Lead: How local strategy is driven by strategic partnership arrangements and how the local community are involved.

Deliver: How operational services are organised in a coherent way to deliver effective support for families.

Evaluate: How progress in outcomes is measured, what the experience of support is like from the perspective of families, and how local partners use and generate evidence.

The four dimensions were used to frame local perspectives about multi-agency working within and across groups in the CTM region, and to identify perceived opportunities for improvement.

Statutory responsibilities

Regional structures have a key role, rooted in legislation, in coordinating service design and delivery across agencies. The structure and framework for multi-agency working for each region in Wales is shaped by national legislation, strategies and guidance, including:

- Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act (2014)
- Children's Act (2004)
- Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015)
- Early Years Integration and Transformation Programme
- Violence Against Women, Domestic abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
- Together for Mental Health Strategy
- Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019-22

An outline of each of these and the implications for multi-agency working in Cwm Taf Morgannwg is provided below.

Social Services and Well Being Act (2014)

Under the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act (2014), seven Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) were created across Wales to secure strategic planning and partnership working between local authorities and Local Health Boards. CTM RPB covers three local authorities (Rhondda Cynon Taf, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil), and one University Health Board (UHB).

In 2018, CTM RPB established the Integration Board/Transformational Leadership Programme Board (TLPB), to oversee the transformation, development and delivery of regional services, including those for children and families. The TLPB coordinates the work of the Children's Services Programme Board, and the Cross Cutting Programme Board. The Children's Services Programme Board oversees five subgroups: Integrated residential accommodation; Continuing care; the Multi Agency Permanence Support Service (MAPPS); emotional wellbeing – early help and support framework/NEST implementation (NHS Wales Executive, 2022); and MUSE communication tool development (Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board, 2023).

The NEST Framework was created to help the RPB to take a 'whole system' approach in planning mental health, well-being and support services for babies, children, young people, parents, carers and their wider families across Wales.

Children's Act (2004)

An Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the Children's Act (2004) aimed to help local authorities and other entities better regulate interventions in the interests of children. In Wales, Safeguarding Children Boards were established under the Children's Act (2004) and restructured under the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act (2014).

CTM Safeguarding Children's Board sits under the RPB and aims to bring together local authorities (LAs), Local Health Boards (LHBs), police, probation services and community rehabilitation to protect children and prevent harm. CTM Safeguarding Board oversees the MARAC Quality Assurance Group, MASH Operational Committee and the Joint Operational Committee. The latter oversees the Multi-Agency Child Sexual Exploitation group, Children Quality Assurance Group, Training and Learning Sub-group and the Engagement, Participation and Communications Sub-group.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015)

Under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015), 19 Public Service Boards were established to bring together public bodies at a regional level across Wales, including local authorities, health boards, police, fire and rescue, third sector and other public bodies operating within the region, as well as public input. Following some mergers there are now 13 PSBs; the geographical footprint of each PSB does not necessarily align with the RPB footprint.

CTM PSB initially covered Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority areas; Bridgend local authority joined in 2019. CTM PSB oversees a Strategic Partnership Board, Together for Mental Health Partnership Board, and the Early Years Integration Transformation Board (EYITP), each of which has a remit for coordinating different aspects of services for children and families.

Early Years Integration and Transformation Programme

The Early Years Integration and Transformation Programme (EYITP) was created to support Local Authorities (LAs), Local Health Boards (LHBs) and third sector to coordinate a more joined-up approach to delivery of early years services. In December 2017, the CTM region was the first of nine regions to be involved as

pathfinders in a co-construction programme with Welsh Government to develop an early years integration model.

EYITP in CTM aims to develop and pilot an integrated needs-based approach to the delivery of enhanced early years services based on local context. The Early Years Transformation Board, which is accountable to the CTM PSB, also includes key senior officers from across the three local authorities, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTM-UHB) and Public Health Wales.

Violence Against Women, Domestic abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act (2015)

The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDSV) Act (2015) required Welsh ministers to publish a national strategy around prevention, protection and support. The VAWDSV strategy 2022-2026 sets out the actions the Government aim to take to increase support for survivors, bring perpetrators to justice, and, ultimately, reduce the prevalence of violence against women and girls. The aim is to deliver and monitor the VAWDASV strategy through a National Partnership Board, and Regional Strategic and Commissioning Partnership boards.

A consultation report published in 2022 called for more detail on how the National Partnership Board and its sub-groups would operate, particularly in relation to multi-agency working (Welsh Government, 2022). It was recognised that more needs to be done to provide consistent funding approaches, greater sharing of data, and a more seamless service for victims.

Together for Mental Health

Together for Mental Health is a cross-Government Strategy setting out goals for improving mental health and mental health services in Wales. The delivery plan for 2019-2022 emphasised early intervention to prevent exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and the need for improved multi-agency working. A National Mental Health Partnership Board was set-up to work with Health Boards, Local Authorities and other public service providers, to deliver services and programmes to improve mental health and wellbeing.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Together for Mental Health Partnership Board is responsible for the delivery of mental health services in CTM. Two sub groups sit below the Board, namely the Children and Young Person's sub group and the Adult's sub group.

Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019-22

In 2019, the Welsh Government published its Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019-2022. The Delivery Plan details the Welsh Government's priorities for tackling substance misuse for the 2019-22 period. Seven Area Planning Boards (APBs) across Wales are responsible for commissioning local, frontline services within their respective regions. Using the Welsh Government funding allocated, APBs are responsible for assessing need and the commissioning and monitoring of substance misuse services delivery within their respective regions. Good partnership working between APBs and other regional structures, such as RPBs and PSBs, is noted as a critical part of substance misuse service delivery within the Plan. A key priority area of the Plan is to strengthen multi-agency working to ensure peoples' needs are met (Welsh Government, 2019).

Summary: a complex legislative and policy landscape

The national policy, funding and legislative framework has led to the development of a range of strategic boards with overlapping remits to support vulnerable families, such as Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs), Public Service Boards (PSBs), Safeguarding Boards and Community Safety Partnerships. Welsh Government (2021) recognise this but have left regions to develop local definitions of distinctiveness and / or areas for collaboration across these strategic partnerships.

Some of the other legislative frameworks and strategies have been designed specifically to address different factors known to make children more likely to need care, including the domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health issues in parents and carers. Table 1 shows the number of groups, sub-groups, programme boards and partnership boards created to deliver services for vulnerable children and families across the RPB and PSB structures in CTM. Agencies providing services for vulnerable children and families within Cwm Taf Morgannwg, as well as within other regions in Wales, are operating within an incredibly complex landscape. At risk families and children are needing to deal with multiple different agencies to address their needs.

Table 1: Regional groups working in Cwm Taf Morgannwg

Regional Partnership Board

Integrated Leadership Board

Adult Services Programme Board	Cross Cutting Programme Board	Children’s Services Programme Board Regional Priority 1: Integrated Approach to Safe Accommodation Sub Group 1: Integrated Residential Accommodation Sub Group 2: Continuing Care Group Sub Group 3: MAPSS Therapy Service Regional Priority 2: Integrated Approach to Promote Emotional and Physical Resilience Accommodation Sub Group 4: Emotional Well-being - Early Help and Support Framework/NEST Implementation Sub Group 5: MUSE Communication Tool Development
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Safeguarding Board

MARAC Quality Assurance Group	MASH Operational Committee MASH Quality Assurance Sub Group (MAQA)	Joint Operational Committee Joint Review Group Multi-Agency Child Sexual Exploitation Group (MACSE) Children Quality Assurance Sub Group (QASG) Training and Learning Sub Group (TALG) Engagement, Participation and Communication Sub Group
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Public Services Board

Together for Mental Health Partnership Board Adults Mental Health Sub Group Children’s Mental Health Sub Group	Early Years Integration Transformation Board	Strategic Partnership Board Area Planning Board Substance Misuse Sub Group Community Safety Partnership Board CTM VAWDASV Regional and Strategic Partnership VAWDASV Steering Group Serious and Violent Crime Partnership Board CONTEST Board Product Delivery Group Protective Security Preparedness Group Community Cohesion Group Offender Management Board
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Maturity of multi-agency working in CTM

The 'Maturity Matrix' was used as a framework to explore how multi-agency working is operating in CTM given this complex legislative and policy landscape. Findings from the desk review were sense-checked through informal discussions with those involved in the coordination and delivery of services, and feedback was sought from the Children's Board. The findings were presented to and further developed by workshop participants.

Some notable pockets of successful multi-agency working were identified. There are well-established relationships and evidence of partnership working (e.g. MASH and EYITP); evidence of joint training (e.g. Multi Agency Training Programme developed by the CTMSB Training and Learning Sub Group); co-production (e.g. Children and Young People Engagement Toolkit); and collaboration and information sharing (e.g. Resilience and Wellbeing Health Programme). However, the complexity of the strategic partnership landscape in Wales was described as a perennial issue for multi-agency working. Participants identified key areas for improvement, to build on existing successes. These are presented under the maturity matrix themes of plan, lead, deliver and evaluate.

Plan

Feedback on the arrangements for planning local support system, using data on population needs, and financial and human resources highlighted:

1. **A need for clarity from stakeholders about how strategic regional governance operates.** Current partnership structures exist as a result of legislation, policy, funding, or a combination of these. This has led over time to the creation of discrete and unconnected partnerships. The majority of stakeholders were not clear about the various regional groups and their remits, or how local and regional groups interact in Cwm Taf Morgannwg. Some participants reported that it is not always clear that resulting regional strategies 'talk to' one another. There were [differing views over the distinction between and overlap of the RPB and PSB](#) work to support children and families; with some suggesting that the PSB structures are less effective because they do not receive funding as other partnerships do. High-risk areas in particular benefit from having a strong and clear legislative framework.

National safeguarding procedures, for example, allow for a consistent response throughout Wales.

- 2. A need for a more coherent and up to date picture of need across the region.** Regional assessments of need are often done at set moments, such as the Population Needs Assessment undertaken every five years in line with legislation, can become outdated quickly. The group reported that **regional assessments of need are segmented according to different areas of policy and domains of need** (e.g., community safety, mental health, well-being), which can encourage silo working. Different pieces of legislation outline how partnership bodies are required to establish and maintain pooled funds to exercise family support functions, such as the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. However, it is not clear how effective pooled funding has been in practice.
- 3. It was unclear whether there is a shared view at the regional level of the current workforce and partnership agreement about workforce planning.** Many services at the local level are reliant on annual funding cycles that make workforce management challenging.

Lead

Feedback on how local strategy is driven by strategic partnership arrangements and how the local community are involved, revealed:

- 1. Notable pockets of successful multi-agency working.** MASH and EYITP were both highlighted and there was evidence of joint training (e.g. Multi Agency Training Programme developed by the CTMSB Training and Learning Sub Group); co-production (e.g. Children and Young People Engagement Toolkit); and collaboration and information sharing (e.g. Resilience and Wellbeing Health Programme).
- 2. Efforts to define partnership working in various legislative frameworks** with some outlining mechanisms for pooled funding and others outlining how functions can be delegated. Individuals within agencies attend meetings of different groups to try to instigate joined-up working across the regional structures. However, it was felt by participants that this could be more systematic. There were **reports of 'too many partnerships' and 'too many meetings'**, and partners reported that there could be improvements in the way that resources are used efficiently to encourage greater effectiveness of partnerships.
- 3. Confusion around the regional landscape and the role of the region.** Regional Partnership Boards are responsible for ensuring information is shared and used effectively to improve the delivery of services, care and support, but there is a lack of clarity about how to manage overlapping

responsibilities between the different boards within the region. This is reported to undermine accountability for decision making, with partnerships seen as blurring responsibility.

4. **Positive examples of community ownership and ongoing dialogue between communities and some services**, but some tension between the work done with communities on the ground and the top-down processes at the regional level. The RPB and PSB were joint partners in the development of the Population Needs Assessment, which included '100 days of engagement' with the public, and CTM RPB is recognised as an area of good practice for co-production and engagement. However, it was noted that regional data can conflict with local experiences.

Deliver

Feedback on how operational services are delivered and organised in a coherent way to deliver effective support for families, highlighted:

1. **Some examples of well-regarded multi-agency approaches and services, but there were also reports that these are not knitted into a coherent system; and that they are vulnerable** (e.g., reliant on grant funding; and not seen as 'core' business by the region). There were reports of work underway to look at regional delivery of evidence-led services and interventions, but currently this is delivered locally, not regionally. Most services and interventions are evaluated locally and outcomes reported back directly to the Welsh Government; there are both resource and capacity constraints that affect the ability to do this well.
2. **Potential to improve the delivery of information sharing arrangements.** Partnership Arrangements (Wales) Regulations 2015 outline information sharing requirements, including use of technology and shared systems. Examples were shared where CTM have developed **integrated pathways** based on a consensus picture of need and the use of well-regarded multi agency approaches, e.g., Resilient Families. However, this response is **not consistently seen across the region** and assessments of service 'sufficiency' are either not happening or are happening in silos within individual services. This can result in the same family being discussed repeatedly across different groups. There was a recognition amongst stakeholders that there is a need to approach things differently and work together in a co-productive way. However, capacity and staff shortages paired with a reliance on small amounts of grant funding can sometimes make this difficult for regional groups.

Evaluate

Participants feedback on how progress in outcomes is measured, what the experience of support is like from the perspective of families, and how local partners use and generate evidence suggested:

1. **Information flowing from the regional level is not always easy to translate into improvements to services at the local level.** Stakeholders discussed the number of regional meetings they attend and how they are unclear about progress or outcomes in relation to their local work.
2. **Significant investment in sharing data at the RPB level, but regional groups report that data is not always analysed as a whole to gain an overall picture of the impact of initiatives.** Data can be reported on and understood within local and regional lines of accountability, which mirror Welsh Government departments for example performance data about government funded programmes, or data related to specific legislation for example safeguarding.
3. **The region is still at an early stage of maturity using data as a source of intelligence to shape service design and delivery and monitor outcomes.** There was a recognition that local and regional efforts are directed to monitoring data in response to Government initiatives. It was felt there was less time for using data to understand the local context in each local area based on population needs assessment data, family and professional experience, and relating this information to research evidence.

Priority issues in CTM

The first workshop aimed to identify priority areas for local and regional stakeholders. Twenty representatives from across social services, safeguarding, community safety, police, third sector and the health board discussed the 'picture' of regional working presented above, and agreed on four priority areas:

1. **Shared leadership and vision across the regional structures**
2. **Clarity of the respective role of different regional bodies**
3. **Time and resources to do community ownership well; and**
4. **Shared understanding of need across local authorities**

These were further refined during the second workshop, which was attended by 14 representatives, covering health, joint commissioning, social care, the third sector, the police and the three local authorities. It was reported that shared leadership and vision are needed to address the lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities across partners within CTM. The first two priorities are therefore presented together.

Shared leadership, vision and clarity of the respective roles of the different regional bodies

Participants at both workshops, working at both local and regional levels, reported the need for clearer identification and communication of a regional strategy. Clarity is needed around shared priorities and governance across the region, to better understand the strategic partnership aims and arrangements within the complex political and legislative landscape. Without a clear vision, collective leadership across the regional footprint including the third sector, is challenging.

Discussions in the workshop indicated that there is a lack of clarity about the respective roles of the RPB and PSB, which were seen as overlapping, and the relationship with the Welsh Government. It was felt that there is a strategy and methodology around multi-agency working for children within the RPB structures but that this is not connected to the wider regional architecture. Participants reported that clarity is needed around what should be happening locally, regionally, and nationally and the connective tissue between these levels. Participants working within the local authority areas struggled to communicate the role of the region to communities.

There were differences acknowledged between Merthyr Tydfil, Bridgend and Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) in terms of priorities due to differences in scale, demographics and needs. Participants reported that communications with operational staff may need to be more robust to ensure clarity of understanding around the priorities. Workforce sufficiency needs also differed across the local authorities with workforce shortages being identified in Bridgend and Rhondda Cynon Taf in line with national shortages, but less so in Merthyr. It was felt that there was a cross-regional commitment to early prevention. but the workforce pipeline was difficult to maintain in order to build local capacity.

Funding insecurity was reported to prevent development of a longer-term shared vision for multi-agency working in CTM, particularly in relation to developing and retaining the workforce. Local authorities are not always clear on whether they will receive funding for the next year, which prevents long-term planning around identified local and regional priorities. It also leads to insecure employment and staff seeking

other opportunities across the region, making it problematic for each local authority to hold on to experienced staff.

The group reported positively about the Regional Integration Fund (RIF) programme of activity developed by the Regional Partnership Board (RPB). This programme was initiated in response to the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act and A Healthier Wales. The RIF has been focussing on developing integrated key models of care as part of the health and social care system. There was an acknowledgement in the workshop that this work did not cover need across the entire Cwm Taf Morgannwg footprint. This was considered particularly relevant when thinking about specific health and social care priorities for complex groups.

It was reported that leadership priorities could orientate delivery around outcomes for families and communities across the CTM region wider than the Welsh Government funded programmes. One of the proposed leadership priorities raised in the session could be developing a more integrated response to the trigger trio (domestic abuse, mental ill-health and substance misuse) and the development of new models of support around the three intersected areas. Currently delivery could be seen as quite separate which may explain why some family needs are discussed repeatedly across strategic groups.

There was a recognition that partnership working at the regional level takes time and commitment. Many leadership roles at this level are carried out by individuals whose primary strategic leadership role rests in one of the three local authorities or the health board. Balancing commitments at both regional and local levels was reported to be challenging.

Time and resources to do community involvement well

Several examples were provided of community involvement in Cwm Taf Morgannwg. At regional level, there is a designated role for community engagement, with capacity and resources to publicise events and establish links with people in communities. The regional Hackathon used music, art and creativity when engaging with young people, identifying a wide range of potential community led priorities and it was felt that this good practice could be built upon and scaled up wider. The RIF has also developed a community engagement approach which has been found to be helpful, but time consuming and can be restrictive to specific areas of need. The Population Needs Assessment (PNA) also collects data on lived experience within local communities with the purpose of informing the plan for the region going forward. At the local level, community engagement by Local Authority youth forums, special schools and youth councils, were presented as providing useful learning about different methodologies.

Various challenges associated with involving communities were also reported, including a lack of resources to develop effective strategies for community engagement and coproduction, which are often time consuming and resource intensive. Workshop participants reported that they find it difficult to capture family and community views and the regional view seems too far removed from the experiences of practitioners and families on the ground. It was suggested that regional strategy needs to be informed by a much wider cross section of stakeholders, alongside strategic and regional boards. Regional strategies for community engagement and involvement should be developed in consideration of Local Authority capacity, time and budgets.

Health representatives reported that awareness and understanding of what has come out of any engagement with communities was dependent on individual relationships (e.g., knowing who has collected the information), rather than there being a robust structure for sharing this and a consistent methodology for engagement. Participants recognised a need to develop a 'community of practice' around this work where there is a consistent system-wide approach for Cwm Taf Morgannwg that can be used by any partner at any level. Participants reported a need to develop methods of engagement to improve community uptake, and a coordinated approach with the third sector and the health sector to combat resource and capacity issues in this area.

Participants reported that engagement is usually carried out by individuals within organisations who have skills and expertise in this area and the work is greatly appreciated. There was a need to ringfence time to be able to co-ordinate priorities from engagement activities and to ensure that regional plans are 'population needs led' and representative. It was recognised that spacing and timing of engagement should be considered to avoid 'over saturation' with communities as well as clarification about who has the right skill set to do the work and can follow up over time.

Shared understanding of need across local authorities

Participants reported a need for timely, useful data to inform decision making within and across the region. The Population Needs Assessment (PNA) currently takes place every 5 years and is collected at the regional level. Participants reported that if the methodology for conducting the Population Needs Assessment isn't right it can entrench silo working. Additionally, if not given sufficient time, learning and change is not fully embedded in services. Participants reported that there are 'Pockets of expertise, fashions of approaches rather than embedded methodologies.' They expressed a need to agree a methodology and purpose so that the regional strategy is based on the 5-year Population Needs Assessment, staff and community views. A

new approach incorporating these ideas would also need to be maintained over time to see sustained efforts.

Local service providers reported that they often use the regional population data alongside qualitative data to paint a more holistic picture of the range of need in their local authority. However, participants described a tension between data on local community experiences and the regional data. Participants were not clear how to reconcile the differences between local and regional data, and asked for clarity about the breadth and depth of data collected with additional consideration of marginalised groups. It was reported that the 5-year cycle of the PNA does not help local areas to articulate to regional boards the local picture in real time, particularly when there are significant changes, such as the COVID pandemic. The need for a central repository for storing data in one place was identified as an ambition with agreed time points in the 5-year cycle agreed for collection and review of data.

There was a challenge reported in collecting real time data. Participants also reported a need for data to be simplified and more orientated to the needs of children and families. Improving data collection was seen as enabling the monitoring of future trends and facilitating wider learning and development beyond the current RIF programme, as well as meeting the requirements of government funded projects.

Identifying regional solutions

The second workshop was also used to build recommendations about how to address identified priorities. The session was structured to enable participants to hear about the key themes and then break out into two smaller groups to discuss potential, actionable solutions that could be taken forward within CTM region. Three key solutions were presented in relation to identified issues:

- 1. Further develop partnership arrangements and associated strategy for vulnerable children and families;**
- 2. Develop a consistent methodology for community involvement and engagement;**
- 3. Develop a more joined up method to understand need.**

These are described in more detail below. Each section includes a list of proposed actions.

Develop strategic partnership arrangements and associated strategy for children at risk

Although governance and accountability issues were raised in both workshops, there was little appetite for a governance review. Participants shared a common enthusiasm for regional bodies to focus rather on:

- creating better use of population needs across the footprint;
- sharing communication between partners and messaging for families;
- identifying clearer partnership commissioning arrangements by developing integrated pathways; and
- child and family accessibility (geographical and protected characteristics), prevention, outcomes and operational impact achieved by pooling resources.

Different ideas were presented on how to orientate strategic partnership arrangements more effectively around outcomes for families and communities. One of the proposed methods for doing this was to arrange partnerships using the 'rainbow model' (Welsh Government 2017). Mapping provision for children 'at risk' onto the model could give a clearer understanding of the continuum of regional services provided ranging from prevention through to specialist tier support, gaps in the service offer as well as an understanding of how each of the services are commissioned and managed. Participants reported that mapping services on to the rainbow may also provide opportunities to look at how Government funded initiatives such as Families First and Flying Start could be aligned with locally commissioned services to develop a more seamless offer. This could also create opportunities for scaling up funded projects across the footprint where gaps are identified. Another suggestion was to develop a more integrated response to the trigger trio (domestic abuse, mental ill-health and substance misuse) and the development of new models of support around the three intersected areas.

Potential partnership actions identified by workshop participants:

- Improve shared communication and partnerships around regional priorities.
- Clarify the inter-connected governance arrangements across the entire regional footprint and the relationship with the Welsh Government.
- Develop a clear partnership arrangement across the region wider than the Regional Partnership Board considering representation and governance responsibilities for public services who are held accountable to the RPB, PSB, community safety and local partnerships boards.

- Develop governance and partnership arrangements around the trigger trio ensuring that service delivery is organized and integrated around these priorities.
- Any changes in governance arrangements needs to have a clear relationship with how services are organized and delivered operationally.
- Organise procurement and its governance across the entire footprint around agreed priorities.
- Co-produce priority areas with a wide range of partners aligning governance structures around them to monitor quality, delivery and effectiveness.
- Pool resources so that services are integrated and delivered to create shared outcomes.

Develop a consistent methodology for community involvement and engagement

Workshop participants reported that the need to build on and further develop the good work that is already taking place in involving and engaging communities. A more cohesive and joined up approach would make better use of limited resources. Participants described the need to ringfence time to be able to co-ordinate priorities from engagement activities and to ensure that regional plans are 'population needs led' and representative. It was recognised that spacing and timing of engagement should be considered to avoid 'over saturation' with communities as well as clarification about who has the right skill set to do the work and can follow up over time.

Participants reported that the third sector is well placed to seek engagement and authentic feedback from communities who are considered 'hard to reach'. There was appetite from third sector organisations in the group discussions to support this work. Representatives from the third sector reported that they are well placed to work on behalf of the partnership with specific local populations or at a regional level. They are confident using systematic approaches for engagement, looking for gaps and supporting shared understanding across partners.

Potential community engagement and involvement actions identified by workshop participants:

- Involve the expertise of the third sector and adapt regional language so that they feel more included.
- The methodology needs to be based on regional good practice for example Hackathon, Local Authority youth forums, special schools engagement activities and the work of youth councils.

- There is a need for a structured, agreed, consistent methodology used by all partners in the region for community engagement.
- There is a need for a region wide community of practice approach to engagement which is used consistently and inclusively across the region, not just within the remit of the RPB.
- Once developed the engagement approach needs enough time for delivery, analysis, understanding/synthesis and monitoring. The region needs to feel confident to do this despite Government timelines. Frequency of engagement needs agreement to avoid 'over saturation' of communities and local partners.
- Changes and development of regional strategy need to be informed by community and partnership output information collected.

Develop a more joined up method to understand need

There is need for more timely local and regional data, in addition to the 5-year Population Needs Assessment requirement, to inform local and regional strategy. The group expressed the need for a variety of methods for data collection which incorporates research findings, organizational data, population data, lived experience and professional knowledge. The data which is collected needs to be coordinated and centralised across the region. Centralising data collection would allow opportunities for analysis and triangulation and a deeper understanding of the regional picture. Better flow of information across the region could then be translated into the development of short and longer-term meaningful outcomes, which could be monitored. This would extend understanding beyond reporting of deliverables of Welsh Government funded projects.

Clearer demographic data would allow partners to understand their regional context better and in turn use this information when bidding for funding. Participants relayed that it feels as if this process currently happens the other way around, where a business case is made for Welsh Government funding to maintain or enhance staffing levels on a fixed term basis but may not necessarily be the highest of priorities in terms of population need. This can lead to workforce overload when practitioners are delivering business as usual casework as well as delivery requirements of the government programme. More efficient use of Population Needs Assessment could then better inform bid applications to reduce this problem.

Potential actions for increasing shared understanding of need identified by workshop participants

- Data collected needs agreement from a wider range of stakeholders (including marginalised groups) in terms of what needs to be collected, by whom, to what timescales and the common methods used by all for collection and reporting.
- Data collected needs to enable the region to monitor trends over the short to medium to long term.
- Data analysts are needed to support system working and maintain up to date data collection to agreed timescales and methods who also support dissemination across the footprint.
- There is a need for a method for triangulating and synthesising data involving a wider representation of stakeholders in the process.
- The regional picture needs to inform the Welsh Government projects that the region bids for need to ensure that government funded projects enhance and support the gaps and needs identified in the regional data set.

Recommendations

The findings from the first workshop summarised participants views about multi-agency working practices and support for children who are 'at risk' in Cwm Taf Morgannwg. Outputs from the second workshop provided opportunities for partners to collaborate and generate potential high-level solutions which can be taken forward by the regional Integrated Leadership Board. Suggestions of next steps for the CTM partnership have been drawn together using the Maturity Matrix and are summarised in Tables 2-4. Potential actions are drawn from the workshops; we have made suggestions around potential effort, impact, and benefits of these, drawing from our experience and expertise and what we learnt from the workshops.

A proposed plan for taking action can be found in Annex C. The Matrix uses 4 stages of maturity from basic level to mature level of progress. The Maturity Matrix is usually used at the local level. Adapted next steps have been developed using the descriptors from the Matrix. These suggestions could be adapted and used by leaders and partners to plan action at the regional Integrated Leadership Board.

Table 2: Proposed Partnership Actions

Outcome	Potential Action	Effort (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Potential Benefit
Strategic partnership arrangements for multi-agency working drives forward the strategy for children at risk.	a) Improve shared communication and partnerships around regional priorities.	Medium	High	
	b) Clarify the inter-connected governance arrangements across the entire regional footprint and the relationship with the Welsh Government.	High	High	A broad and active partnership group is responsible for a strategy around children at risk and is having a positive impact.
	c) Develop a clear partnership arrangement across the region considering wider representation and governance responsibilities for public services who are held accountable to the RPB, PSB, community safety and local partnerships boards.	High	High	Governance of delivery of the strategy is clear and partners have a shared understanding of goals, performance and their role in taking action. There is an agreed process for addressing areas of underperformance.
	d) Develop governance and partnership arrangements around agreed priorities for example, the trigger trio. Agree related roles and responsibilities of regional and local structures in relation to each priority including the monitoring of quality, delivery and effectiveness.	Medium	High	Partners have an effective working relationship, hold each other to account and trust each other. They actively contribute and engage in partnership discussions, and constructively challenge each other with a focus on impact for children and families.
	e) Clarify the lines of accountability and information flow between the RPB, the Welsh Government and local partnerships to ensure that local practice mirrors policy and vice versa.	Low	High	Identified partnership groups have clear responsibility for delivering strategy around children at risk.
	f) Clarify and map the terms of references for strategic and regional boards and partnership groups and communicate this to stakeholders at all levels.	Low	Medium	Partners are willing to share responsibility, design solutions and take action.

Table 3: Proposed Community Engagement Actions

Outcome	Potential Action	Effort (High/Medium/Low)	Impact (High/Medium/Low)	Potential Benefit
There is an agreed consistent, robust methodology for engagement across the region.	a) Involve the expertise of the third sector and adapt regional language so that they feel more included.	Low	High	The views of families inform strategy through formal consultation focused on children who are at risk, issues and goals. Families co-design the family engagement strategy and are involved in commissioning and procurement processes and are part of the governance structures where decisions about children at risk are made.
	b) Evaluate good practice methodology based on regional and local good practice examples eg Hackathon, Local Authority youth forums, special schools engagement activities and the work of youth councils.	Low	High	
	c) Develop a structured, agreed, consistent methodology used by all partners in the region for community engagement.	High	High	
There is a clear understanding of community needs which informs the regional strategy.	d) Disseminate a region wide approach to engagement which is used consistently and inclusively across the region, not just within the remit of the RPB.	High	Medium	
	e) Deliver a range of engagement events, including face to face.	Low	Medium	
	f) Develop and embed an evaluation and reporting mechanism.	Low	Medium	

Table 4: Proposed Shared Understanding of Needs Actions

Outcome	Potential Action	Effort (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Potential Impact
A more joined up method to understand community needs and views which supplements population needs data.	a) Agree common data collection methods for needs assessment including timescales and reporting mechanisms from wider stakeholders including marginalised groups.	High	High	Partners share a multi-agency population needs assessment. Data and intelligence influences decision-making and prioritisation for children at risk.
	b) Regional leads analyse data to monitor trends over short, Medium and longer term.	Medium	High	Needs Assessment identifies local priorities.
	c) Data analysts support system working, data collection for analysis and reporting making this accessible across stakeholders.	High	High	Needs assessment informs local strategy. Need Assessment informs funding bids aligned with local needs.
	d) Develop a method for triangulating and synthesising data involving a wider representation of stakeholders in the process.	Medium	High	Current data and triangulation of evidence enables understanding of current trends. Partners working together enables an ongoing cycle of improvement.
	e) Ensure Welsh Government projects align with local and regional priorities.	Low	High	

Conclusion

This report intends to support cohesive multi-agency working at the local and regional level across CTM, through engaging with those working within local and regional roles around strengths and key areas for improvement. Participants across CTM have shown a great passion to provide the best offer to communities across the local areas and region. There were many examples of regional partners attempting to create new and innovative multi-agency methods of working. Stakeholders at the workshops valued these efforts and wanted to go further in order to create services and multi-agency approaches which are designed around the needs and views of children, families and communities.

The group recognised the challenging legislative and policy context. Although some notable pockets of successful multi-agency working were highlighted, the complexity of the strategic partnership landscape in Wales influenced capacity to deliver co-ordinated services for children and families in Cwm Taf Morgannwg. Contrary to stated policy aims, the impact of the legislative, policy and funding environment created by Welsh Government is that regions are required to establish multiple regional boards and structures that segment aspects of need according to policy domain. Those working within these regional structures are then required to retrofit coordinating activities that 'join-up' across these boundaries. This effort is 'additional' and outside the core business of delivering against the relevant policy or legislative imperative. And yet, it is well understood that the individuals and families that these structures are designed to serve have needs that routinely cut across policy domains and the regional structures.

It may be beyond the scope of regional partners to address the complexity of the legislative landscape for multi-agency working in Wales. Participants were reticent to propose a governance review, despite lack of clarity in the remit of PSBs and RPBs, and associated partnership arrangements. However, the challenges associated with delivering effective services within this context are widely recognised, and the consequences should be acknowledged. A 2020 review of strategic partnerships conducted by the Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association, and Welsh NHS Confederation also concluded that there were 'too many partnerships' and 'too many meetings'. Discrete partnerships mandated through legislation or resulting from grant funded programmes often remain unconnected from each other, and from delivering outcomes that matter to the public.

Participants offered a clear set of recommendations for improving multi-agency working for children and families in Cwm Taf Morgannwg. The group presented a

shared ambition to develop a consensus around priorities, with partners working together at regional level to enable priorities and strategy to focus on what is most important at local and regional levels, and build into system planning. Working in a coordinated way as a community of partners with improved communication, engagement and more timely, accessible population data sharing to enable more creative engagement and practice to benefit the local communities. The insights gained and potential solutions explored require commitment, the development of a shared understanding, and engagement at both the regional and local level to work collaboratively.

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Annex A – Workshop 1 Questions

Workshop participants were presented findings from the desk review and informal conversations and asked the following questions.

Plan

- Is this a fair representation / does it map onto your experience of working in CTM?
- What impact does this fragmentation have?
- What do you think a regional approach/strategy should look like?
- Is there a regional picture of sufficiency?
- What are the regional mechanisms for identifying issues of sufficiency and addressing them?
- Are there challenges with the current situation with addressing them?
- Does the region have a role in workforce planning?
- Are there any problems with not having a regional workforce plan?
- How does it impact upon resources?

Lead

- Are lines of accountability, responsibility and oversight clear?
- What is the mechanism for escalating issues to the regional level?
- What is the role of the region in dealing with escalations?
- Are leaders bought into and driving a shared multi-agency agenda?
- To what extent are communities involved in decision making at the regional level?
- How does community involvement and engagement at the local level interact with regional efforts?
- What challenges / opportunities are generated by the current approach?

Deliver

- What role does the region play in identifying and promoting evidence-based interventions?
- Does the region assess the performance of services / interventions?
- To what extent does data inform discussion of service provision at the regional level?
- Is data driving decisions? Our sense is that you are investing a lot in data sharing architecture but it seems that decisions aren't being driven by a shared data source that tells you what's going on in your region. Is this correct?
- What are the problems and opportunities that you think this creates?
- What is the purpose of regional data collection and sharing?

Evaluate

- To what extent is the region able to track the impact that services / interventions are having on outcomes?
- What evaluation of provision takes place at the regional level?
- What is / should be the role of the region in this?
- What do you call evidence?
- How is this used to inform decision making?
- Our impression is that evaluations are commissioned but there is no consistent evaluation of service provision. Is this correct?

Annex B – Workshop 2 Questions

Workshop participants were presented findings from the desk review, informal conversations and workshop 1 around the four priority areas:

- Leadership
- Clarity of the role of regional bodies
- Community engagement
- Shared understanding of need sufficiency and impact

They were then asked to consider:

- What key actions need to be taken?
- What difference will it make - short term impact?

Annex C- Taking Action

This format is intended to facilitate a structured discussion around the proposed actions in tables 2, 3 and 4 with key stakeholders.

Stakeholders should work together to:

- Consider the effort column, discuss and agree suggested level with stakeholders.
- Prioritise actions considering those low effort high impact ratings and those most appropriate for the next steps the group are wishing to take;
- Consider who should be involved in the discussion and planning across the local and regional landscape;
- Gather and use appropriate available evidence and look to 'plug the gaps' if the information isn't easily accessible;
- Ensure all involved understand the potential outcomes, impact and benefits of making the changes;
- Agree smaller key steps to making the changes and who will take ownership of these;
- Set review dates to keep the group updated around progress and support around challenges;
- Consider using a red, amber, green measure to measure progress as you review the steps taken;
- Consider wider work which may impact on this action and ensure a shared understanding of how this may affect the changes planned here.

<p>Agreed Focus and Outcome: <i>eg from recommendations table select Partnership, Community Engagement or Shared Understanding of Need and outcome from first column.</i></p>		<p>Potential Action: <i>taken from recommendations table</i></p>		<p>Stakeholders Involved:</p> <p><i>Consider: Local and Regional Officers, Parent/Carer representation, VCS Partners, Data analysts</i></p>	
Action	Action Owners	Related Evidence	Progress:	Review Date (RAG)	
<p><i>Break down actions into smaller steps</i></p>	<p><i>Consider:</i></p> <p><i>Local and Regional Officers</i></p> <p><i>Parent/Carer representation</i></p> <p><i>VCS Partners</i></p> <p><i>Data analysts</i></p>	<p><i>Consider:</i></p> <p><i>Feedback from strategic partners.</i></p> <p><i>Consultation Outcomes</i></p> <p><i>Partnership group terms of reference and membership</i></p> <p><i>Training and development plans</i></p> <p><i>Local and regional reporting</i></p> <p><i>Information sharing from partners</i></p>	<p><i>Note progress made and challenges to be solved with wider group</i></p>	<p><i>Set a date and measure how progressing towards this</i></p>	

		<i>Multi-agency population needs assessment</i>		
<p>Next steps/ further considerations: <i>consider other work which may impact on this and vice versa</i></p>				

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