



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board**

**18<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

### **Report of the Head of Transformation Andrew Thomas**

#### **Matter for Information**

#### **Wards Affected:**

All Wards

#### **Report on the work of Cynnydd and the Wellbeing Service**

#### **Purpose of the Report:**

- To provide Members with information on the work and impact of the Wellbeing and Behaviour Service and Cynnydd.
- To provide Members with information on future work, opportunities and challenges.

#### **Executive Summary:**

Members have previously seen case studies evidencing the impact of the support provided by Cynnydd and the Wellbeing and Behaviour Service in the report *Inclusion Service Report on Overview of Support for Children and Young People with Additional learning Needs*. This report will provide more detail on the work undertaken by the services, including the impact, challenges and future work plan.

## **Background:**

### **Wellbeing & Behaviour Service Background.**

The service was established in June 2016 as a result of the *Review of Inclusion in Neath Port Talbot 2014* and the *Reorganisation of Provision for Pupils who receive their Education Otherwise than at School 2015*. The remit of the service is to provide support for schools, staff, learners and families with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). SEBD refers to the internalised or externalised behaviours that we may see in schools.

The service consists of workers from a range of backgrounds, but all with extensive experience of engaging with vulnerable children, young people and their families. The service's ethos is built on the importance of relationships and that all behaviour is communication. Understanding the reasons for behaviour is fundamental to identifying the appropriate strategy and intervention. The service has developed a school cluster model of working which provides schools with key links for support and allows for a more pro-active approach to supporting children and young people. This model of working ensures that the service have a secure understanding of the schools and communities they are working in. Support provided by the service includes:

- Direct intervention for learners both within the school setting and in the wider community; transition support for learners moving schools, support for transition in or out of specialist educational provision, transition from primary to secondary settings or transition for learners who have moved into the area and need supported integration.
- Covid-19 has resulted in the service responding innovatively in supporting caseloads both physically in school hubs where possible, as well as virtually through Microsoft Teams, phone calls and garden visits. Play kits have been provided to some caseload families with ideas on activities to encourage play at home, these kits are also then used in virtual sessions with members of the team.

- Project work takes place including Forest/Coastal School sessions, wellbeing workshops for pupils, school holiday provision and parent workshops on the impact of adverse childhood experiences. Forest School and outdoor learning sessions have continued with small groups following appropriate risk assessments within schools. Recent grant funding has allowed us to provide all schools with an outdoor learning kit and the service is providing example activities to support this resource.
- The NPT Young People's Mental Health Forum is now in its fourth year with an average attendance of 26 young people, representing all our secondary and specialist provision schools. The aim of the forum is to raise awareness of mental health issues within our schools and for the young people to drive change. Last year the young people held a very successful conference highlighting their work. Having this work led by the young people enables them to have a say in issues that are important to them and have their contributions effect positive change, which leads to more meaningful outcomes. Examples of this include the establishment of lunchtime emotional wellbeing support groups, designing awareness raising posters and artwork to be displayed around the schools, undertaking research on the impact of mental health on young people and working with cluster primaries to raise awareness.
- A Primary Therapy Service has been established by working collaboratively with the School Based Counselling Service (SBCS) to utilise grant funding to extend the offer of counselling to primary school pupils from year 1. SBC is currently funded as a statutory service from Year 6. This ensures identification and intervention takes place earlier, with the aim of securing support to prevent need escalating. The counselling offered is a developmentally appropriate therapy delivered through verbal and non-verbal mediums including play and creative art by qualified therapists. So far 24 pupils have been supported.

- Support for specialist provisions is provided by link workers from the service, they attend reviews, provide training and co-ordinate therapeutic intervention.
- Capacity building work in schools is a priority to ensure staff have the skills to be able to support learners with SEBD. The team work within primary and secondary schools looking at whole school approaches, strategies and suggested adjustments for learners. This includes delivering workshops, training and working alongside school staff to model effective ways of working to support sustainability (**Appendix 1**).
- Working with other services and organisations is an essential aspect of the service's work to ensure a holistic package of support is in place which involves all key stakeholders, including the learner's family. The service are key members of numerous groups and forums contributing to Early Intervention Panel which provides early help to families, Resource Panel which discusses children and young people who are edge of care and Contextual Risk Panel which supports young people engaged in risky behaviours.

### **Cynnydd Background**

Cynnydd is an operation under Specific Objective 2 of the 2014-2020 West Wales and the Valleys ESF Operational Programme, funding is due to finish on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022. This provision was set up across the ERW region comprising the local authorities and Further Education (FE) colleges in these areas, together with Careers Wales. The aim of the operation is to reduce the numbers of young people at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET), targeting those 'most at risk'. This is evidenced through an improvement in behaviour, attendance, attainment and progression into post 16 destinations

Within Neath Port Talbot Cynnydd provides Youth Engagement Worker support to young people aged 11-16. The workers are

embedded within all secondary schools, Ysgol Hendrefelin Special School and Cefn Saeson Secondary Education Nurture Centre (SENC). Initial funding covered a 0.5 worker per school (1.5 for YBB for the three schools that merged). Six schools have seen the value in the service and have invested funding to ensure they have a full time worker in their settings.

Cynnydd also provides funding for additional support within what was the Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS), now the Vulnerable Learners Service.

Cynnydd is very much an extension of the Wellbeing and Behaviour Service with support focussed on the most vulnerable learners, in particular those at risk of disengagement from mainstream education and/or at risk of exclusion.

Learner participation is key to any work undertaken ensuring a person centred and strengths based approach (**Appendix 2**). Any young people referred into Cynnydd develop their action plan with their worker, so that they are at the centre of decision making. This is supported by the completion of a self-efficacy questionnaire. The self-efficacy measure is based on research into the key emotional and social capabilities that young people need to succeed in life and it helps measure distance travelled. 96% of Cynnydd participants have shown an improvement in self-efficacy.

The service works with young people on identifying and resolving issues which may be contributing to their disengagement from mainstream education and also to enable them to raise their aspirations. Work to support this includes delivering a series of interventions such as workshops, school holiday provision, project work, one to one sessions, check in's, breakfast/lunch time clubs, qualifications and facilitating access to other services and opportunities. The workers liaise on a regular basis with parents and carers, ensuring they are updated on any work delivered and progress made (**Appendix 3**).

The service also provides post 16 transition support, this includes visits to providers, taster sessions, setting up bank accounts, applying for the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), interview support and workshops. Work placement opportunities are facilitated with Careers Wales.

Throughout the pandemic Cynnydd have continued to work in schools and support pupils virtually, working closely with their schools to ensure they are linking in with the school processes for supporting vulnerable learners.

### **Impact of Work**

In terms of whole service delivery, for both Cynnydd and the Wellbeing and Behaviour Service, the most significant outcome for the children and young people supported is the improvement in their own wellbeing and their skills related to social and emotional development. Both services use wellbeing and self-efficacy to measure this, we are also undertaking a piece of work with Swansea University to start to incorporate the Most Significant Change Technique which is a participatory monitoring and evaluation method, which will further enhance how impact is measured (**Appendix 4**).

### **Cynnydd Impact.**

Cynnydd have supported 708 young people. 322 have finished their intervention with Cynnydd, 165 of these left with a qualification and 91% of them are at reduced risk of becoming NEET, our target set within the business plan is 60%.

Cynnydd has been subject to external evaluation by Wavehill and OB3 research who were commissioned by the Wales European Funding Office (WEFO). Researchers have attended sessions with young people to discuss their experience of Cynnydd. Feedback from the evaluation was overwhelmingly positive with the following conclusion:

*'We've identified many examples of participants being able to identify the benefits of engaging with Cynnydd. The young people described how their involvement with the project had helped them work through personal problems, develop new skills, and reshape their relationship with school. Participants pointed to feeling happier in their day-to-day life as a result of having someone to listen to them, and had started to develop a more positive outlook towards school'* OB3 Research.

Cynnydd also featured on the BBC national news as part of a feature on Brexit to highlight the excellent projects that could be at risk of losing funding.

For Cynnydd the positive impact is in how they have become an essential support provision within Neath Port Talbot schools. The vision for Cynnydd workers was that they would be involved in all aspects of school life and be an integral part of school support teams. This was important to ensure early identification of need, providing workers with the opportunity to be proactive in providing support throughout the school day and for that support to feed into school systems. The impact for young people is that the Cynnydd workers have been able to build effective relationships as well as having the ability to be accessible and responsive to need. Feedback from head teachers and staff within schools reflect the value Cynnydd has added. It has been highlighted as a good example of partnership working between schools and the local authority as it ensures a joint vision and accountability for the work. An example of this is shown in **Appendix 5**, Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur have part funded a Cynnydd worker from the start of the project and having seen the benefits of the role they have provided additional funding to enable that Cynnydd worker to lead on support for vulnerable learners within the school.

### **Wellbeing and Behaviour Service Impact.**

The service has supported 383 individual pupils through referrals from mainstream schools. All learners demonstrated improved wellbeing through our wellbeing measures. Evaluations are completed with all stakeholders, schools, and other services.

Training is a particular strength of the team with evaluations being consistently positive. The training offered by the team provides some theory but focuses on how that theory can be implemented in schools to ensure it is relevant and useful for school staff. A particular focus is on trauma informed approaches and the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), attachment awareness and working with pupils with SEBD. All training has continued through the pandemic, Team Teach training has been delivered following risk assessments and a Relationship Based Play training containing demonstration videos has been developed. All secondary schools have recently been provided with a recorded training session on young people's emotional wellbeing for their return to school. The team are also qualified trainers in Youth Mental Health First Aid, every secondary school now has at least one staff member trained in it. One team member has recently trained to deliver Forest School leader training, this will allow schools to be offered the training at a significantly reduced cost and support the development of outdoor learning. Supporting schools to embed any training they have received is a key part of the wellbeing cluster link role.

School staff self-efficacy measures, similar to those used by the Educational Psychology service were developed just prior to the pandemic and will be used going forward to capture the impact of the team in building capacity within schools. This will add to the current information captured through evaluations.

The NPT Wellbeing and Behaviour Continuum has been developed by the service in partnership with schools, to ensure learners receive the right support and provision to meet their needs, first time every



time. The purpose of the Continuum is to ensure a more pro-active approach focusing on early identification and intervention.

The service is often the key link in signposting and co-ordinating the holistic support required for the children, young people and families referred. When discussing young people in Contextual Risk Panel one of the protective factors in most cases is the positive relationship between the young person and a member of Cynnydd or the Wellbeing and Behaviour Service. In Early Intervention Panel the service has been involved in screening referrals from an education perspective. The impact of this work has been positive in terms of streamlining panel processes, it has contributed to ensuring the right support is provided for families.

### **Future Work**

Future work identified by the service includes:

- Reducing exclusions by embedding a trauma informed approach across schools, in particular through the use of Pastoral Support Programmes (PSP), is a priority area for development. PSP's are put in place when learners are at risk of exclusion and are in need of longer-term intervention. The aim is that that PSP meetings will be conducted in a trauma informed way. A trauma informed approach is a relational approach, it has a neuro and biological basis and there is a wide range of research to show the impact of trauma on children and young people, including the work around ACE's. The standard response to behaviour of consequences for rule breakers is not effective for children and young people whose neurological development has been impacted on by ACE's/trauma. The service is working closely with Cefn Saeson Secondary School to pilot this approach, a primary school will also be identified and a conference will be held to share the outcomes and lessons learned with wider schools.
- A contextual safeguarding approach in schools will be piloted in Ysgol Hendrefelin Velindre and Theodore Road sites. This will

enable an improved approach and understanding to the impact of significant harm outside the family home. It will allow us to trial the tools available for support with contextual safeguarding and adapt for future use. It will also involve holding regular 'team around the school' meetings with key partners including South Wales Police, Children and Young People's Services and the Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service to ensure a co-ordinated, holistic, strengths based approach to supporting young people.

- An SEBD Provisions Group consisting of the head teachers and lead teachers of our primary and secondary provisions, has been established to develop work around SEBD support in mainstream schools and to ensure a consistent offer across our provisions. An additional remit of this group will be to review and update the Wellbeing and Behaviour Continuum in consultation with key stakeholders including children and young people.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

One of the challenges in supporting learners with SEBD is that there is no one intervention or strategy that will guarantee success, research and studies have shown that positive relationships are pivotal to any intervention and this takes time. Within Neath Port Talbot we have 941 learners who have SEBD as their prime area of need. Working with schools to build capacity and consistency is fundamental to providing those children and young people with better outcomes. To do this we need to ensure all services are working together to avoid duplication, with the recent grant funding from Welsh Government to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people there is a need to ensure co-ordination.

Cynnydd funding comes to an end in August 2022, and the potential impact of losing this service within our schools will be significant. The success of the service is a result of the skillset of the staff, they have built positive relationships with young people, their families and

school staff. There is a risk these workers will start leaving for more secure jobs in the very near future.

There are also opportunities to continue to improve our support for learners with SEBD. ALN Reform focuses on the further development of inclusive learning provision in our schools and embedding person centred practices. The new curriculum has health and wellbeing as an area of learning with equal status to literacy and maths. There is no better time than now to further develop how pupils with SEBD are supported and embed whole school approaches to wellbeing.

**Financial Impacts:**

No implications

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring / information purposes.

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

No implications.

**Workforce Impacts:**

No implications.

**Legal Impacts:**

No implications.

**Risk Management Impacts:**

No Implications.

**Consultation:**

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

**Recommendations:**

That Members note the content of this report and the information provided in the verbal update.

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1- A Collaborative Trauma Informed Approach.

Appendix 2 -Cynnydd case study.

Appendix 3- A School Journey.

Appendix 4- Most Significant Change.

Appendix 5- Embedded in school.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **A Collaborative Trauma Informed Approach**

XX is a looked after child and is a pupil at a primary school in Neath Port Talbot. They had a number of adverse childhood experiences in their life and this has caused them to view themselves, others and the world in a wholly negative way. This narrative has meant that they have significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties which left them facing a permanent exclusion or referral to a specialist provision, due to their unpredictable, dangerous and aggressive behaviours.

Whilst all this is understandable, given their past trauma and difficulties in forming relationships, it was proving to be hugely difficult to effectively and safely manage their behaviours in a mainstream school setting. To give some context to the extreme complexities of this child, they once had 5 care placements over the course of one school two week holiday period.

XX would frequently engage in behaviour what was dangerous to themselves (absconding, climbing and self-injuring) and others (becoming physically aggressive, hitting out, throwing things and damaging property). This made their behaviour almost unmanageable at school and staff had tried all manner of strategies, but none yielded any real success. XX was hugely self-directed and would not follow the class rules or the curriculum. Their relationships with others were negative and it was a case of 'hurt them before they hurt me'.

The Wellbeing Service supported school to develop a trauma informed support plan. This consisted of looking at 4 key areas of: Safety, Connection (relationships), Regulation (calming activities) and Rebuild (reflective practices and developing new coping strategies). A plan was devised, whereby trigger points were identified and key moments during the day where XX would usually become

dysregulated. A 'team around the XX' approach was created which meant that they had several members of staff who were 'emotionally supportive adults'. The service also looked to build on the strengths and interests of XX, which allowed them to develop their self-esteem and change their negative self-narrative. Lastly, XX would be slowly integrated into class so that they could start to access the curriculum and build peer relationships.

XX went from being educated on a 1:1 basis, in a classroom without peers and facing exclusion due to the danger they posed to others, to now being fully integrated into a mainstream school system. XX follows the full curriculum, has made a number of friends, accessing all aspects of the school day and most importantly they enjoy being there.

There are still days when XX needs additional support but the frequency has diminished tremendously. XX was able to stay in a mainstream school setting and work towards meeting their full potential. XX is also in a settled home placement now and their improved behaviour at school contributed to this.

## **Appendix 2- Cynnydd case study.**

### **Cynnydd case study**

#### **Why is the young person at risk of becoming NEET?**

I have worked with pupil X for about three years. X had experienced trauma as a baby and young child through violence and alcohol. When I first met X, they would sporadically not attend lessons, arrive late, hide in the toilet in school and generally could not make eye contact or communicate verbally with peers and adults alike.

#### **What interventions has the young person taken part in?**

I developed a plan to increase x's engagement with lessons, pupils and members of staff. I also included X's parent and developed regular contact. I tried various methods/activities to breakdown the reclusive behaviour and to increase X's social understanding and behaviour. One of the first activities I introduced was riding a bike. I chose this first to build a relationship, introduce a new skill and most importantly, work on their confidence. X wasn't able to ride a bike at first and found it difficult to even put on the bike helmet. X could not ride past people and would stop the bike, take off the helmet and hide their head until they passed. I persevered with this for about a year when, eventually, X could ride comfortably and also pass members of the public without stopping.

The second activity was quite simple, playing Guess Who. This forced X to ask questions and interact with myself or whoever I nominated to play. This helped dramatically in their communication skills and confidence. I also introduced team sports such as football and basketball to encourage participation. I also used the game of squash to maintain concentration in hand to eye co-ordination and also to bring out a controlled form of assertion.

X was also enrolled on to the Riverside programme (a Forest School type of education) which included a level 2 qualification in 'Work Related Education' and also the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. Whilst completing the Award, X took part in a variety of activities and challenges (both individual and team-based) within the woodland/riverside setting. These have included practical activities, such as tool use (e.g. secateurs, loppers, knives, axe, saw), knot tying, shelter building, fire making, nature awareness activities and team building games and challenges. X also took part in more focused learning activities - group discussions, measuring and planning and preparing for activities. X also demonstrated good knife skills and also skills in building and lighting fires by using a fire steel. Throughout the Award, X improved their team and individual work ethic and showed good resilience.

X has also attended two educational trips to Pen Y Fan, coasteering in the Gower, a multi activity day (including climbing, abseiling and zip wire), a practice expedition in the Brecon Beacons and an expedition in the Gower (both involved overnight camping).

**How has the young person progressed? What have they achieved?**

Over the three years X has improved dramatically socially and emotionally and attends a full timetable. X is now able to instigate a conversation with peers and adults and is comfortable in speaking publicly. X has also enrolled in Neath College with a view to take an apprenticeship the year after.



## **Appendix 3- A School Journey**

### **Cynnydd Case Study- School Journey Year 7- Year 11**

XX was referred by the school for Cynnydd support in December 2016. The initial referral was to support XX to improve their behaviour and help them to adapt to the secondary school environment. At this time XX was finding school extremely difficult, they were struggling with the academic side and their frustration with this was leading to them being disruptive in class, they were constantly getting sanctions for poor behaviour.

XX was going through a difficult time at home in their personal life. This cumulated in Social Services intervention and XX being placed in the care of another family member. Having to adapt to a different home life proved to be extremely challenging for XX and had a knock-on effect on their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Initial Cynnydd Intervention was put in place for one lesson a week. During these initial meetings the main purpose was to build a rapport with XX. Gaining their trust was of the utmost importance, so that XX felt confident that they could be open and honest about their feelings and emotions. Initially it was difficult to engage with XX who had already developed a tendency to be disruptive to get attention. However, by getting to know XX and what triggered them, along with understanding what they enjoyed doing, that mutually trusting relationship developed. XX was able to engage well in tasks given to them as part of their Cynnydd time. XX particularly enjoyed taking part in creative projects, completing practical tasks was what XX enjoyed most.

XX had the opportunity to attend a Fire Fighter for the day at Port Talbot Fire Station and also undertook a Fire Safety Awareness Course. Both were organised by Cynnydd.

XX took part in a range of Cynnydd school holiday activities to include mountain biking, go karting and coastal walks. This was set up for

Cynnydd pupils in order to be able to maintain contact with them during the long break. It has been recognised that during this time losing the structure of school can have a negative impact on pupil's wellbeing. XX really enjoyed the mountain biking and continued to engage in these school holiday activities throughout their years of Cynnydd support.

Although XX was engaging well with Cynnydd support they were still finding it difficult to engage in their mainstream lessons. And as a result, during Year 8 a mixed package was put in place where XX also attended a more specialist provision for part of their time. Cynnydd supported XX's transition, taking them to visit and then arranging taster days for them.

XX continued to attend their mainstream school one day a week and during this day they had Cynnydd intervention time. This Cynnydd intervention focused on personal identity, establishing a positive routine, self-discipline, good decision making, behaviour management and making positive life choices.

With the support of Cynnydd XX has continued to mature and improve upon their behaviour and as such they have now made the transition back to being at mainstream school on a full-time basis. XX started studying a level 2 BTEC qualification in year 9 supported by the Cynnydd Worker. XX always consistently works hard on this, discussing topics such as employment and managing own money. This helped XX to understand some of the current difficulties they were having.

XX has also been supported from the Cynnydd Careers Adviser to plan for their future after full time education. XX has decided that they would like to use their practical skills to look for an apprenticeship in construction. XX has been supported to put together a CV and has applied for an apprenticeship with a local brickwork company. XX has also been supported to apply for a place on a construction course at

College as a backup plan in case they don't secure an apprenticeship.

COVID-19 During lockdown

XX has continued to receive consistent support from Cynnydd and the Careers Adviser throughout lockdown restrictions. Contact has been made with regular text messages, phone calls and group video via Microsoft Teams. XX has engaged really well with this digital support. Cynnydd were also able to arrange for XX to attend the School Hwb for three days a week so that they could get support to complete the online learning tasks. From meeting XX in Year 7 and to continue to support them now in Year 11 the difference in them is amazing. XX is so positive and resilient with goals and ambitions.

Parent feedback- email received 8/3/2021

My name is XXX. I am XX's mum. XXXX has been my child's Cynnydd support worker since year 7 they are now in year 11. The very words that have come from them is that "I wouldn't have got through school without XXXX." It speaks for itself really. Over the years XX has faced many difficult challenges and the support they have received from XXXX is second to none. Money couldn't buy the time and effort they've invested into XX. Without them I'm not sure how XX would have managed their behaviour. They are a young person who's not only kept their feet on steady ground but have also found themselves a little side job which they wake up to and get to all by themselves. I am immensely proud of XX for all that they've been through and all that they stand for today. I owe that to XXXX (Cynnydd worker) without question. I hope they get to continue their support to help other families like ours. XX is also waiting for an interview in the coming weeks for an apprenticeship that is something I never thought possible,  
Thank you 😊

## **Appendix 4- Most Significant Change**

### **XX's brain and Mike's brain**

#### **Background**

XX is a 10 year old child. They live with their family and a pet cat. They have witnessed domestic violence and have spent some time living in a refuge. They like the X box, riding their bike, football, rugby and like to play outdoors with friends. XX has struggled with their anger and frustration in school and this has caused difficulties at home and in school. XX was getting frustrated and this led to angry outbursts in school especially at break and lunch times. This led to XX having their break times sanctioned where XX felt bored and unable to expend their energy leading to more frustration at home and school.

#### **What changed?**

I am not as angry anymore, I don't lie to my friends and I'm not as cheeky to my teachers and my parents. I don't feel bad like I used too.

#### **What was it like before?**

Before I used to get frustrated and angry all the time in school and at home. I was only allowed 5 minutes at the end of play and dinner times and I had to sit on the wall most of the time. I was bored and fed up and it made me angrier. I used to try and trip kids up when I sat on the wall and I was very bored. I had to stay in and do maths work in my class, even though I like maths I was fed up of it. I would be grounded at home because of school and I would be cheeky to my parents.

#### **What caused the change?**

I had help with my anger and frustration. It helped me have a better understanding what was going on in my brain. I call my other brain "Mike's brain".

**What was it like after?**

My behaviour has got better. I walk away to calm down or ask for help when I am feeling frustrated or angry. I can now play on the yard the whole play and lunch times where I can use my energy up, I don't get in trouble in my class. I feel happier because I don't have to stay in and do my maths on play and lunch times.

At home it is better too, I go out after school and play with my friends and mum and dad are having help off therapy to help us all at home. I have 2 really good friends who I see in school, play on Xbox and go out after school with. I am better friends with them and I don't argue anymore with them.

## **Appendix 5- Embedded in School- Cynnydd Worker Account.**

Having worked at Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur for four years I have been able to build strong professional relationships across the school. It can be seen that these relationships have given me a unique opportunity to attend weekly meetings to share vital information about some of the most at-risk students. The development of my role has significantly helped members of staff understand the importance of a holistic approach in aiding the emotional development of all students, specifically some more at risk young people at the school. As a result my role has developed to leading the school inclusion team. I have been able to organise and mentor a team of committed professionals who have regular, meaningful contact with students identified as most vulnerable of dis-engaging with education as a result of a wide range of wellbeing issues.

Having the ability to lead a team of wellbeing centred workers has enabled a larger number of young people to engage with and share their most complex issues. Having the consistency of regular non-formal contact in a formal setting is key to building sustained purposeful relationships. What I have learned most during my time at the school is that students who are at risk of harming themselves, falling out of education or expressing negative behaviour simply need a designated person at school who is readily available to listen, teach and advocate on their behalf. This essentially is the fundamental purpose of my role. Providing the school with someone who has the freedom and skills to encourage inclusion – however impossible the task may seem. Furthermore, my long-term vision for this role is to encourage a school-wide approach, training all staff to understand the importance of child centred approach to personal, emotional and academic development.

**Head teacher comment:**

Cynydd funding has allowed Ystalyfera to set up a provision within the school which became a key part of our daily support for not only vulnerable pupils, but the wider school community. In assessing the impact of this funding, we would do well, not only to focus on the change in life ambition, life chances and opportunities of our most vulnerable, but more so on the character of the school community and the message it sends to staff, pupils and their parents, on the importance of wellbeing and support. Stafell stwnsh, funded and partly supported through Cynydd has been built on a real vibrant ownership of partners who brought their limited resources to bear and make a real difference on the lives of young people. This has meant we can expand our provision, guidance and support to reach more pupils, but also to effect change on our teaching staff their wellbeing and ability, desire to help pupils within a wider context. I cannot underline strongly enough the importance of joint funding, accountability and communication to ensure this provision is not a bolt-on, an added dimension, but an integral part of the school's strategic direction and support for its pupils. As we face the most difficult challenge in our provision, this model of integrated, effective partnership support needs to be safeguarded for the future- Matthew Evans