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Integrated Care Fund – Greater Gwent Regional Partnership Board

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This document has been prepared for Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Newport City Council and Torfaen County Borough Council as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions.

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Anne Beegan, David Wilson and Nathan Couch under the direction of Matthew Mortlock.

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Introduction

- 1 The Integrated Care Fund (the fund) is allocated by the Welsh Government across Wales. The aim of the fund is to drive and enable integrated working between social services, health, housing and the third sector and independent providers to develop sustainable services.
- 2 Since establishing the fund for 2014-15, the Welsh Government has distributed £270 million across Wales between 2014-15 and 2018-19. In 2019-20, the fund is £115 million.
- 3 Initially focused on supporting older people, and particularly the frail elderly, the scope of the fund has extended over time to include other population groups and projects as set out in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1: the scope of the Integrated Care Fund



Exhibit source: Wales Audit Office

- 4 The Welsh Government distributes the fund across Wales to the seven Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs). The RPBs are responsible for overseeing and managing the use of the fund in their area.
- 5 On behalf of the Auditor General for Wales, we have examined whether the fund is being used effectively to deliver sustainable services that achieve better outcomes for service users. We have focused on whether the Welsh Government is effectively managing the fund to deliver against its intentions, and whether RPBs are demonstrating effective use of the fund. We also considered whether the projects supported by the fund are making a clear difference at a local level.

6 In July 2019, we published our national report **Integrated Care Fund**. We concluded that **the fund has had a positive impact, supporting improved partnership working and better integrated health and social care services. However, aspects of the way the fund has been managed at national, regional and project levels have limited its potential to date. There is little evidence of successful projects yet being mainstreamed and funded as part of public bodies' core service delivery.**



7 This supplementary report, which should be read in conjunction with the national report, sets out more detail about our findings for Greater Gwent Regional Partnership Board. It builds on feedback that we provided to the Regional Partnership Board following completion of our fieldwork.

8 The Greater Gwent RPB brings together the five local authorities in Gwent (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Newport City Council and Torfaen County Borough Council), Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, and representatives of the third sector and independent providers.



Part 1 summarises partnership working in relation to the fund



Part 2 summarises how the fund is used in the region



Part 3 summarises the regional governance arrangements for the fund



Part 4 summarises the overall impact of the fund in improving outcomes for service users

9 In undertaking this work, we have identified a number of areas that we think the Greater Gwent RPB could improve upon at a regional level. These are set out throughout this report. We have not made specific recommendations for the RPB; however, the national report contains a number of recommendations which apply to all RPBs.

10 We have also identified examples of practice from across Wales which the Greater Gwent RPB can learn from.

11 Finally, we have also identified some key questions that Board members of Health Boards and scrutiny members of local authorities could explore with lead officers responsible for the fund to maintain a close handle on how the fund continues to be used across the region.



Detailed report

Partnership working

- 12 Our national report has identified that **the fund has helped to bring organisations together to plan and provide services**. Health and social care partnerships have been around for some time but integrated working prior to the fund was limited. We found that the fund has provided the impetus for regional partners to develop integrated services and to move to joint funding arrangements in the context of wider policy and legislation.
- 13 In Greater Gwent, members recognised that the RPB has been on an improvement journey since being established in 2016. Partners have been open to using core and other funding such as winter pressure monies to support Integrated Care Fund projects, but this has taken some time to put in place. Following tensions in the early years of the partnership, the RPB has since implemented a memorandum of understanding which sets out roles and responsibilities of each of the partners. This has helped strengthen the partnership working.
- 14 As part of our survey of RPB members, we asked:
- whether the RPB facilitates good partnership working; and
 - whether the partner organisations demonstrate a commitment to partnership working.
- 15 The responses we received from Greater Gwent were slightly less positive than the all-Wales average but were still generally positive.
- 16 As part of our surveys of RPB members and project leads, we also asked about the impact of the fund on partnership working. The responses we received from Greater Gwent RPB confirmed positive views about the impact that the fund has had on strengthening partnership working ([Exhibit 2](#)). The full regional responses to the surveys can be found in [Appendix 1](#), along with the response rates.

Exhibit 2: respondents to our surveys in Greater Gwent told us that...

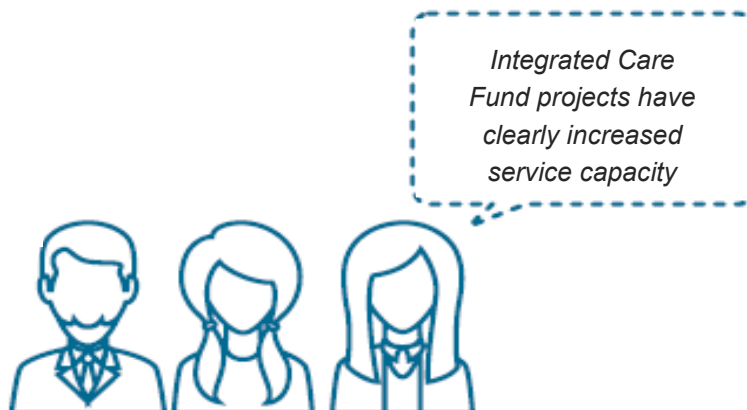


Exhibit source: Wales Audit Office surveys of RPB members and project leads



Detailed report

Use of the fund

17 Our national report identified that aspects of the way funding has been allocated by the Welsh Government and used by regional partners have limited the potential of the fund to date. The report highlighted that Regional Partnership Boards can find it difficult to balance local population needs with the Welsh Government's indicative allocations for target groups. It also highlights that RPBs use the fund in different ways, not all of which support a regional focus. We found that the approaches to the use of the fund vary between the regions, with limited sharing and learning of the approaches used across Wales.

Exhibit 3: approaches applied to the fund 2014-18

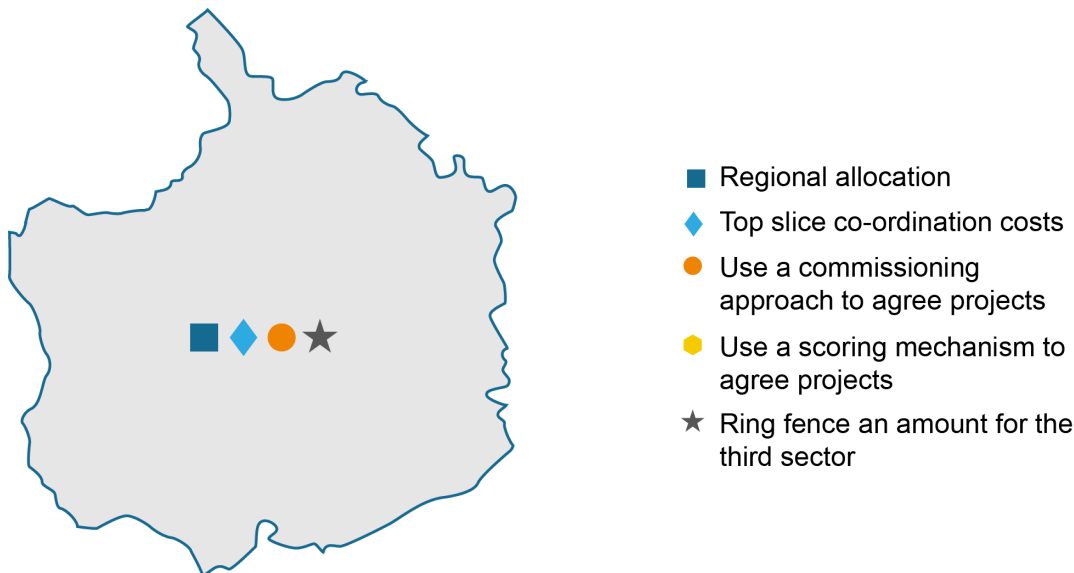


Exhibit source: Wales Audit Office

18 In Greater Gwent, the fund is allocated on a regional basis. An amount of funding is top-sliced to fund co-ordination and project management roles. Recognising the lack of third sector led projects over previous years, the Greater Gwent RPB has also ring-fenced a proportion of the fund for the third sector to bid for since 2018-19. However, third sector representatives told us they felt they have insufficient access to the fund and that they benefit predominantly when spending on other projects slip.

- 19 Some RPBs recently began allocating the fund by commissioning thematic groups to identify a programme of work that the fund can support, rather than openly seeking bids from member organisations. The Greater Gwent RPB has taken this approach. The RPB through its Strategic Partnership Board develop business cases for the use of the fund. Although there is no scoring mechanism in place, we observed good discussion in relation to the approval of projects. We found that projects put forward aligned with partners' corporate objectives on prevention and integration. In contrast to other RPBs, there was also clear evidence that projects needed to link to the strategic objectives of the RPB and local wellbeing objectives to support implementation of the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**.
- 20 Our work also highlights that the RPBs have developed varying approaches for managing underspends. The effective management of underspends remains an issue, but the most advanced process is within the West Wales RPB where a reserve list of projects is kept which can be supported if surplus funds become available. The Greater Gwent RPB also invites short notice bids from the third sector for projects which can be delivered in a short timescale, as well as agreeing upfront the use of capital underspend to support the Gwent Integrated Equipment Store.

Areas for improvement

- Look for ways to ensure fair access to the Integrated Care Fund for the third sector





Detailed report

Governance arrangements

- 21 Our national report has identified that governance arrangements for the fund need to be further developed to strengthen central oversight and ensure greater consistency across the regions. The report highlights that RPBs frequently delegate responsibility for the fund to a sub-group and there is limited scrutiny of the use of the fund by health boards and local authorities. The report also identifies that the rigour of project management varies between RPBs and organisations, and few projects involve services users at the outset.
- 22 In the Greater Gwent RPB, the fund is delegated to the Strategic Partnership Board and the Regional Leadership Group, which reports to the RPB. The RPB mainly endorses allocations and provides oversight of financial performance and impact, including sign-off of monitoring returns.
- 23 All the RPBs have representation from the statutory bodies, although representation from housing prior to the 2018 amendment to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 was variable. Greater Gwent, unlike other regions, have sufficient financial representation but we highlighted to the RPB the need to consider if it has sufficient housing representation. Due to the number of local authorities in the region, the size of the Greater Gwent RPB membership can create challenges in decision-making, discussions and gaining consensus, but we found that health and local authority partners have been engaged effectively. Although carer and service user representatives do not attend the RPB meetings themselves, we noted some good practice as their views are represented by members from the Regional Citizen Panel.
- 24 Greater Gwent RPB members do not consistently communicate discussions back to their own organisations, for example, on the allocation and impact that the fund is having within the region.
- 25 The Greater Gwent RPB has taken some steps to link its work with local Public Service Boards (PSBs) by making links between the Area and Wellbeing Plans. However, we found that relationships between the RPB and the PSBs are not well developed. We found scope to further clarify and improve links between the RPB and the five PSBs within the Greater Gwent area, by:
- identifying how the PSBs link to the Greater Gwent RPB structure;
 - having consistent membership between the PSBs and the Greater Gwent RPB; and
 - establishing a more formal link between the PSBs and the Greater Gwent RPB.
- 26 At a project level, we found both strengths and weaknesses in the management of funded projects ([Exhibit 4](#)).

Exhibit 4: strengths and weaknesses in management of projects

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Good communication between the Integrated Care Fund regional leads and project leads✓ A requirement for project leads to work and report against agreed goals targets✓ Project leads want to engage service users when planning projects✓ Risk management of projects✓ Locally there appear to be generally good oversight arrangements for funded projects, based on adopting arrangements from the host organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Not all projects are supported by a project plan, particularly for projects rolled-forward from previous years and projects in receipt of underspend✗ Project management methods vary✗ Not clear whether project risks are feeding into organisational risk monitoring✗ Risk management within projects is not applied consistently

Exhibit source: Wales Audit Office fieldwork

- 27 In common with many other regions, Greater Gwent RPB is consistently unable to collate, scrutinise and sign-off project monitoring information by the tight deadline required by the Welsh Government. Sign-off often takes place before the RPB has been able to scrutinise monitoring returns.

Areas for improvement



- Make more effective links with all five Public Service Boards
- Strengthen project management arrangements across all Integrated Care Fund projects
- Develop mechanisms for reporting back to individual organisations in a more consistent way



Detailed report

Outcomes for service users

- 28 Our national report has identified that despite positive examples, the overall impact of the fund in improving outcomes for service users remains unclear, with little evidence of successful projects yet being mainstreamed. The report highlights that RPBs identify a range of positive case studies, but there is little evidence that successful projects have yet been mainstreamed and funded as part of public bodies' core service delivery.
- 29 Greater Gwent RPB members felt strongly that the fund is used to fund the right projects, and that the focus is on outcomes when overseeing the use of the fund. The Greater Gwent regional partners are getting better at capturing performance data for the projects, but acknowledge that capturing consistent and comparable outcomes, rather than output data remains a challenge.
- 30 Greater Gwent RPB members continue to struggle to successfully share information, which makes demonstrating impact and outcomes from a multi-agency view very difficult. Project leads in Greater Gwent, as in other regions, are increasingly attempting to demonstrate the impact of their projects through case studies.
- 31 In common with other RPBs, in Greater Gwent there are few examples of projects being mainstreamed due to financial and savings pressures. Project leads find it particularly difficult to quantify financial savings due to the preventative nature of projects. Such projects aim to manage demand and improve services and it is difficult to quantify these outcomes as a financial saving. A number of projects do not have a clear exit strategy should the funding cease, although an evaluation of all projects in Greater Gwent has been undertaken to better understand what projects are achieving. Many projects are continuously rolled forward from previous years, limiting opportunities to use the fund to develop new and innovative projects. While still reliant on the fund, a number of the projects are now considered as part of core services.

Exhibit 5: challenges identified with mainstreaming projects through our project lead survey in Gwent

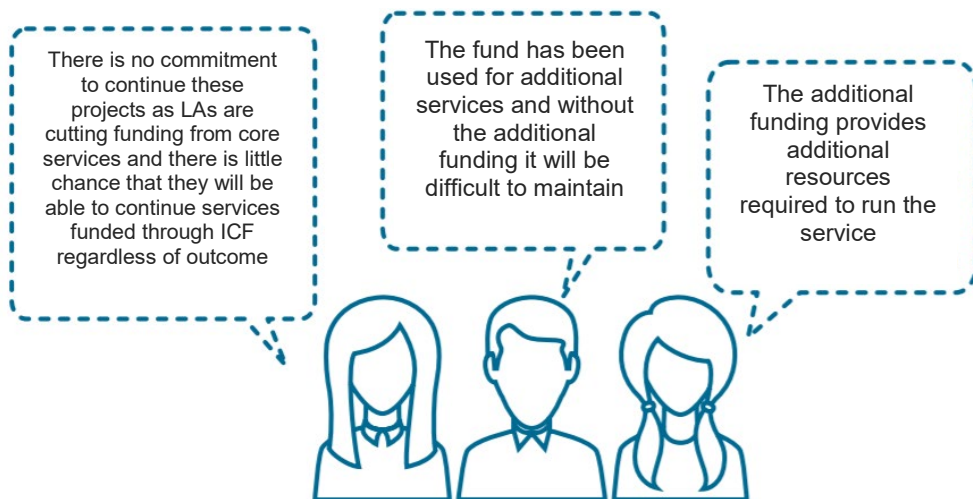


Exhibit source: Wales Audit Office survey of project leads

32 The Greater Gwent RPB acknowledged it could do more in terms of sharing learning and good practice, including sharing learning from similar projects run in the different county areas across the RPB. We found that the RPB has underdeveloped ways to share learning within the region and between other regions, which risks missing opportunities to improve projects and deliver them more efficiently.

Areas for improvement














- Capture consistent outcomes data across projects
- Develop exit strategies for all Integrated Care Fund projects
- Learn from good practice within the region and across other regions

Appendix 1

Key findings from our surveys of RPB members and project leads














Our survey of Greater Gwent RPB members¹² identified that

		Across Wales...
	13 out of 14 agreed that partner organisations demonstrate a commitment to partnership working	84%
	8 out of 13 agreed that there were appropriate links with other regional groups and forums, such as Public Service Boards, to ensure that there were no overlaps or gaps in responding to legislative requirements	56%
	8 out of 14 agreed that the ring fencing of the fund for the national initiatives was helpful	53%
	4 out of 14 agreed that the templates provided by the Welsh Government for quarterly reporting capture the right information	34%
	10 out of 14 agreed that there was helpful ongoing communication between the RPBs and the Welsh Government to understand any changes to the fund	63%
	12 out of 14 agreed that proposals put forward for the RPB to approve are generally good quality	80%
	8 out of 14 agreed that the RPB sets enough time aside for effective scrutiny of the delivery of the projects supported by the fund	57%
	12 out of 14 agreed that there is a clear process for monitoring and managing project underspends and overspends within the RPB structure	72%
	7 out of 14 agreed that the RPB and its sub-group focus on outcomes when scrutinising the projects	69%
	7 out of 13 agreed that the fund is funding the right projects	64%
	12 out of 14 agreed that the projects funded were making a difference to service users	87%

¹ 14 of the 23 (61%) RPB members invited to take part in our RPB member survey responded.

² Not all members responding answered every question.

Our survey of project leads³ across Greater Gwent identified that

		Across Wales...
	9 out of 10 (90%) identified that their project(s) had received funding in previous years	71%
	6 out of 10 (60%) identified that their project(s) received additional funding as well as the Integrated Care Fund	48%
	9 out of 10 (90%) identified that their project(s) clearly linked to national strategic priorities, including the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act	92%
	5 out of 10 (50%) identified that there was a risk management framework for their project(s)	58%
	8 out of 10 (80%) identified that they had received appropriate guidance from managers to support them in delivering the project(s)	89%
	0 out of 10 (0%) identified that they were required to include an exit strategy as part of their project plans	40%
	8 out of 10 (80%) identified that there was a single point of accountability for delivery of the project(s)	78%
	2 out of 10 (20%) identified that their project(s) started on time	32%
	1 out of 10 (10%) identified that there was a mechanism to measure the financial benefits of the project(s)	40%
	8 out of 10 (80%) identified that they had been able to demonstrate the impact of the project(s)	60%
	8 out of 10 (80%) identified that the fund is helping to provide sustainable and improved services in their region	66%
	4 out of 9 identified that there were challenges in mainstreaming the project(s)	75%
	10 out of 10 (100%) identified that the project(s) was making a difference to service users	91%

³ Only 10 of the 40 (25%) project leads invited to take part in our project lead survey responded.

Appendix 2

Examples of notable practice

In undertaking our work, we have identified a number of areas of practice which other RPB areas could learn from.

Across the **Cwm Taf Morgannwg** regional footprint, development work has been undertaken between the Regional Partnership Board and the Cwm Taf Public Service Board to identify areas of crossover between the partnerships, and to agree the responsibility of each. To strengthen these arrangements, a representative from the RPB sits on the PSB as a non-voting member and vice versa, ensuring communication between the partnerships.

The **West Wales** Regional Partnership Board has developed a strategic approach to using underspend. When allocating money to new projects at the beginning of the financial year, the unsuccessful projects are ranked using the same scoring mechanism as the successful projects. The highest scoring projects are identified and agreed as to be delivered via any underspend that occurs. This approach means that the regional partnership board is not trying to use up underspend at the end of the year on short term interventions.

Following an internal review, the **Cardiff and Vale** Regional Partnership Board has developed a performance dashboard to monitor the Integrated Care Fund. The dashboard supports quarterly reporting of planned and actual levels of activity, impact and outcomes being achieved by the fund using a RAG rated system to visually identify projects that are off track.

In the **Greater Gwent** Regional Partnership Board, roles and responsibilities of the RPB and its subgroups are set out in a memorandum of understanding. Signed by all partners, the document sets out their shared intention to work together in a spirit of co-operation for the benefit of residents living in Gwent. The memorandum includes a conflict resolution process which has supported open and honest discussions between partners should conflict arise.

These examples are not exhaustive. Further examples can be found in the materials produced following our recent Good Practice Exchange webinars [**Key Issues for Regional Partnership Boards**](#)

Appendix 3

Key questions for Board and scrutiny members

To enable Board members of Health Boards and scrutiny members of local authorities to maintain a close handle on how the fund is used across the region, we have identified some examples of questions that could be used with lead officers responsible for the fund and lead officers who are members on the RPB.

Partnership working

- Is the organisation challenging existing working practices and actively seeking new opportunities through the fund to work in partnership with its regional partners?
- Is the organisation considering options to utilise funding more effectively, for example by combining various funding streams, where appropriate, to support services to achieve greater impact?

Use of the fund

- Is the organisation through its representatives on the RPB effectively engaging with relevant stakeholders, including the public, to inform its plans for the use of the fund?
- Is the organisation through its representatives on the RPB ensuring third sector organisations are equal partners and have fair access to the Integrated Care Fund at the beginning of the financial year and in-year?
- Is the organisation through its representatives on the RPB ensuring the approach to assessing, prioritising and approving services in receipt of the Integrated Care Fund is robust?
- Is the organisation through its representative on the RPB ensuring that the fund is used in a way that maximises value for money (for example, by reducing administrative costs)?
- Is there an effective approach to managing fund underspends in-year?

Governance arrangements

- Is there a mechanism in place to ensure the organisation is regularly kept up-to-date about the work of the RPB and its sub-groups in relation to the fund?
- Is there a robust risk management framework in place for the services funded through the Integrated Care Fund, and who would be responsible for any unforeseen issues with projects?
- How does the organisation and the RPB get assurance that the approved Integrated Care Fund projects are managed effectively and that the reporting of approved projects is accurate?

Outcomes for service users

- Is the organisation working with its RPB partners to evaluate what difference funded initiatives have made in terms of outcomes for the regional population?
- Is the organisation working in partnership with its RPB partners to demonstrate outcomes from a multi-agency view?
- Are there services continually funded through the Integrated Care Fund which would significantly impact on the organisation if they were to cease ie those now considered core services?
- Is the organisation mainstreaming Integrated Care Fund projects that have demonstrated a positive impact?
- Is the organisation supporting the RPB to facilitate shared learning within the region to enable continuous improvement of project development and management, and the roll-out of successful localised projects?
- Is the organisation supporting the RPB to engage with other regions to share information and learn lessons from other examples and experiences of the Integrated Care Fund?

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