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# Integrated Care Fund – Powys Regional Partnership Board

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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, Fflur Jones and Allison Rees 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 Powys Regional Partnership Board. It builds on feedback that we provided to the Regional Partnership Board following completion of our fieldwork.

8 The RPB brings together the Powys County Council, Powys Teaching 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

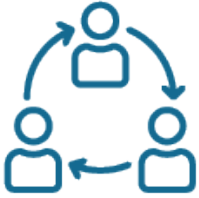


**Part 4** summarises the overall impact of the fund in improving outcomes for service users

9 In undertaking this work, we have identified a number of areas that we think Powys 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 Powys 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 Powys, members recognised that the RPB has been on an improvement journey since being established in 2016, though the previous partnership board in Powys had established a good foundation. We found generally good partnership working between the Health Board, Council and third sector.
- 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 Powys were slightly less positive than the all-Wales average in terms of whether the RPB facilitates good partnership working. The responses were very positive in terms of whether partner organisations demonstrate a commitment to partnership working.
- 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 Powys RPB generally confirmed positive views about the impact that the fund has had on strengthening partnership working. The full regional responses to the surveys can be found in [Appendix 1](#), along with the response rates.



## 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 2: approaches applied to the fund 2014-18

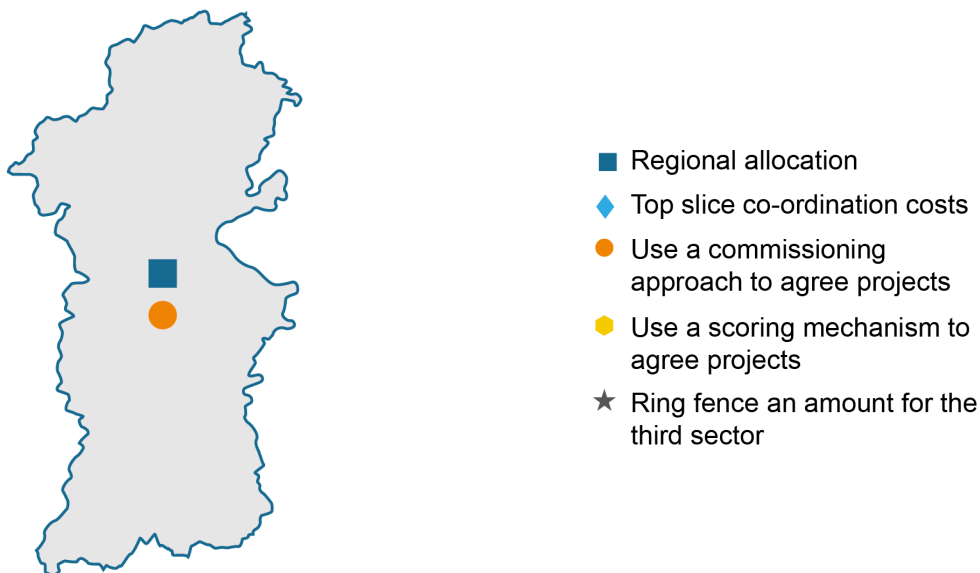


Exhibit source: Wales Audit Office

18 Prior to 2018-19, Powys RPB had not top-sliced its allocation of the fund for co-ordination and project management roles. In 2018-19, Powys began to top-slice a small amount to support co-ordination of the fund across the region. In contrast to some other regions, Powys RPB does not ring-fence a proportion of their allocation for the third sector to bid for specifically. However, in Powys the third sector has historically received a significant proportion of the region's allocation, co-ordinated by the Powys Association for Voluntary Organisations (PAVO).

- 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. Powys RPB is one of these regions. Its approach is to use the RPB’s Area Plan and joint Health and Care Strategy<sup>1</sup> as a driving force for determining the use of its allocation of the fund. It provides allocations to the thematic sub-groups of the RPB eg age well (older people), who determine how to best use the fund to support the area plan’s priorities for that group. Projects put forward broadly aligned with partners’ corporate objectives on prevention and integration although we found no requirement 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. Powys RPB recognise that their approach to managing underspends has not been effective in previous years, sometimes made worse by the fact not all of the fund was committed within revenue investment plans to begin with. At the time of our review, Powys RPB were attempting to address this through greater monitoring responsibilities for overspends by RPB sub-groups and increased RPB oversight.

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## Areas for improvement



- Increase transparency of future allocations to thematic groups

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- Ensure there is no unallocated funding within future revenue investment plans

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- Ensure underspends are allocated efficiently and effectively in-year

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<sup>1</sup> The Health and Care Strategy, published in June 2017, is the integrated plan developed between Powys Council, Powys Teaching Health Board and key partners, including the public.





## 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 service users at the outset.
- 22 In the Powys RPB, from 2018-19 the fund has been delegated to the cross-cutting group, which reports to the RPB. The cross-cutting group allocates the fund to the four thematic groups in place: 'Start Well', 'Live Well', 'Live Well Mental Health' and 'Age Well'. Prior to 2018, a steering group was responsible for recommending decisions regarding the fund, but this group lacked consistent meetings and a formal Terms of Reference.
- 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. Powys RPB had housing representation prior to this amendment. Uniquely, Powys has chosen to increase its carer and service user representation, who are supported by the RPB and PAVO. However, in common with most regions, carer and service user representatives identify that their contributions to decisions can often be limited because discussions and decisions are often taking place outside of the RPB meetings and without their involvement.
- 24 Powys 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 Powys RPB has made a conscious effort to work with its local Public Service Board (PSB) and ensure linkage between the work of both Boards. For example, it has secured common membership in some instances, and has mapped the roles of both Boards to reduce the risks of gaps or duplication of work. According to our survey, Powys RPB members were the most positive across Wales when asked about the links between the RPB and PSB.
- 26 At a project level, we found both strengths and weaknesses in the management of funded projects ([Exhibit 3](#)).

### Exhibit 3: Strengths and weaknesses in management of projects

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Locally there appear to be generally good oversight arrangements for funded projects, based on adopting arrangements from the host organisation</li><li>✓ A requirement for project leads to work and report against agreed goals targets</li><li>✓ Project leads want to engage service users when planning projects</li><li>✓ Risk register for individual projects</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ Not all projects are supported by a project plan, particularly for projects rolled forward from previous years and projects in receipt of underspend</li><li>✗ Not clear whether project risks are feeding into organisational risk monitoring and there is no risk register for the programme</li></ul>

Exhibit source: Wales Audit Office fieldwork

- 27 In common with many other regions, Powys 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



- Develop mechanisms for reporting back to individual organisations in a more consistent way
- Ensure all projects are supported by a project plan
- Seek assurance that risks relating to funded projects are identified and managed effectively at a programme level



## 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 Powys 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 Powys regional partners are getting better at capturing performance data for the projects and Welsh Government feedback letters show that Powys have improved in completing monitoring returns to demonstrate the impact of the fund in the region. However, Powys RPB acknowledge that capturing consistent and comparable outcomes, rather than output data remains a challenge. Project leads are increasingly attempting to demonstrate the impact of projects through case studies, including through the use of video stories.
- 30 In common with other RPBs, in Powys 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. Routine evaluation of projects is not in place although some evaluation does take place at a local level on an ad hoc basis. 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 4: challenges identified with mainstreaming projects through our project lead survey in Powys



Exhibit source: Wales Audit Office survey of project leads

- 31 Powys RPB has undertaken limited shared learning within the region as well as between itself and other regions. This creates a risk of missed opportunities to improve projects and deliver them more efficiently and effectively. Powys RPB acknowledged that they should do more in terms of sharing learning and good practices, including sharing learning from similar projects run in the different areas across the RPB.

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**Areas for improvement**














- Develop exit strategies for all Integrated Care Fund projects
  - Explore further opportunities to learn from good practice within Powys and in other regions
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# Appendix 1

## Key findings from our surveys of RPB members and project leads














Our survey of Powys RPB members<sup>23</sup> identified that

		Across Wales...
	12 out of 13 agreed that partner organisations demonstrate a commitment to partnership working	84%
	9 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%
	7 out of 11 agreed that the ring fencing of the fund for the national initiatives was helpful	53%
	2 out of 9 agreed that the templates provided by the Welsh Government for quarterly reporting captures the right information	34%
	6 out of 10 agreed that there was helpful ongoing communication between the RPBs and the Welsh Government to understand any changes to the fund	63%
	8 out of 14 agreed that proposals put forward for the RPB to approve are generally good quality	80%
	3 out of 12 agreed that the RPB sets enough time aside for effective scrutiny of the delivery of the projects supported by the fund	57%
	7 out of 12 agreed that there is a clear process for monitoring and managing project underspends and overspends within the RPB structure	72%
	9 out of 12 agreed that the RPB and its sub-group focuses on outcomes when scrutinising the projects	69%
	11 out of 14 agreed that the fund is funding the right projects	64%
	12 out of 13 agreed that the projects funded were making a difference to service users	87%

<sup>2</sup> 14 of the 20 (70%) RPB members invited to take part in our RPB member survey responded.

<sup>3</sup> Not all members responding answered every question.

Our survey of project leads<sup>4</sup> across Powys identified that

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

<sup>4</sup> Only five of the 21 (24%) 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 an 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**' which are available to view on our website [audit.wales](https://www.audit.wales)

# 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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