

Summary of discussion & action points from Talybont Forum 14/11/24

GROUP ON EDUCATION

There was a wide-ranging discussion about their sense of the educational offer in Powys. The group included parents, grandparents and those without children and also a young person who is still studying at college level. The overriding theme was a sense that the educational offer had been diminished over time. They were concerned about a lack or scaling back of services such as careers services, additional learning needs support, youth services and activities, range of subjects such as Arts and Sciences.

- Careers/employment: sense from younger person in group and others that careers advice/work experience is much less available. Desire to see more advice on this front and more opportunities for work experience. Sense there are no pathways for locally-needed skills e.g. dentistry/trades. Desire to see more links between local employers and schools.
- ALN/Additional needs/support services: One parent in particular had direct experience and the younger person supported her view, support is very hard to access and takes an incredibly long time – for ALN but also support for mental health issues or social issues. This can have a long-term negative impact on children and families.
- Youth services/activities: a feeling that these are either tightly rationed or absent e.g. no youth clubs/activities for young people outside schools or colleges so these need to do more to provide them.
- Range of subjects: On this issue there was a sense that smaller schools struggle to provide the full range of subjects, but also that even larger schools now offered less choice.

Several participants felt the education available was part of a downward spiral, without good schools it will be hard for those growing up in Powys to thrive or to attract new people with school age children to move to the area. Some young people go out of Powys to e.g. Hereford/Ebbw Vale to get more wide-ranging and 'modern' educational offer.

KEY POINTS:

- Any ways to address low funding? Can Powys address how funding is calculated? Risk of 'self-defeating' cycle with education as part of downward cycle in area. Needs priority to maintain population/ employment. Powys should look to neighbouring areas doing better for ideas. E.g. Merthyr school improvement.
- Address narrowing of offer/gaps in offer in terms of ranges of subjects and full range of experiences like work experience. School leadership is key.
- ALN support and support for young people needs improving in terms of waits and access. Mental health services and ALN waiting lists need to be reduced.
- Better links between high school/employees/further training e.g.
 - Careers service as ongoing offer for all ages. Person advice available with schools as base. Better and quicker ALN support and support for wellbeing (avoid negative impacts with large long term problems)

Action ;

It is vital that the Community Council is actively engaged with young people if the Council is to be aware of these issues and hence able to better represent them . Should there be an attempt by the Community Council to set up regular meetings with local young people .

More work experience and skills exchanges at local level using local people/skills/ business for re-training of all ages.