



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Renewed Strategic Partnership Agreement between the Welsh Government and local government in Wales

September 2026

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Foreword

The people of Wales want and deserve their national and local governments to maintain a constructive relationship and align our efforts to deliver services which meet their fundamental needs and support their aspirations.

The renewal of this Strategic Partnership Agreement (the Agreement) follows the formation of a new Welsh Government and reflects a shared commitment to strengthening the trusted partnership between the Welsh Government and local government. This partnership will be vital in driving the practical action and measurable outcomes needed to deliver lasting change, longer-term reform and improved lives across Wales, in line with the Welsh Government's six key commitments.

Renewal of the Agreement provides an opportunity to reaffirm the values that underpin our relationship, refresh our shared understanding of how we will work together, and build on the strong foundations established through the Agreement to date. At the same time, it recognises that while governments and leadership may change, our collective responsibility to improve outcomes for the people of Wales endures.

During the first year of embedding the Agreement its value and potential have been recognised by both partners, and we are keen to build on that success by together recommitting to the principles, purpose, ethos, and spirit of the Agreement. The Agreement continues to provide a framework for better and earlier engagement ahead of decisions affecting the vital services we deliver, ensuring we can make those decisions more effectively.

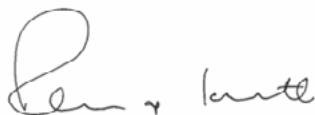
This Agreement also commits national and local government to stand up for Wales in the context of UK Government policy, speaking with a collective voice to benefit our people and communities.

And ultimately, the Agreement gives us a practical framework for responding to the challenges Wales faces by focusing our efforts where they can make the greatest difference. We look forward to moving ahead with a renewed Agreement and a close, effective partnership for the people of Wales.

Signed on behalf of the Welsh Government

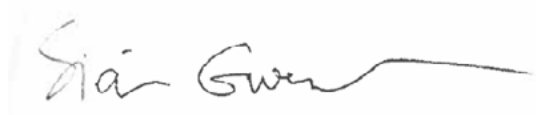
Rhun ap Iorwerth MS

First Minister of Wales



Siân Gwenllïan MS

Cabinet Minister for Local Government,
Housing and Planning



Signed on behalf of local government

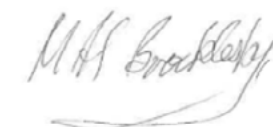
Cllr Anthony Hunt

WLGA Leader/Group Leader – Labour



Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby

WLGA Llywydd



Part One

Strategic Partnership Agreement between the Welsh Government and local government



Chapter One

Introduction

Renewal of the Agreement

The commitments set out in this Agreement impact across government. This renewed version of the Agreement, published in September 2026, builds on the success of the original Agreement and reflects the commitment of both the new Welsh Government and local government to deepen and strengthen the relationship.

Renewing Part 1 of the Agreement

This renewed version of the Agreement is focused on Part 1 of the original Agreement only. This will reassert our joint commitment to working in trusted partnership and the underpinning principles of that, including a series of collective commitments and a shared focus on fair funding a reduction in bureaucracy and on sector-led improvement.

Early and meaningful engagement and involvement will continue to be key to how we work together.

Renewing Part 2 of the Agreement

In the autumn of 2026, a renewed Part 2 of the Agreement will be co-developed in partnership. This will help ensure the people of Wales see the real-life benefits of relevant shared ambitions aligned with the new Welsh Government's Programme for Government to be delivered in collaboration with local government.

We are committed to transparency and accountability in monitoring our joint progress, relying on evidence and data to help articulate the real-world impact of our progress.

Setting the Context

The seven well-being goals in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the WFG Act) are the foundation for our partnership and the whole of the Welsh public service. Wales is the only nation in the world to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the well-being of future generations in law. Public services must put the five ways of working at the heart of everything we do – collaboration, integration, involvement, long-term and prevention¹.

This Agreement is forged in those five ways of working and underlines the importance to Wales of an effective working relationship between the Welsh Government and local government.

In line with the WFG Act, we are committed to improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. This includes our shared commitment to promoting and upholding the rights, wellbeing and opportunities of all people in Wales, including children and young people, older people and future generations. We recognise the importance of ensuring that diverse voices are heard and respected, and that our partnership reflects the needs and aspirations of the people and communities we serve. These principles help shape the way we work together and underpin this Agreement.

The Agreement² is a significant milestone for the Welsh public service. It impacts on almost all working relationships across the wider public and third sectors. Experience shows that when national and local government are working in trusted partnership, there is a strong foundation for the whole Welsh public service to become united as ‘One Welsh Public Service’.

This Agreement will therefore:

- define our respective roles and responsibilities
- set out agreed principles for trusted partnership
- set out our collective commitments
- set out principles for funding, reducing bureaucracy and improvement
- set out the framework for working together in trusted partnership
- explain how this Agreement will make a difference to people in Wales.

¹ [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015: the essentials \[HTML\] – GOV.WALES](#)

² This Agreement does not include the wider local government family, town and community councils, the Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) or the National Park Authorities (NPAs). There are separate agreements in place with them which can be reviewed in light of this Agreement.

Chapter Two

Working in Trusted Partnership

Roles and responsibilities

We respect and value each other's democratic mandate. Members of the Welsh Government and councils are elected by the people of Wales to work to benefit the communities we serve. But the responsibilities of those two mandates differ and are separate.

We respect the separate responsibilities of national and local government in Wales and of regional governance arrangements. We believe in subsidiarity and accountability, so decisions are made by the elected representatives who are best placed to make them.

It is the Welsh Government's responsibility to set the legislative framework and national policy environment across the range of devolved areas to enable local government to determine how best to serve its communities. It is responsible through national elections to the people of Wales.

Local government is responsible for developing, planning and providing a wide range of statutory and discretionary services. It leads local and regional partnerships, working with other public service bodies and the third sector, and provides strong strategic democratic leadership for its communities through these mechanisms. It is responsible to its local electorate for the decisions it makes.

However, governance is complex, and these two levels of accountability are not mutually exclusive, rather they can reinforce and strengthen one another if they operate effectively. They are spheres, rather than tiers, of democratic governance in Wales.

As well as respecting each other's roles and responsibilities, we will also have shared ambitions and recognise that sometimes

a regional geography will provide the best mechanism to deliver those ambitions. Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) have been established as democratic decision-making bodies for regional working in specific areas.

The four CJCs exercise functions relating to strategic development planning and regional transport planning. They are also able to promote the economic well-being of their areas.

The approach to the development of the CJC model continues to be one of collaboration between national and local government, recognising that one size does not fit all

We will work together to support effective regional collaboration, where it makes sense to do so, reflecting local democratic leadership and helping to achieve our shared ambitions for Wales.

We will work together to achieve greater coherence between the footprints of regional structures which will empower local government to deliver with reduced bureaucracy and duplication.

We also recognise that some opportunities and challenges extend beyond established organisational or geographical boundaries. In those circumstances, we support flexible and pragmatic partnership working, enabling organisations to collaborate across boundaries where this contributes to shared priorities and improved outcomes for people and communities.

National Government, Local Government and Regional Governance roles and responsibilities in Wales

National The role of Welsh Government is to	Local The role of local government is to
• Determine and explain its national vision for Wales and provide the legal framework for vision to be realised. • Develop programmes and policies to support the delivery of the vision. • Provide the right conditions so that public service organisations can continually improve the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of public services. • Engage and consult with partners across public sector to ensure programmes and policies are well designed and delivered effectively. • Promote good practice and innovation. • Recognise the prevailing economic and fiscal conditions and provide partners with financial guidance to help with tough choices that will have to be made.	• Provide community and democratic leadership. • Work with national government to help deliver national priorities and programmes and to determine the priorities for local communities. • Carry out the range of statutory duties and functions of local government. • Commit to sector-led improvement and fulfil its statutory duties for self and peer assessment under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, to continually improve the quality and effectiveness of its services. • Consult partners and work with local citizens and others in the public sector to ensure national, regional and local programmes are designed well and delivered effectively. • Constitute and lead CJsCs as a mechanism for regional collaboration and delivery. • Collaborate with others to make sure services are delivered by the right organisation and at the most economic scale.
Regional Governance The role of Corporate Joint Committees is to	
• Undertake the duty to prepare a Strategic Development Plan and Regional Transport Plan. • Exercise an economic well-being power, providing a CJC with the power to do anything to enhance or promote the economic well-being of its area. • Provide a consistent and formal framework to support regional collaboration. • Improve strategic delivery across critical independent areas such as economic wellbeing, transport planning and land use planning.	

We also recognise that we operate within a UK wide context and will use our partnership to promote the tripartite relationship on matters which are the responsibility of the UK Government, working together to influence the UK Government on issues that affect Wales.

Chapter Three

Principles of Trusted Partnership

There are countless daily interactions between the Welsh Government and local government, from the strategic to the operational, policy to financial. The principles in this Agreement create the framework for all those interactions and everything we do together, whether that be consultation and decision making by elected representatives or more practical engagement by our officials.

Principles

Mutual Trust and Respect

- The foundation of the relationship between the Welsh Government and local government is mutual trust. We recognise and respect each other's democratic mandate, roles, responsibilities, and contributions to the democratic governance of Wales. This principle is exemplified by respectful dialogue and the acknowledgement of the importance of each other's autonomy.

Transparency and Openness

- Transparency and openness are crucial for accountability and trust-building. We commit to open communication and making information and data accessible that will aid effective decision-making. We will work together to understand and develop the evidence needed to assess impact and make positive improvements. We will strive to follow national Open Data guidance.

Working together on Fair Funding

- We recognise the need for public services to be fairly funded and effectively and efficiently delivered.
- We will continue to work together to refine, revise and improve the funding formulae used to distribute core revenue funding using the tried and tested political channels of the Partnership Council for Wales and Finance Sub Group.
- We will jointly make the case to the UK Government where appropriate for fair funding for Wales.
- Public services continue to evolve. As future initiatives and new responsibilities emerge, we will continue to work together to identify the policy intention and key priorities to be delivered in addition to ensuring the financial (and service) implications are jointly understood.
- Where a new responsibility depends on the introduction of primary or secondary legislation, the associated financial implications will be assessed through the relevant Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA), or other appropriate assessment. This assessment will be developed jointly wherever possible.

- The RIA should identify the costs and impacts of implementation, including funding requirements and service changes. It should focus on the additional costs and consequences arising from the proposed legislation or policy, rather than existing service delivery pressures.
- Local government will be involved at an early stage in the development of the RIA and engaged through the WLGA and relevant professional networks.
- The WLGA will work with councils to provide the data needed to inform the RIA. Local government will therefore be responsible for providing timely and robust estimates of the financial implications to support the legislative and budget-setting process.
- Where new responsibilities come with additional cost, it may not always be about seeking extra money but about identifying funding which could be redirected from elsewhere to have the maximum impact. Beyond that, any new responsibilities would be funded.

Accountability and Responsibility

- Each sphere of government has distinct responsibilities. We are accountable for our own actions and decisions. Working in trusted partnership means clearly demonstrating our contributions to shared outcomes, whilst respecting our different accountabilities to the public.

Innovation and Flexibility

- Innovation and flexibility are necessary to address complex challenges and adapt to changing circumstances. We commit to continuous improvement and embracing innovative solutions.
- Collectively embracing digital ways of working will help us achieve greater economic opportunities and a more prosperous and resilient society. This will ensure services are designed for and with our communities, for the long-term in a way that also supports efficiency and financial sustainability.

Chapter Four

Our Collective Commitments

In addition to the above principles, there are some areas of mutual value and importance that we would like to jointly restate our collective commitment to:

Cymraeg 2050 and Welsh-speaking Communities

- We will design and deliver public services equally through the medium of Welsh and English and will champion Welsh in the workplace; Welsh and technology; and every-day Welsh, in service delivery.
- We will work collaboratively to strengthen the Welsh language in our communities, by implementing recommendations from the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities in areas including but not limited to housing, planning and workplaces.

Equity, Inclusivity and Participation

- Inclusivity and public participation are essential for democratic governance. The Welsh Government and local councils strive to engage, involve and reflect the full diversity of views and needs of our communities in decision-making, ensuring diverse voices are heard and considered.
- We have a long-shared commitment to promoting community cohesion and a strong record of working together to doing so. We will continue to work together to understand the root causes of divisions within society, tackle and challenge mis and disinformation and take proactive actions to foster good relations and trust within, and between, communities across Wales, making people feel safer and with a sense of belonging.

- We commit to designing services around people to improve social cohesion, creating more healthy, united and a more equitable society with well-connected communities, and contributing to a thriving Welsh language. We will ensure that digital transformation does not create or deepen exclusion, and will build the digital confidence and capability of the public service workforce to enable organisations to make informed decisions and support communities effectively.
- We will put tackling discrimination and reducing socio-economic and environmental inequality at the heart of our decision making and service delivery. We will promote improved outcomes for all, regardless of protected characteristics and embed an anti-racist approach to the way we operate as organisations, supporting all communities to achieve their full potential.

Tackling Health Inequalities

- We commit to working collaboratively to develop an all-Wales approach to go further and faster in embedding a preventative approach to improving the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the nation, through tackling health inequalities, focusing on the wider determinants of health and the societal issues that impact on health and wellbeing. Together, we will support local leaders and enable communities to identify and improve opportunities for empowerment of individuals and communities to help create and develop healthy and sustainable places to live and work and achieve better outcomes.

Tackling Poverty

- We will work together to improve the lives of people living in poverty and reduce poverty in the longer term, with a focus on tackling child poverty so that children have a fair start in life. Using our powers to bring partners together at a national and local level and focusing on practical action where it is needed the most and where will have the greatest impact.

One Welsh Public Service

- We recognise and appreciate the importance and interdependencies of all public service organisations in Wales working together, and with the third sector and other partners, to deliver effective and seamless services to people across Wales.

Workforce and Skills

- The local government workforce provides leadership and vital services. However, many occupations face recruitment and retention challenges, such as social care, planning, and environmental and engineering specialisms. We must also recruit and develop new skills, diversifying our skill base to meet future needs and opportunities.
- The Welsh Government and local government will work together to promote local government as an employer of choice and attract diverse, skilled individuals. We will support recruitment and retention initiatives and embrace digital opportunities to develop digital skills and leadership. We will also promote professional development programmes, increase workforce diversity, including in leadership roles, and work to stamp out abusive behaviours towards the local government workforce.

Social Partnership and Fair Work

- Social partnership and fair work are essential principles in the relationship between Local Government and the Welsh Government. We are committed to promoting and strengthening effective collaboration between the Welsh Government, Local Authorities, and our recognised trade unions to enhance well-being and public service delivery in Wales. Leading by example through promoting behaviours and ways of working based on trust and mutual respect, to build on the duties and founding principles outlined in the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

Tackling abuse in politics

- The intimidation and abuse of councillors, whether in person or through other means, threatens democracy. It can hinder elected officials from serving their communities, discourage individuals from running for office, and erode public confidence in democratic systems.
- Tackling abuse in politics means that we can promote local government as a positive path for women, younger people and others to contribute to their communities, their country and to local democracy.
- The Welsh Government and local government are committed to working together to tackle abuse at all levels. Those elected at national or local levels can be confronted by abuse in person or online and we will work together to stamp out poor and unacceptable behaviours from democratic life.
- Abusive behaviour can also be targeted at the local government workforce and the threat of that could discourage good candidates from applying to join. Together we are committed to stamping out abusive and unacceptable behaviour at all levels of local government.

Sustainable development

- Our partnership work encompasses environmental protection, social equity, economic prosperity and cultural well-being considerations, in accordance with the well-being goals and ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Achieving a 'just transition' and building community resilience in the face of climate change are key considerations in the drive for more sustainable activities and outcomes.

Economic Development & Regeneration

- We recognise the contribution of local government to the development of the Welsh economy, particularly its role as a driver of local economic activity and regeneration, and its wider strategic role.
- We will work collaboratively to pursue urban and rural regeneration of our communities, including action on town centres, supporting their role in place-making and community life.

Chapter Five

Funding, reducing bureaucracy, and sector led improvement

Funding

- We recognise the importance of services delivered by local government including their wider impacts. We also recognise the need for the Welsh Government to balance funding for local government within the financial envelope available to support the breadth of its responsibilities and priorities.
- Working in trusted partnership means local government will have opportunities for early engagement with the Welsh Government's budget process. The engagement processes set out in Chapter Six will facilitate this and ensure the Welsh Government understands the pressures being faced by local government, their implications and the total 'ask' of local government across the full range of Government portfolios.
- Multi-year financial settlements will be agreed wherever possible as enabled by the UK Government funding to the Welsh Government, and financial and political cycles.
- Collective work will also be undertaken to develop a more strategic and sustainable approach to digital transformation funding, focussing investment on defined public service outcomes and evidenced needs. We will prioritise investment in long term shared capabilities, reusable products and common foundations to realise greater value for Wales.

Approaches to hypothecation of funding

- The Revenue Support Grant provides flexibility for councils to deliver on national and local priorities, prioritising funding to deliver services to meet the needs of local communities.

Levels of hypothecated funding under the local government settlement will be kept under joint review with further dehypothecation or consolidation of grants where possible. This is integral to councils having the flexibility to manage their resources effectively.

- The Protocol on Hypothecated Grants, currently being co-developed as part of this suite of agreements, sets out the agreed approach of the Welsh Government and local government to determining, operating and reviewing hypothecated grant schemes.
- The protocol will reaffirm the Welsh Government commitment to provide as much financial certainty as possible in respect of hypothecated funding and to have a clearly stated and agreed longer term strategy for each one.

Local Taxes

- Local councils are responsible to their electorates. We believe that the council tax pressure on households should be managed as much as is possible within the broad spending envelope available and the choices to be made on services. Decisions about the setting of council tax levels locally are an important part of local democratic mandates, and Welsh Ministers' powers to cap council tax should be used as last resort after full engagement with local government through the Finance Sub Group and the WLGA. Local authorities will consider medium term plans for council tax rises, and early engagement between local government and the Welsh Government each year will help mitigate short-term pressures on taxpayers.

- Where future reforms are planned for council tax and non-domestic rates, we will engage collaboratively throughout the policy development and delivery process to ensure the local tax systems remain stable and effective.
- We agree to work together to optimise the effectiveness of local tax administration, upholding fair collection practices and minimising tax avoidance. This includes sufficiently investing in operational systems and key personnel that are crucial to financial propriety.
- The Welsh Government is open to exploring additional financial flexibilities for local government to help them manage their own finances more effectively, generate additional revenue and enable better delivery of local services.

Reducing bureaucracy

- We will continue to develop new ways of working and embed trusted partnership behaviours throughout policy development and implementation planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- We are committed to reducing workload burdens and avoiding resource wastage, focusing on collaborative efforts that do not rely on extensive administrative systems.
- A digital approach will enhance joint working, remove duplication, and improve process standardisation.
- Welsh Government will collect only necessary and valuable data nationally, while local government will provide timely and high-quality data returns supported by efficient digital and data systems.

Sector-led improvement

- We share a commitment to a strong and ambitious approach to sector led improvement that supports councils to respond to current challenges whilst preparing for future opportunities and demands. Grounded in local democratic accountability, collaboration and continuous learning, this approach will

help strengthen the resilience, effectiveness and sustainability of local government in Wales.

- Local government and the WLGA will work together to strengthen sector led improvement arrangements, so they are forward looking, proportionate and focused on future needs. This will include identifying emerging themes and pressures, sharing learning and good practice, developing support where there is collective need, and applying the principles of sector led improvement through a balanced focus on corporate, service improvement and shared national priorities. The Welsh Government recognises the critical contribution from the sector and will continue to support it.
- We recognise that local government is operating in an increasingly complex environment. We will collectively develop a sustainable vision and operating model for local government in Wales, with an outcomes framework for local government that supports local accountability, improvement and learning. This approach will strengthen collective understanding of outcomes, provide intelligence to inform decision making, and support the monitoring of the shared ambitions and priorities set out within this Agreement.
- We will use sector intelligence to identify challenges, opportunities and successful approaches and share across councils to identify learning and achieve improvements.
- We will design services and policy around the needs and experiences of people and communities, using digital approaches, where they improve outcomes and public value.
- We will strengthen the leadership, capability and capacity needed to realise the benefits of digital transformation and artificial intelligence. We will identify opportunities to develop, procure, reuse and scale shared solutions to deliver greater value and reduce duplication. We will collectively pursue digital transformation and use of artificial intelligence in ways that are safe, ethical, bilingual, accessible, inclusive and environmentally responsible.

Chapter Six

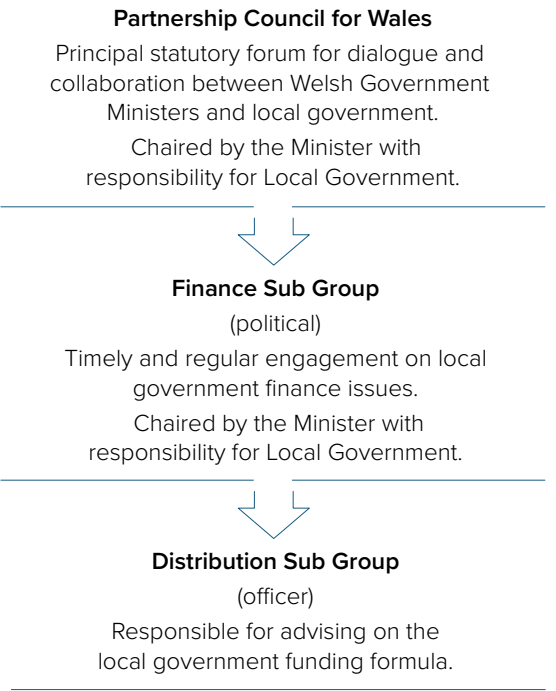
Framework for Working Together

How we will work together

- Consistent, transparent discussions are crucial to working together in trusted partnership. We will harness the benefits of our agility as a small nation by working together effectively and efficiently to reduce bureaucracy and achieve value for our communities.
- As part of this, we commit to continued and regular formalised engagement between the Welsh Government Cabinet and local authority Leaders to focus on shared challenges and opportunities that will help improve the lives and experiences of people. Codifying our approach to engagement by this Agreement will help future-proof the relationship and ensure its continued effectiveness beyond changes in political leadership at national or local levels.
- This Agreement complements the existing engagement mechanisms in place between the Welsh Government and local government, including the statutory engagement mechanism of the Partnership Council for Wales. It also recognises the importance of the range of engagement between Welsh Government Ministers and local authority Leaders on shared challenges.
- The WLGA has a range of mechanisms for engaging with its membership at both strategic and policy levels, for example, political meetings, cabinet member networks and bilateral meetings. The WLGA values the contribution Welsh Ministers make to these meetings and would like this level of engagement to continue in the future. The Welsh Government will rely on the WLGA to provide a convening force and single channel through which the collective views of local authorities are voiced.

Welsh Government and Local Government engagement mechanisms

Statutory Partnership Engagement



Non Statutory Partnership Engagement



All engagement must be meaningful, action-oriented and outcome-focused to make the most of our shared resources and deliver tangible improvements to public service delivery.

Partnership Structures and Mechanisms

- We will not create any new partnership structures without being clear on the intended policy purpose and desired outcomes. We must first understand and utilise the existing partnership mechanisms which could potentially be used for engagement on a policy or other related issue. We will enable each other to challenge any proposals for a new partnership and take opportunities to review and rationalise where appropriate.

Policy Development

- Digital, data and technology expertise will be engaged in early stages of policy making to ensure new policies do not increase the barriers to digital transformation, and local government delivery teams will be engaged

throughout the process to support new policy proposals.

- We will engage early and meaningfully in the development of policies that impact on local government to develop practical models for implementation, and an understanding of the costs and the outcomes for people.

Integrated Impact Assessments

- Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs), developed jointly, are a good way of ensuring all the underpinning themes and principles are considered. This will include 'rural proofing' of proposals. IIAs will be undertaken in ways that are proportionate to the matters under discussion.

Chapter Seven

Review, evaluation and evolution of the Agreement

The signing of the renewed Agreement shows the commitment from all parties to continue the positive relationship to deliver better outcomes. The Agreement will continue to evolve, particularly as the Programme for Government is established and a new Part Two is developed to provide the framework for identifying and measuring outcomes and impact.

The Agreement will be updated and reviewed as appropriate, through existing engagement mechanisms to ensure it is continuing to deliver on its intentions and to assess the status of the relationship.

Supporting documents and agreements

It will always be our intention to develop separate documents to support and supplement the ways of working. These will be communicated as they are approved by both Welsh Ministers and local authority Leaders.