

# **NORTH GWENT CHILDREN'S CENTRE AND TRANSITION HUB FEASIBILITY REPORT PHASE 2**



**Commissioned by Gwent Regional Partnership Board**

**Written by Sparkle (South Wales) Limited**

**2022**

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## Executive Summary – PHASE 2

Sparkle is a charity delivering care and support to children and young people with additional and complex needs in South Wales. In line with the strategic aims of ISCAN (Integrated Service for Children with Additional Needs) and the ABUHB, namely *'to ensure that children and young people with complex needs, and their families/carers are placed at the heart of all decision making, and will receive equitable, joined up (planned and co-ordinated) services from each of the service providers'* we have conducted detailed and extensive research, including interviews directly with parents and young people, in addition to relevant professionals. This has been combined with a thorough review of Welsh Government guidance on collaborative working, co-production and transition, in addition to the UN Charter for Human Rights. In developing this feasibility report we have carefully considered the options available to ensure the delivery of an equitable, high quality service for the families of children and young people (CYP) with additional and complex needs in North Gwent.

The Phase 1 report looked at the need, location and facilities required for a new North Gwent Children's Centre and Transition Hub. The report concluded that:

**There is a need for a new fully integrated children's centre in the north of Gwent, and that its location should be in Blaenau Gwent, closest to the majority of children and young people that it will serve.**

One key finding of the Phase 1 report is that currently the five Local Authorities in Gwent do not meet the Welsh Government standards for transition of young people with complex needs, and it is thus proposed that:

**The inclusion of a Transition Hub, co-located with the proposed Children's Centre would accelerate addressing the gaps in the current system, by developing a model of improved collaboration between Health, Social Care and the Voluntary Sector. Furthermore, it would facilitate new models of care including the development of transition clinics between paediatrics and adult health services, across the 14-25 year age group, in line with the new Welsh Government Additional Learning Needs Code.**

This service model, which would be a first in Wales, could then be fully evaluated, with a view to replication across other regions if evidence suggests it is a successful model. Sparkle have the capacity to conduct in depth research and evaluation of new models of care, as shown by their previous publications (See: <https://www.sparkleappeal.org/research>)

Using the detailed criteria relating to the specification of the proposed Centre, and the site requirements developed in Phase 1, Phase 2 evaluates the available sites and scores them to conclude if any are fit for purpose and discusses the top two sites in detail. Within this options appraisal, the following options have been considered:

- **Continue to use Nevill Hall Children's Centre**
- **Improve the facilities of the existing centre and operate from multiple other sites in a piecemeal way**

- **Develop a new fully integrated Children’s Centre and Transition Hub in Blaenau Gwent, as part of an all Gwent Hub and Spoke model**

The essential criteria for the site are as follows;

- Based on the relaxed boundaries laid out in Phase 1, 90% of the children that will be accessing services from the new Centre will be from *Blaenau Gwent, North Caerphilly and north Torfaen*, with the remaining 10% from Monmouthshire.
- The site must be located near *good public transport* links including accessible main roads, train links, and within the bus network, given the low levels of car ownership among the majority of families attending the centre.
- The site will need adequate *parking* for professionals and families using the centre.
- The site should be within the proximity of other *community facilities* and services such as schools, leisure centres, and health facilities.
- The size of the site will need to be level and approximately *2.5-4 acres*.

**The conclusion of this Phase 2 is that a site will only be suitable if it meets all the essential criteria, and the majority of remaining criteria (see section 2.3).**

Section 3 of the report outlines the site search, detailing the consultation and research conducted into identifying potential sites, and how they were evaluated. The report details:

- Site analysis using a point scoring system against 16 predetermined criteria.
- Given the above criteria, and in particular site and location requirements for the provision of a comprehensive Children’s Centre with Transition Hub, it has been concluded that the Nevill Hall site is not a viable option.
- Consultations carried out with representatives from the Health Board, Local Authorities and private landowners led to the identification of available sites in North Gwent.
- Research conducted via online external and Local Authority websites into appropriate sites in North Gwent regarding site options.
- Discussions have been undertaken with Council members and officers in Blaenau Gwent, as they own the proposed site. They are very supportive of this proposal.

Two sites scored highest overall across the criteria measured; these were RES KNL on Lime Avenue, and RES F on Strand Annealing Ln, and both are located on the Works site in Ebbw Vale (see map 4).

The site RES KNL scored significantly higher than the other potential sites. It is located opposite Ebbw Vale leisure centre, next to the multi-storey car park and near to Pen-y-Cwm special school and Coleg Gwent. It has excellent public transport links, with a bus stop at the site entrance and the railway station within easy walking/ wheelchair distance. There is easy access to the heads of the valleys road.

**The conclusion of this section is that RES KNL exceeds the essential criteria, and meets the majority of the remaining criteria, thus is the preferred site for a Children's Centre and Transition Hub.**

**Recommendation:**

**It is recommended that the Feasibility study continue to a fully costed business case, on the basis that the new Children's Centre and Transition Hub is located on site RES KNL.**

## 1. PHASE 2, Section 1: Options Appraisal

### 1.1 Option 1 – Continue to use Nevill Hall Children’s Centre

Continuing to deliver services from the current Children’s Centre at Nevill Hall for the population in the North, will continue the inequity of access compared to the South given that it is not fit for purpose. Furthermore, evidence has demonstrated that Nevill Hall Children’s Centre is located in the wrong place to effectively serve the children in North Gwent. Based on the proposed relaxed catchment boundaries, only 10% of the children accessing the centre live in this catchment area. Those that do, are living in areas with low deprivation and high car ownership. As a result, numerous families in areas of deprivation living outside Monmouthshire have great difficulty travelling to Nevill Hall due to the time and availability of public transport, which they are reliant on. This results in more time lost from employment for parents, non-attendance and time lost from schooling for the children, and a hugely increased burden on families expected to use two or more buses, over a journey time of up to 1.5 hours to attend appointments. The existing facilities in Nevill Hall are inadequate for any expansion of the service, and currently staff operating clinics from there cannot all be accommodated onsite. Professionals working there have expressed their frustration at the inadequacy of the facilities, and inequity with South Gwent. There is no capacity for joint working with Social Care or the Voluntary Sector, due to the site constraints and location.

**Continuing to use Nevill Hall Children’s Centre is not a viable option.**

### 1.2 Option 2 - Improve the facilities of the existing centre and operate from multiple other sites in a piecemeal way

As demonstrated in Phase 1 (see section 1.1.3) evidence shows that the co-location of services is more convenient, and cost effective for families given that it creates a ‘one stop shop’ where they can attend all their appointments, as opposed to travelling to multiple appointments in different locations (Sparkle, 2021). Research conducted by Susan Booth (2013) concluded that co-location also facilitates multidisciplinary working and improved communication between colleagues, leading to better patient experiences.

**Due to the evidence in support of co-location of services, piecemeal improvement of services at multiple locations is not recommended.**

### 1.3 Option 3 - Develop an Integrated Children’s Centre and Transition Hub in Blaenau Gwent

Our work has shown there are two sites which meet the criteria for a new Children’s Centre and Transition Hub in North Gwent. Of the two sites, the site known as RES KNL, located in Ebbw Vale scored the highest by far with 101 points out of 115 across the 16 criteria considered.

The site has the following benefits:

- ★ It is in a good location to serve the 90% of users who are from North Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, and North Caerphilly.
- ★ It is located next to a free covered multi-story car park which families and professionals attending the centre would be able to use. This would result in significant cost savings, given that at least an additional acre of land needed for parking would no longer be necessary.
- ★ It is located near Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre, which has modern, fully accessible facilities. This is also cost-effective, given that their facilities could be used for some of the specialist group activities, or by therapists for activities; likewise, the local disability sports officer could use the new Children's Centre & Transition Hub facilities to enhance their provision to children and young people with complex needs.
- ★ It is located near to Pen-y-Cwm special school, which would shorten the distance families would need to travel to access clinics, reducing time lost from employment and education, and facilitate ease of access to specialist group activities for their children. Proximity to Pen-Y-Cwm special school would also ease pressure on their facilities, enabling more classroom space by providing specialist facilities such as a sensory room, rebound etc in the new Centre.
- ★ It is located near Coleg Gwent, which would mean College students would be able to easily access and volunteer at the centre, while young people with complex needs could be familiarised with the College prior to transition there, in line with the WG Additional Learning Needs Code.
- ★ It is located near excellent transport routes, near a railway station and numerous bus routes, with easy access to the Heads of the Valleys road for road users, such as families travelling from Monmouthshire.

**As this site meets all the essential criteria, and meets the majority of additional criteria, it is recommended that the feasibility study continue to Phase 3 on the basis that the new Children's Centre and Transition Hub is located on site RES KNL.**

## Phase 2 - Site

### Introduction

Section 1 presents an options appraisal detailing recommendations for project continuation. Section 2 addresses the site criteria, looking in total at 16 different key criteria, including the location of those who will be using the centre, accessibility and the distance to other relevant facilities. Section 3 of the report then looks at sites available through consultation with key stakeholders within the Local Authorities (LAs), Aneurin Bevan Health Board (ABUHB), housing associations, and private landowners. Using a point-score evaluation based on specific criteria, the report then concludes with the optimal site for the project.

## 2. PHASE 2, Section 2: Site Criteria

### 2.1 The area it will serve

In summary:

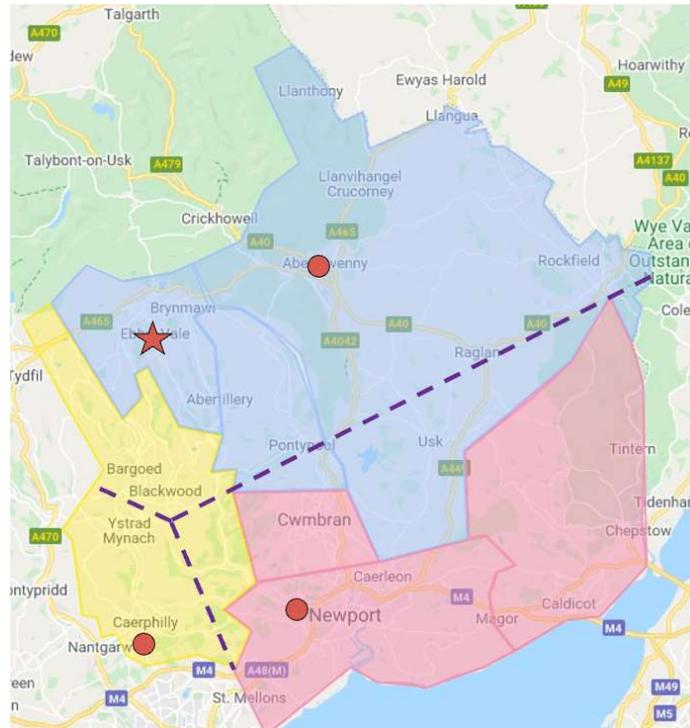
- Consultation exercises during Phase 1 revealed a need for a relaxation of the ABUHB boundaries
- These boundaries and the location of users will be used as a basis for measuring the area a new centre will serve
- Based on the relaxed boundaries, 90% of the children accessing services from the new Centre will be from Blaenau Gwent, North Caerphilly and Torfaen, with only 10% of the children living in Monmouthshire

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) services in Gwent are currently split into three catchments. In summary:

- ★ The 'north' area covers from Tredegar in the west across to Abergavenny and onto Monmouth and then down to Raglan, the Usk Valley to Caerleon, then north of Cwmbran onto Crumlin
- ★ The 'west' catchment covers Rhymney to Bargoed and down to Caerphilly
- ★ The 'south' catchment covers the area Chepstow across to the Usk Valley to Caerleon, south of Cwmbran, and falls onto the boundary by Crumlin, and then down to the Severn estuary
- ★ These boundaries are historic (> 30 years old), and do not align with current housing or transport routes.

#### Map 1: Aneurin Bevan University Health Board boundaries in Gwent

(yellow, red and blue) with proposed relaxed boundaries



Due to the clear need for more relaxed boundaries emerging from the consultation phase of this report, the feasibility study has accepted this and used a 'relaxed' boundary which allows some flexibility to the current ABUHB boundaries (see Phase 1, section 2.5.2 for more information). The relaxed boundaries can be seen in the map above. Key changes to the boundaries are as follows:

- ★ Areas moved from North Gwent to South Gwent are Monmouth, Raglan, and Usk, and surrounding areas, in addition to Pontypool
- ★ Areas moved from Caerphilly to North Gwent are New Tredegar, Rhymney, and surrounding areas
- ★ Areas moved from Caerphilly to South Gwent are Risca, Crosskeys and surrounding areas

## 2.2 The number and location of children and young people that will attend the Centre

Much work has been carried out in ascertaining where in North Gwent the children and young people attending the new Centre live. Data has been sought from the following resources:

- ★ ABUHB
- ★ Welsh government
- ★ The local authorities
- ★ Sparkle South Wales
- ★ Statistical office
- ★ Other regional statistics within the UK

Given the need to forward plan for demand, an in depth analysis, titled ‘Estimated Numbers for a New Children’s Centre and Transition Hub in North Gwent’ has been commissioned by Sparkle as part of this feasibility study and can be found in Appendix 1. Based on published research, and Welsh Government statistics, specifically as they relate to Gwent, there is projected to be a huge rise in children and young people (YP) with complex needs over the next ten years., namely an increase of 10% per year, resulting in a 100% increase in children in 10 years time. This report concludes that the best estimate of numbers attending the new Centre, and the regions within North Gwent where they live, are as follows:

**Table 1: Estimated number of children with a disability receiving care and support by catchment area based on relaxed boundaries**

|                                         | Postcodes              | Estimated number that would attend the Children’s Centres |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>South/Serennu catchment area</b>     |                        | <b>884</b>                                                |
| Newport                                 | NP10; NP18; NP19; NP20 | 514                                                       |
| Torfaen (60%)                           | NP44                   | 126                                                       |
| Monmouthshire (80%)                     | NP15; NP16; NP26       | 202                                                       |
| Caerphilly (10%)                        | NP11                   | 42                                                        |
| <b>North/Nevill Hall catchment area</b> |                        | <b>496</b>                                                |
| Blaenau Gwent                           | NP13; NP22; NP23       | 192                                                       |
| Torfaen (40%)                           | NP4                    | 84                                                        |
| Monmouthshire (20%)                     | NP7; NP25              | 51                                                        |
| Caerphilly (40%)                        | NP22; NP24; CF81       | 169                                                       |
| <b>West/Caerphilly catchment area</b>   |                        | <b>212</b>                                                |
| Caerphilly (50%)                        | NP12; CF46; CF82; CF83 | 212                                                       |

The above table demonstrates that the majority of children that will be accessing the children’s centre (90%) in North Gwent are located in Blaenau Gwent, North Torfaen and North Caerphilly. Broken down, 39% of the children would be coming from Blaenau Gwent, 17% coming from North Torfaen and 34% from North Caerphilly, and only 10% of children accessing the Centre would be from Monmouthshire. The current Nevill Hall Children’s Centre is located in Monmouthshire and therefore is furthest away from the highest population, and closest to the population with high car ownership, as opposed to dependence on public transport.

The number of young people currently within early transition age (14- to 18-year-olds) who were referred via ISCAN between 2019 and 2021 was 598. Extrapolating this number to cover the full transition age, in line with the new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code (14-25 years) would suggest a minimum of 1495 young people eligible to access a Transition Hub in Gwent (10x598/4). For more details about the number of children accessing services, please see Appendix 1.

**Table 2: Estimated number of children and young people to attend the Children’s Centre and Transition Hub based on relaxed boundaries**

|                   | Currently | 2030  |
|-------------------|-----------|-------|
| Children's Centre | 496       | 1,022 |
| Transition Hub    | 1495      | 3080  |
| <b>Total</b>      | 1991      | 4102  |

The above table demonstrates the total estimated number of current children who would potentially use the Centre. The table also demonstrates the projected numbers of children and young people using the centre by 2030 (for further details see Appendix 1).

When thinking about the location of the Centre, an important consideration is accessibility, in order to ensure equitable and easy access for the majority of families in the catchment area. It is assumed those families who do not own a car will find it harder to access a centre further away than those families with a car, given that they will be reliant on public transport, which is primarily designed to run up and down the valleys north to south, as opposed to east to west. The following table demonstrates the percentage of households who own a car or van living in Gwent.

**Table 3: Households with cars or vans in Gwent**

| Area            | Average % | Data source |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Tredegar        | 70        | 1           |
| Ebbw Fawr       | 73        | 1           |
| Upper Ebbw Fach | 72        | 1           |
| Lower Ebbw Fach | 68        | 1           |
| Monmouthshire   | 84.8      | 2           |
| Torfaen         | 76.4      | 2           |

Red – below Welsh average

Green – Above Welsh average

1: Extract from 'Blaenau Gwent Well-being Assessment'<sup>1</sup>

2: Data from the 2011 census<sup>2</sup>

The average number of households with cars or vans in Wales is 77.1%

A table above shows that for the Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen areas, ownership is below the Welsh average, whereas in Monmouthshire ownership is above average. Thus, families living in Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen are more reliant on public transport and would find it more difficult to access a centre located further away from their homes. However, the 10% of families located in Monmouthshire using the current facility would find it easier. However, it should be noted that a number of the children located in Monmouthshire attend Pen-y-Cwm special school, and frequently transition to Coleg Gwent Further Education College in Ebbw Vale, therefore a centre close to this school and college would be beneficial.

<sup>1</sup> Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board. (2017). Blaenau Gwent Well-being Assessment. Available at: [WellBeingAssessment.pdf \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> RAC Foundation (2012). Car ownership rates per local authority in England and Wales. Available at: [car ownership rates by local authority - december 2012.pdf \(racfoundation.org\)](#)

## 2.3 Site location criteria

In summary:

- The site must be located near good public transport links including accessible main roads, train links, and within the bus network, given low car ownership among the families served
- The site will need adequate parking for families and professionals using the centre
- The site should be proximal to other community services such as schools, leisure centres, and hospitals

**Essential site criteria:**

**The site should be close and accessible to:**

- ★ The families that will attend the Centre, in line with policy of providing care closest to home, and that the voice of the users are 'at the heart of all services' (ABUHB and ISCAN strategic priority)
- ★ Good road links to all areas of North Gwent
- ★ The bus networks
- ★ The railway networks
- ★ Adequate and, if possible, undercover parking
- ★ Taxi's and Fflecsi bus service
- ★ A nearby community health facility
- ★ Educational establishments
- ★ A community of similarly aged young people
- ★ Sports and leisure facilities
- ★ A townscape
- ★ Transport hub experience
- ★ Facilities for the professionals working at the Centre

**The site conditions:**

- ★ Site details
- ★ Site size

**Other matters:**

- ★ Deprivation indices in line with the majority of the population served

Looking in more detail at the site criteria:

### 2.3.1 The families that will attend the centre

The families accessing the site have children who struggle with long journey times, and in particular would struggle with waiting at bus stops during a multi trip journey, as public transport to Nevill Hall requires. Furthermore, families have expressed very clearly that the difficulty they have accessing Nevill Hall contributes to them not attending appointments.

### **2.3.2 Good road links to all areas of North Gwent**

The Children’s Centre and Transition Hub should, if possible, be sited close to an arterial road in the north of Gwent for ease of access. It should have good road links to the majority of families whose children and young adults will attend the Centre.

The major roads in North Gwent are as follows:

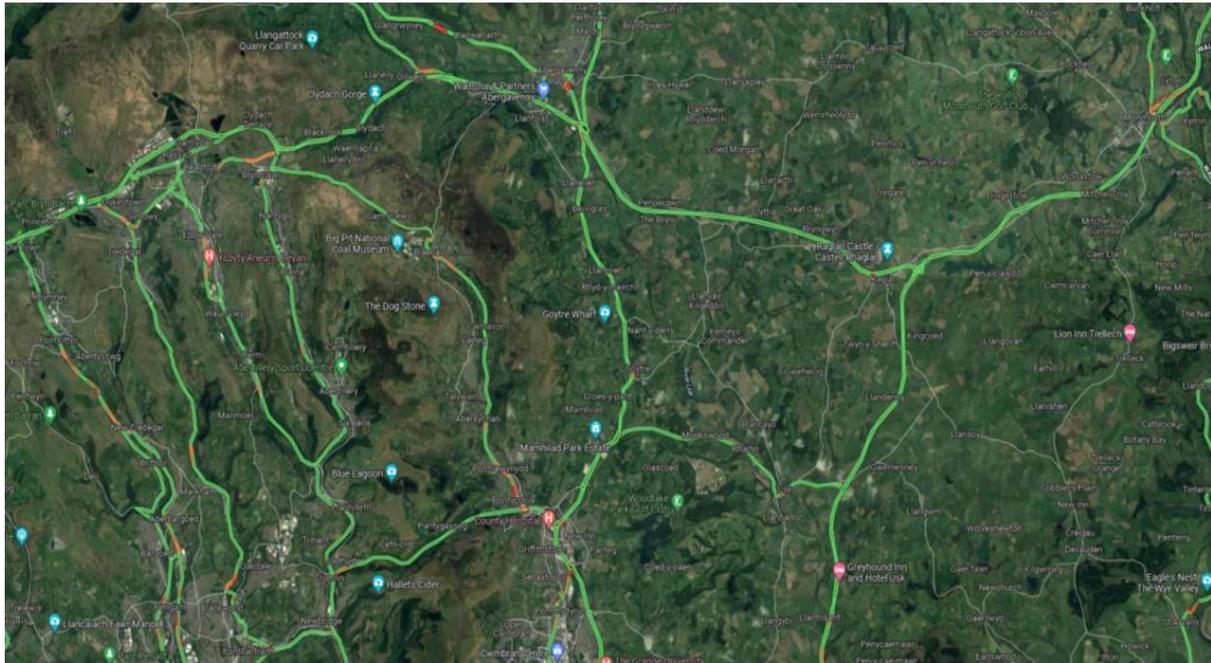
- ★ A449 - From Newport to Usk and Raglan where it joins the A40. Then the A40 from Abergavenny to Raglan and onto Monmouth
- ★ A465 - (Heads of the Valleys) from Abergavenny to Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Tredegar and Rhymney
- ★ A4042 - Pontypool to Newport

These roads are dual carriageways.

Other than the Heads of the Valleys Road, the roads from Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Tredegar and Rhymney follow the individual Valleys south. From Brynmawr to Blaenavon (B4248) and onto Pontypool (A4043) (Llwyd Valley) and to Blaina, Abertillery and on to Newbridge (A467) (Ebbw Fach Valley). From Ebbw Vale to Cwm and onto Newbridge (A4045) (Ebbw Valley). From Tredegar to Hollybush and onto Blackwood A4048) (Sirhowy Valley). And finally, from Rhymney to New Tredegar, Ystrad Mynach and onto Caerphilly A469 (Rhymney Valley). These roads are in the main single carriageway.

It can be seen that for those living in this area to travel to the current Children’s Centre in Abergavenny, there is a need to travel by car or bus up the Valley to the A465 and then onto Abergavenny or to travel down the Valley to Pontypool or Newport and then onto the A4042 to Abergavenny. None of the valley routes are fully dual carriageways and are prone to delays in inclement weather. A table of travel times by car from the main towns to either Newport, Abergavenny, or Ebbw Vale can be found in Appendix 1.

Within Ebbw Vale and in particular the “Works Site”, the road network is new and has been designed for high pedestrian flows with low-speed limits. There is easy access to the Heads of the Valley A465 to Brynmawr and Abergavenny and, in the other direction, to Tredegar and Rhymney. From these towns, via the heads of the valleys road, there is access to Oakdale, New Tredegar, Bargoed, Cwm, Llanhilleth, Crumlin, Brynmawr, Blaina, Abertillery, Blaenavon, and Pontypool.



**Map 2: Major roads in North Gwent**

In summary:

The roads linking Monmouth, Raglan, and Usk to Abergavenny or Newport and from Abergavenny to Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, and Tredegar are good. Travel to and from Abergavenny to the towns in the five Gwent Valleys including Newbridge, Blackwood, Llanhilleth, Crumlin, Blaenavon, and New Tredegar is not as easy, with a mix of dual and single carriageway roads, and the terrain making comparable travel times longer.

### 2.3.3 The bus network



**Fflecsi bus stop outside Ebbw Vale Leisure centre**

The bus network in North Gwent tends to link the major towns. A plan of the Monmouthshire network can be found in Appendix 2. The main routes are as follows:

- Monmouth and Raglan to Abergavenny bus 83
- Monmouth to Newport via Raglan and Usk bus 60
- Pontypool to Abergavenny bus X3
- Pontypool to Newport bus X24
- Usk to Pontypool bus 63

It is noted that within the Gwent Valleys bus routes generally follow the Valleys (up and down) and *not across*. There is one route, the X4 at the top of the Valleys in the north, linking Abergavenny, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Tredegar and Merthyr via Dowlais Top. Other than this, the next cross Valleys link is from Pontypool to Crumlin, and onto Newbridge, Blackwood

and then over to the Rhymney Valley to Ystrad Mynach via bus 21 and bus 7 (change at Blackwood).

Details of other bus routes are as follows:

- ★ Llwyd Valley local bus 31
- ★ Ebbw Fach Valley bus X15
- ★ Ebbw Valley local bus E3
- ★ Sirhowy Valley bus 56
- ★ Rhymney Valley local bus 2

Examples of journey times can be found in Appendix 2. It should be noted that these journey times are for Monday to Friday and make no allowance for time to get from home to the bus station, or from the bus station to the relevant Children's Centre. Several services finish early evening, so could not be used for out-of-hours transition clinics/specialist leisure activities/leisure attendance.

The only route that is not direct is from Ebbw Vale to Rhymney where the X4 travels to Dowlais Top and the connecting local bus 2 travels back to the Rhymney Valley. It is noted that in the Rhymney Valley there are good rail (see the section on rail) and bus links south to Caerphilly and Cardiff. There is a Fflecsi bus route from Ebbw Vale down the Ebbw Fach Valley and around Ebbw Vale town (see section 2.3.6 on Fflecsi Bus services).

### **2.3.4 The railway network**

There are three rail lines in North Gwent as follows:

- ★ Newport to Abergavenny, stopping at Cwmbran and Pontypool
- ★ Ebbw Vale to Cardiff, stopping at Llanhilleth, Newbridge, Cross Keys, Risca, Rogerstone and Pye Corner
- ★ Rhymney to Cardiff, stopping at Pontlottyn, tir-Phil, Brithdir, Bargoed, Gilfach Bargoed, Pengam, Hengoed, Ystrad Mynach, Llanbradach, Aber, Caerphilly and on to Cardiff



Figure 1: The Gwent rail network

For children and young adults attending the current North Gwent Centre in Abergavenny who live in the North Gwent catchment, there are no railway stations, other than Pontypool, that have services to Abergavenny. The Abergavenny railway station is located on the far side of Abergavenny from the current Centre at Nevill Hall Hospital. From the railway station to Nevill Hall is 1.5 miles and takes an able-bodied person approximately 29 minutes to walk or 7 minutes by taxi. For a bus, there is a need to walk to the Abergavenny bus station and then the bus takes 11 minutes and only runs once an hour.

It is understood there are plans for spurs on the Ebbw Vale to Cardiff line to Abertillery and Newport.

### 2.3.5 Adequate and, if possible, undercover parking

The Centre will need to have sufficient parking for those who attend or work there, and for visiting professionals (see phase 1, section 4.12 for more information). For those attending or working at the Centre, covered parking would be of great benefit to enable disembarking and embarking from vehicles in inclement weather. This is especially important for children and young people with a disability. Offloading and assembling equipment in the rain and wind whilst supervising a disabled child or young adult can be very stressful and time-consuming. Professionals and staff often need to carry equipment to and from their cars, which is difficult to protect from the elements in bad weather.

Convenient parking will also reduce the size of the site required, with a resulting capital and ongoing revenue cost-benefit.

### 2.3.6 Taxi and Fflecsi bus calling service

The availability of local taxi services or a Fflecsi bus service is of importance for those working or attending the Centre without access to a suitable vehicle. Within North Gwent there are two Fflecsi services that run:

- ★ From Ebbw Vale to Brynmawr and Llanhilleth
- ★ Around Ebbw Vale town

These Fflecsi services are particularly helpful for people with mobility difficulties as they can be booked at a particular time and picked up at a particular location (not necessarily at a bus stop). This can significantly shorten travel times.

Clearly the use of taxis would add a significant cost for families which given the significant areas of deprivation, could cause financial strain or be detrimental to attendance.

### 2.3.7 A nearby community health facility

There are two hospitals in North Gwent, Nevill Hall (District General) on the outskirts of Abergavenny, and Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (Community) on Lime Road in Ebbw Vale.

Proximity to a hospital site potentially offers some benefits to the Centre. If children require an x-ray, or specific tests, close proximity will make it easy to access both facilities in one day.

### 2.3.8 Educational establishments

A Centre would ideally be situated close to educational establishments, given that this would allow young people to interact with people their own age. In addition, if a child were to attend a school near the Centre, this would minimise travel times for families and young people, and significantly reduce the amount of time they need to be out of school for appointments. Pen-y-Cwm special school is the primary school dedicated to children and young people with complex needs who live in Blaenau Gwent or Monmouthshire, and is located in Ebbw Vale on the Works site. In addition, Coleg Gwent and Ebbw Fawr Learning Community - Secondary Phase are on the Works site in Ebbw Vale.

### 2.3.9 A community of similar aged young people

Many comments have been received from parents and young people that they would like the Centre to be close to other young people to enable them to interact with people of their own age group. Education policies also specify the need for young people, with or without a disability, to follow where possible the same educational route. Thus, it would be beneficial for the Centre to be located near to educational establishments.



"I think she needs to speak to others her age as well who are going through the same kind of thing. Its all well and good having good friends in school but they don't always understand her issues, cause obviously they don't experience them either" (Parent of young person with complex needs)

### 2.3.10 Sports and leisure facilities

A sports and leisure centre will have more, and in some regards better, facilities than can be realistically provided for in the Children's Centre and Transition Hub. Examples are outdoor all-weather sports facilities, fully equipped gymnasiums, and large-scale dance facilities etc. In addition, a sports and leisure centre would benefit from specialist facilities within the new Children's Centre and Transition Hub, that are not present in the locality e.g. a fully accessible climbing wall, rebound, sensory and interactive rooms etc. Thus, from both a cost and benefit position, proximity to a public sports and leisure facility would be mutually beneficial. Within North Gwent the following facilities exist:

- ★ Monmouth Leisure Centre located at Monmouth Comprehensive School
- ★ Abergavenny Leisure Centre located at King Henry V111 School
- ★ Ebbw Vale Sports Centre located at Lime Avenue Ebbw Vale
- ★ Tredegar Leisure Centre located at Tredegar Comprehensive School
- ★ Abertillery Sports Centre located at Abertillery Comprehensive School

Having opened in 2013, Ebbw Vale is the newest of the Leisure Centres, and boasts a wide range of modern outdoor and indoor facilities. It also has its own disability officer who offers sports activities tailored to people with complex needs, such as the Ebbw Vale Wheelchair Sports Club.<sup>3</sup> However, the sports officer is limited in what he can provide to children and YP with the most complex disabilities, due to the lack of appropriate facilities.

### 2.3.11 A townscape

It is important that children and young people with a disability have as wide a range of life skills as possible. Being close to a town centre, where they can experience shopping, restaurants, banks and cafés together with crossing roads, using public transport and mixing with the community, is a key practical learning experience, particularly for the large population of children with complex needs who do *not* attend a special school, with dedicated facilities for travel training etc. This is in fact the majority of complex needs children, who still require key life skills training to enable safe and effective transition to adulthood.

### 2.3.12 Transport Hub experience

Practical experience of catching a bus or train is another important life skill, so being close to a bus and train station would be beneficial.

### 2.3.13 Facilities for professionals working at the Centre

For people working at the Centre, it would be beneficial if the following facilities were close by:

- ★ Bank or cashpoints
- ★ A range of shops
- ★ Cycle and jogging routes
- ★ Restaurants and café's
- ★ Leisure centre, gym, swimming etc.

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<sup>3</sup>Parasport. Available at: [Ebbw Vale Wheelchair Sports Club | Parasport](#)

- ★ Park or green landscape
- ★ Petrol station

### 2.3.14 Site details

Plot criteria which would be of benefit:

- ★ Level
- ★ Appropriate planning conditions in place
- ★ Services in place
- ★ Not in a residential area to avoid parking issues
- ★ Good road vision splay
- ★ Parking facilities near-by
- ★ Good pedestrian and cycle access and facilities
- ★ The support of the relevant Local Authority
- ★ Good access to local shops and café/restaurants for professionals

### 2.3.15 Site size

In order to assess the size of the site required for the Centre reference has been made to the 'Serennu' site in Newport.



**Map 3: Serennu Children's Centre in Newport**

The Serennu building has a footprint of approximately 1500sq metres and with three floors and an overall space approaching 4,500sq metres. It has grounds in use of approximately four acres. The grounds contain parking for 80 cars and road access front and rear. There is an outdoor all-weather sports area, specialised play areas and a sensory garden, together with an area of pathways, woodland and grass lawns. The site has a boundary of trees to form a landscape screen from nearby residential property and roads.

The predicted number of users for the new North Centre is somewhat less than for Serennu Children's Centre, but there will be a Transition Hub in addition to the Children's Centre.

Unless there is suitable parking nearby, it will require a substantial area for parking, as it is clear that Serennu requires more than the allocated 80 spaces. Outdoor facilities will be similar to Serennu Children's Centre, but the grassed area could be smaller, and an outdoor all weather sports area would not be required if there was access to a local leisure centre. Any tree screen could be curtailed in size if it is not in a residential area and planning allows.

It is considered a site of approximately 2.5-4 acres would be adequate, but this could be at the lower end if off-site parking was possible.

### **2.3.16 Deprivation**

It can be argued that the Centre would give maximum benefit by being situated close to or in one of the areas of deprivation that it serves. The area covered by the Aneurin Bevan Health Board has the highest rate of both deprivation and health deprivation in Wales (see Appendix 3 & 4). However, deprivation is not spread evenly over the area, with large areas of Monmouthshire and the south of Gwent being in the 50% *least* deprived. Areas where deprivation is high, and very high, are located in North Torfaen, North Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent. Areas of deprivation have below average income, higher levels of unemployment, fewer cars per household, less adequate housing and higher levels of illness.

## **3. PHASE 2, Section 3: Site search**

### **3.1 Research and consultation**

In summary:

- Consultations were carried out with representatives for the Health Board, North Gwent Local Authorities and private landowners into possible site locations in North Gwent
- Research was also conducted via online external and local authority websites into appropriate sites in North Gwent

Once all the necessary criteria for the Children’s Centre and Transition Hub site and surrounding area were established, site options in North Gwent were explored. Consultations were carried out with relevant representatives at ABUHB, Local Authorities and with landowners regarding appropriate sites, locations and costs. Research was also conducted online into available sites in North Gwent (see Appendix 5).

#### **3.1.1 Aneurin Bevan Health Board**

During our search for appropriate sites for the Centre, Sparkle consulted with ABUHB works and estates department in order to discuss possible sites that were available and met the requirements for a new Children’s Centre & Transition Hub. Discussions with Gareth Hughes and Glenn Evans of ABUHB works and estates have confirmed that at present ABUHB have no surplus land in North Gwent.

#### **3.1.2 Local Authorities**

Consultations and research were also carried out with Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Local Authorities. Correspondence with Victor Mbvundula, corporate asset manager at Torfaen LA, resulted in information on one site at Blaenavon (see Appendix 7). After analysis of the available transport network, this site was deemed unsuitable due to the significant additional time it would take to get to Blaenavon. The site location was also unsuitable as it was close to industrial activities. Sparkle also consulted with Nick Landers of Blaenau Gwent LA land and development department. A review of land for sale on the Blaenau Gwent LA website resulted in a number of potential sites. Sparkle also researched possible sites via Monmouthshire LA website, however no sites of the appropriate size or location were available.

#### **3.1.3 Private landowners**

Sparkle consulted both in person and over email with United Welsh Housing Association and Tai Calon Housing Association to make enquiries about their available land,

In addition, from the beginning of April 2021, as part of the feasibility study, a search of commercial sites for sale in North Gwent has been undertaken online. Sparkle received

automatic notifications of all potential development sites for sale in the North Gwent area from 'on the market'.

### 3.2 Site options

In summary:

- Sites were analysed using a point scoring system where eight sites were scored on the basis of 16 criteria
- Two sites scored highest overall across the criteria measured, these are RES KNL on Lime Avenue, and RES F on Strand Annealing Ln, and both are located on the Works site in Ebbw Vale

Once all the appropriate organisations were consulted and available sites had been researched, Sparkle evaluated all potentially suitable sites.

Sites were discounted in:

- ★ Pontypool and Cwmbran. Cwmbran is located in the South, and therefore is inappropriate. Pontypool is on the boundary with the South, and therefore travel times will be excessive to many North locations.
- ★ Monmouth, Raglan, and Usk. These locations are more distant than the existing centre for 90% of the children and young people accessing the centre.

Sites under 2.5 Acres in size were also discounted due to being too small.

Selected site locations can be found in Appendix 5 along with their details.

This list of available sites of acceptable size has been scored for each of the above criteria (scoring bias is set out in Appendix 8):

All sites considered are available freehold. Several have been on the market for a considerable time. The table below summarises the results:

**Table 4: Total scores of the top six scoring sites found in North Gwent**

| Site location                                                      | Score |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Maximum Score                                                      | 115   |
| Co-op Abertillery                                                  | 52    |
| Kays and Kears Blaenavon                                           | 42    |
| Bryn Serf Ebbw Vale                                                | 71    |
| Rhyd-y-Blew Ebbw Vale                                              | 71    |
| Site Res KNL- adjacent to multi story car park The Works Ebbw Vale | 101   |
| Site Res F- adjacent to Pen-Y-Cwm special school Ebbw Vale         | 92    |

It is seen that there are two sites which have scored highly when compared to the others. These are the sites known as **Res KNL** at Lime Avenue, Ebbw Vale and **Res F** on Strand Annealing Ln, Ebbw Vale (see map 4). Given that both sites scored considerably higher than the others, the search was narrowed down to these two sites. The sites are both located on the ‘Works Site’ redevelopment in Ebbw Vale and are discussed in detail below.

### 3.3 The Works Site in Ebbw Vale

In summary:

- The highest scoring site, RES KNL, is located opposite Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre, near Pen-y-Cwm school, and Coleg Gwent and next to a multi-story car park. It has good public transport links and easy access to the heads of the valleys road
- The second highest scoring site, RES F, is located opposite Pen-y-Cwm school and has good public transport links, however there is no easy access to parking



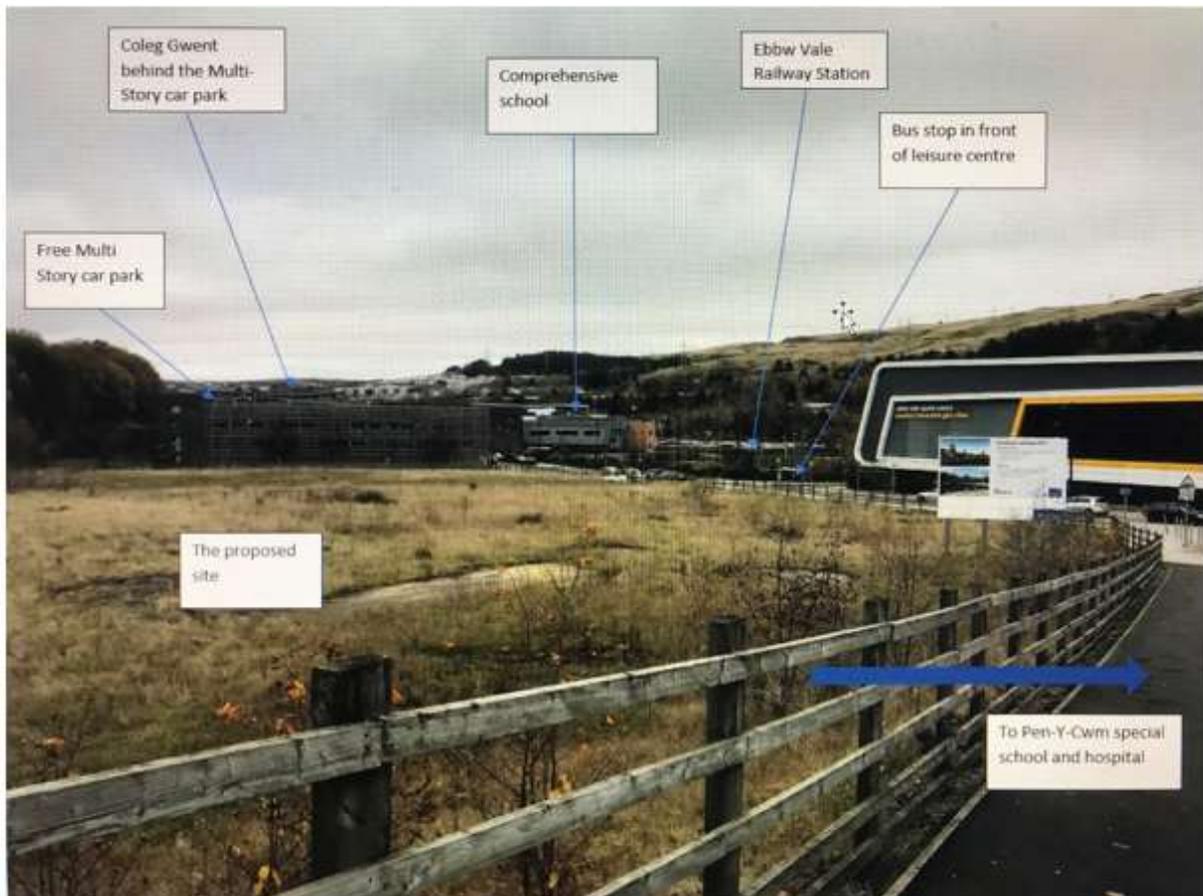
Map 4: Ariel image of the Works Site in Ebbw Vale on which both top sites are located

#### 3.3.1 Option 1: Res KNL Lime Avenue, The Works, Ebbw Vale

This site is part of the ‘Works Site’ a major redevelopment of the old Ebbw Vale Steel Works. The redevelopment started in 2002. **Site Res KNL** has been cleared and much environmental work carried out. It is in the area called “The Learning Zone”. The redevelopment plan for the “Works Site” is for a mix of educational, leisure, business and residential housing. A transport hub is present with the terminal of the Cardiff to Ebbw Vale railway line and around the learning zone are multiple bus stops and cycle ways. The learning zone area houses the following:

- ★ Coleg Gwent
- ★ The Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre

- ★ The Ebbw vale comprehensive school
- ★ A multi-story car park
- ★ The Ebbw Vale Railway station
- ★ Gwent Archives Museum
- ★ Multiple office and workshop units
- ★ The National digital Exploitation centre (NDEC)
- ★ A network of walk ways and cycle track
- ★ Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan Hospital



**Map 5: Site known as Res KNL, Lime Avenue, The Works, Ebbw Vale**

Site details:

Site Res KNL is on Lime Avenue opposite the Leisure Centre and is an available plot of just under 3 acres in size. Most of the plot is cleared with a bank at the rear with established trees. It is a reasonably level plot. Environmental works have been carried out but there may still be some small areas where work is required. We understand from Blaenau Gwent redevelopment department that the site currently has planning for housing, but the department feels this is not appropriate for the site and are willing to change its use to a category that will fit the proposed Children’s Centre & Transition Hub. This can be completed via a report to Council. The site received a Welsh Government derelict land grant of approximately £120,000 some years ago. The repayment status of this will need to be considered/negotiated.

The site has services and there is a community heating system that can be connected to, which would improve environmental credentials and reduce the Centre’s running costs. There are no major issues with planning conditions or design. There is a multi-story covered car park next to the site. We have been informed by Blaenau Gwent LA that the car park is underused, and they would be very happy if the site development used the facility. Parking is free. The car park has 4 levels of which 3 are undercover. There are just over 500 parking spaces including 16 reserved for disabled users on the ground floor within 15m of the preferred site. At present, the top 2 floors are closed off due to lack of use. This has ample available undercover parking and would give easy and available parking unlike at many hospital locations. This will save time and stress for users and professionals. It would also reduce significantly the site requirement for parking and help **maximise the site use and value** for the users. Discussions with BG LA could be undertaken to explore dedicated areas of parking for users of the Children’s Centre and Transition Hub.



**Multi-story car park Lime Avenue**

Also, on the ‘Works site’ are the following:

**Coleg Gwent**



**Coleg Gwent in Ebbw Vale**

Coleg Gwent has two campuses in North Gwent. The first on the outskirts of Usk is focused on agriculture and animal welfare. The second centre is in the ‘Learning Zone’ in Ebbw Vale and has a wide-ranging curriculum including teacher training.

Proximity to Coleg Gwent in Ebbw Vale would be beneficial to the Children’s Centre for the following reasons:

- ★ In light of the new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code<sup>4</sup>, all young people with ALN will have plans made for appropriate further education. For many of these learners, Coleg Gwent in Ebbw Vale is likely to be the College they would attend.

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government (2021) *The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021*. Available at: [210326-the-additional-learning-needs-code-for-wales-2021.pdf \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/210326-the-additional-learning-needs-code-for-wales-2021.pdf)

- ★ Students at Coleg Gwent, particularly those undertaking health or social care courses, who wish to gain experience through volunteering will have easy access and minimal travel issues.
- ★ The proposal to use the Centres facilities by Coleg Gwent for certain elements of courses would work much better if the Children’s Centre & Transition Hub was nearby.
- ★ The ability of the Children’s Centre & Transition Hub to use Coleg Gwent facilities would be beneficial.
- ★ Many comments have been received from young people with disability and their parents that locating the Centre close to an area where there is an able-bodied peer group and young community would be of great benefit in many ways, in particular facilitating transition to adulthood, and potentially greater independence.
- ★ Users of the Children’s Centre who intend to undertake courses at Coleg Gwent, would benefit from developing relationships with their staff through sessions in the Transition Hub.

### **Pen-Y-Cwm special school**

Pen-y-Cwm is located in Ebbw Vale on the ‘Works Site’ and is a large special school serving children in the north of Gwent. It currently has a capacity of 120 children with disabilities and developmental difficulties, with plans to expand to 170. There is considerable pressure on the school to accommodate more children with complex needs, thus requiring more classroom space, potentially at the expense of specialist facilities.



**Pen-y-Cwm special school in Ebbw Vale**

It is expected that a high percentage of these children will attend the Centre both for clinics and the after-hours specialist

group activities, e.g. Independent Living Skills. In their later stages at the school and after they leave, the Transition Hub will be a key facility for them and will complement the strategy at Pen-Y-Cwm. Having the new Centre close to the school would therefore be of great benefit to children attending the school, and their parents, for the following reasons:

- ★ Many children who attend Pen-Y-Cwm will be used to the location which will help them remain calm and comfortable if the new Centre is close by
- ★ Travel time will be minimised between school minimising time lost from school to attend appointments and simplifying attendance at after-hours specialist leisure activities at the Centre.
- ★ With shorter travel time the facilities will be more accessible
- ★ With collaboration between the new Centre and Pen-Y-Cwm School it should be possible for after-hours specialist play and leisure activities for children to be run seamlessly which will enable parents to extend their working hours etc.

- ★ The use of the specialist facilities in the new Centre, eg rebound, sensory room etc, could take pressure off classroom space in Pen Y Cwm.

**Other key attributes of the site are as follows:**

It is very close (within 10 metres) to bus stops which cover the following routes:

- ★ X4 East – Brynmawr, Abergavenny
- ★ X4 West – Tredegar, Rhymney (via Dowlas Top)
- ★ E3 -Cwm, Abertillery, Aberbeeg and Brynmawr
- ★ Fflecsi bus – Brynmawr, Llanhilleth
- ★ The Ebbw Vale Town railway station (250m)

Coleg Gwent is next to the multi-story car park with the secondary school opposite. The railway station is within 300m. There are accessible cycle routes available close to the site. Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan hospital is nearby. The Sports and Leisure Centre is opposite with extensive outdoor facilities which with collaboration will further reduce the site size requirements.

The site is close to the town of Ebbw Vale.

In summary, there are potentially significant cost savings for the overall project through collaboration with:

- The leisure centre e.g. the gym and dance room, large outdoor Multi Use Gym Areas for football, basketball etc. It also has an accessible café
- Pen-Y-Cwm school has a hydrotherapy pool (currently out of use), rebound facility, and hall.

With collaboration, it will give the potential for after-hours leisure activities to be run seamlessly between the school and the new Centre with the potential to assist parents to extend their working hours, etc. Collaboration with the Education Department would ensure no duplication of facilities, with no loss in service provision

- The multi-story car park nearby will negate the need for a considerable parking area on site



**Cycle route opposite the site at Lime Avenue**



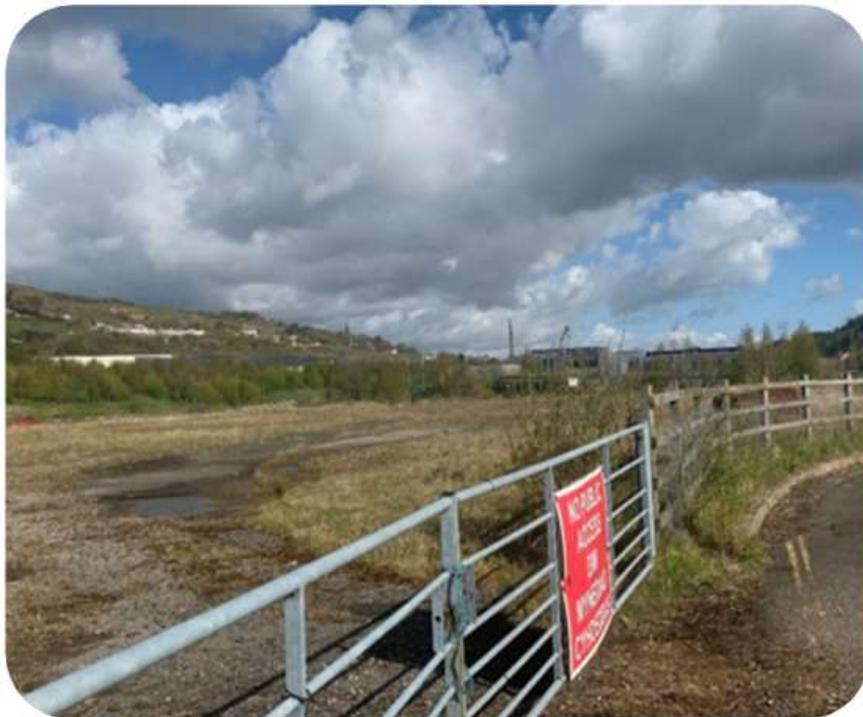
**Ebbw Vale leisure centre with extensive outdoor facilities opposite site RES KNL**

- Community heating system – minimising environmental impact and reducing running costs

Discussions suggest an initial asking price in the region of £150,000 to £200,000 for the site subject to valuation and negotiations. Any repayment of the derelict land grant will be additional to this.

### 3.3.2 Option 2: Res F on Strand Annealing Ln, Ebbw Vale

This site is also located on the ‘Works Site’ in Ebbw Vale. It is adjacent to the Pen-Y-Cwm special school (see above).



**Site Res F adjacent to Pen-Y-Cwm school**

The site is level and has undergone environmental works. It is approximately 3.21 acres in size. There is on-road parking but this is congested at school times. There is a small car park located opposite Pen y Cwm School which can house 115 cars, however this is a five-minute walk from the site, and would require crossing a main road. Res KNL is fairly close to a transport hub and other facilities, but the distance is approximately 1.6m rather than adjacent to Res KNL. Furthermore, it is 1.1km from the leisure centre and 1.4km from Coleg Gwent, thus preventing easy use of those facilities for treatment or specialist leisure provision. For these reasons, site Res KNL is scored considerably higher than this site.

The price for this land will be an equivalent price per acre as Res KNL, the other site located on the works.

### 3.4 Conclusion

We have carried out a thorough search of all available sites in the area of North Gwent within the criteria set. The site Res KNL at Lime Road, Ebbw Vale stands out as the most appropriate. The next best site is Res F on Strand Annealing Ln, Ebbw Vale. Despite scoring better than the remaining sites of interest, it scored well below site Res KNL due to the distance from the Leisure Centre, Transport Hub, Coleg Gwent, and undercover parking facilities. For this reason, site Res KNL has been identified as the site recommended for the Children's Centre and Transition Hub.

## Appendices

### **Appendix 1 – Estimated Numbers for a New Children’s Centre in North Gwent**



Appendix 1-  
Estimated numbers i

### **Appendix 2 – Map of Monmouthshire bus routes**



Appendix 2 - Map  
of Monmouthshire t

### **Appendix 3 – Deprivation by Local Health Board**



Appendix 3 -  
Deprivation by Local

### **Appendix 4 – Deprivation map of Wales**



Appendix 4-  
Deprivation map of

### **Appendix 5 – Site locations in Ebbw Vale**



Appendix 5 - Site  
locations in Ebbw V

### **Appendix 6 – The Works Ebbw Vale design and masterplan**



Appendix 6 - The  
works ebbw Vale de

### **Appendix 7 – Email from corporate land manager**



Appendix 7 - Email  
from corporate land

## Appendix 8 - Available land and scoring



Appendix 8-  
Available land and s