



# Complete Agenda

Democratic Services  
Swyddfa'r Cyngor  
CAERNARFON  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1SH

Meeting

**CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date and Time

**10.00 am, THURSDAY, 26TH NOVEMBER, 2020**

***NOTE: A BRIEFING SESSION WILL BE HELD FOR MEMBERS AT 10.00 A.M.***

Location

**Zoom Virtual Meeting**

**\* NOTE**

**This meeting will be webcast**

[https://gwynedd.public-i.tv/core//en\\_GB/portal/home](https://gwynedd.public-i.tv/core//en_GB/portal/home)

Contact Point

**Einir Rhian Davies**

**01286 679868**

**einirrhiandavies@gwynedd.llyw.cymru**

(DISTRIBUTED 18/11/20)

## **CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MEMBERSHIP (18)**

#### **Plaid Cymru (10)**

Councillors

Menna Baines  
Alan Jones Evans  
Linda Ann Jones  
Dafydd Owen  
Linda Morgan

Annwen Daniels  
Gareth Tudor Morris Jones  
Olaf Cai Larsen  
Berwyn Parry Jones  
Rheinallt Puw

#### **Independent (5)**

Councillors

Richard Medwyn Hughes  
Beth Lawton  
Angela Russell

Eryl Jones-Williams  
Dewi Wyn Roberts

#### **Llais Gwynedd (1)**

Councillor  
Anwen J. Davies

#### **Gwynedd United Independents (1)**

Councillor  
Vacant Seat - Gwynedd United Independents

#### **Welsh National Party (1)**

Councillor

#### **Ex-officio Members**

Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council

#### **Other Invited Members**

# **A G E N D A**

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

To Elect a Chairman for this Committee for 2020-21

**2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR**

To Elect a Vice-Chairman for this Committee for 2020-21

**3. APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies for absence

**4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

To receive any declarations of personal interest

**5. URGENT MATTERS**

**6. MINUTES**

4 - 13

The Chairman shall propose that the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on the 30th January 2020, be signed as a true record.

**7. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION ON SUPPORTING THE DISABLED PEOPLE OF GWYNEDD (WHEELCHAIR SERVICE)** 14 - 20

To Receive a Progress Report on the on the Recommendations of the Scrutiny Investigation on Supporting the Disabled People of Gwynedd (Wheelchair Service)

**8. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

21 - 31

To consider a report on Looked After Children and Young People

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## CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 30/01/2020

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**Present:** Councillor Dewi Roberts (Chair).  
Councillor Beth Lawton (Vice-chair).

**Councillors:** Menna Baines, Annwen Daniels, Anwen Davies Gareth T M Jones, R.Medwyn Hughes, Eryl Jones-Williams, Cai Larsen, Dafydd Owen, Peter Read and Angela Russell.

**Officers present:** Llywela Owain (Senior Scrutiny and Language Advisor), Lowri Haf Evans (Democratic Services Officer) and Gruff Ellis (Democratic Services Officer)

**Present for item 5:**

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)  
Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department)  
Aled Gibbard (Senior Operational Manager - Childcare Resources)  
Melvin Panther (Fostering Team Manager)

**Present for item 6:**

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)  
Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department)  
Aled Gibbard (Senior Operational Manager - Childcare Resources)  
Melvin Panther (Fostering Team Manager)

**Present for item 7 below:**

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)  
Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department)  
Stephen Wood (Gwynedd and Anglesey Youth Justice Service Manager)

**Present for item 8:**

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)  
Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department)

**Present for item 9:**

Councillor Craig ab Iago (Cabinet Member for Housing)  
Dafydd Gibbard (Head of Housing and Property Department)

**Present for item 10:**

Councillor Dafydd Meurig (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being)  
Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)  
Mari Wynne Jones (Senior Adult Services Manager)

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Linda Ann Wyn Jones

**2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

- a) Councillor Cai Larsen for item 9 on the agenda, as he sat on the Adra Housing Association Board.
- b) Councillor Dewi Roberts for item 10 on the agenda, as his wife worked with Dementia patients in the Dwyfor Area.

They were not prejudicial interests.

### **3 URGENT ITEMS**

None to note.

### **4. MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 14 November 2019 as a true record.

### **5. THE NATIONAL FOSTERING FRAMEWORK**

An update was submitted on the National Fostering Framework, which included comprehensive and substantial information regarding the Framework along with the proposed development of the Framework on a national and regional level. Reference was made to the main work streams associated with the Framework's work programme, along with the regional priorities. In addition to the regional priorities, it was reported that the Service in Gwynedd was reviewing its structure in response to the Service's requirements in terms of achieving better balance when assessing and supporting kinship and general foster carers.

Members were encouraged to attend activity days for foster parents which were arranged jointly by the Council and the Foster Parents Partnership in order to scrutinise the relationship and attempt to gain better understanding of the work.

Gratitude was expressed for the information, and the staff were congratulated on their hard work in a very important field.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by Members:-

- There was a concern regarding a lack of support from Welsh Government to fund the need
- The anticipation of the need for 180 new general foster carers over the next three years was ambitious
- There was a need for better marketing - some authorities were more innovative than others
- There was a concern that the private sector would gain more influence
- There was a need to ensure that Welsh speaking children were placed with Welsh families
- The report was too general - there was a need for more information regarding the situation in Gwynedd
- There was a concern, should two teams be established, that certain matters would fall 'between two stools'
- There was a concern that people were withdrawing from the process as the process was too complex and difficult - a suggestion was made to ask fosterers who withdrew for their reasons

In response to a question regarding the additional work which has been created with the arrival of the national work programme, it was noted that positive regional collaboration was in place across the regions and that, due to this, there were not many changes / amendments to be made.

In response to an observation regarding the reason people were withdrawing from the process, it was highlighted that the reasons varied but that the majority were due to a change in personal circumstances rather than dissatisfaction with the Service. It was expressed that there was a need to ensure a robust process with safe regulations and guidelines; the requirements and criteria were high due to the nature of the field.

It was added that the re-branding of the Service across Wales to attract people into the Service was one of the Framework's key work streams. It was noted that a bid had been submitted to the Government for additional funds for branding and recruitment in Gwynedd. Traditionally, marketing had not been a part of job requirements within the Gwynedd fostering model; however, the Service was now confident that establishing a specific post for marketing and recruitment would be a substantial improvement.

In response to an observation regarding the need for 180 new general foster carers over the next three years, it was highlighted that this was a regional figure, and that Gwynedd anticipated the need for 30 carers over the next three years. While accepting that this was ambitious, the need to ensure a work programme for Gwynedd on what was needed was emphasised.

In response to a concern regarding splitting the fostering team into two, it was emphasised that there was no intention to split the team. What was being considered was a division of roles, in order for one team to focus on general foster carers and the other to focus on kinship foster carers.

**RESOLVED to accept the report**

- **An update on the marketing element is required in 12 months' time.**
- **An update on the successes / failures of dividing the fostering team's roles is required in 12 months' time.**
- **A request is made for a report explaining how Gwynedd's work interlinks with regional work (successes and failures)**

**6. NORTH WALES ADOPTION SERVICE**

An update was submitted on the North Wales Adoption Service. Members were reminded of the work done by Local Authorities in North Wales to work in partnership to create a regional service, by pooling resources and acting efficiently when placing children. The Service became operational in April 2010, and the National Adoption Service was established five years later. Reference was made to the Annual Report (2018 - 2019) of the National Adoption Service, which was appended to the report.

It was explained that Wrexham Borough County Council was the Host Authority for the Service and that the staff, since 2010, had been seconded to the Service but continued to work within their original authorities. The fact that the performance of all Welsh regions was collated by the National Adoption Service was highlighted, and that four main achievements had been identified for North Wales in 2018 - 2019:

- The appointment of a Contact Co-ordination Officer who offered consistent responses and support to adoptive and biological parents in terms of direct and non-direct contact.
- Worked with the specialist, Richard Rose, to implement the Life History Framework.
- Extended the Buddy Scheme for Adopters.
- Invested in increasing the Training Officer's skills

Following a review of the Service in 2017-2019, insufficient capacity on an operational and strategic level to manage and develop the service was identified, and therefore the structure was remodelled by moving over to a Service which was managed fully by Wrexham Council. It was noted that all current staff would transfer into Wrexham Council's employment in 2020, but would continue to work from their current local authorities. It was reported that additional funding was available on a national level for the development of adoption support services along with National Lottery funding for a TESSA Service.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by Members:-

- That many of the Service's work streams were dependent on grants or additional funding, and that this created concern as a result of having to depend on grants. There was a need to consider plans for reserve funding.
- There was a risk that schemes could be withdrawn due to a lack of budget
- Should Gwynedd Council consider the option of buying a house in order to keep children from the same family together?
- There was a need for better marketing of the Service as well as improving communication methods

In response to an observation regarding permanent budgets, the Cabinet Member noted his desire to ensure that open discussions were being held when any successful and effective grant funded scheme continued.

In response to an observation that the data submitted with the report highlighted that Gwynedd appeared very low in terms of enquiry numbers, the number of adopters available, children placed in 2018 and the number waiting for placements, it was noted that there were no particular reasons for the low levels. It was acknowledged that there was a need to ensure that people received the correct information and that there was a need for better marketing of the service and to erase the historic perception of requirements for adopting. It was added that there was a way to discuss and collaborate through any situation.

In response to a question as to whether the children who were fostered moved on to be adopted by the same family, it was noted that there were successful examples to be had, but that consideration of the child's true needs was the priority. It was noted that no child was placed with the intention of being moved on to adoption.

It was noted that there were insufficient adoption providers for children and that the number of families / enquiries displayed a lower trend than usual. However, this was not unique to North Wales and, as a result, the matter was being addressed on a national level.

**RESOLVED to accept the report, and a request was made for an update in 12 months' time**

## **7. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROBLEMATIC AND HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR TEAM (PHSB TEAM)**

A report was submitted notifying Members of the development and key expectations of the Problematic and Harmful Sexual Behaviour Team established for Gwynedd in September 2019. The purpose of establishing a multi-agency integrated team was to provide support to co-ordinate cases of problematic and harmful sexual behaviour in response to the requirements of the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Inspection and Framework. It was noted in the Report that, although good work was being done, there was very little early intervention available.

Attention was drawn to the rationale for establishing the team in addition to the way the team was funded via the Integrated Care Fund. It was highlighted that the Gwynedd Team (now known as the Emrallt Team) comprised of four members and was located with the Youth Justice Service, where it benefited from the established partnership strategies and cross-sector networks.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by Members:-

- Concern that the problem was on the rise
- There was a need to encourage / call upon parents to take responsibility
- There was a need to ensure early intervention
- Concern around the fact that the project was funded via the Integrated Care Fund - there was a need to secure permanent funding for the project
- All Councillors and Governors were encouraged to use / familiarise themselves with 'Myconcern' (a useful resource to record safeguarding concerns for schools)
- People needed to be encouraged to pick up the phone and discuss / highlight concerns - there was a need to reinforce the message
- There was need to ensure that messages were shared with school Welfare Officers and the Police

In response to an observation regarding the securing of permanent funding for this project, it was highlight that there was no indication that permanent funding was available for this project.

**RESOLVED to accept the report**

## **8. THE 'A HEALTHIER WALES' (CHILDREN) TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

A report was submitted providing Members with an update on the implementation progress of the 'A Healthier Wales' (Children) Transformation Programme in Gwynedd. Members were reminded that 'A Healthier Wales' was Welsh Government's long term scheme for health and social care, published in 2018 in response to the Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care. In relation to the Healthier Wales Scheme, there was an action plan, arranged in the form of a national programme of transformation and supported by the Transformation Fund. It was added that the North Wales Regional Partnership Board had responded to 'A Healthier Wales', securing resources from the transformation fund for four fields of work. It was highlighted that one of those fields was

Transforming Integrated Early Intervention and Intensive Support for Children and Young People. An update was provided on the programme's main work streams.

- Piloting of the 'Effective Child Protection' model - the pilot was operational in Gwynedd only, in an attempt to ensure that child protection practices were effective. The other north Wales regions were eager to see whether the project was successful
- The Intensive Support Multi-disciplinary Team - the establishment of a team across Gwynedd and Anglesey to ensure support for a small percentage of families who would benefit from intensive intervention due to complex needs
- Early Support Hub - work was ongoing to develop the Hub, which had already drawn together the Children's Social Services Admissions Team, the Information for Families Team and the Team around the Family. The hub would use one procedure for admission, assessment and referral, and would be a gateway for information, early support, preventative services, care and safeguarding.
- Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Well-being - this work stream was being led by Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board. The first meeting of the Steering Group, arranged for January, had been postponed.

It was reported that the work streams supported by designated Project Managers reported to the North Wales Children and Young People Transformation Group.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by Members:-

- That postponing the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Well-being Steering Group was unacceptable, given the importance of the field
- There was a concern that Council services would have to fill the gap if the Health Board did not provide services
- There was a need to ensure that the effective child protection model continued beyond the pilot period.

In response to a concern regarding the fact that the first meeting of the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Well-being Steering Group had been postponed, it was noted that it was a challenging situation in terms of delivering the right service for children, and that it was the Steering Group's intention to have open discussions with the Health Board to improve the provision.

In response to an observation regarding the effective child protection model, it was noted that the work would continue as it was led by the Service's internal arrangements. It was added that Gwynedd would be launching a good practice model, and that the practice would be cascaded to the entire service over the coming year.

The service was thanked for its work

**RESOLVED to receive an update in 12 months' time**

## **9. HOUSING ACTION PLAN 2020 - 2025**

A report on the Housing Action Plan for 2020 to 2025 was submitted by the Cabinet member and the Head of Housing and Property Department. The purpose of this report was to update the Care Scrutiny Committee on the impending work to develop specific solutions to the housing challenges facing the residents of Gwynedd, in order to consult with the Committee before the proposed expenditure programme was submitted for the Cabinet's approval in due course, in March of the same year. The report explained the main housing challenges seen in Gwynedd, the resources available for the housing plan 2020-25, and the long list of schemes which needed priority. It was emphasised that this was an early step in the process, and that the presenters were at the meeting to listen to Committee members' input and priorities, in order to begin the work of turning the Council's housing strategy into an operational plan for the next financial year.

The funding available to achieve these schemes was discussed, and attention was drawn specifically to the source of income from Council tax on second homes and empty houses. In response to a question from the members, it was noted that the figure in the report and the anticipated income from this tax was reasonable. It was estimated that £2.7m would be collected annually from this tax; however, it was noted that £2.9m had been collected in the first year. The challenge posed by people who had ways and means of avoiding this taxation, such as by registering the house as a business, was discussed. It was noted that there were upcoming discussions with the Government regarding ensuring that people did not avoid paying as they were required to do. It was also explained that the Council had the ability to take out loans at a cheaper rate than housing associations, should the Council decide that more funding was needed to support the housing plan. In response to a question regarding the Council's relationship with housing associations, it was emphasised that the intention and aim was to work with the housing associations rather than to compete against them. It was explained working alongside the housing associations was an opportunity to combine resources, skills and strengths in various fields, especially as the Council had transferred its expertise in tasks such as rent collection to Adra.

In response to members' enquiries regarding the ambition, it was acknowledged that there were many obstacles, including financial ones, but it was emphasised that they were ambitious, and wished to achieve as many of the schemes as possible. In response to a question from members regarding what the Housing and Property Department considered to be the priorities, the head of department noted the following: bringing empty houses back into use as this achieved more than one objective, increasing the housing options available to local people, schemes involving care and supported housing, and schemes addressing homelessness issues.

The Cabinet Member and the Head of the Housing and Property Department expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions and observations from members. They expressed their gratitude to the Committee for its work, that they appreciated the good relationship, and that they were eager for the Committee to play an increased role in future. During the discussion, the following observations were made:

- Each of the schemes noted in the report were approved, noting that it was difficult to prioritise them. However, the priorities mentioned or highlighted during the discussion were increasing the number of affordable houses for young people, offering support to people who were unable to get a mortgage or who were unable to secure temporary accommodation while the house was being built, housing for large families with many children, prioritising vulnerable people and the schemes which would have the widest impact on the largest number of people, prioritising supported housing in order to ensure that people were able to live independently (something the Council, in the opinion of the member, had not always succeeded

in doing in the past), and purchasing empty houses in order to bring the buildings back into use.

- In response to an observation that support for large families with many children was not included within the schemes, reference was made to three items in the plan which could address this issue; however, it was acknowledged that there was a need to make direct reference to large families in order to highlight this.
- In response to observations regarding the number of affordable houses, the support available to young people at present, and the general definition of affordable housing, it was explained that some of the matters referred to were planning matters. It was noted that the Plan would attempt to address the need to increase housing options and supply for local people.
- In response to members' observations regarding the relationship with the planning department, the Head of Department noted that constructive discussions had already commenced with the planning department in terms of what was possible to achieve. The Head of Department noted that both departments had a very good relationship and that they would continue to work together on what was possible to achieve within the Planning framework. It was also emphasised that the importance was in providing according to need rather than windfall development, thus agreeing with a member's observation that the point in the report regarding establishing the actual need for houses in our communities was of core importance to the plan in moving forward.
- It was noted that the Council ran an empty houses scheme, which had succeeded in bringing 56 houses back into use in the current year. It was explained that the process of recovering well-known empty buildings in town centres was a lengthy and complicated one, but that there were upcoming discussions with the Government in order to understand how this process could be undertaken, and that it was possible that there would be new powers available in the near future.
- In response to an observation that getting a mortgage was the main obstacle preventing people from acquiring a house and that the Council should therefore consider purchasing houses or offering loans, it was explained that the Department was aware of a previous discussion regarding a mortgages scheme, but that part-ownership schemes seemed more promising as a solution at present.
- The possibility of supporting individuals through the self-build process was also discussed. It was noted that one of the schemes within the report referred to this situation, as the Government was investing in a similar scheme. It was noted that it appeared to be a complex scheme at present.
- The suggestion that councillors should help by drawing officers' attention to land which went up for sale in their wards in order to allow the Council to move quickly should it be possible to purchase was welcomed. The Committee was asked for its approval to develop this idea further, in order to obtain guidance as to how this could be done and via which process.

**RESOLVED to accept the report and look at establishing a task and finish group in order to work alongside the Housing and Property Department, and to offer support through the process of prioritising the housing schemes.**

## 10. DEMENTIA

A dementia report was submitted for information and to raise awareness of dementia, by providing Members with an overview of the work being done in Gwynedd to secure support and services for people living with dementia. In 2015, there were 1,927 aged 65 and over in Gwynedd who had dementia. By 2035, it was anticipated that there would be 2,923 people in Gwynedd who had dementia. It was noted in the report that it was

difficult to obtain accurate data on the actual number of individuals who lived with dementia or memory impairments in Gwynedd, since a great many of those who came to our attention had not received an assessment or an official diagnosis. It was stated in the report that the vision was to provide timely information, advice and support to individuals with dementia in Gwynedd. It was noted that a range of support was available to individuals diagnosed with Dementia, from information and community support as the early signs of the condition emerged, to mainstream services such as domiciliary care and day care, and specialist intensive care during the final stages. It was noted that the Council was eager to ensure that people with dementia received the most suitable care as locally as possible.

The report stated that Gwynedd Council would maintain its commitment to fulfilling the requirements of the Dementia Action Plan for Wales by working together with individuals, their families and friends, and our partners in the third sector and the Health Board. It was noted that the services were reliant on temporary funding to support a great number of the developments in care provision for individuals with dementia. It was noted that, as part of the previous year's bidding process, the department had submitted an application to bridge the Dementia Go Scheme gap, and that the challenge was to secure long-term funding to ensure the sustainability and continued development of this service.

The Cabinet Member and officers expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions and observations from the members. During the discussion, the following observations were made:

- The Cabinet Member and the officers were thanked for the report. It was noted that it was difficult to scrutinise the entire content of the report within a single session, and it was noted that a specific field under the title of dementia could be identified for scrutiny in depth if required.
- Sympathy was expressed towards people who lived with dementia or who cared for people with dementia, and it was acknowledged that this was a problem affecting an increasing number of people within our communities. It was noted that a number of families were facing the difficult situation of being unable to care for a person living with dementia and having to depend on a care service.
- Concern was raised regarding residential and nursing home fees, especially those additional fees within the service that people were expected to pay, noting that the fees in general were beyond some people's capacity to afford. It was acknowledged that this was a matter related to the dementia report, and that it was an increasingly problematic issue. It was noted that it was a reflection of the situation in general, across the care sector. It was confirmed that the Council was aware of the situation and was looking at sustainable fees, but it was noted that the Council was not the only commissioner within the field; therefore, until the situation in its entirety was given attention, it would be difficult to resolve.
- It was emphasised that, in the member's opinion, dementia was a matter for the Health Board. It was noted that there was a need for the Health Board and social services, with the Government's guidance, to work together to tackle the problem of dementia, and that it would be impossible to find a solution to the problem until this collaboration occurred.
- In response to members' observations, it was noted that individuals often arrived at the Council's door when their condition had deteriorated to a situation of

emergency, and that traditional care in care homes was the suitable response in such situations. It was noted that many people in our communities were currently living with the early symptoms of dementia, but had not been diagnosed. It was emphasised that there was a need to improve the methods of providing information regarding the services and the provision available from the Council and other sectors in order to reach people sooner, and to support them along the care pathway before they arrived at a care home in a state of emergency. The requirements of dementia provision meant that a wide range of support was available via the care system from the Council, the third sector and the Health Board. In addition to this, it was noted that reinforcing the support for carers was a priority and that the department had appointed a member of staff to look at this field in particular.

- In response to a question regarding units for partners within dementia care homes, it was explained that these units were not specifically available within the Council's services, but that it was possible to make arrangements for couples to be co-located in the same home. Units of this kind were available at some other care homes.
- In response to a question regarding the relationship with the Housing and Property Department, it was confirmed that there had been close collaboration, and that the schemes in the Housing and Property Department's report, presented during the previous item, reflected the Adults, Health and Well-being department's input and suggestions. The care schemes within the housing plan derived from the needs identified by the Adults' Department and the Children's Department. There were discussions regarding Frondeg in Caernarfon and the Penygroes Health Hub in particular. It was noted that this was a long term programme of developments in order to address the needs which increased annually.
- In response to members' observations regarding the lack of private sector care provision in south Meirionnydd, it was noted that there was a need to consider the possibilities in terms of the Council offering to fill the gap, and it was explained that the Council's investment in the homes in that area was a reflection of this.
- In response to a request made by the members, it was agreed to prepare a concise handout by the next meeting, giving an outline view of the service with information and figures in terms of bed numbers, staff numbers, length of waiting lists, etc.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 3.10pm.

(lunch break 12:40 - 13:30)

# Agenda Item 7

## **Progress Report on the recommendations of the scrutiny Investigation on Supporting the Disabled People of Gwynedd (Wheelchair Service)**

Adopted by the Care Scrutiny Committee on 12 September 2019.

### **1. Foreward**

This scrutiny investigation has lifted the veil on the service available to provide wheelchairs to the residents of Gwynedd, both adults and children. The intention was to investigate and see if it is possible to improve the current provision.

### **2. Introduction**

2.1 Following a Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Peter Read to the Council meeting on 15 June 2017, the Council determined:

"That the Council refers the question of the suitability of arrangements to provide wheelchairs to the residents of Gwynedd for consideration on the scrutiny programme."

### **3. Aim of Scrutiny Investigation**

The aim of the Scrutiny Investigation, was to answer the following questions:

- 3.1.1 Is there evidence to show that the **individuals who use the services are put at the centre** of the process of assessing and providing suitable equipment, and are they assisted to live their lives in the way they wish to live them?
- 3.1.2 If there is **dissatisfaction or complaints** about the existing service, are they addressed in a satisfactory manner?
- 3.1.3 If needed, how could the **service be improved for the future**?

### **4. Summary and Update on Recommendations**

- 4.1 This investigation looks at a service that is provided by the Health Service in Wales, and there are organisations that specifically exist to scrutinise its work, and to listen to the voice of the Health Service users. Therefore, it is right and proper that organisations such as Community Health Councils in Wales, Welsh Assembly and Welsh Government consider the matters that have arisen through this scrutiny investigation, and act accordingly.

4.2 Additional elements of support are also provided to wheelchair users by other organisations, which are mostly Local Authorities and third sector agencies. We have also researched elements of this extra support and have proposed observations or recommendations where we believe there are opportunities to improve the existing provision.

4.3 Recommendations:

4.3.1 That the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being and the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families refer this report for the attention of the North Wales Community Health Council, and ask them to consider the need to request that the Welsh Government hold a national review of the suitability of the wheelchair provision from the perspective of the service users.

**Update: confirmation that the Cabinet Member for Adults Health and Wellbeing has contacted the North Wales Community Health Council to outline the aim of the investigation and share a full copy of the report and recommendations.**

4.3.2 That the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being and the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families refer this report for the attention of the Minister for Health and Social Services at Welsh Government.

**Update: confirmation that the Cabinet Member for Adults Health and Wellbeing has referred the report to the attention of Vaughan Gething, the Minister for Health and Social Services at Welsh Government.**

4.3.3 That the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee publish its annual report on the performance on the Posture and Mobility Service, in accordance with its policy, so that it can be scrutinised publicly.

**Update: confirmation that the Welsh Health Specialist Services Committee publish annual reports in regards of their services.**

4.3.4 That the Posture and Mobility Service (PAMS) research the possibility of having an electronic form or referral system that everyone involved with the referral process can follow. If this is not possible, a communication system should be agreed which ensures that PAMS immediately informs the individual and the referee that the referral has been received, and the expected timetable for the provision of the wheelchair or equipment.

**Update on recommendations 4.3.4 to 4.3.12 –see Appendix 1 (page 5):  
Update on actions by the Posture & Mobility service**

**Gwynedd Adults Health and Wellbeing Department reports that the Posture and Mobility Service (PAMS) have introduced an electronic referral form. This has made a big difference for our Occupational Therapists in facilitating timely requests for equipment, especially during COVID 19. The new system has enabled the department to track referrals easier.**

4.3.5 That the Posture and Mobility Service continues to work with other organisations (e.g. GPs, local nurses, occupational therapists in the community) in order to share information about an individual's needs assessments for a wheelchair. This should avoid duplication and the need to hold separate reviews for the provision of other equipment, e.g. shower chairs. This should also speed up the process of providing the necessary support for the service user.

**Update: The Adults Health and Wellbeing Department have established bi-monthly meetings with the Posture and Mobility Service (PAMS) to facilitate the process of improving the overall service to the residents of Gwynedd. The aim is to enhance communication and joint working. Gwynedd Council's Occupational Therapists are in regular contact with PAMS and joint visits are conducted.**

4.3.6 That the Posture and Mobility Service, the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee and Gwynedd Council (and other Councils if they so wish) continue to collaborate in order to attempt to overcome the existing barrier of having separate assessments for the needs of the individual who requires a wheelchair, and the need to modify the individual's home.

**Update: PAMS and Gwynedd Council are collaborating in order to improve the communication path between both organisations, and are conducting joint visits with individuals in order to assess them for wheelchairs.**

4.3.7 The outcomes of the new scheme being trialled in south Wales to train some specialist staff in the community to be able to conduct Level 2 assessments (specialist or powered wheelchairs) should be considered. If successful, consideration should be given to rolling it out nationally.

4.3.8 In line with the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, information and best practice should be shared via the Community Clusters (health and social care workers collaborating on a local level). Information regarding which staff from which organisations are trained to conduct Level 1 and 2 assessments should be shared locally amongst all organisations that support individuals in wheelchairs, in order to speed up the referral process for the benefit of the service user.

4.3.9 In line with the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Posture and Mobility Service should continue to work in partnership with other organisations in order to support and enrich the well-being of service users.

**Update: see 4.3.5**

4.3.10 Consideration should be given to training local nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, carers, etc. to monitor the use of specialist chairs and equipment in order to attempt to anticipate problems with the equipment, or to identify whether there is a need to adjust them to respond to the needs of the individual, and promptly inform the Posture and Mobility Service of any needs.

**Update: It has been agreed in the bi-monthly meetings between Gwynedd Council and PAMS to have regular training sessions between both services in order to ensure that the process can be improved further. This training will be offered to other Allied health professionals within the Community Resource Teams including District Nurses, Physiotherapists et al.**

4.3.11 Local nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, carers, etc. should inform the Posture and Mobility Service promptly if they are aware of defective chairs or equipment that are no longer in use, so that they can be collected and reused by others in need.

4.3.12 As training is already available to carers on the use of wheelchairs, this should be promoted and maximised.

## Appendix 1:



### Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

23/10/2020

### Scrutiny Investigation Report: Supporting the Disabled People of Gwynedd (Wheelchair Service)

#### Update on actions by the Posture & Mobility service

(This excludes recommendations that are outside the remit of the service)

#### Recommendations

- *4.3.4 That the Posture and Mobility Service (PAMS) research the possibility of having an electronic form or referral system that everyone involved with the referral process can follow. If this is not possible, a communication system should be agreed which ensures that PAMS immediately informs the individual and the referee that the referral has been received, and the expected timetable for the provision of the wheelchair or equipment.*

**Action: A new electronic referral form is currently in development and will be moving to the implementation stage shortly with a target date of December 2020. In terms of individuals and referrers, all clients that are identified as requiring an assessment receive an acknowledgment letter that indicates what clinical pathway for which they have been referred, with this being completed according to a timeframe set by WHSSC.**

- *4.3.5 That the Posture and Mobility Service continues to work with other organisations (e.g. GPs, local nurses, occupational therapists in the community) in order to share information about an individual's needs assessments for a wheelchair. This should avoid duplication and the need to hold separate reviews for the provision of other equipment, e.g. shower chairs. This should also speed up the process of providing the necessary support for the service user.*

**Action: The service proposes setting up a working group with regional partners to identify ways to improve information sharing to remove the barriers identified. Due to COVID-19, the setting up of working groups has been put on hold due to service priorities, but communication has been taking place between partners in terms of support in the current pandemic. A target date of February 2021 has been set by the service, dependent upon the ongoing pandemic response.**

- *4.3.6 That the Posture and Mobility Service, the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee and Gwynedd Council (and other Councils if they so wish) continue to collaborate in order to attempt to overcome the existing barrier of having separate assessments for the needs of the individual who requires a wheelchair, and the need to modify the individual's home.*

**Action: The service proposes setting up a working group with regional partners to identify ways to improve information sharing to remove the barriers identified. Due to COVID-19, the setting up of working groups has been put on hold due to service priorities, but communication has been taking place between partners in terms of support in the current pandemic. A target date of February 2021 has been set by the service, dependent upon the ongoing pandemic response.**

- *4.3.7 The outcomes of the new scheme being trialled in south Wales to train some specialist staff in the community to be able to conduct Level 2 assessments (specialist or powered wheelchairs) should be considered. If successful, consideration should be given to rolling it out nationally.*

**Action: The service will engage with the South Wales service to determine the clinical effectiveness of the trial. If the outcome is positive, then this will be discussed with the service commissioner, WHSSC, as to whether this should be a standardised All Wales approach.**

- *4.3.8 In line with the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, information and best practice should be shared via the Community Clusters (health and social care workers collaborating on a local level). Information regarding which staff from which organisations are trained to conduct Level 1 and 2 assessments should be shared locally amongst all organisations that support individuals in wheelchairs, in order to speed up the referral process for the benefit of the service user.*

**Action: Linked to Actions 4.3.5 and 4.3.6**

- *4.3.9 In line with the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Posture and Mobility Service should continue to work in partnership with other organisations in order to support and enrich the well-being of service users.*

**Action: In line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board works in cooperation and partnership with its Local Authority partners and others in order to improve outcomes for its population.**

- *4.3.10 Consideration should be given to training local nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, carers, etc. to monitor the use of specialist chairs and equipment in order to attempt to anticipate problems with the equipment, or to*

*identify whether there is a need to adjust them to respond to the needs of the individual, and promptly inform the Posture and Mobility Service of any needs.*

**Action: Level 1 training is available at multiple venues and dates throughout the year. These are shared with the services main referrers and in addition, the service is able to offer training for teams where enough staff are available to attend.**

- 4.3.11 Local nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, carers, etc. should inform the Posture and Mobility Service promptly if they are aware of defective chairs or equipment that are no longer in use, so that they can be collected and reused by others in need.

**Action: The service can be contacted in regard of equipment no longer in use or requiring attention. The service reuses and recycles equipment wherever it is safe and effective to do so.**

- 4.3.12 *As training is already available to carers on the use of wheelchairs, this should be promoted and maximised.*

**Action: As indicated in the finding the training is already in place and available. The Posture and Mobility service continually look at ways to promote this service and ways to engage with service users and their carers to develop the service.**

<b>NAME OF COMMITTEE</b>	Care Scrutiny Committee
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	26 November 2020
<b>TITLE OF ITEM</b>	Looked After Children and Young People
<b>PURPOSE</b>	An overview of matters relating to care services for children and young people
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Marian Parry Hughes, Head of Service
<b>CABINET MEMBER</b>	Councillor Dilwyn Morgan

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an overview to the Scrutiny Committee of the situation in the field of looked after children in the Council, to set the context of the current policy and to draw attention to the manner the service has responded to ensure consistency during the Covid period to maintain support and a service for this cohort of children and young people being looked after by the Council.
- 1.2 At the end of September 2020, 294 children were looked after by Gwynedd Council. The members will be aware that the Council has a statutory responsibility as corporate parents for each of these children and young people, and therefore there is a responsibility to ensure that they get the best opportunities in life to thrive and to develop like any other child. Each child needs to be considered as "If this were my child..."
- 1.3 Children become looked after for a variety of different reasons, but in the vast majority of cases the decision to bring children into care is based on incident(s) of significant harm to them in the care of their parents. This means that children have suffered physical, sexual, emotional abuse and/or negligence. There are also examples now of teenagers becoming looked after by us due to their own behaviour, meaning they put themselves in danger and self-harm, suffer abuse by being sexually exploited or by being drawn into offending (e.g. 'county lines'). In the majority of these cases, keeping these young people safe is extremely challenging, and the ability of parents to do this is compromised to the extent where there is no choice but to bring them into care to do our best to keep them safe.

## The Current Situation

- 2.1 The Council implements its corporate parenting responsibility through a social worker and a manager in the Children and Supporting Families Service, and the Corporate Parent Panel is responsible for ensuring that the multi-agency services offered to looked after children is of high quality, is accessible and meets their needs. Our ambition for looked after children is to:
  - Provide safe, stable homes for them to thrive and develop
  - Work with our partners to ensure the best possible outcomes for each child looked after by us
  - Support families to stay with each other and to look after their children safely
  - Return children to live with their parents when safe to do so
  - Provide a wide range of appropriate, suitable and local placements
- 2.2 As noted above, 294 children (156 families) were being looked after by Gwynedd Council at the end of September 2020, which is an increase of 11% from September 2019. 27 children were looked after for the first time between April and September 2020. 24 left care during the same period, either by returning home, quashing their care orders, moving to live independently, being adopted, or becoming subject to a Special Care Order to their carers. The vast majority of the children who

become looked after are the subject of a Care Order which is an order through the court which gives the Council parental responsibility. This responsibility is shared with the parent, and collaboration with the parent is crucial to ensuring that the needs of the children are being met. At times, the Council must make decisions that are contrary to the wishes of the parent for the welfare of the children, and a Care Order gives the Head of Service authority as the designated person on behalf of the Council to make these decisions. Some examples of the type of decisions include giving a child consent to receive medical treatment if the parent refuses; going on holiday abroad with his/her carers and preventing contact with some individuals. Birth parents only lose their parental responsibility through adoption.

2.3 As seen in Appendix 1, which provides members with details of the information, the majority of looked after children in Gwynedd still live with their own families either through a Care Order and a Placement with Parents arrangement, or they are placed with extended members of their families who are registered as foster parents.

2.4 There has been a substantial increase over the past five years in the number of care cases living at home with their parents (see Appendix 1). These cases are high risk as significant harm has been proven; however, there is recognition that it is possible to work closely with the parents to change the behaviour to look after their children appropriately. It means that children are not removed from their homes, but that additional safety measures are required to ensure that the placement in their homes is safe. They are subject to the same review, visiting and support arrangements as any other looked after child living with foster parents or in residential care.

2.5 Our most valuable resource is the foster carers that have registered for general fostering. Without them, we would not be in a situation to offer stability or safe homes for over 100 children in Gwynedd. They are very special families who open their doors and lives to children who have suffered trauma, and who work with us as a service to identify their needs to ensure that they gain access to the services they need in order to develop. They play an essential part in the lives of these children, whether it is a long-term placement throughout their childhood, a short-term placement, respite care or a placement that prepares children to move to permanent placements, for example adoption.

2.6 Within our own fostering resources - known as general fostering - 72 placements have been registered, with the capacity of offering placements for 139 children. 60 other foster placements that look after 96 children are extended family placements, from grandparents to aunts and uncles, and older siblings. Between April and October 2020, nine additional family placements were registered for 15 children, and four general fostering placements were registered, which currently offer care for seven children. We regularly look for innovative and new ways of recruiting foster carers, and take a full part in the work that takes place nationally under the National Fostering Framework.

2.7 Currently, there are 21 children and young people in residential care as they have complex and intensive needs that cannot be met within a foster placement. These needs include matters such as inappropriate sexual behaviour; self-harm and dangerous behaviour; sexual exploitation, severe disabilities and behaviours beyond the parents' control that endanger the welfare of the young person. Finding a suitable placement for this cohort of children is extremely challenging. They are placed in units outside Gwynedd, as well as outside Wales as they have very specific needs.

2.8 At times, the ability to find a suitable residential placement is impossible, and the service must make a decision to establish a plan to look after the child themselves, staffed 24 hours by our own workers. This is fundamentally unlawful and is considered as an unmanaged placement. As a result, we are required to inform the Social Care Inspectorate of the placement, and we must report on the progress of finding another placement for the young person on a weekly basis. These are high risk cases for our workers and for the Council, and are very difficult decisions to make due to the vulnerability of the situation. There is a possibility of criminal prosecution by undertaking these placements, but doing so is the last resort after failing all other options. Ultimately, the child or young person is now our responsibility, and he or she must be looked after no matter the professional implications for individuals who make the decision. In the last five years, we have completed seven such arrangements. Fortunately, none of these are long-term placements, and we have been able to find a residential placement in order to end the unmanaged placement.

### **Plans to reduce the numbers of looked after children**

3.1 As a service, our main aim is to keep families together, but there are occasions where children need to become looked after. There has been a steady increase in numbers in Wales over the past years. We are very aware of this increase in Gwynedd, and it is extremely important that we as a service implement plans to reduce the number of children becoming looked after. We as a service are completely clear that the number of looked after children in Gwynedd need to be looked after due to the factors that have led to the need for the Council to intervene to safeguard them. Additionally, as a result to a full review of the Children Service in Gwynedd published at the beginning of 2019, the statement of the Social Care Inspectorate notes that the service goes the extra mile to ensure the safety of children and young people, and that we do everything within our ability to ensure that children are able to stay with their families. The Inspectorate published a national overview report in 2019 which noted that they did not discover any looked after children in Wales that should not be looked after, and that there was no evidence to show that there are children in the system who should not be there.

3.2 The above, of course, gives local authorities assurance that the right decisions are being made to safeguard children, but at the same time fully appreciates that the number of looked after children is unsustainable in the long-term, and that it should be ensured that resources and services are available to support families to look after their own children safely.

3.3 Mark Drakeford, First Minister, announced at the beginning of 2019 that reducing the number of looked after children was one of the Government's policy priorities, and local authorities were required to set a numerical target to reduce the numbers in order to be able to measure success against this target. As a result, Welsh Government was informed that Gwynedd Council would not set a numerical or percentage target in relation to reducing the number of looked after children. The principle for these grounds is the authority's commitment to ensuring that children are safeguarded. The corporate and political expectation of the Children Service is that we continue to make the right decisions for children based on the need and risk. In accordance with the vision, the Council is committed to avoiding setting targets as we know from experience that they are not an effective way of working. Our purpose is to ensure that things improve through appropriate and suitable practice, and not through compliance by reaching targets. This means that we focus on improving practice, understanding the service demand, on continuous improvement and removing barriers in order to achieve the best for children. This is the current standpoint in Gwynedd in relation to the requirement to set a target to reduce the number of looked after children.

### **COVID-19 Situation**

**4.1** Covid-19 brought new challenges for the children service. Ceasing operation was not an option, however decisions needed to be made very swiftly to agree on the new way of working and practising to deliver our statutory responsibilities. The entire workforce fully accepted the challenge and there was no impairment whatsoever on the availability of our workforce during the period.

**4.2** The following changes had to be undertaken swiftly:

- Moving everyone from the offices to work from their homes
- Ensuring that every staff member has access to full PPE in order to continue undertaking home visits when required to do so, e.g. child safeguarding investigations
- Putting arrangements in place for looked after children to have contact with their parents over the internet, e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, Teams, etc. rather than having face-to-face contact
- Closing the respite unit for disabled children, Hafan y Sêr, and putting arrangements in place to support some families in the community, taking into consideration the requirements of the lockdown restrictions
- Ensuring that statutory visits for looked after children and children on the child protection register either take place virtually or at the home, depending on the risk level
- Collaborate with the Education Department to ensure that children with the greatest needs gain access to the schools as vulnerable children
- Undertaking looked after children reviews virtually
- Ensuring that practical support is available for foster parents, especially where individuals had to self-isolate
- Establishing a helpline outside working hours for foster carers
- Giving evidence in court cases over a digital platform

**4.3** Since the end of the lockdown, we have:

- Continued to visit homes and see children face-to-face to deliver statutory responsibilities in the field of safeguarding and looked after children
- Re-opened the respite unit, Hafan y Sêr, for two children/young people at the time thus far
- Recommended face-to-face contact between looked after children and their parents within the Covid-19 restrictions
- Continue to ensure that our workforce has access to full PPE

**4.4.** Generally, we have fulfilled our responsibilities, but in different ways to usual. There is no doubt that there has been immense pressure on the workforce and managers, and there is some concern about the impact of this period and the pressure on the emotional welfare of a number of our staff. We continue to work from home in accordance with the expectation, but this is becoming increasingly difficult in a field that depends on formal and informal personal contact with colleagues and teams. We now see the impact of this on individuals, and are putting arrangements in place to mitigate some of the matters, for example, ensuring that no worker has to give evidence in court from his/her own home without the support of a manager; strict health and safety arrangements are in place, especially when a worker enters a risky situation to ensure that they are safe and feel alright following a difficult visit, and ensuring that very regular contact is made with all workers on manager and Management Team level.

Marian Hughes,

16 November, 2020.

## Number of looked after children

30/9/2020	%		30/9/2015	%
294		Total	185	
101	34%	Local Authority Foster Care	81	44%
32	11%	Agency Foster Care	24	13%
64	22%	Friends and Family Foster Care	29	16%
21	7%	Residential care	13	7%
62	21%	Placements with parents	27	15%
0	0%	Secure Unit	1	1%
4	1%	Placed for adoption	8	4%
8	3%	Independent living with support	1	1%
2	1%	Mum and child placement	0	0%
0	0%	Hospital	1	1%

## Profile of placements on 30/9/2020

Location	Number of children	%
Gwynedd	201	68%
Anglesey	22	7%
Conwy	12	4%
Denbigh	15	5%
Wrexham	4	1%
Flint	3	1%
Powys	3	1%
Ceredigion	2	1%
Swansea	3	1%
Pembrokeshire	1	0%
Neath Port Talbot	1	0%
England	23	8%
Adoption	4	1%

## Legal status

Status	30/9/20	%
S76	6	2%
Interim Care Order	52	18%
Full care Order	225	77%
Placement Order	11	4%

## Children who have become looked after - 27

Number of children	Age	Date of becoming looked after	Status when becoming looked after	Status November 2020
1	15	1/4/20	J1	Out of care – prison
1	0	7/4/20	ICO	ICO
3	1,5,4	5/5/20	EPO	ICO
1	0	6/5/20	ICO	ICO
1	0	7/5/20	S76	ICO – PWP
2	0,3	18/5/20, 28/5/20	ICO	ICO
1	0	28/5/20	ICO	ICO – PWP
3	0,3,1	2/6/20	S76	ICO - kinship
2	3,0	11/6/20	ICO	ICO - PWP
2	1,16	23/6/20	ICO	1 x ICO. 1 x out of care
1	0	26/6/20	S76	ICO - PWP
1	0	3/7/20	ICO	ICO
1	17	17/7/20	S76	S76 – residential (Derwen)
1	15	3/8/20	PPO	S76 – residential
2	4,4	14/8/20	S76	ICO
1	9	9/9/20	S76	ICO - kinship
2	6,5	10/9/20	ICO	ICO - kinship
1	0	24/9/20	ICO	ICO

## Leaving care - 24

Child	Age	Care exit date	Reason
JP, SP, RP, DP	14, 12, 2, 1	13/5/20	E4 – ICO quashed
OL	15	5/5/20	E9 - prison
AM	18	E10	E10 – 18 years old (When I’m ready)
EW	2	5/6/20	E4 – ICO quashed (live with dad)
IM, RM, GM	7, 4, 1	11/6/20	E4 – ICO quashed
CJ	18	28/9/20	E8 – 18 years old
KS	18	6/9/20	E8 – 18 years old
AD	18	21/9/20	E8 – 18 years old
HW, SS, CE	12, 15, 10	8/7/20	E43 - SGO
SD	18	24/9/20	E8 – 18 years old
AJ	18	20/7/20	E10 – 18 years old (When I’m Ready)
CB, JB	13, 11	11/8/20	E43 – SGO
FC	17	1/7/20	E6 – leaving care
TMW, WMW	2, 1	24/7/20	E11 - adoption
JW	11	27/7/20	E43 - SGO

# Gwynedd Foster Carers

## Situation at 9/11/20

- Number of general foster homes – 72
- Registration for 139 children
  
- Number of friends and family foster homes – 60
- Registration for 96 children

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## Fostering Panel

- Between April and October, 9 friends and family foster homes were registered (15 children)
- Between April and October, 4 general foster homes were registered (7 children) – the registration of 2 were respite only.