



Complete Agenda

Democracy Service
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH



Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Meeting

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time

10.30 am, THURSDAY, 8TH OCTOBER, 2026

(NOTE: A BRIEFING SESSION WILL BE HELD FOR MEMBERS AT 10.00AM)

Location

Siambr Dafydd Orwig, Council Offices, Caernarfon and virtually on Zoom

*** NOTE***

This meeting will be webcast

https://gwynedd.public-i.tv/core//en_GB/portal/home

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(DISTRIBUTED 30/09/26)

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP (18)

Plaid Cymru (12)

Councillors

Jina Gwyrfai
Gareth Tudor Jones
Gwynfor Owen
Dyfrig Siencyn
Elin Walker Jones
Geraint Wyn Parry

Dawn Lynne Jones
Olaf Cai Larsen
Huw Rowlands
Rhys Tudur
Sian Williams

Independent (6)

Councillors

Elwyn Jones
Beth Lawton
John Pughe Roberts

Gwilym Jones
Dewi Owen
Richard Glyn Roberts

Ex-officio Members

Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council

Other Invited Members

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

With a vote on education matters only

[vacant seat]	Church in Wales
Colette Owen	The Catholic Church
[vacant seat]	Meirionnydd Parent/Governors Representative
Gweno Glyn Williams	Dwyfor Parent/Governors' Representative
Sharon Roberts	Arfon Parent/Governors' Representative

Without a Vote

Elise Poulter	NEU
Gwilym Jones	NASUWT

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chair for consideration.

4. MINUTES

5 - 57

The Chair shall propose that the minutes of the previous meetings of this committee held on 18/06/26 and 14/07/26 be signed as a true record.

5. UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE RESPONSE PLAN: OUR BRAVERY BROUGHT JUSTICE

58 - 195

The item has been included on the scrutiny work programme following the committees' previous consideration in January 2026 and as part of the need to scrutinise the progress of the Response Plan.

6. THE YOUTH SERVICE'S 5-YEAR STRATEGY

196 - 228

Scrutiny of the draft strategy will be an opportunity for the Committee to give its input prior to the adoption of the Strategy.

7. GWYNEDD CULTURE PLAN

229 - 292

Pre-scrutiny of the Plan prior to its adoption will be an opportunity for the committee to recommend matters that should be considered.

8. EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD PROGRAMME

293 - 295

To adopt an amended work programme for 2026/27.

9. PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE MEETINGS

296 - 298

To nominate representatives to attend performance challenge meetings.

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 18/06/26

Attendance:

Councillors: Councillor Geraint Wyn Parry (Vice-chair)

Councillors:- Jina Gwyrfai, Dawn Lynne Jones, Elwyn Jones, Gareth Tudor Jones, Gwilym Jones, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Gwynfor Owen, John Pughe Roberts, Richard Glyn Roberts, Huw Llwyd Rowlands and Dyfrig Siencyn.

Co-opted Members: Sharon Roberts (Arfon Parents/Governors' Representative), Colette Owen (Catholic Church), Gwilym Jones (NASUWT) and Elise Poulter (NEU).

Officers present: Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Adviser) and Jasmine Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

Present for item 7 – Councillor Llio Elenid Owen (Cabinet Member for Corporate and Legal Services and the Welsh Language) and Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer).

Present for item 8 – Councillor Dewi Jones (Cabinet Member for Education), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education) and Robert John Jones (Education Transport Manager).

Present for item 9 – Councillor Dewi Jones (Cabinet Member for Education), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education), Robert John Jones (Education Transport Manager), Alison Halliday (Assistant Head of School Support) and Ffion Edwards Ellis (Assistant Head of Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion).

Present for item 10 – Councillor Medwyn Hughes (Cabinet Member for Economy and Community), Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community); Roland Evans (Assistant Head of Culture) and Llŷr Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community).

Present for item 11 – Councillor Llio Elenid Owen (Cabinet Member for Corporate and Legal Services and the Welsh Language), Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Services) and Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Service).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Rhys Tudur was elected as Chair for 2026/27.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Geraint Parry was elected as Vice-chair for 2026/27.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Sian Williams, Elin Walker Jones, Dewi Owen, Rhys Tudur and Gweno Glyn Williams (Dwyfor Parents/Governors' Representative).

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Gwynfor Owen declared a personal interest in Item 8 on the agenda as he was a Governor at Ysgol Hafod Lon . The member did not consider it to be a prejudicial interest and did not leave the meeting during the discussion.

Sharon Roberts (Arfon Parents/Governors' Representative) declared a personal interest in Item 10 on the agenda because of her position with the Welsh Government. The member was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and she withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meetings of this committee held on 19 January 2026 and 12 February 2026, as a true record.

7. MEMBERS' WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Legal Services and the Welsh Language submitted the report, reminding Members that the Cabinet had adopted an amended Whistleblowing Policy for staff in January. It was noted that adopting the policy had been a high priority and an important step forward in strengthening the Council's procedures and arrangements in response to the Our Bravery Brought Justice report. It was explained that there had been a call at the same time for a policy that would provide a way for elected members and co-opted members to raise concerns about any misconduct.

It was noted that there was a need to prepare a policy that was appropriate for Cyngor Gwynedd elected members, as the staff whistleblowing procedure was based on employment legislation and legal protection under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. It was explained that the policy offered guidance to members on how to raise concerns in a safe and clear space, and that the procedure co-existed with other arrangements such as the Code of Conduct and the Safeguarding Policy. It was emphasised that this strengthened the Council's arrangements to respond to any impropriety for the benefit of the county's residents.

It was reported that discussions had been held with the Member Enquiries Task Group when preparing the policy, and that engagement had also taken place with all the members. It was noted that they had consulted with Protect, a charity with expertise in the field of whistleblowing, and that the Standards Committee had considered the policy earlier in the month and had expressed support for it. It was considered that the next step, after receiving the Committee's observations, would be to submit the policy to the Full Council in July with the intention of adding it to the Council's Constitution.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

The policy was welcomed, noting that it was a positive step forward. It was suggested that including a general definition of what whistleblowing meant made the policy easier to read and gave a clearer context. In response, it was explained that whistleblowing was an employment concept which derived from employment law, and that it was

essentially a framework for raising concerns about serious matters. It was noted that the policy offered two things to elected members, namely a place to raise matters that they considered to be serious and an element of confidentiality in doing so. It was emphasised that the intention was to create a space that was as safe as possible to raise serious concerns.

It was acknowledged that the policy was an important step forward because this type of specific protection had not been available to councillors previously. The fact that the policy acknowledged concerns about significant misconduct or criminal or illegal behaviour, that it offered confidentiality when raising those concerns and that it stated that any type of poor treatment a member may face as a result of making a disclosure should be reported, was welcomed. However, many changes that would strengthen the policy were suggested.

Concern was expressed that the policy largely relied on internal processes. It was suggested that a member raising concerns about senior officers, organisational culture or governance failures might feel that there was not a truly independent route available. It was suggested that an alternative route should be available under such circumstances, which would allow a councillor to directly contact external bodies such as the Police, Audit Wales or any other relevant regulator. It was acknowledged that such a route would not likely be used in the majority of cases, but it was emphasised that it should be available.

Attention was drawn to paragraph 3.3 of the policy, which stated that concerns about the safety or well-being of children or adults should be addressed in accordance with the national safeguarding policy. It was acknowledged that this was appropriate in relation to individual cases, but it was suggested that the wording could give the impression that the policy was irrelevant should a member want to raise concern about a systemic failure in safeguarding arrangements. It was emphasised that individual safeguarding cases should not be addressed under the policy, but it was suggested that the wording should be changed to make it clear that concerns about systemic failures in safeguarding procedures could be raised through this route. It was suggested that clear deadlines should be set for dealing with matters. In response to the suggestions, the following was noted:-

- A member, in relation to any concern, had a right to contact an external agency. It was explained that the Code of Conduct provided an open route to refer matters to the Council, the Police or other relevant bodies.
- It was confirmed that a sentence could be added to clearly highlight that this procedure was not the only one available.
- Paragraph 3.3 referred to referrals regarding an individual child or adult, which should be addressed under the appropriate safeguarding procedure. It was noted that it would be inappropriate for individual safeguarding cases to be submitted to the Monitoring Officer under the whistleblowing policy. It was noted, however, that the policy could be an appropriate way to raise serious concerns about systemic failures in safeguarding arrangements. It was confirmed that wording could be added to highlight this difference between individual cases and systemic failures.
- The protection given to staff who were whistleblowing was statutory. It was explained that the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 adapted the employment legislation and provided protection such as the ability to claim compensation, an employment tribunal should an individual be persecuted, as well as protection from unfair dismissal.

- The relationship between elected or co-opted members and the Council was different to an employment relationship. Should a member be treated inappropriately by a member of staff as a result of a whistleblowing matter, this could be a disciplinary matter, and it would be treated as one. It was noted that the policy already referred to that.
- Should the inappropriate behaviour come from another member rather than a member of staff, that would more than likely be a matter under the Code of Conduct. It was emphasised that the policy should not offer a level of protection that could not actually be provided.
- The consequences of inappropriate behaviour from another member could be political in their nature, and the ability of the authority, as a corporation, to deal with such situations could be limited. However, it was noted that the policy at least highlighted a system to raise the matter.
- That setting deadlines for investigations was complex, because the subsequent actions would depend on the nature of the concern. Should the matter be criminal or involve the Police or the Health and Safety Executive, the investigation schedule would be beyond the Council's control. The Council could set a timetable to acknowledge the concern and provide an initial response, as well as commit to keep in touch with the member. However, it was noted that the timetable for the subsequent steps varied according to the nature of the matter.

The view was expressed that increasing the number of documents and policies did not make things clearer. It was noted that paragraph 6.2 referred to referring matters to the Police or an external authority when that would be appropriate, and the decision to do so was in the hands of the Monitoring Officer after receiving a request from a member under the policy. It was questioned whether there was a fundamental paradox in the Monitoring Officer's role. It was noted, on one hand, that the Monitoring Officer was responsible for monitoring the propriety of members, staff and the authority itself and, on the other hand, acted as the main legal officer responsible for the Council's legal protection. It was suggested that it might be more appropriate for the Monitoring Officer to come from another authority, whilst the main legal officer stayed within their own authority.

In response, it was explained that this matter had been the subject of an ongoing discussion amongst officers who had fulfilled the same role, as the two functions were combined in many authorities. It was noted, based on experience, that problems rarely came up, because propriety was relevant to the two roles. It was acknowledged that a theoretical paradox could arise should the Monitoring Officer's role be more operational in legal matters, but it was noted that this had not been a problem in practice. It was acknowledged that the question had come up by others over the years, but it was explained that this was the procedure used in the majority of councils in Wales and other public bodies with Monitoring Officers.

It was noted that paragraph 6.2 placed significant paradoxical pressure on the Monitoring Officer. Attention was drawn to paragraph 6.3, that referred to reporting back when appropriate or suitable. This wording was questioned in the context of transparency in local government and public authorities in general. It was noted that there was a feeling amongst the public that authorities reported on everything and claimed transparency, except for the matters that the public wished to know about. Concern was expressed that increasing the number of documents could give the impression that something was being done, but it could also cause more uncertainty and give the impression of a desire to be transparent, instead of ensuring true transparency.

In response, it was emphasised that the policy had been presented sincerely to create a procedure for raising concerns. It was noted that a logical system had been included, which offered a way to raise concerns and noted how they should be dealt with in a range of circumstances. It was confirmed that the policy would be expected to be implemented sincerely and appropriately. However, it was acknowledged that there were wider questions regarding how the Council dealt with matters beyond the scope of this type of policy. It was emphasised that the aim of the policy was to create a clear path for members to raise concerns that they considered to be serious, and to specify how those concerns should be dealt with. It was noted that the policy filled a gap in terms of how such concerns were raised and treated. It was explained that the policy also made it clear that other paths were available, and that was the most that such a policy could achieve.

It was added that the policy already stated, should there be a conflict of interest or any suspicion about the propriety of the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Executive would act as the alternative route.

It was noted that it was sad that such a policy was required, but it was acknowledged that it was needed under the current circumstances. The policy was described as logical and a matter of common sense. It was noted that the policy would not necessarily change the way that members behaved or were treated, but many of the positive elements in it were welcomed. It was suggested that the only people who could oppose such a policy were the ones who engaged in misconduct as they would not want other people to raise concerns about them.

It was emphasised that confidentiality was an extremely important element of the policy. It was noted that this could be a weakness within the Code of Conduct arrangements, because the same level of confidentiality did not apply when submitting a complaint to the Ombudsman, where it would be a requirement for the complainant to provide their name. The opinion was expressed that the policy gave better protection to members than the Code of Conduct in some circumstances. The policy in its entirety was welcomed.

It was noted that the policy was necessary and it would open the door for members to follow different ways to raise concerns. It was acknowledged that many comments had been made during the discussion, and minor amendments could be made to the policy in response to them.

RESOLVED that the Committee declares support for the policy, asking the Monitoring Officer to make changes in accordance with his response to members' comments.

8. EDUCATION TRANSPORT POLICY

The Cabinet Member for Education submitted a draft of the new Education Transport Policy, and the Committee was asked to submit observations on it. It was noted that the main changes had been clearly highlighted in the report, including the Empty Seats Scheme, faith schools transport, dual residency arrangements and the offer to post-16 learners.

It was explained, although this was a Cyngor Gwynedd policy, that it must operate within the Education Transport Measure and the associated statutory guidance set by the Welsh Government. It was noted that the Council did not have freedom to act as they wished in every case, because there were statutory requirements that they had to

comply with. The opinion was expressed that the Welsh Government should review the Measure and the associated guidance because some elements of them did not make sense.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

The matter of the Empty Seats Scheme was raised, explaining that the scheme allowed children who were not eligible for free school transport to use empty seats on school transport vehicles for a fairly low cost. It was noted that the scheme had been paused since October 2025 and there was no provision for it in the draft policy. It was asked whether this meant that the scheme would permanently end and would not be re-established. In response, it was confirmed that there was no provision for an Empty Seats Scheme in the draft policy and such a policy would not be implemented from September onwards.

Significant concern was expressed regarding the decision, referring to a previous confirmation that there was no legislation preventing an authority from implementing an Empty Seats Scheme, and the fact that other authorities continued to implement such schemes. It was noted that the main reason for revoking the scheme was to reduce the financial and operational risk to the Council. It was acknowledged that the risk must be managed in a responsible way, but it was questioned whether the risk had been balanced appropriately against other considerations.

Reference was made to the Ffordd Gwynedd principles and the expectation to find practical ways of meeting the needs of Gwynedd residents. It was noted that revoking the scheme could lead to more cars travelling to schools, and it was questioned whether the environmental impact had been considered in the context of the climate emergency declared by the Council. It was questioned whether the decision had been considered in the context of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, fairness for children in rural areas and the impact on children who faced an economic disadvantage. It was suggested that the Council's financial and operational risk had received more emphasis than all these other considerations, and it was asked whether the department's priorities were correct. It was asked whether an assessment had been conducted of the likely impacts of revoking the scheme. In response, it was noted:-

- It was acknowledged that the offer could appear unreasonable at first glance, because providing an empty seat for a specific period was not a problem in itself. It was explained that the problem arose due to the statutory duty of the department to provide transport to eligible pupils.
- It was explained that a seat could be empty at the start of a term and offered to a child who was not eligible for free transport. Should a new family move to the area later and need the seat for an eligible child, it would not be possible to take the seat from the discretionary user immediately.
- It was explained that the discretionary user would have to be consulted during the autumn before revoking the seat the following September. Consequently, the Council could be required to provide additional separate transport for the eligible pupil, although an ineligible child was still using the seat on the current vehicle.
- It was emphasised that there was a need to protect the Council's benefits, the department and all Gwynedd residents. It was explained that it was no longer possible to rely on an arrangement where the user of an empty seat accepted that they would have to give up the seat should an eligible pupil move to the area, because this previous arrangement had been challenged and there were already

cases in Gwynedd where the Council provided transport that it would not have had to provide historically as a result of this.

- Over 50 children currently used empty seats, and the plan had been frozen to avoid creating a further reliance on the provision until the department had consulted on the policy.

Reference was made to other authorities that continued to implement schemes where users signed to confirm that they only had a right to use a seat whilst it was available. It was suggested that such an arrangement gave some protection to the authority and that the Council operated in a manner that was too risk-averse. In response, this suggestion was rejected, noting that there had been local examples where the individuals had threatened to take legal steps against the Council regarding the implementation of the discretionary provision. It was explained that many rural authorities had revoked similar schemes many years ago because the implications and the risks were higher in rural areas than urban areas. It was acknowledged that the level of the offer varied across Wales, but it was noted that the department's recent experience was that implementing the discretionary offer left the authority open to a challenge. It was confirmed that legal advice had been received that the provision should not continue to be offered because the long-term risk to the authority was significant.

It was proposed to ask the Cabinet to reconsider the matter as it considered the draft policy. In response, it was explained that the decision was based on the Government's guidance and was not an interpretation created by the department. It was acknowledged that the Empty Seats Scheme made sense and this was why the scheme had originally been introduced, but it was noted that the scheme had been implemented in good faith within a legislative framework and weak guidelines from the Welsh Government that put the Council on uneven ground.

The Cabinet Member for Education reported that a letter had been sent to the Minister for Education asking her to review the Measure and the guidance. It was explained that the requirement for an 11-month notice before changing a transport arrangement did not provide enough flexibility to authorities in relation to a discretionary provision. It was confirmed that the department had listened to the observations submitted and the matter would be fully considered, as well as the potential implications of any change to the existing policy.

Reference was made to the need for an effective working relationship between the Education Department and the Environment Department to implement the policy and commission the transport provision. In response, it was confirmed that the department had worked with the Environment Department to implement the policy and commission the transport.

It was asked whether the relationship between the two departments had worked effectively. In response, it was confirmed that the relationship had been strengthened, with the Transport Manager coordinating the work within the Education Department and managers within the Integrated Transport Service commissioned the transport and managed the day-to-day provision. It was noted that the collaboration and communication between the services strengthened as they went on.

It was asked whether the arrangement had improved since the school bus service between Abererch and Ysgol Glan y Môr was stopped at the beginning of the school term the previous year. In response, it was noted that lessons had been learned regarding the need to communicate and share messages in good time, instead of

during school holidays. It was hoped that there would not be a similar situation again in September.

Reference was made to the relationship between school transport, safeguarding and child protection. The opinion was expressed that there was a tendency to place more emphasis on the legal and organisational safety of the system, the authority and schools instead of child protection. In response, it was explained that the challenge was to draw a balance between basic statutory requirements and the public's expectations around safeguarding.

It was noted that some matters reached the well-being and attendance level rather than reaching the safeguarding threshold, such as children purchasing junk food on the way to school. Reference was made to children using public transport to reach the school and having to stand due to a lack of seats, as well as behaviour problems and the impact on people travelling to work. It was expressed that those considerations had not received enough attention.

Clarity was sought regarding the arrangements for faith schools, asking whether there was significant demand for transport to the faith schools for children outside their catchment area. In response, it was explained that there was generally no significant demand, but there was a specific demand in relation to the Catholic schools in Bangor and Caernarfon. It was noted that a reference to faith schools had been included as it had not appeared in the previous policy, and that a 5-mile transport catchment area had been designated.

Reference was made to the difference between rural and urban areas and the fact that safe footpaths to the school were not available in every area. An example was given of children who lived in villages near the A470, where it was unsafe for them to walk from one village to the other because the road was so busy. The opinion was expressed that there was inconsistency between rural and urban areas due to a lack of funding for safe footpaths. In response, the suggestion that the policy did not give fair consideration to rural areas was rejected. It was explained that footpaths were assessed to determine whether they were safe and suitable for children, and that the process applied in rural and urban areas. It was emphasised, should there not be a safe footpath to the school, transport would be provided. It was emphasised that there was an attempt to be consistent and fair within the policy across the county.

Support was expressed to providing support to families to ensure attendance at school, but it was acknowledged that continuing with the existing Empty Seats Scheme could create an additional significant cost due to the requirement to provide a 1-year notice before revoking a seat. It was suggested that a legal challenge about a shorter notice period had led to a weaker policy for parents in the end and had forced authorities such as Gwynedd to change their arrangements. The policy was accepted as it was in relation to the Empty Seats Scheme, and it was appreciated that the Cabinet Member had written to the Government asking to reconsider the guidelines.

The information about the pilot at Ysgol Hafod Lon was welcomed, but concern was expressed regarding the tendering process for transport for children with additional learning needs. It was noted that the report placed great emphasis on costs without sufficiently explaining the detrimental impact that changing providers, drivers or transport arrangements had on children with additional learning needs.

Concern was expressed regarding the requirement for parents of children with additional learning needs to fill a form to make a request for transport. It was asked

how many forms parents were expected to fill across the Council's services, suggesting, should an Individual Development Plan already state a need for transport, that the same information should not have to be re-submitted. It was asked for a reduction in the number of forms that parents of children with additional learning needs were expected to fill. In response, it was noted:-

- There was a need to ensure that transport providers understood the needs of children and young people with additional learning needs, and the journey to school was an important part of their school day.
- There was a need for drivers, chaperones and providers to be aware of children's needs and do everything possible to reduce any stress caused by the journey.
- Work had already been done with providers and more work was underway. Reference was made to the pilot scheme at Ysgol Hafod Lon, where electric buses and drivers employed by the Council were used by the Council to ensure more consistency and control over the standard of the service.
- Problems could arise when contracts were re-tendered, because a different company could win the contract and lead to changing drivers. It was noted that a close relationship often developed between families, children and drivers, and that such a change could be difficult for the child.
- Lessons had been learned from previous experiences and steps had been considered to mitigate the impact of changes when re-tendering contracts.
- Some children had very profound needs and specifically adapted vehicles, and that parents may choose to transport their child themselves. Therefore, it was noted that the form could be necessary to ensure the most suitable provision.
- Any unnecessary questions on forms would be reviewed and removed. It was confirmed that there was no intention to force parents to repeat the same information, and an effort would be made to reduce the load of paperwork.

Reference was made to the Ysgol Hafod Lon pilot, and it was noted that the priority was to provide a high-quality service to the children. However, it was emphasised that education transport was a significant expenditure field which was overspending, and any opportunity to make savings without reducing the quality of the provision should be taken advantage of. It was reported that the pilot had been successful during its first year and had led to a £55,000 saving. It was noted that a second minibus would be introduced next year, with the expectation that this would ensure a further saving of £130,000.

It was emphasised that the aim was to maintain or improve the quality of the service so that children and families would not see a deterioration in the provision. It was noted that there was a possibility to expand the service, but the department continued to rely on contracts with the private sector, and it would not be possible to change the arrangements overnight. Reference was made to the reduction in the number of taxi drivers and taxi companies, and they needed to gradually develop the service.

It was reported that the transport cost solely for Ysgol Hafod Lon was approximately £1 million per year, and there was an additional cost of approximately £500,000 for Ysgol Pendalar. It was noted that these figures showed the significant amount of spending. It was explained that a letter had been sent to the previous Minister raising a question regarding whether the Council received sufficient funding to pay the actual cost of transporting children to school. It was suggested that the real costs were not fully reflected in the funding received through the general block grant from the Welsh Government. It was suggested that a specific grant could be required for education transport, which would be directly allocated to the department, and it could be appropriate to raise the matter once again with the new Government.

Assurance was requested that the Welsh language would be duly addressed in the tendering process, although it was acknowledged that this would not always be easy. In response to a question regarding specific travel plans, it was explained that two different schemes were implemented alongside each other, namely the £1 travel scheme for young people up to 16 years old and a scheme for young people aged 16-21 called 'My Travel Card'. It was noted that the second scheme had started as a pilot, but the hope was that the Welsh Government would make it permanent to facilitate travel between educational sites.

Concern was raised regarding the 5-mile limit for transport to faith schools. It was noted that this would have a significant impact on pupils from some areas who had received transport historically. Reference was made to the fact that the faith schools were admission authorities themselves, and they did not have formal catchment areas, but it was argued that parish boundaries had been used historically for transport purposes. The Bethesda area was given as an example, noting that it had been within the parish boundary and had been included in maps shared with the local authority in the past. Concern was expressed that children from Bethesda would lose transport to Ysgol Ein Harglwyddes in Bangor. The department was asked to reconsider the limit and adapt it for faith schools.

In response, officers confirmed they would be willing to discuss the matter and look at the details. It was explained that the 5-mile figure had been set based on the template used for primary and secondary transport, but that did not prevent the department from reconsidering it. It was confirmed that the matter would be discussed before submitting the policy to the Cabinet.

Full support was expressed for the review of the policy, and the provisions for post-16 learners were welcomed, noting that they gave students more choice to attend settings that offered suitable courses. It was emphasised that the policy should give appropriate consideration to the safety of the child and school attendance. Reference was made to the significant overspend in the field and it was asked whether there was an estimate of the savings that the new policy would secure. In response, it was noted that the policy's implementation was not expected to create savings. It was explained that the policy had been drawn up to ensure consistency and fairness across the system, not to reduce expenditure. It was noted that the budget was being managed as tightly as possible, but costs would likely increase when re-tendering contracts due to fuel prices and operational costs.

Attention was drawn to the need to review school catchment areas. It was noted that closing schools and pupil movements could change which school was most suitable to a specific community. It was asked when the catchment areas would be reviewed, who would be part of the process and whether the history of the areas and local connections would be considered. In response, it was noted:-

- The future of some schools had already been discussed and the whole catchment area had been considered as part of any such discussion.
- Should a school close, there would be a need to decide where the catchment area should move, which boundaries would change and what schools would the children attend.
- The department did not have the capacity to conduct a comprehensive review of every catchment area.
- Catchment areas would be reviewed as changes arose, especially when the future of a particular school was being considered.

- A wider review could be conducted per cluster of schools, using a secondary school catchment area as a foundation, should the capacity be available.

It was asked whether new housing developments were considered when looking at school catchment areas. In response, it was confirmed that the department worked with the Planning Service when a new housing development was proposed. It was noted that the Planning Service asked for information regarding local school capacity to receive additional children, but there were enough spaces in the majority of schools.

It was asked whether it was possible to change a catchment area when a new estate was constructed to facilitate a smaller school or prevent a school from closing. In response, it was confirmed that the department would not change the catchment area boundary to direct children from a new estate to a smaller school instead of the nearest school. It was explained that the boundary of the existing catchment area would be respected. It was added that legislation made it a requirement to respect the right of parents to choose a school for their children, and it was not possible for the Council to encourage parents to choose one school instead of another in order to support the numbers of specific schools.

It was explained that housing developments did not currently create a significant problem because capacity was available in most schools. It was noted that not all pupils of every school necessarily lived within its catchment area. Should a school reach its capacity, the admission procedure would prioritise children from the catchment area. Reference was made to the low number of appeals regarding school admissions in Gwynedd, noting that there were usually enough spaces to approve the application according to the parents' choice.

Concern was expressed that not all parents who used the Council's website to search for catchment area schools were aware that they had a wider choice. In response, it was noted that wider discussions were taking place regarding the sustainability of communities and what the Council could do to support it. Reference was made to a new stream, 'Nôl i Wynedd', in the Council Plan, and it was noted that they might need to think more creatively about how communities could be supported and to challenge existing trends.

It was emphasised that making savings was not the main reason for introducing the policy and the discussion had not been steered by an intention to remove bus services to reduce costs. It was explained, should opportunities arise to provide services in a different, better and more efficient way, those opportunities would be considered.

It was asked where the policy left post-16 students from Dwyfor who, due to curricular reasons and the range of subjects available, chose to study in sixth form in a secondary school in Arfon. In response, it was explained that the amended policy assured free transport to the nearest educational site that provided the relevant course. It was noted that the nearest provision to learners from Dwyfor who intended to study A Level would normally be Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor.

It was asked what would happen should a learner study a subject that was unavailable at the nearest setting. In response, it was confirmed, should the relevant subject or course not be available at the nearest setting, transport would be provided to another setting where the provision was available.

It was acknowledged that the Education Transport Policy was complex and there were many barriers and statutory requirements associated with it. It was noted that there

was a need for flexibility to implement it, and the importance of pupil safety and ensuring fairness was emphasised.

RESOLVED

- 1. To accept the report and note the observations.**
- 2. To ask the Cabinet to pay particular attention to the Empty Seats Scheme when making a decision.**
- 3. To recommend to the Cabinet Member for Education:-**
 - **That consideration should be given to modifying the Draft Education Transport Policy to designate parishes rather than distance in terms of transportation to faith schools.**
 - **To look at reducing the number of forms that parents of pupils with Additional Learning Needs must complete.**

9. EDUCATION DEPARTMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Education presented the report, stating that the arrangement was relatively new but it was a useful way for the Members to see and understand the Education Department's range of work. It was noted that the report gave the Committee an opportunity to scrutinise the department's performance.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

General concern was expressed regarding the size of the reports pack submitted to the Committee, which included approximately 350 pages. It was noted that it was unrealistic to expect members to read all the material in detail, which could mean that some relevant questions would not be raised. In response, an apology was given about the length of the report, and it was explained that changes to the Education Department's performance challenge arrangements were underway. It was noted that the department was large and contained many different services, and identifying the most important matters amongst all the information had been a challenge. It was confirmed that every manager would continue to report on performance, but moving forward, the Assistant Heads of Department would provide summaries of approximately three or four pages, highlighting the successes and the fields that required attention.

Attention was drawn to the significant reduction in the number of applications for headteacher posts and to the increasing challenge of attracting individuals to leadership posts in schools. The development of the Future Leaders programme was welcomed, which provided practical support to individuals who wished to move to leadership posts. It was noted that 17 individuals from the primary sector and seven from the secondary sector followed the programme. It was asked how many had followed the programme in the previous year and whether the feedback had been positive.

Reference was made to the support programme for new headteachers and acting headteachers, with 26 individuals following the programme. It was noted that the response to the programme had been positive, and that new headteachers had provided good feedback regarding the support received from the Council. Attention was drawn to the fact that 13% of schools did not have a permanent headteacher, and

members asked for the equivalent figures for the previous years to put the situation in context. In response, it was noted:-

- That recruiting headteachers was a significant challenge and the problem was not unique to Gwynedd, as schools across Wales and beyond faced the same difficulty.
- There had been a significant turnover amongst headteachers in Gwynedd over the last two or three years due to the age profile of the workforce. It was estimated that between 30% and 33% of schools had changed headteachers during that period.
- Some headteachers had reached retirement age, whilst others had decided to leave the profession because they did not wish to remain in the role.
- Primary headteacher posts had attracted three or four applicants in the past and secondary headteacher posts had attracted two or three, but posts were now being advertised without receiving any applications in some cases.
- The situation had been included on the department's risk register, as it was a significant risk that could have an impact on the quality and standards of schools.
- A team of school support officers was in place, and they intended to strengthen the support for governing bodies in the coming year to ensure that headteachers and schools received support from several directions.
- There was a need for national changes, including increasing the number of spaces on the National Professional Qualification for Headship. It was emphasised that teachers who showed a desire to lead a school should be supported to gain the relevant qualification.

It was reported that 15 individuals had followed the Future Leaders programme during the previous year, and the majority had moved on to acting headteacher posts or permanent posts. It was explained that the programme had worked towards developing talent within Gwynedd schools and ensuring that a pool of individuals was available to respond to urgent situations in the primary and secondary sectors. It was confirmed that the programme had been successful and had contributed to an annual increase in the number of successful applicants for the headship qualification.

It was reported that a new programme had been established this January for headteachers who had been in their posts for less than three years, as well as acting headteachers. It was noted that 22 headteachers were following the programme, which was being led by two support officers who had previously been headteachers. It was explained that the programme gave headteachers an opportunity to network, receive mentor support and identify familiar faces and departments within the authority. It was noted that the programme provided support with matters such as funding, improvement plans and human resources. It was acknowledged that the role of a new headteacher could be lonely and this support could be of significant benefit.

It was asked whether one main reason stood out in the decisions of headteachers and teachers to leave the profession. In response, it was explained it was not one specific reason, but a number of factors had contributed to the situation since the period of the pandemic. It was noted that some children arrived at school without being able to complete basic tasks such as using the toilet, eating independently or wearing a coat. It was explained that secondary schools had seen a deterioration in the reading skills of some pupils as they started in Year 7 compared with the pre-covid period.

Reference was made to the challenging behaviour of children, parents' behaviour and the burden of dealing with an increasing number of complaints. It was noted that complaints had become more complicated, especially as artificial intelligence was used

to create them, and that responding to them could be difficult for headteachers. Reference was made to changes in the curriculum, with some headteachers deciding to retire instead of implementing more changes over the coming years. It was noted that there were more children with additional learning needs in schools, and that frustration regarding a lack of sufficient provision to fulfil their needs had contributed to the pressure on headteachers.

It was emphasised that no headteacher could cope with all these changes on their own. It was noted that there was a need to change the way the authority, schools, governors and the scrutiny committees worked together, and reduce the sense of "us and them" within the system. It was explained that success would be assured by working for the benefit of all Gwynedd children, instead of only focusing on one classroom.

It was suggested that these challenges should be raised at a national level with the Welsh Government. It was noted that the new Minister for Education had previously led headteacher unions and would therefore be aware of the pressures facing the profession.

A member noted, in terms of education unions, that the three main concerns consistently being raised by teachers were workload, behaviour and salary. It was noted that workload and behaviour often swapped places as the primary concern, with salaries normally in third place. It was suggested that these factors made teachers think carefully before applying for leadership posts. Reference was made to data from the Education Workforce Council regarding the cohort of newly qualified teachers in 2015, stating that 40% of that cohort had left education by 2025.

Reference was made to a number of capital projects that had slipped in terms of time or cost, or both in some cases. It was asked whether more delay was expected in relation to the projects that were underway, or whether there was confidence that they would be completed within the timeframe and the budget. In response, it was acknowledged that it could not be assured that there would not be further delay as capital projects were complicated and unexpected problems could arise.

Reference was made to the Ysgol Ein Harglwyddes project, where it had been planned for children to move to the new building, but the work had not been completed to a sufficient standard. It was noted that a difficult decision had been made to postpone the opening until 1 September 2026. It was emphasised that it was better to postpone than move children to a building where the work had not been completed properly, noting that there had been a tendency in the past to move children in and then resolve the problem.

It was explained that the Ysgol Tryfan project had been underway for several years and had faced capital challenges. It was noted that it was difficult to anticipate the cost of construction work, especially when work was taking place on the site whilst the school continued to operate on the site. The hope was expressed that it would be possible to keep to the timeframe and the budget, but it was acknowledged that there would be a need to continuously fight to achieve this. It was noted that no large capital projects had been completely free from problems, and further problems could arise although specific ones had not been identified.

Reference was made to a plan to reduce the cost of attending school, and the fact that a specific plan was in place was welcomed. It was asked how the success of the plan would be measured. In response, it was explained that the success would be based on

the commitment of schools to implement the plan's principles. It was noted that no headteacher wished to make attending school more difficult or more costly, but schools were required to consider the financial implications of their decisions. Reference was made to the second-hand school uniform shop schemes and the need to consider whether a specific logo on sports uniforms was necessary. In response, it was noted that members who served on governing bodies could raise these matters directly and the response of governing bodies would be important in developing the work.

Reference was made to the immersion system, and it was noted that the department wished to make many improvements, but they were not affordable at this time. A member asked for more information regarding those improvements. In response, it was noted that a review of the immersion system had been conducted, a positive Estyn inspection had been received and a report from Bangor University had been considered. It was noted that there were significant implications in terms of resources, and that more centres and more staff would enable more children to have access to immersion provision.

It was explained that the existing budget was insufficient to fully fund the current immersion centres, and more resources would enable the department to provide more spaces. However, it was acknowledged that this would raise questions regarding the length of time that learners would spend in the centres and the associated transport costs. It was noted that the system performed well with the resources available, and the best possible use was made of local and national resources to increase the use of Welsh in schools.

It was acknowledged that there was increasing pressure on the immersion system and that pressure would continue over the coming years as schools implemented the Language Policy. It was emphasised that the cost of the system was higher than the level of grants received. They expressed their appreciation of the Welsh Government's contribution, but it was noted that the contribution should reflect the real cost of the provision. It was suggested that schools would have to spend more on Welsh-medium education in the future.

Concern was expressed regarding the increase in the number of pupils who had de-registered from schools. It was asked what Gwynedd's strategy was to respond to the increase and reduce it. It was noted that the report referred to a national pattern, but it was asked to include figures for the whole of Wales to put Gwynedd's position into context. In response, it was noted:-

- The number of children being educated at home had increased nationally, and it was agreed to share the national figures with the Committee.
- There was significant concern about the increase in Gwynedd. It was noted that the number had increased to over 300 school-aged children, compared with approximately 250 at the same time the previous year.
- The figure had changed during the year as Year 11 pupils left the system, and therefore it could appear that the number had reduced in September even though the basic trend had not changed.
- There was a particular trend for older pupils to be de-registered.
- There was a difference between parents choosing to educate their children at home from the start, parents who had decided to give up working to provide high-quality home education, and parents who took their child from school because the school could not fulfil the child's needs or due to attendance or behaviour problems.

- Many parents provided excellent home education. However, particular concern was expressed about children who were taken from school due to difficulties, as they could reach post-16 age without qualifications and then have to follow foundation courses before moving on to their choice of studies.
- The Gwynedd and Anglesey Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service was in the process of being split, and they planned to have two staff members to support families who chose to educate their children at home.
- Home visits were already being conducted to assess what support was required and whether the parents could provide an appropriate education.
- There was a need to prevent families from feeling under pressure to pull their children out of school. It was noted that this required joint working between the inclusion teams, additional learning needs and schools.
- Plans were in the pipeline to respond to the matter, and it was suggested that a more comprehensive report be submitted to the Committee in the future, including more information about the impact of the interventions.

It was emphasised by the Cabinet Member that it was a matter of priority for him. It was noted that additional learning needs, social issues, poverty and changes in society contributed to the increase. It was acknowledged that family situations had intensified in some cases over recent years, but it was emphasised that identifying the causes of the problem was not sufficient in itself. It was explained that the Council needed to adapt and develop its way of working to meet the needs of those children and families.

Reference was made to the work that had been undertaken over the previous 18 months to review services. It was noted that the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service with Anglesey would come to an end by September and a separate service would be established for Gwynedd only. It was explained that the demand had significantly increased, that the service was growing and was difficult to manage, and the geographical areas were very broad. It was hoped that a service solely for Gwynedd would give better control and respond more effectively to local needs, continuing to work with Anglesey when appropriate.

Reference was made to other changes, including establishing a new inclusion service and a new Camu i'r Copa centre in Llanwnda, as well as the changes deriving from the conclusion of GwE (School Effectiveness Service). It was noted that the new arrangements had an important role in terms of supporting schools, children and families. Reference was made to the culture of schools and the priorities that steered their work, including whether more emphasis should be placed on the standard provision instead of more expensive activities. It was acknowledged that there were no quick answers, but it was repeated that the area was a priority and the service was moving in the right direction.

It was added that a legislative change was underway regarding home education, which would change the power of local authorities in terms of access to children and making decisions about children and families who chose this path. It was noted that the department would try to work in partnership with families, in the spirit of the new legislation. It was noted that the Youth Service provided support to reduce the number of young people who were not in education, employment or training, and the service intervened earlier in schools to prevent this from happening.

The commitment to present more information to the Committee was welcomed. It was asked for the data to include the age of pupils who were being de-registered and their geographic location, to identify any patterns.

Concern was expressed that some teachers and acting headteachers who wished to follow the qualification for headship continued to be refused. It was acknowledged that the course was run by the Welsh Government, not Cyngor Gwynedd, but it was noted that the situation caused concern given the shortage of headteachers. In response, it was agreed that individuals who had shown an interest in becoming headteachers should have the opportunity to follow the qualification. It was explained that the Welsh Government had set a cap on the number of spaces, and that this was not the local authority's decision.

It was noted that acting headteachers and other individuals who wished to apply were being encouraged to contact the department, and that the local leadership programmes helped to identify gaps in their experience and strengthen their applications. It was reported that one individual had been successful in 2024, had gained the qualification and received a permanent headteacher post, contributing to reducing the number of acting headteachers. It was noted that three individuals had received the qualification since September, and that four others had been accepted for September 2026.

It was confirmed that the concerns had been raised with the Welsh Government. It was reported that the number of spaces had increased from 46 to 96 for September 2026, suggesting that the Government had listened to the concerns. It was noted that the department worked closely with Learning, which was responsible for leading the qualification and developing a career path for middle and higher leadership.

It was asked whether satellite sites were being developed in Meirionnydd as discussed when the pupil referral provision was established, and whether feedback had been received regarding the proposal. Reference was made to a recent television programme regarding Brynffynnon, and it was noted that there was some similarity between that provision and Camu i'r Copa, although the age groups were different. It was emphasised that high priority must be placed on safeguarding, because vulnerable pupils were at greater risk of being abused. In response, it was noted:-

- A decision had been made from the start to establish an appropriate and high-quality provision.
- A significant capital investment had been made at the old school to create a safe and inclusive facility.
- All the necessary resources had been provided to ensure that the children were fully involved and felt safe.
- Working in a behaviour support unit was challenging because children's behaviour was becoming increasingly challenging.
- The team had some outreach capacity to schools, although there were mixed opinions regarding the effectiveness of that method. It was explained that the success of behaviour work often depended on building a relationship with the child, and this was difficult when an officer only visited for a short period.
- There was a wish to develop more provision and more centres, but it was emphasised that they should be full and suitable provisions.
- Discussions had been held with headteachers in Meirionnydd who were eager to see a provision in the area, particularly for the secondary sector.

Concern was expressed regarding safeguarding children who were being educated at home, noting that child abuse often happened by parents, brothers, sisters or close family members. It was asked how problems could be identified should the child be educated at home and there was no regular contact with a school. In response, it was noted that safeguarding every child was important. It was emphasised that it should

not be assumed that safeguarding problems were associated with every family who chose to home educate, because many parents were doing excellent work for the right reasons. It was acknowledged that there had been national cases where safeguarding issues were raised, and it was suggested that this was one of the factors that influenced the Government's decisions when creating the new legislation.

Concern was expressed regarding the decision to separate the Anglesey and Gwynedd Additional Learning Needs services, noting that the Welsh Government often encouraged collaboration between local authorities. It was asked for a separate discussion to explain the reasons for the decision. In response, it was explained that this was a practical decision. It was noted that the service included approximately 130 to 140 staff members, that it was a growing area and faced intensifying needs, and that it was difficult to manage as one service across such a vast area. It was acknowledged that many of the aspects from the partnership with Anglesey had worked well, but it was noted that a more dynamic service was required which could respond more effectively to the needs of the people of Gwynedd.

Concern was expressed that children with additional learning needs who would have been provided a space in a special school five years ago were now being refused, leaving mainstream schools to respond to their needs with limited resources. Reference was made to a significant increase in the number of pupils in special schools, stating that Ysgol Hafod Lon had been built for 100 children, but it would have 135 registered pupils in September 2026. It was noted therefore that the school had to use satellite sites because of the lack of space.

In response, it was noted that the increase in the number of children with additional learning needs who might require a space in a special school caused significant concern. However, it was emphasised that there was a need to consider the basic question regarding inclusion and the way schools and communities were organised. It was explained that it was not desirable to create a system where children with additional learning needs were being educated completely separate to other children. Reference was made to an example of full inclusion between two nearby schools during break times, and a desire was expressed to see children with additional learning needs and other children being educated together where possible.

It was noted that the Council had invested more in integration during the year, but it was acknowledged that more funding was required. It was confirmed, should additional resources be available, that they would be given to schools to employ more staff and increase their ability to be inclusive. It was acknowledged that inclusion made the work of mainstream schools more challenging. It was noted that any increase in the capacity of special schools or constructing a new school would lead to transport implications and additional costs, and there was a need to consider these matters collectively. It was emphasised that it would be better to invest in education and children's experiences instead of spending more on transporting them to provisions that were further away.

Clarity was requested regarding the reference in the report to changes to the plan at Ysgol Bontnewydd. In response, it was explained that the project was challenging because the plan was to build a net zero school. It was noted that this created specific challenges that had not emerged in normal school projects, including insurance matters. It was confirmed that a more comprehensive response would be provided in due course.

It was asked whether schools lost funding when a child was de-registered, because funding was allocated per pupil. Concern was expressed that losing this funding could contribute to redundancies and a reduction in the number of staff. In response, it was explained that it was not possible to provide a simple answer because the impact depended on the time of year that the child was de-registered. It was noted that some schools were able to benefit temporarily should the child leave after the funding had been allocated based on the pupil census. However, should the child be out of school for a whole year, the loss would appear in the subsequent funding.

It was asked how many children benefited from the Camu i'r Copa provision, and whether those children differed from the ten pupils who had been permanently excluded from secondary schools. It was asked, on average, how long a child who had been permanently excluded remained without education before receiving an alternative provision, and who was responsible for safeguarding the child if they were not open to the well-being team. In response, it was reported that approximately 25 children had benefited from the Camu i'r Copa provision during the first year. It was noted that their paths before reaching the provision varied, with some facing exclusions and others not. It was explained that the long-term aim was to ensure that children were able to access the centre before reaching the point of exclusion.

It was asked about the impact of the 230 applications to transfer schools this year, noting that this could place significant pressure on nearby schools, particularly should many children move at the same time. It was asked whether the funding moved with the child when a transfer happened during the academic year. In response, it was explained that not every transfer came from behaviour or inclusion issues, as some could be due to moving house or families moving into or out of the area. However, it was acknowledged that schools were concerned regarding accepting children with challenging behaviour or inclusion needs without additional funding.

It was noted that an agreement existed in the past for the funding to follow the child, but there was not an existing agreement between the headteachers. It was confirmed that the arrangement could be reconsidered, but it was a matter for the schools to agree upon. It was noted that a discussion would take place at every governing body in September, with a decision being made about the way forward.

The Camu i'r Copa staff were thanked for their work, noting that they worked under significant pressure and showed a huge commitment to the children at the centre.

Concern was expressed that the report was fairly superficial in some places and that insufficient figures had been included. Reference was made to statements that the Youth Service work had a positive impact on the well-being, personal development and confidence of young people, but it was noted that there was no specific data to support these statements. In response, it was confirmed that there was more information regarding the Youth Service in other reports and the Youth Service's annual report. It was proposed to share the annual report with the Committee. It was acknowledged that the brief observations in the performance report did not do justice to the amount of work happening.

Reference was made to a recent change from the SIMS information system to a Bromcom system in secondary schools. Concern was expressed that the transfer process placed significant pressure on the well-being of school office staff, and that staff had worked additional hours to address the change. It was asked whether the authority provided sufficient resources and support to schools when introducing the new system. In response, it was noted:-

- The authority had paid for a SIMS system for many years, but schools had been part of the process of choosing Bromcom as the new provider.
- Moving from a system that had been in place for almost a quarter of a century to a new system had been difficult.
- The relevant headteacher had discussed the problems with the department officers and the support team.
- The school should not have been left alone, and the authority should not allow that.
- Many of the problems derived from matters that were beyond the authority's control, including the difference between what was promised by Bromcom and what the company could provide.
- There was disappointment regarding the fact that the change had impacted office staff, as the intention was to improve the school's business processes.
- The authority had committed to the new system and there would be a need to resolve the problems.
- The school in question had been the first to adopt the system and therefore faced the challenges before other schools.
- There was a recommendation in the Child Practice Review to have one consistent system across the county to record safeguarding matters. It was noted that Bromcom was able to provide that function, and that had been one of the main reasons for the change.
- There was a need to ensure that education systems, data and information about children reached the best possible standard, because the previous situation was unacceptable.

The open nature of the discussion between Committee members, the Cabinet Member and officers was welcomed. It was noted that the report reflected the increasingly difficult social circumstances in which schools operated, including children's readiness for school and their ability to carry out basic tasks.

It was suggested that it would be beneficial to include more information about traditional educational results in the report, such as attainment in literacy, numeracy and GCSEs across Gwynedd. It was explained that comparative data could show Gwynedd's situation compared with Wales and the United Kingdom, without the need to scrutinise individual schools in a public session. In response, the suggestion was welcomed and it was noted that work was underway to bring the information together. Reference was made to previous national decisions not to use or publish performance data in public forums, but it was noted that secondary headteachers now showed a desire to be more open when using data to plan improvements.

The Cabinet Member for Education noted that the door had not shut on further developments in the provision of special schools. It was confirmed, should more spaces be required, they would have to respond to that need. It was suggested that satellite sites in mainstream secondary schools could provide support to some pupils with specific needs.

It was reported that more funding had been given to special schools and mainstream schools during the year, and the intention was to try to provide more in the following year. It was noted that an audit of school funding arrangements was underway, which could create opportunities to re-distribute the budget in a different way.

Reference was made to the Youth Service's annual report, and it was noted that it included more information about the number of children who had benefited from well-being support. It was explained that the questionnaires within the report submitted

measured the experience of children whom the service already worked with, and that it was not easy to collect consistent data about children who did not receive support.

Concern was expressed regarding restructuring the Youth Service which had happened some years before. It was noted that five new community provisions had been established since the previous year, and the possibility that the service was gradually moving back towards the previous provision was welcomed. It was reported that the Youth Service was developing a five-year plan and had conducted a consultation. Members were encouraged to take part in the consultation and submit their views.

In terms of the schools' performance data, it was suggested that they should go further than only submitting the Gwynedd average, because one school could increase the average and another could reduce it. It was proposed that data should be submitted per school, without naming the school. It was emphasised that the purpose of this would be to identify schools that performed well and those that required support, to steer improvements instead of placing blame. It was noted that headteachers' agreement was required and a consideration of the Welsh Government's perspective before implementing the arrangement. It was confirmed that the matter would be raised with headteachers before September, with the aim to submit information to the Committee in the autumn.

RESOLVED

- 1. To accept the report and note the observations.**
- 2. To ask the Head of Education to share national comparative data on de-registration with members of the Committee together with the Youth Service Annual Report.**
- 3. There is a need to look at including information and data in relation to pupils' attainment in the future performance report.**
- 4. That the Committee scrutinises the situation in relation to de-registration and Elective Home Education as part of its work programme when timely.**

10. ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Community presented the report noting that it looked back on the department's performance over the previous year, with specific attention to the progress made against the Council's priority projects. It was acknowledged that many of the department's services had faced financial uncertainty because of changes to the Government's funding programmes, but pride was expressed in the performance of the department's teams and the progress made in achieving the Council's commitments.

It was noted that 69 organisations across the county had received support through the Government grant in the last year. It was reported that 55 community councils across Gwynedd had been supported and that £8.9 million had been invested to improve town centre infrastructure. It was noted that a request had been made for the department to further research the additional actions the Council could take by using local authority

powers, including options that did not necessarily align with existing guidelines. It was confirmed that work had already started on this.

It was reported that 118 Gwynedd businesses had received support over the previous year, with a £1.3 million investment. It was noted that 255 Gwynedd residents who faced barriers to employment had received support, as well as 130 additional individuals who had received support to ensure a better or full salary.

Satisfaction was expressed with the progress made with the Trawsfynydd science park. It was noted that members had received an invitation to visit the site and receive a presentation on the latest information regarding the plan, and it was confirmed that a further update would be presented to the Committee in due course.

It was noted that work had commenced over the previous year to develop a more sustainable model to support communities. It was explained that pilot arrangements were being considered in Tywyn, Abermaw and Blaenau Ffestiniog. It was reported that grants to the value of £217,000 had been allocated to community groups and food banks across Gwynedd to strengthen the local support available to residents.

It was noted that the number of visits to Byw'n Iach leisure centres during the previous year had been lower than the previous year. It was explained that the reduction stemmed mainly from a change in the method of gathering data, although there was also a small reduction in the number of primary children who received swimming lessons at the centres. It was noted that the number of visitors remained slightly lower than pre-covid levels, and it was emphasised that there was a need to agree on new systems, improve the performance and encourage more people to use the swimming pools.

It was reported that the previous year had been challenging for maritime services, with winter storms causing damage and a large number of visitors arriving on weekends when the weather was fine, creating traffic problems and additional pressure. It was noted that waste and safety were matters that needed to be considered, as well as several other matters. It was acknowledged that the services' ability to respond to the quick increase in the population on busy days was limited, which caused frustration for local communities and visitors. It was confirmed that these matters would be part of the Destination Management Plan in the future.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

Reference was made to the archives service and the fact that the opening hours had been reduced to the lowest level since 2016. It was noted that over a thousand individuals had responded to a questionnaire, and insufficient opening hours had become prominent as the main concern. It was acknowledged that more material was available online, but it was emphasised that not everyone wished to access services from their homes. It was asked whether there was any intention to extend the opening hours as a result of the Government's investment in public places and the public's responses.

In response, it was explained that opening hours had been a cause for concern to users for many years, and the reduction derived from the need to reduce the service's operating costs. It was noted that the opening hours between Dolgellau and Caernarfon had reached the lowest level possible. It was reported that there had been significant investment in windows, sustainability measures within the premises and the

reading rooms, but it was confirmed that there was no additional funding available to extend the opening hours.

Reference was made to the work to encourage businesses to increase their use of the Welsh language, and it was asked how compliance was being monitored. In response, it was explained that promoting the Welsh language was included as a condition when allocating grants, and that evidence was gathered to show that the condition had been fulfilled. It was noted that businesses were expected to do more than just translate sheets, promoting the Welsh language as part of their activities. It was explained that the method of implementation varied between businesses, but checks were being undertaken. However, it was acknowledged that there was a weakness in the monitoring arrangements because staff who managed the grants were often funded through the grant itself. It was noted that the resource would not necessarily continue after the scheme came to an end. It was explained that the three-year plan would be evaluated and that information and evidence were being gathered, but it would not be possible to monitor the businesses after the scheme ended.

Reference was made to areas where broadband was not always available for businesses and homes. It was emphasised that a reliable connection was essential, particularly as analogue services ended, and it was asked what support the Council could provide to areas without coverage. In response, it was noted:-

- The Digital Gwynedd plan had been part of the Council's previous plan, but the work was now being done in partnership with Ambition North Wales through a regional team.
- A plan was underway to target areas where there were gaps in the provision, but the UK Government had published a similar plan, creating two initiatives with the same aim.
- The regional programme had been postponed to see what the UK Government scheme could provide. It was noted that this scheme would provide subsidies and support for providers to encourage them to serve areas where there were specific gaps.
- The UK Government change had created uncertainty in terms of the status of the scheme, and there was a need to confirm how far it had developed.
- Members were encouraged to submit practical examples and the postcodes of areas where problems continued. It was confirmed that the information would be shared with the regional digital team and raised with the relevant officers.

Reference was made to the £1.3 million distributed between 118 local businesses, and it was asked whether there was evidence that the investment had created new jobs. In response, it was confirmed that such data was being gathered. It was explained that the purpose of the grants was not solely to create new jobs, as they were used to protect existing businesses and posts and increase long-term sustainability. It was noted that information about the number of jobs created had been included in an appendix, and they committed to share the actual figure with the members.

Reference was made to cultural regeneration projects and their reliance on external funding. It was asked whether it was possible to ensure that some projects could continue should the external funding come to an end. In response, it was acknowledged that the department relied heavily on external grants as there was no internal capital budget available. It was explained that Government funding was attracted to support business in Gwynedd, but grant conditions could limit the type of activities that could be achieved.

It was noted that there had been a request for the department to consider what needed to be achieved instead of only focusing on what was eligible under grant conditions. It was explained that there had been a significant change in the funding over previous years, with the Shared Prosperity Fund having been fairly flexible, whilst the new Local Growth Fund placed more emphasis on growth and capital expenditure and was less flexible. It was reported that an effort was made to ensure a fair geographical allocation of the funding across the county. Reference was made to regeneration plans for 13 catchment areas in Gwynedd, with the hope that those plans would reflect most local priorities.

Reference was made to the workstream for town centres. It was noted that Welsh Government funding and the Shared Prosperity Fund tended to focus on improving town centre facilities, but this did not always address the use patterns of town centres, empty properties, parking or softer matters that influenced people's perceptions. It was acknowledged that there was a need to extend the scope of the work, and it was confirmed that a specific report on town centre work would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in July.

It was asked whether there was evidence that the World Heritage Site designation and the associated investment brought economic benefit to Gwynedd communities. In response, it was explained that the designation had been in place for four years and that many schemes and projects had been developed in the communities of the slate areas. It was acknowledged that all the results of the work had not become clear yet.

It was noted that close work was happening with communities on economic projects, tourism, regeneration, pride in place and heritage interpretation. Reference was made to a project to the value of approximately £36 million which included redeveloping the Wales Slate Museum in Llanberis. Neuadd Ogwen in Bethesda was given as an example of investment that had made a practical difference. It was reported that basic infrastructure had been improved, including lighting, sound and insulation, and the improvements had enabled the hall to hold events and late night gigs without adversely affecting the local area.

Reference was made to completing work on buildings in Church Street in Blaenau Ffestiniog, in partnership with Antur Stiniog, to regenerate shops on the high street for housing and commercial use. It was reported that work had happened in Parc Padarn, Llanberis, and that local companies were being supported through the regeneration and construction work.

Reference was made to previous observations that funding for the bypass in Llanbedr would have to come through the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee. There was doubt that the body would allocate a significant proportion of its funding to one plan. It was noted that invites had been sent for Welsh Government members to visit the area and discuss the plan with the community. It was emphasised that the bypass was important to the economy, public safety and to create work opportunities, and it was asked whether the department would continue to press on the Welsh Government to fund the plan. In response, it was confirmed that a plan was ready to be implemented before the previous Government reconsidered the matter. It was noted that costs had increased since then, but a plan still existed and funding was the main barrier. It was confirmed that meetings would be arranged with the relevant Ministers, and the importance of the plan to the economy and the local community would be emphasised.

Reference was made to overnight sites for motor homes, and it was noted that approximately 2,000 vehicles had stayed on the sites in Cricieth, Caernarfon and

Pwllheli for a two-year period. A member asked about the percentage use of the sites. Reference was made to an increasing problem with motor homes in other areas, noting that a significant number had been seen in one location whilst the Caernarfon official site was almost empty. It was asked for clarity regarding 96 enforcement cases in unofficial locations, including the nature of breaches and the reason for taking action. It was noted that motor homes caused problems in some areas. Reference was made to the fact that they would come under the visitor levy scope, but it was suggested that collecting the levy from motor home users would be difficult.

In response, it was confirmed that information could be provided about the percentage use of the sites. It was explained that the Environment Department was responsible for enforcement work, and they committed to ask for background information about the cases. It was acknowledged that the capacity of the enforcement team was limited and that it was difficult to prove in some cases that a vehicle had stayed overnight.

It was asked whether the Welsh Government had considered establishing a new development department, which could offer better grants, attract employers and create jobs in rural areas. In response, it was noted that a meeting would be held with the Minister for the Economy in the Welsh Government, and the question regarding a development department would be raised.

Reference was made to parking problems in communities, including vehicles parking on yellow lines, obstructing roads and creating danger and inconvenience for residents. It was asked whether it would be possible to invest in land to create new parking spaces. It was suggested that purchasing the land or sites of chapels that were closing could be considered, and to charge for parking to recover some of the cost. In response, it was acknowledged that the matter was cross-departmental. It was confirmed that there were opportunities to create more parking spaces for residents and visitors, which could also create an income for the Council. It was explained that the matter could be discussed with the Environment Department. It was noted that community parking was one of the priorities that could be introduced through the Area Regeneration Framework, because different communities had different priorities.

Communities were encouraged to present ideas through the Area Regeneration Framework. It was noted, should an appropriate grant be available, that funding could be sought to purchase land. Should funding not be available immediately, it was suggested that the plan should be developed to a sufficient level of maturity to take advantage of any future funding opportunity. It was added that there would be a need to collaborate between services such as environment, highways, housing and economy. It was noted that the most successful companies were often led by active local groups, but it was acknowledged that management and maintenance costs would rise should the Council purchase and provide a car park. It was confirmed that there was an opportunity to work with community support officers to assess the options and develop a specific plan for a specific site.

Concern was raised regarding recent changes to car park arrangements. It was acknowledged that the Environment Department was responsible for parking, but it was emphasised that the decisions had a significant impact on the local economy. Dissatisfaction was expressed with the consultation period held in November, noting that participants had to read many documents before finding the relevant information about the changes. It was suggested that this did not constitute a fair and accessible consultation.

The rationale for extending the charging hours so that payments began earlier in the morning and finished later at night was acknowledged. However, concern was expressed that some parking spaces had been re-designated from short-stay to long-stay. Llandanwg was given as an example, where it was noted that a visitor or a local individual who wished to spend half an hour on the beach could need to pay £4.50 for parking. Reference was made to a local business that had suffered significantly because of the change. It was suggested that the changes had led to more vehicles parking on the side of the road before the car park, creating additional traffic problems.

The Economy Department was asked to raise the matter with the Environment Department and ensure that the economic impact of changes to car parks were fully considered when conducting consultations in the future. In response, it was confirmed that the observations would be submitted to the Environment Department.

RESOLVED

- 1. To accept the report and note the observations.**
- 2. To ask the Economy and Community Department to share data on numbers using Arosfan (motorhome) sites and information relating to enforcement issues with Committee members.**

11. CORPORATE AND LEGAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Legal Services and the Welsh Language submitted the performance report of the Corporate Services first. It was explained that the report referred to the progress made against the promises of the Council Plan 2023-28 and included the department's performance measures. It was noted that the Corporate Services led on six main projects, namely Keeping the Benefit Local, promoting the use made by Gwynedd residents of the Welsh language, workforce planning, ensuring fairness for all, women in leadership and a strategic review of health and safety management. It was reported that these projects had been scrutinised by the Cabinet Member during a performance challenging and support meeting in April.

It was noted that progress had been made during the year. Reference was made to developing and approving a new procurement strategy that placed an emphasis on local and social benefits. It was reported that training sessions had been developed for officers in the field of procurement to raise their awareness and their understanding of how to buy locally, gain social value and reduce carbon.

It was reported that significant work had been carried out to promote the Welsh language, including programmes with local schools and businesses, as well as research with Bangor University to analyse the public use of the Welsh language in Gwynedd. It was noted that work had been done with the Welsh Language Commissioner to expand on this.

It was reported that the Women in Leadership project had performed well, with many examples of women moving to leadership posts. Reference was made to a video created and a questionnaire sent to women who worked for the Council to gather their views on the project and the next steps. It was noted that prominent progress had been made in the field of health and safety by introducing the first phase of the new information technology system and providing training to managers. It was explained

that this had improved the process of reporting accidents across the Council, and that positive feedback had been received.

It was acknowledged that there had been a delay with the workforce planning project, but it was noted that a draft plan had been created and a full consultation would be conducted in due course. It was explained that this delay had impacted the milestones for the Ensuring Fairness for All project. It was further noted that the milestone for the strategic review on health and safety management had slipped due to work on introducing a new system for human resources and payroll.

In terms of the department's day-to-day work, reference was made to a high percentage of staff who had completed mandatory training. It was reported that the department, during 2025-26, had dealt with every freedom of information request within the appropriate deadline. It was noted that the situation regarding sickness figures continued to be monitored to understand the pressure and take appropriate steps to manage it.

It was reported that there was strong performance in terms of the level of the service, with high levels of customer satisfaction and the number of calls to the contact centre had reduced in recent years. It was noted that the processes for dealing with freedom of information requests were timely and had improved over the previous year. It was reported that developing and training staff was a robust field, with more e-modules available online and positive feedback had been received. Reference was made to an improvement in the field of procurement and Keeping the Benefit Local, noting that this supported the local economy. It was acknowledged that some fields still needed more attention, including data protection and occupational matters.

The officers were thanked for their work and their contribution to support the Council's work throughout the year.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

The progress made through the Women in Leadership project was welcomed, but concern was expressed that men should also receive the same opportunities and support to develop. It was noted that there was no objection to the project, but it was emphasised that men should not be left behind when trying to increase the number of women in leadership posts. Reference was made to the Ensuring Fairness for All project, and it was emphasised that there was a need to give attention to other groups, including disabled people, people from ethnically diverse backgrounds and from different sexual orientations.

Concern was expressed that many posts included a driving licence as an essential requirement, even when there were other methods of travelling to meetings or completing the work. It was noted that online meetings and improvements to public transport also reduced the need for officers to use a car in every case. In response, it was noted that a procedure had been adopted in the past to include a clause regarding a driving licence in job descriptions, but it was acknowledged that the point raised was fair. It was noted that staff were expected to attend training and meetings, but this did not mean that they could not use other methods of travel. It was acknowledged that there was a need to look carefully at the wording in job descriptions to ensure that it did not create an unnecessary barrier for disabled people or other groups.

In terms of Women in Leadership, it was noted that the project had turned a corner in terms of its original aim, as the number of women in higher leadership posts had

significantly increased. It was explained that a lack of confidence had emerged as an important factor during the training, but it was acknowledged that this was also relevant to men. It was noted that the same training and development opportunities were available to everyone, but the project had given more cohorts of women an opportunity to come together to discuss their experiences. It was acknowledged that there could be room to consider a similar offer for men.

It was emphasised that ensuring fairness for all was an important priority. It was noted that regular meetings were being held with the Equality Team to consider what was happening across the Council. Reference was made to the Core Equality Group, which met four times a year, and to the Staff Equality Forum, which provided information and raised matters to discuss. It was reported that 30% of those in leadership posts were women when the project had started, and that figure had increased to 46%. It was noted that this was the original intention of the project, but the department was now in a situation to discuss the next steps and how the work should be developed.

Reference was made to the priority of promoting Gwynedd residents' use of the Welsh language and it was asked who the members of the Welsh Language Project Board were. The idea of having a strategic overview of the work and the priorities was welcomed, but it was asked who was responsible for allocating and realising the work.

In response, it was explained that the Welsh Language Project Board had just been established with the aim of providing guidance, monitoring progress and receiving reports on the work. It was confirmed that a list of the officers and members on the board would be provided. It was noted that officers had already been leading on specific projects, but there was an advantage in having a programme board to ensure that the Council's Language Strategy was being achieved.

It was explained that many projects had been completed and that lessons learned reports would be submitted to the board. It was noted that one of the board's important roles in the future would be to commission new projects, agree on a list of priorities, set success measures and ensure that the necessary details were in place.

It was added that the Project Board had held one meeting to date and that there was representation from every department on it. It was noted that this was a cross-departmental matter, and contributions from all departments were needed to get a comprehensive picture of the work. It was explained that the first meeting had focused on establishing the board's terms of reference, and subsequent meetings would look in detail on the projects and progress. It was confirmed that elected members were also part of the board.

Reference was made to place names and street signs, noting that many streets in Trefor did not have name signs. It was explained that work had been done locally through a pilot to create a list of suitable Welsh names. It was noted that the signs had been welcomed by residents. Disappointment was expressed that the pilot scheme had ended, and the report suggested that it was not practical to change every sign. It was suggested that the work should be reconsidered as it was a practical way of ensuring that the Welsh language was more visible.

They proceeded to submit the performance report of the Legal Services.

It was explained that the service's performance was being monitored through feedback from the departments that received the advice of the Legal Service. It was noted that a questionnaire was issued at the end of every case. It was reported that 30% of the

questionnaires sent during the year had been returned. It was acknowledged that the response rate may appear low, but it was noted that it was a significant increase on the previous year and reflected the department's work to promote the questionnaires.

It was reported that 95% of the responders had given a score of 5/5 or noted that they were satisfied with the service, compared with 93% in 2024-25. It was acknowledged that there was room to improve, and it was noted that actions were already underway to respond to the observations received. It was reported that annual questionnaires had also been sent to heads of departments and managers, with a response rate of 33%. It was noted that the responders had described the service as good or very good. Reference was made to observations regarding the department's capacity, and it was confirmed that the situation would be monitored regularly.

In terms of propriety, it was reported that a course on good decision-making had been provided to officers and that work was continuing to promote high standards amongst members. It was noted that some members had not completed the Code of Conduct training. It was confirmed that the course was core training and available online, and that work continued to encourage everyone to complete it.

It was reported that increasing emphasis would be placed on preparing a national programme for the 2027 elections. It was noted that the Monitoring Officer's period of providing legal advice to the Corporate Joint Committee had come to an end, releasing the Head of Legal Services to return to work full time for Cyngor Gwynedd.

It was reported that work to keep the Council's Constitution under review had been completed, and a contribution had been made to review the whistleblowing procedure, as well as review officer delegation schemes.

It was reported that the recent period had been very busy for the Elections Service, including several by-elections, with the Llanrug by-election also underway. Reference was made to the Senedd election in May, which had presented additional challenges due to the size of the geographical area, the number of constituents and the new boundaries for Gwynedd Maldwyn. It was noted that the annual register had been published. Reference was made to a problem that arose in relation to the Coroner's salary and it was confirmed that this matter had now been resolved.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

The increase in the satisfaction level with the Legal Service to 95% was welcomed, but attention was drawn to the response rate of 30% for the questionnaires. It was asked whether any proactive actions had been taken to seek the opinion of the 70% who had not responded. In response, it was explained that no specific action had been taken to target the individuals who had not responded, and it was acknowledged that questionnaire fatigue could be a factor. It was noted that obtaining responses to the questionnaires had been a challenge for many years, but the 30% rate provided a relatively useful picture of the service's performance. It was explained that the biggest change was the work of directly consulting with the departments and their management teams, because that method was able to provide more detailed feedback and an opportunity to conduct a more comprehensive discussion about the service's performance. It was emphasised that individuals could not be forced to respond to questionnaires and therefore there was a need to ensure a balance between the different methods of gathering feedback.

Reference was made to the arrangements of the recent Senedd election, noting that it had been very different to previous elections due to the size of the constituency and the voting arrangements. It was asked whether there was an intention to review the way the election had been conducted and to identify any lessons to be learned for future elections. In response, it was explained that there was a need to be careful regarding the role of the Council as it was the Returning Officer's responsibility to conduct the election and the Council did not have a specific role in terms of scrutinising that function. However, it was noted that it was a normal part of planning every election to conduct an operational review of all the arrangements since then, considering what worked well and what needed to be improved. It was explained that these lessons would be used when preparing for the next election, and the whole process was being reviewed against the Electoral Commission's standards. It was confirmed that an operational review of the processes took place regularly. It was noted that more work relating to the Senedd boundaries was expected in future, as the recent arrangements were temporary. It was explained that the size of the area to be administered had led the service to start planning much earlier than usual, and the view was expressed that this had been beneficial.

It was expressed, based on the experience of visiting many polling stations, that the arrangements in Gwynedd had been very thorough. It was noted that Gwynedd was not always amongst the quickest areas to complete the count process, but it was acknowledged that ensuring that the count was thorough and correct was more important than the speed of the process.

Attention was drawn to a reference in the report to legal advice that emerged from the Ysgol Friars situation, and a member asked for more information regarding the nature of the work, the resources assigned to it and the impact or lessons that had arisen from it. In response, it was explained that such a situation created a wide range of legal work and led to a demand for advice across several fields, including Education, Human Resources and governance. It was noted that it was not only one individual from the Legal Service who was associated with the work, as different officers had contributed according to the nature of the matters and the expertise required. Reference was made to work that had come about from the situation, including contributing to the whistleblowing arrangements, as well as elements of the wider response plan that required legal input. It was emphasised that a lot of legal support had been provided throughout the period, from the initial steps to the current situation.

It was asked further whether the work had placed significant pressure on the service's resources. In response, it was acknowledged that the usual day-to-day work had not reduced as a result of the situation, and therefore the additional requirements had created additional pressure. It was reported that external experts had been commissioned when specific expertise was required, and it was noted that the end of the arrangement of providing legal advice to the Corporate Joint Committee had released additional capacity. It was acknowledged that the situation had added to the pressures on the service, but it was confirmed that the team had managed to cope with the work.

The committee expressed its huge appreciation of the legal support received, noting that the service provided invaluable support to members and that the staff responded willingly and in a helpful manner. It was acknowledged that the Council was fortunate to have a professional team in Gwynedd.

Reference was made to a complaint that had been received following the election regarding changing the location of a polling station. It was explained that the polling

station in a ward had moved from a previously used building, but the sign on the old building still stated that it was a polling station, even though the door was locked. It was noted that constituents who had voted in the building for years had gone there and had not been able to vote due to the confusion about the new location. Concern was expressed that there had not been enough warning about the change, and specifically regarding the presence of the sign on the old building.

In response, it was explained that the Elections Service monitored and reviewed voting arrangements and that changes to boundaries, new housing developments and other local circumstances could mean having to change the location of polling stations. It was noted that such changes were advertised and information was sent to constituents, but it was acknowledged that it was natural for individuals to go to the venue that they were used to voting in for years. It was confirmed that the matter had been brought to the service's attention and would be considered as part of the current review to ensure that enough information was provided when similar changes occurred.

RESOLVED to accept the reports and to note the observations.

The meeting commenced at 10:30am and concluded at 3:47pm

Chair

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14/07/26

Attendance:

Councillors: Councillor Rhys Tudur (Chair)

Councillors:- Jina Gwyrfaï, Dawn Lynne Jones, Elwyn Jones, Gareth Tudor Jones, Gwilym Jones, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dewi Owen, Gwynfor Owen, John Pughe Roberts, Richard Glyn Roberts, Huw Llwyd Rowlands and Sian Williams.

Co-opted Members: Sharon Roberts (Arfon Parents/Governors' Representative), Gwilym Jones (NASUWT) and Elise Poulter (NEU).

Officers present: Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Adviser) and Jasmine Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

Present for item 4 - Councillor Huw Wyn Jones (Cabinet Member for Finance), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance) and Sian Pugh (Assistant Head of Finance – Sustainability and Developments).

Present for item 5 - Councillor Dewi Jones (Cabinet Member for Education), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education) and Llion Williams (Safeguarding and Well-being Quality Leader).

Present for item 6 - Councillor Medwyn Hughes (Cabinet Member for Economy and Community), Llŷr Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community) and Hannah Joyce (Wales Slate Regeneration Programme Manager).

Present for item 7 - Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Advisor).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Elin Walker Jones, Geraint Parry and Dyfrig Siencyn; Colette Owen (Catholic Church) and Gweno Glyn Williams (Dwyfor Parents / Governors' Representative).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Sharon Roberts (Arfon Parents/Governors' Representative) declared a personal interest in Item 6 on the agenda. The member was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and she withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report which provided the Committee with an update on what had been achieved in the field, including an update on the

Council Plan and the Department's day-to-day work up to the end of March 2026. It was explained that the Information Technology Service had been transferred to the management of the Corporate Services Department since 1 April 2026, but as the 2025/26 performance was being considered, the digital services had been included in the report. It was noted that the transition had been smooth, but that the recruitment of an Assistant Head for the Information Technology Service remained a challenge.

It was reported that all matters under the responsibility of the Cabinet Member had been discussed and scrutinised at Performance Challenge and Support meetings, and satisfaction was expressed with the Department's overall performance. It was noted that the Finance Department had taken the lead on two priorities in the Council Plan during 2025/26, namely Managing the Impact of National Budgetary Cuts and the Digital Plan. It was emphasised that the need to achieve financial savings across the Council remained a priority to achieve budgetary balance in the medium term and to seek to keep any increase in Council Tax within reasonable limits. It was noted that the work of the Finance Department in the field was robust and effective, but ensuring that savings were successfully realised in all services remained a challenge.

It was noted that the performance measures showed a robust performance overall, with a few areas still receiving attention. Reference was made to high levels of compliance with mandatory training, along with the robust performance of the Finance and Accountancy, Payroll and Pensions services. It was noted that the level of long-term debt managed by the Income Service remained a matter of concern and that this was the only red category measure in the Department. It was noted that there were signs of improvement and that plans were in place to reduce risk and improve debt recovery. It was reported that the rate of Council Tax collection had improved, although it remained below historical levels. It was noted that there was an intention to introduce additional digital support to support the service.

In terms of Information Technology, it was noted that significant improvements had been made to strengthen the digital provision, including the modernisation of devices, the upgrading of systems, the expansion of digital ways of working and the rationalisation of the infrastructure. It was explained that the work had contributed to achieving financial savings. It was noted that cyber incidents and service outages had highlighted the need to continue to strengthen the resilience and security of the infrastructure, and it was noted that these issues were regularly monitored through the Performance Challenge and Support arrangements.

Attention was drawn to two reports received from external auditors during the year. It was noted that the report by Audit Wales on Strategic Management of Balances and Reserves had been published in September 2025, with the main recommendation relating to strengthening the Council's reserves strategy. It was reported that the ISA260 report had been published in November 2025 and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee. It was noted that an unqualified opinion had been given on the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts and that the report did not contain any recommendations.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:

Attention was drawn to the fact that the percentage of staff who had completed the mandatory training on awareness of the Welsh language was lower than the percentages for the other mandatory training. Concern was expressed about this stressing that as the training was mandatory, the Department should aim to ensure that all members of staff completed it.

Reference was made to the Benefits Service and the pressures arising from high levels of private rents and intermediate rents, noting that high rent costs could make it difficult for people to save towards buying a home.

Attention was drawn to free school meals, noting that the provision of free meals for all primary pupils meant that some families who would have previously been eligible did not see the need to register. Concern was expressed that this led to a loss of important information, as eligibility for free school meals continued to be used as an indicator of deprivation, and it was noted that the problem could increase with the movement of pupils from Year 6 to the secondary sector.

In response to several comments, it was stated:-

- That significant progress had been made with mandatory training since the data collected in March. It was explained that the different courses needed to be prioritised as they required a time commitment from staff, but the expectation was clear that the aim was to reach 100%.
- That the Department had been among the first in the Council to reach 100% in terms of safeguarding training, and that the level for domestic abuse training was almost 100%, with the exception of one member of staff who was absent on a long-term basis. It was noted that Welsh Language awareness training continued to be among the lowest percentages, but it was confirmed that work continued to improve the situation.
- The majority of housing benefit payments had now transferred to Universal Credit, with the Council continuing to deal with specific groups such as pensioners and people in certain types of accommodation. It was explained that the level of rent was based on the nationally determined Local Housing Allowance, and it was recognised that there were cases where the level of benefit was lower than the rent that a claimant had to pay.
- That the Discretionary Housing Payments fund was used in full each year to provide support in this field.
- That the Department was aware of the issue of registering for free school meals as pupils moved from primary to secondary, and that discussions were taking place with the Education Department to address the situation.

Reference was made to the high level of debt owed by the Health Board, and it was questioned how long the money had been outstanding and why it had not been recovered. In response, it was confirmed that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board's debt was a matter of concern. It was noted that old debts were mainly under consideration and that arrangements in relation to newer debts had improved. It was reported that discussions were ongoing with the Health Board.

It was explained that the six local authorities in North Wales needed to work together on the Health Board's debts. It was noted that historical experience had shown that one authority could be paid if it put significant pressure on the Health Board, leaving the other five authorities to wait for their payments. It was reported that the issue had been identified at the level of finance officers and chief executives, and that collaboration was planned.

Concern was expressed about debt levels in general and the possibility that the cost of living pressures were making it more difficult for residents to pay Council Tax. In response, it was clarified that the overall debt figures under the Income Unit did not include Council Tax debts.

It was further questioned where Council Tax debts were recorded. In response, it was explained that they were reflected in the collection rates. It was noted that residents with the lowest levels of income and capital may be eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Concern was expressed, however, about a cohort of people whose income, savings or assets were slightly too high to qualify for the scheme, but who were nonetheless struggling to pay. It was explained that the Council sought to signpost such individuals to services such as Citizens Advice in order to receive support.

The relationship between Council Tax collection rates and the premium on property was highlighted, and it was asked whether a clearer analysis of cases where Council Tax had not been paid could be provided. The view was expressed that a distinction should be made between individuals who refused to pay without mitigating circumstances, cases where an error had occurred, and cases where there was real difficulty in paying. Reference was made to cases where the premium had been charged on a property and where that was considered disproportionate under the circumstances, including a holiday property for which there was no relevant planning condition. A request was made for such information in future reports to provide a better picture of the reasons for the difference in collection rates. Reference was made to the overall reduction in the collection rate since 2019 and the reference to revaluation in 2026, questioning whether an increase in property values could further affect Gwynedd taxpayers and collection rates.

The performance of the Internal Audit Service was questioned, noting that the Service had not met its targets. Reference was made to a recent annual report to the Governance and Audit Committee where a relatively high number of audits had been given 'limited assurance', and it was questioned whether this suggested a problem with the Internal Audit Service. In response, it was noted that:-

- The introduction of the Council Tax Premium had created a significant challenge for the Tax Service, along with the additional pressures that derived from the Covid period. It was stressed that there had been no attempt to hide the magnitude of the challenge.
- Significant progress had been made over the previous year in responding to exceptional cases relating to the premium. It was reported that a panel had been set up to consider applications and cases where there were exceptional circumstances, recognising that some properties could be in circumstances that did not fulfil the original intention of the premium.
- A general exception could not be introduced for a particular type of property, and that each case needed to be considered on its own merits. It was noted that the panel developed information over time and, in identifying cases with similar characteristics, there was a need to ensure consistency in dealing with cases.
- An analysis of the figures could be provided in the next report to provide the additional context requested.
- The revaluation referred to in the report related to Non-Domestic Rates and not Council Tax. It was noted that the revaluation, along with changes to some relief schemes, could create problems for businesses in the county, and it was noted that the Council would do what it could to support them.
- In relation to Internal Audit, it was recognised that the number of reports that had received limited assurance was slightly higher than usual, but that in itself was not considered to be an indication of a problem with the Internal Audit Service. It was explained that the role of the service was to report on what it found, and that an increase in limited assurance reports could be indicative of wider issues

around the Council's internal controls. It was noted that that was a matter to be considered at a corporate level.

It was explained that the concern in relation to Internal Audit was the resources and capacity of the service rather than the quality of the work. It was noted that, in the context of the previous discussion on the premium, a number of Gwynedd residents were in a position where they had assets or capital but relatively low incomes, and it was emphasised that this needed to be taken into account when making decisions regarding Council Tax. In response, it was confirmed that that consideration was borne in mind when considering cases through Panel 13A. In relation to Internal Audit, it was confirmed that the capacity of the service was an issue considered by the Head of Finance, and that a commitment had been given to the Governance and Audit Committee to review the resources available.

It was reported that the number of staff in the Internal Audit team had decreased significantly over the years, from around 12 members of staff to six. It was explained that there was no single specific measure for deciding how much internal audit work should be carried out, and that the level of work depended on the resources available. It was emphasised that the Chief Finance Officer needed to ensure that the capacity of the service did not fall to a level where it would no longer be able to carry out its duties or provide the necessary assurance regarding internal controls. It was noted that any request for additional resources would have to follow the Council's normal bidding process. It was stressed, however, that there was no evidence that the increase in limited assurance reports stemmed directly from the capacity of the service, as they reflected the findings of the work carried out.

Attention was drawn to the long-term debts, which amounted to almost £2 million, and it was asked what exactly the robust plans were to tackle the debt. It was questioned whether there was a risk that some of the debts would have to be written off, and whether court proceedings had been initiated to recover the money. In response, it was noted that:-

- The Cabinet had approved a one-off bid in March, and that a legal and administrative resource had been secured. It was explained that close work was taking place with the Children and Adults Departments in relation to care debts, and that discussions had begun to seek further recovery of the amounts owed.
- Information about specific court cases was not at hand, but that some cases were referred to the Council's Legal Service. It was stressed that in all cases it was not necessary to go to court in order to pursue debt.
- There was an important difference between Council Tax debts and minor debts. It was explained that the Council had stronger statutory powers in relation to tax debts, while recovering minor debts could be more complex.
- A proportion of the debt was owed by another public body, in which the Council hoped to be able to reach an agreement, and that another significant proportion related to people who were being looked after. It was stressed that the circumstances of the debtors needed to be considered before deciding whether court action would be appropriate.
- Debt was defined as long-term debt for the purposes of the report when it was more than six months old. It was explained that some debts were significantly older than that, and that some cases went back several years.
- The Income Service reviewed its practices and structures to see how the debt recovery team could operate faster and more efficiently with the limited resources available.

Reference was made to the tens of millions of pounds worth of savings achieved over recent years and, looking back on the process, it was asked whether there was confidence that the systems used had succeeded in minimising the impact of the cuts on front-line services. It was enquired what lessons had been learnt for the future, given the likelihood that further savings would be needed. In response, it was explained that the Finance Service had learnt through all cycles of savings and had developed a more supportive and challenging role in assessing saving plans. It was noted that there was now a better understanding of how realistic a saving plan was before it was approved, acknowledging that plans had been submitted in the past that were ultimately unachievable.

It was emphasised that it should not be assumed that support services such as the Finance Department were able to accept cuts on an ongoing basis without impact, as that support capacity was needed to enable front-line departments to operate. Nevertheless, the view was expressed that there were further opportunities to improve efficiency, especially through technological advances and doing more with the same level of resources or less. It was acknowledged that it could not be promised that all the necessary future savings would be achieved through efficiency alone, but the view was expressed that opportunities continued to improve ways of working to reduce the need to cut services for the people of Gwynedd.

Attention was drawn to the pressures on the Tax Service during the period of sending Council Tax bills at the start of the financial year. Concern was expressed that residents who were worried about an increase in their bills had to wait for long periods to receive a response over the phone, with some reporting that they had waited up to 45 minutes. It was emphasised that not all individuals wished to use e-mail or wait for a written response, and it was asked whether more staff could be provided to answer calls during busy periods. In response, it was explained that the recruitment and retention of staff in the Tax Service was a significant challenge, particularly as answering calls about tax could be difficult. It was noted that it would be desirable to increase the number of staff at busy times, but that there were not enough applicants available, and it was emphasised that it was not possible to promise an undeliverable arrangement.

The view was expressed that Galw Gwynedd could provide additional support during the busy periods as the increase in calls could be predicted. In response, it was explained that the telephone lines were busy throughout the year and not just during the billing period, and that the service worked regularly with Galw Gwynedd. It was noted that efforts to recruit additional staff were being made on a regular basis, but that a number of posts had to be re-advertised. Reference was made to a particular difficulty in the recruitment of court officers, noting that it was not possible to attract applicants even for some temporary posts.

It was reported that a pilot scheme was underway to introduce on-line forms to improve the service for those wishing to deal with issues digitally. It was explained that Council Tax staff would be able to assist individuals over the phone to complete the forms, with the hope that this would speed up the process and free up more time to answer calls.

It was stressed that not everyone wished to communicate on-line, and the concern was reiterated that some residents due to their situation needed a quick response rather than waiting several working days for a response. It was questioned whether the main obstacle was a lack of applicants, rather than a lack of funding to employ staff. In response, it was confirmed that additional resources had been provided as a result of

the premium to be able to employ more staff, but that the challenge was to attract people to apply for the jobs. It was clarified that the introduction of on-line forms was not intended to replace the telephone service. It was stated that the intention was to enable those who were willing to use an on-line service to do so, freeing up capacity for staff to assist those who needed to use the phone or preferred to do so.

It was emphasised that the Department's services were trying to put the people of Gwynedd first, but that the welfare of staff needed to be addressed. It was noted that staff remaining in the Tax Service were under significant pressure due to the recruitment difficulties, and that putting unacceptable pressure on them had to be avoided. It was acknowledged that the service at the time did not meet the desired best standard for residents, but it was confirmed that different approaches were being considered to improve the situation. It was stressed that failure to attract applicants to vacant posts significantly limited what could be achieved.

Returning to the mandatory training, it was asked how many staff the percentages in the report represented and how many vacancies there were in the Department. In response, it was explained that the training figures included Information Technology Service staff. It was noted that the Finance Department now consisted of approximately 150 staff after the transfer of the service to the Corporate Services Department. It was confirmed that the exact number of vacancies was not to hand, but a commitment was made to provide the information to the members. It was noted that the Tax Service was where recruitment was most difficult, and that turnover levels in other parts of the Department were more normal.

It was questioned whether Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board was the Council's largest single debtor. It was questioned whether the amount related to old debts, given that more recent payment arrangements had improved, and whether there was a risk that the debt would eventually have to be written off. In response, it was confirmed that the Health Board was the Council's largest single debtor. It was confirmed that old debts were mainly under consideration. It was explained that disputes could arise in care cases about what proportion of the cost should be paid by the health service and what proportion should be paid by the Council, and that this often caused delays. It was noted that the Health Board paid relatively promptly once an agreement had been reached.

It was recognised that there was a risk that some debts would eventually have to be written off. It was noted that the Department was continuing to seek to recover older debts, but that there might come a point where it would have to be accepted that a certain amount was not likely to be paid. It was explained that provision for bad debt was included in the budgeting and preparation of accounts, to ensure that the Council planned prudently for that risk.

Returning to the recruitment problems in the Tax Service, it was noted that some members were aware of people who were looking for work, but that there were no Finance posts to be found on the Council's vacancies page at the time. It was questioned how people could know about the opportunities or apply for them if jobs were not advertised. In response, it was explained that some posts within the Tax Service had been advertised in the past without attracting any applicants, and as a result the Department had concluded that the structure of the service needed to be reviewed. It was noted that work on the review was underway and, once the new structure was in place in the following weeks, further posts would be advertised.

It was reported that the Department was looking at the Council's central pool staff to see if there were individuals available who could fill some of the posts, and people looking for work were encouraged to join that pool. It was noted that regular discussions were being held with the service managing the pool to identify any suitable individuals. It was noted that agency staff needed to be used from time to time when posts could not be filled, although this was not the first choice. It was emphasised that the work was not just about answering phone calls, as the information received subsequently needed to be processed. It was reported that the service had succeeded in attracting a trainee and two apprentices to the field, and it was hoped that they would contribute to the future of the service.

RESOLVED

- **To accept the report and note the observations.**
- **To ask to include the following in the next performance report that will be brought before the Committee:**
 - **more detailed data categorised in relation to long-term debts and tax collection;**
 - **number of legal cases relating to long-term debts;**
 - **information about the department's recruitment arrangements.**

5. SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS IN SCHOOLS SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION REPORT

The Chair of the Scrutiny Investigation presented the report and thanked all those who took part in the investigation. It was explained that this was not a specific case investigation or a statutory investigation, and that its purpose was not to reconsider matters that had already been examined through the Child Practice Review. It was noted that the question posed to the Panel was whether the safeguarding arrangements in the county's schools were appropriate and consistent, with the Panel being responsible for gathering evidence, drawing conclusions and making recommendations to the Cabinet and, in some cases, to the Welsh Government.

It was stressed that the reopening of the Foden case was not within the remit of the investigation, as the Child Practice Review had already considered the case. It was explained that the intention of the investigation was to look ahead and consider what else could be done to strengthen safeguarding arrangements in schools. It was noted that the scrutiny investigation was one of the work streams in the Council's Response Plan following the Child Practice Review, and that the Response Board, the Child Practice Review and the Scrutiny Investigation had different but complementary functions. It was explained that the Child Practice Review had looked back to understand what had gone wrong and the lessons to be learnt, that the Response Board was leading and overseeing the implementation of the corporate response, and that the Scrutiny Investigation had provided an additional layer of independent challenge by focusing on the arrangements in place in schools today and considering how to strengthen them further.

It was reported that a wide range of evidence had been considered over a period of several months. 11 schools were visited and discussions had been held with headteachers, governors, staff and pupils, as well as taking evidence from officers and experts and considering national guidance, policies and Estyn's work. It was noted that the investigation had found a lot of good work taking place in Gwynedd's schools, but it

was emphasised that having good policies on paper was not enough in itself and that it needed to be ensured that they were implemented consistently in all schools, by all members of staff and at all levels.

It was elaborated that the 22 recommendations formed the basis of a work programme rather than a list of individual proposals. It was noted that some of the recommendations related to people, ensuring that staff, governors and those with safeguarding responsibilities received the necessary training, support and clarity; that others related to systems, including strengthening arrangements for recording, monitoring, sharing information and ensuring greater consistency between schools; and that others were culture-focused, ensuring that pupils knew who to turn to for help, that their voice was heard and that everyone understood that safeguarding was the responsibility of each individual. It was noted that the recommendations had been grouped under nine strategic themes, namely training, pupils' understanding, support and well-being, the voice of pupils, review and learning, systems and information sharing, parents, safeguarding visibility, and governance and accountability.

It was stressed that one of the strengths of the report was that it did not rely on one major change, but recognised that effective safeguarding depended on a number of elements working together in a coherent manner. It was recognised that no system could guarantee complete safety, but it was noted that risks could be reduced, systems strengthened and concerns could be identified and responded to earlier, more consistently and more effectively. It was emphasised that the report alone would not make children safer, and that the action taken following the report would make the difference. It was therefore noted that the submission of the report was not the end of a process, but the beginning of the next stage, and that the actual success of the investigation would be measured by the implementation of the recommendations and the difference they would make in practice.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:

It was noted that the investigation had been conducted in a constructive spirit and that members had understood the importance of safeguarding children and the reason for carrying out the work. It was explained that the randomly selected schools worked well together once the purpose of the investigation was explained. It was noted that the 11 schools were located across the county and included a special school, primary schools and secondary schools, giving a broad cross-section of Gwynedd schools. It was reported that the response and information received from the visits had been valuable, and it was recognised that the support of officers in co-ordinating the visits and recording the evidence had enabled the members of the Panel to focus on the scrutiny.

Reference was made to the recent criticism of the report in the press, and the Chair of the Investigation was asked to respond to the comments made. In response, it was acknowledged that criticism had been submitted before the report was considered by the Committee, and it was emphasised that it was important to respond to the criticism as the correct implementation of the recommendations was essential to make a real difference to the safeguarding of children in Gwynedd and beyond. It was noted that the recommendations would be more likely to be implemented effectively if the report and the process that led to it were understood and taken seriously.

It was noted that the criticism had been presented by Ms Yates, who represented some of Foden's victims along with other victims. It was acknowledged that she had represented some of the victims for years and that it was understandable that she was keen to see rapid, robust and meaningful change. It was emphasised that the same

aim was shared, namely to do everything possible to ensure that children in Gwynedd would not experience failures similar to those seen at Ysgol Friars again.

It was reiterated that the Scrutiny Investigation was not a statutory investigation or a public inquiry, but an investigation carried out within the terms of reference approved by the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee. It was reiterated that the reopening of the Foden case or the allocation of individual responsibility was not within the remit of the investigation, as that had already been dealt with by the Child Practice Review. It was explained that the task was to look ahead and consider what else could be done to strengthen safeguarding arrangements in Gwynedd schools in the future, noting that attempting to fulfil both functions at the same time would have created a risk that neither would have achieved effectively.

Reference was made to criticism regarding the use of the word "should" rather than "must" in the recommendations. In response, it was clarified that the use of "should" reflected the nature of a scrutiny investigation, as a scrutiny committee did not have the power to impose statutory duties. It was noted that the Committee's role was to make recommendations and then hold the Cabinet to account for the implementation of the recommendations. It was stressed that this did not make the recommendations any less important, but that it reflected the democratic framework within which scrutiny operated.

Reference was made to sample size and the voice of pupils' work, and it was recognised that a larger sample would always be desirable. However, it was emphasised that the voice of pupils' work was not the only basis for the report, but that it was part of a wide range of evidence which had included visits to 11 schools, discussions with governors, headteachers and staff, evidence from Estyn, officers and experts, as well as the statutory framework. It was noted that the Panel had reached its conclusions on the basis of all the evidence.

It was pointed out that too much emphasis had been placed on the voice of the child. In response, it was explained that including the voice of the child had been a deliberate decision by the Panel from its first meeting, before any evidence had been gathered. It was noted that not including the voice of pupils would have been subject to harsh and appropriate criticism. It was emphasised that the Panel did not see a choice between the voice of the child and adult accountability, as children needed to feel safe and confident enough to raise concerns, but that the adults who served them needed to have the training, knowledge and accountability to respond appropriately. It was noted that neither element could work effectively without the other.

It was explained that the order of the recommendations did not reflect the order of their importance, as they were grouped by theme, and it was emphasised that each of the recommendations was important. Reference was made to the accountability of governors, and it was noted that the Panel had carefully considered the matter. It was explained that this was why the report included recommendations to strengthen the training for governors, clarify responsibilities and call on the Welsh Government to reconsider the national framework. It was therefore expressed that the difference between the criticism and the Panel's position was how far the recommendations should go, rather than the principle itself.

Reference was made to a criticism that the report did not contain anything new. In response, it was reiterated that the purpose of the Scrutiny Investigation was to build on the lessons of the Child Practice Review rather than repeat or replace it. It was noted that the Scrutiny Investigation had asked a different question, namely whether

the safeguarding arrangements of Gwynedd schools at the time were appropriate and were being implemented consistently. It was explained that a number of the recommendations went beyond what was included in the Child Practice Review, including calls for greater national standardisation, strengthening governance arrangements, improving recording and monitoring arrangements and ensuring greater consistency between schools. It was emphasised that the two reports fulfilled different but complementary functions, with the Child Practice Review looking back at the failures and the Scrutiny Investigation looking forward to strengthening the existing systems.

Reference was made to a criticism that action was needed rather than producing another report. There was agreement with that principle, emphasising that the end goal was not the report but the action that would follow. It was noted that the Scrutiny Investigation had seen the report as a single step in a process, and that success would be measured not by the number of recommendations but by the actions taken by the Council and the Welsh Government in response to them.

It was acknowledged that the Panel had not claimed to have all the answers, and that the members had been very aware of the seriousness of the matter and their responsibility. It was emphasised that the intention was to make a constructive contribution to the wider work of strengthening safeguarding arrangements in Gwynedd, and that any constructive comments or criticisms that resulted in the action plan being strengthened or further improving arrangements would be welcomed. It was reiterated that the actions taken jointly, rather than words in a report, would make the difference to the safety of children.

The contents of the report were welcomed and it was noted that new elements had emerged. Reference was made to the recommendation regarding ensuring that the names of the Designated Safeguarding Person and the Designated Safeguarding Governor are displayed on posters in the school. The view was expressed that the information should be visible outside the school building and on the school website, and that relevant contact details should be provided within the Council. It was emphasised that if the concern related to someone within the school, it was important that children and other people knew how to contact someone outside of school.

Reference was made to digital systems for recording concerns, including MyConcern. It was questioned whether it would be possible for an appropriate officer from the Education Department to access the system to be able to see patterns, especially in a situation where the headteacher was overseeing the system. The view was expressed that such access could assist in identifying patterns and ensuring that information followed a child when moving between primary schools or in the transition from the primary to secondary sector. In response, it was noted that:-

- The Committee had previously raised the matter of displaying safeguarding details, and that a team of four officers visited schools annually to check the arrangements and ensure that the relevant requirements were in place. It was explained that the team was relatively new but that it was now ahead of schedule in terms of visiting all the schools.
- The recommendation to display the details of the safeguarding persons, including on lanyards, was considered good practice and that that practice would be added to the criteria used by the safeguarding team. It was noted that some schools in Gwynedd were already doing this.
- The Department could not force a school or governing body to implement an arrangement that was not a statutory requirement. Frustration was expressed

about the limitations of the education authority's powers, noting that recommending, asking and highlighting good practice were the methods that were often available.

- The review being carried out by the Welsh Government needed to clearly consider where the different powers and responsibilities lay, expressing the view that officers of the Education Department did not have sufficient powers to demand that certain arrangements be implemented.
- The Council had invested in a new Bromcom digital system, with more progress being made in the primary sector than in the secondary sector. It was noted that moving between systems was challenging, but that the work was ongoing.
- School autonomy meant that it was difficult to ensure that all schools used the same system. It was noted that seeking agreement across North Wales, Powys and Ceredigion would be even more challenging, and therefore support was expressed for the Welsh Government to mandate a single national system for Wales.
- More than one individual may have access to safeguarding records and that several persons needed to be able to access MyConcern.
- The authority had commissioned one new system for managing information about children across the county, for the primary and secondary sectors.
- The process of moving from the old system to the new system had been very challenging, but it was noted that the aim was to ensure one record for each child that would transfer easily from primary to secondary school. It was noted that, with the school's consent, the authority could have an overview of the safeguarding records on the system.
- Access to MyConcern was possible but more limited and depended on the school's permission.
- There was close and constructive collaboration between the Education Department and Gwynedd schools, and that schools rarely refused to act on new guidelines or requests, particularly in the safeguarding field.
- However, as more additional requirements were introduced, schools in the future may be more reluctant to implement non-statutory arrangements due to the additional workload.

It was questioned what specific safeguards the Education Department would like to have the power to make mandatory, beyond consistency in terms of the recording system. In response, it was explained that schools were already required to record concerns and changes in children's behaviour, but that the nature and level of the concern could be interpreted in different ways. It was noted that Gwynedd's schools tended to be cautious and recorded the vast majority of issues of concern. It was emphasised that one of the most useful changes would be to have a single national system for Wales, as children were able to move between local authorities during their education and there was no consistent system to ensure that a single safeguarding record followed the child throughout their education. It was noted that more than one system was being used even in Gwynedd, as the choice of software remained in the hands of individual schools and headteachers.

It was emphasised that the fact that schools had autonomy did not mean that they did not listen or co-operate with the Education Department. It was noted that there was close collaboration between headteachers and education officers, and that different views were naturally present in a system involving a large number of schools. It was explained that the role of the Cabinet Member for Education and the Head of Education was to listen to those views and, at times, to come to a decision on what was considered most appropriate for the county. The view was expressed that the Welsh Government had a similar role at a national level, and that schools could find it

easier if some decisions, such as the choice of a national system, were made at a Wales level rather than by each individual school.

Reference was made to the accountability of headteachers, noting that school headteachers were accountable to their Governing Bodies and that the Chair of the Governing Body was their line manager, not the Head of Education. It was noted that this was related to the review of school governance. It was reported that the importance of the review had been raised directly with the Minister for Education, stressing the need for it to be a genuine and fundamental review where no option had been ruled out. The view was expressed that the review went to the heart of the arrangements of the education system in Gwynedd.

The report and the emphasis on the voice of child were welcomed, noting the importance of ensuring that children were able to approach an adult they trusted. It was emphasised that safeguarding was a responsibility for the whole community and not just the school. However, the view was expressed that the role of the education authority did not appear to be strong enough in the recommendations. It was acknowledged that officers were visiting schools and recommending practices, but the view was expressed that more robust guidance was needed in some fields. Reference was made to the investment in Bromcom and it was noted that not all schools involved in the investigation had been using the system. The view was expressed that the Department may have more influence over schools than it acknowledged, noting that schools would not be expected to refuse additional support to strengthen child protection.

Particular reference was made to the consideration in the report as to whether the Education Department should take responsibility for providing training to all teachers. The view was expressed that the Education Department could play a stronger role in this field rather than leaving the responsibility to school headteachers, and the wish was expressed to see the education authority act more prominently as a co-ordinator for the arrangements.

In response, it was explained that Bromcom had been commissioned for every school in Gwynedd and that it was intended to be rolled out in all schools. It was noted that the transfer of all primary schools was a significant task over a number of terms, and that the work was intended to be completed by the end of March 2027. It was emphasised, however, that although the system was provided free of charge, schools still had the option not to use it and that the Head of Education did not have the power to force them to do so.

As for supply teachers, it was explained that it was the schools, and not the education authority, that employed them. It was noted that some schools used private supply agencies that provided lists of teachers who had completed DBS checks and safeguarding training. It was reported that Gwynedd maintained a list of supply teachers, although no specific resource was available to maintain it. It was explained that the list was compiled annually and updated where possible, and included teachers who wished to carry out supply work in Gwynedd and who had completed the relevant DBS checks. It was noted that training had been offered to them, but that they were not obliged to attend as they were not employed by the authority.

It was emphasised that it was the responsibility of the school to ensure, when using a supply teacher, that they received the appropriate safeguarding training and knew who to turn to in the school should a concern arise. It was noted that the authority was able to commission systems and provide support, but did not have the power to force a

school to use a particular system or to force supply teachers to attend training with no certainty of work.

Support was expressed for the report and recommendations, and it was suggested that a summary copy of the recommendations should be sent to all school headteachers, including the foreword by the Chair of the Investigation. Reference was made to Recommendation 1, which was to ensure that training of an appropriate level is offered annually to all school staff and governors. It was questioned whether this suggested that the Investigation had found a weakness in the current training. In response, it was clarified that there was no strong evidence of a specific shortcoming in the training, but that the Panel wished to emphasise the principle that safeguarding was everyone's responsibility. It was noted that there was a need to ensure that the training provided was of high standard, consistent, and completed by all.

Reference was made to pupils' understanding of the safeguarding system and the Child Protection Policy 2025. It was noted that the policy should be approved by the Designated Safeguarding Person, the Designated Safeguarding Governor and the Headteacher, but there was no reference to the Chair of the Governing Body or the Chair of the School Council on the pupils' part. It was noted that a promise had been made at a previous meeting that an easy-to-read version of the policy would be available to pupils, and that it should have been published alongside the policy in October 2025. It was questioned why that version had not been provided so far. In response, it was confirmed that an easy-to-read version for children and young people would be published alongside the revised policy in September.

Reference was made to Dr Ceryl Teleri Davies' work on the voice of pupils, noting that she had met with 57 pupils and acknowledged that there had been no opportunity to involve older pupils. It was highlighted that eight areas for improvement or development had been identified in primary schools, while ten strengths had been identified in the secondary schools with no areas of development. It was noted that this seemed inconsistent. Reference was made to the fact that the Investigation involved a number of key stakeholders, including headteachers, safeguarding co-ordinators, staff, governors and pupils, but it was questioned why the voice of parents had not been included. The view was expressed that a questionnaire or survey could have been used to gather parents' views on how clear and consistent safeguarding arrangements were across schools.

In response to the comments regarding training, it was explained that a range of training was provided in accordance with Welsh Government requirements and at different levels according to the relevant responsibilities. It was noted that ensuring that individuals committed to completing the training was a different matter. It was explained that one of the lessons learnt from the investigation was the need to monitor more carefully that Chairs of Governing Bodies, for example, completed the mandatory safeguarding training in a timely manner, and to ensure that the training had an impact.

The Cabinet Member for Education noted that a culture change had already begun, with the Council seeking to be more open to external scrutiny, comments and suggestions on how arrangements could be improved. Reference was made to the establishment of the Response Board following the publication of the Child Practice Review, chaired by Professor Sally Holland, the former Children's Commissioner for Wales. It was noted that members of the Council, officers, along with observers from Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales, the Welsh Government and the Office of the Children's Commissioner were part of the Board. It was explained that the Board was scrutinising over 57 work streams, not including the associated sub-streams.

It was reported that several quarterly reports had been submitted by the Chair of the Board to the Cabinet and were publicly available, along with the Board's papers. It was noted that the Chair had reported that he was satisfied with the progress being made, that the work was being carried out in a timely manner and that a number of the tasks had already been completed. Reference was made to a joint report by Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn which had looked specifically at safeguarding arrangements. It was noted that the recommendations of that report were being implemented and that the recommendations of the Scrutiny Investigation would be considered alongside that work.

It was reported that initial work had been undertaken to assess the status of the 22 recommendations, with seven, according to the initial assessment, fully completed, 12 partially completed and three not yet implemented. It was noted that some of the recommendations that had not been implemented depended on the Welsh Government, including the need for a single national recording system across regions and authorities. It was explained that a similar situation existed in relation to the recommendations of the Child Practice Review, as some of them were matters for the Welsh Government to act on.

It was noted that a further update would be presented to the Committee in the autumn on the work of the Response Board, to provide assurances that the work was progressing thoroughly. It was reported that the Assurance Board established with the Welsh Government continued to meet regularly. It was noted that the arrangement would continue following a change of Government, and that a further meeting had already been scheduled.

It was emphasised that significant work was being carried out and that the Council was not ignoring the recommendations or failing to act. It was noted that a clear decision had been made to change policies, procedures and culture to do everything possible to prevent failures similar to those seen at Ysgol Friars from happening again. Reference was made to public criticism that the Council had not acted, and that suggestion was rejected stating that a number of the recommendations of the Child Practice Review and the Scrutiny Investigation had already been implemented.

It was reported that significant progress had been made over the previous 18 months in terms of safeguarding and well-being arrangements in schools. It was noted that a new Education Safeguarding and Well-being Team had been established and expanded, with the intention of visiting each school annually in relation to safeguarding. It was explained that support for governors had been strengthened through a training programme, a new handbook and the appointment of an additional officer to support them, and that safeguarding training had been updated to include awareness of grooming. It was noted that there was a new Headteacher and management team at Ysgol Friars, along with changes to the Governing Body and a new Chair of Governors.

Reference was made to the processes of Part 5, Safeguarding Procedures for Wales, and it was noted that the arrangements had been strengthened to ensure that safeguarding decisions were not made by just one individual, and that records and historical information were checked each time a safeguarding referral was received. It was reported that a retrospective audit of referrals had been carried out over a number of years to ensure that another similar pattern had not been missed. It was noted that work was underway to move all schools to a single electronic system for recording information about children, which would strengthen the ability to share information across the county and improve consistency.

It was stressed that the voice of the child was central to the new arrangements. It was reported that a social worker made a proactive effort to speak to each child who was subject to a safeguarding referral, to ensure that the child's views were part of the decision-making process. It was noted that these developments demonstrated a commitment to strengthening safeguarding arrangements, improving governance arrangements and ensuring the best possible support for children and young people in Gwynedd. It was emphasised that the field was being taken seriously and that there was a commitment not to shy away from any work that needed to be done.

RESOLVED

- **To approve the report.**
- **To ask for an update from the Cabinet Member for Education on the implementation per recommendation in approximately six months.**

6. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Community presented the report noting that the challenges facing town centres were evident, including changes in shopping habits, the growth of on-line shopping and cost of living pressures. It was explained that the challenge was to re-purpose town centres and make them attractive places to live, work and spend time. It was noted that discussions had begun with the new Welsh Government regarding the field.

It was elaborated that the report buildt on information previously submitted to the Committee and focused on the activities of the Regeneration Programme Service, including town centre regeneration, the development and implementation of regeneration projects and the response to empty properties. Reference was made to the framework for the towns of Gwynedd and the Place Making Schemes developed for Bangor, Caernarfon, Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Bala and Dolgellau. It was noted that these schemes had been prepared since the report was submitted to the Committee in 2023.

The report included information on the development and implementation of regeneration projects and the main grant programmes. It was noted that grants worth £31.8 million had been secured between 2023-26 for the development and implementation of town centre regeneration projects across the county. Reference was made to the projects to be implemented through the Pride in Place Impact Fund and the Local Growth Fund, as well as the work on empty properties in town centres.

It was elaborated that work was being carried out to develop performance measures and collect data to be able to measure the impact of the regeneration work on town centres. Reference was made to the Council's new Economic Strategy and the need to assess the impact of projects as well as monitor the number and condition of vacant properties. It was explained that the final part of the report summarised the main conclusions and lessons learnt, along with further issues to consider over the following months.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:

Clarification was sought regarding the definition of vacant properties. Reference was made to examples in Pwllheli where a shop continued to operate on the ground floor of a building but the top floor was empty, noting that the situation could lead to significant

Council Tax Premium costs and put additional pressure on the viability of the ground floor business.

In response, it was clarified that there was no single simple definition of empty properties across the Council, as a number of services and departments related to empty properties and operated under different legislations and regulations. It was noted that the relevant definitions and periods may therefore vary between services. In relation to town centre regeneration work, it was explained that the Service tended to focus on properties that had been empty for more than a year, prioritising substantial buildings in central locations where their condition was deteriorating and impacting the area.

It was noted that there was a marked difference between the performance of different streets and town centres, with some thriving while others found it very difficult to attract new businesses. It was questioned why there was so much difference between one street or town and another. In response, the view was expressed that retail developments on the outskirts of towns were a significant factor. It was noted that towns without nearby external competition tended to perform better, while town centres with significant development on their outskirts faced more pressure. Reference was made to Bangor as a prominent example, and Caernarfon to a lesser extent.

It was further explained that every town was different and faced specific opportunities and challenges. It was noted that Place Making Schemes had been developed over the previous three years for Caernarfon, Bangor, Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Dolgellau and Bala to identify the main challenges and opportunities in each town and to draw up a specific action plan. It was noted that towns across Wales were facing a period of significant change and that there was no single simple or consistent solution for every place. It was emphasised that towns that had been affected by changes in retail needed to be re-purposed, considering what uses and facilities could attract people and make the experience of visiting a town centre more enjoyable. It was noted that a number of external factors influenced town centres and therefore specific solutions needed to be developed for each town.

It was questioned whether parking costs were having a significant impact on town centres. Reference was made to Porthmadog, where people could use a supermarket car park without paying and then walk to the high street, and it was asked whether such arrangements helped the town centre. Reference was made to concerns raised by members from the Bethesda area, in relation to the impact of introducing a charge for the first hour of parking in the Council's car parks on the viability of high street businesses. Although the Environment Department was responsible for parking, it was noted that there was a desire for the matter to be considered across departments due to its economic impact.

In response, reference was made to the report, which already identified matters such as business rate levels and parking fees as potential barriers to increasing vibrancy in town centres. It was noted that parking charges could be a barrier to the economy, but it was emphasised that the car parks generated a significant income for the Council and that consideration needed to be given to how any reduction in charges would be funded. Reference was made to public transport as an option for some residents, including those eligible for free travel on buses. The view was expressed that the matter needed to be considered differently, but it was noted that the fragile financial situation and the need for the Cabinet to consider further cuts made any change challenging. It was confirmed that the matter would be the subject of further discussion by the Cabinet.

Attention was drawn to the significant investment secured for town centre regeneration of around £31 million, noting that the report recognised the difficulty of proving the impact of that investment. Reference was made to an increase in the number of empty properties between 2025 and 2026, following a previous improvement, and to the fact that several additional empty properties were located in Caernarfon, Bangor, Dolgellau and Pwllheli. It was questioned how the Cabinet assessed the effectiveness of the current strategy and what evidence was available to show that the investment was having a long-term impact rather than a temporary one.

In response, it was recognised that impact measurement was an area that needed to be improved. It was explained that the service relied almost entirely on grants to develop and implement projects, and therefore there was a need to work within the guidelines and priorities of the main funding programmes. It was noted that evaluation reports were being carried out to ensure that projects had been implemented in accordance with grant requirements and had achieved the expected outputs and outcomes. However, it was explained that the challenge was to measure the wider impact on the location itself.

It was explained that the matter had been embedded in the new Economic Strategy, with a framework for monitoring and evaluating the difference that the Council was trying to make. It was noted that the method would take into account the direct outputs, the results at a higher level and, ultimately, the impact. It was noted that the model was not perfect due to the large number of other factors influencing local economies, but the hope was expressed that the new structure would enable the Council to create a clearer link between the projects implemented and the results seen. It was confirmed that this work had not been adequately done in previous years and that it was a field that had been identified for improvement.

It was added that measuring the actual difference, impact and outcomes had been one of the main considerations in the development of the new Economic Strategy. Reference was made to the report which set out the types of measures that were intended to be used. It was noted that measuring impact remained difficult due to the constantly changing economy and wider circumstances, but hope was expressed that the new Welsh Government would be able to provide support in this field.

Reference was made to the challenges that on-line shopping was creating for local stores. Dolgellau's performance was compared to Machynlleth, noting that a number of businesses in Machynlleth benefited from cyclist-related economic activity and major facilities in the surrounding area, including bicycle repair and selling businesses, factories, hotels and other services. The view was expressed that Council officers should visit such successful examples and hold discussions to see what lessons could be learnt and what support could be provided to similar enterprises in Gwynedd.

Concern was expressed that much of the funding listed in the report was concentrated on towns, and it was questioned how much support was being provided to communities and areas outside the main towns. Reference was made to a number of projects in Dolgellau and it was noted that despite the investment, the town continued to face challenges and that local businesses were closing or for sale. The need for officers to visit businesses directly and ask what assistance they needed, including whether parking or other factors were at the root of the problems, was emphasised, rather than relying on desk-top information or investing in projects whose impact was uncertain.

In response, it was confirmed that the Service was seeking to visit examples of good practice across Wales to learn from successful projects and interventions. It was explained that the report in question focused specifically on town centres and therefore the figures in it did not provide a complete picture of all the Department's work. It was noted that the figures, for example, did not include community grants and other programmes administered by different services within the Department, and that many groups in rural areas received support through those streams.

The role of local businesses and groups in the regeneration of town centres was emphasised. It was noted that local partnerships were being developed alongside the Place Making Schemes to co-ordinate the action plans and support local organisations to implement projects. Reference was made to the previous year's pilot scheme for town and community councils, which noted that it had been relatively successful and that a similar scheme had been developed for the current year.

It was noted that the business community was a key partner and that the Service sought to ensure that the voice of local businesses and the private sector was included in local partnerships. It was emphasised that the businesses themselves were best placed to explain the challenges they were facing. It was emphasised that the Regeneration Programmes Service was a relatively small service and that the report did not cover the Department's wider work such as business support and events. The view was expressed that there was a need to move away from focusing solely on grants and to consider how different services and provisions within town centres could be intertwined, including parking and responding to business rates challenges.

The work highlighted in the report was welcomed, with particular reference to the Fund for Town and Community Councils. It was noted that economic development and regeneration were important, but that works such as improving footpaths, bus shelters, playgrounds and other local facilities made a significant difference to the quality of life of residents and were highly valued.

It was noted that measuring the direct impact of economic regeneration work was difficult. The view was expressed that data on the number of visitors or the number of people walking through town centres could be one way of generating more direct evidence, but it was noted that any conclusions about the impact of individual activities remained partly theoretical without such data. The challenge was compared to the work of reviving the Welsh language, noting that both areas were facing major social changes that a local authority did not have the capacity to fully manage at a county level.

It was stressed that there was a role to prevent decisions by other parts of the Council from exacerbating negative trends. Reference was made to the location of supermarkets and commercial developments, noting that the location of large shops in the centre or close to a town centre could support the high street, while developments on the outskirts of towns could take activity away from the centre. Reference was made to Porthmadog and Caernarfon as examples where large facilities were close to the town centre, and this was compared to Pwllheli and Bangor where planning or land allocation decisions had led to increased development on the outskirts of towns. The view was expressed that this should be taken into account when considering land allocations for supermarkets and similar developments in the future.

In response, it was noted that the Pride in Place Fund had been set up by the Council prior to the introduction of the Government's scheme of the same name, and it was emphasised that improving the image and quality of towns benefited the local

community. In terms of measuring the number of visitors, it was reported that work had begun in the previous year to track town centre data. Reference was made to Gwynedd's town centre profile for 2025 and it was noted that the 2025/26 figures would be available shortly. It was explained that the data could show trends and patterns over time, but it would not be able to prove a direct link between a particular activity by the Council and the change observed. It was confirmed that the development of the datasets would continue, with the hope that they would become more valuable as long-term trends emerged.

Reference was made to cross-departmental collaboration and it was noted that a number of existing regeneration projects already involved collaborative work. It was reported that the Service was working closely with the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department on town centre projects, as well as joint schemes with the Housing and Property Department. The hope was expressed that this collaboration could be further expanded to address a wider range of issues.

The work of the Department was welcomed and the significant financial pressures faced over recent years were recognised. However, concern was expressed about the level of collaboration between departments in decision-making that affected local economies. Particular reference was made to the recent increase in parking charges, noting the impression that there had not been enough discussion between the Environment Department and the Economy and Community Department prior to making the changes. It was stressed that such decisions should not be made in isolation, as parking fees could have a significant impact on businesses.

It was noted that Gwynedd was a large and diverse county and that a uniform approach was not suitable for all areas. Reference was made to efforts to rationalise parking charges across the county, but the view was expressed that different local circumstances needed to be taken into account when setting the charges, as the impact of changes on businesses and town centres could vary significantly between areas.

It was further emphasised that the impact of parking charges could vary significantly between different areas and even between individual car parks. Llandanwg was given as an example, noting that one small business relied heavily on locals and visitors who stayed for a short time to walk on the beach and visit the café. It was explained that the previous arrangement had enabled people to pay for an hour, but there was now a need to pay £4 for four hours. It was noted that locals, and often visitors on less favourable days, did not wish to stay for four hours, and that the loss of even a small number of customers could have a significant impact on a business employing a few people in a rural area. The need for better collaboration between departments was emphasised and for the economic impact of decisions to be assessed based on the circumstances of each area and, where appropriate, every individual car park.

Clarification was sought as to the way different towns had been defined in the report. Reference was made to Harlech, which was at the bottom of the list, and to Llanbedr and Talsarnau which had not been included. Concern was expressed that the approach of prioritising investment might put less emphasis on smaller villages and towns, although creating or protecting even a small number of jobs could make a significant difference in a small area. It was emphasised that attention needed to be paid to the smaller communities as well as the major towns.

Reference was made to the fund for town and community councils and it was questioned whether the guidance on what could be applied for had been clear enough.

It was noted that a wide range of projects had received support, with some councils receiving significantly higher amounts than others and many had not received funding. In response, it was explained that the Department had contacted all town and community councils to explain the opportunities available, and had again contacted those who had not responded, which had led to further applications. It was emphasised that no application by a council had been refused and that there was an intention to give local councils the freedom to decide which projects were best suited to the needs of their communities. It was explained that the level of funding was allocated on the basis of population, and therefore that larger areas received more money than smaller areas.

It was questioned whether the opportunity to apply for the fund remained open. In response, it was explained that the latest cycle had just closed at the beginning of July. It was noted that examples of successful projects from the previous year had been shared and that councils had been encouraged to submit applications. It was reported that funding had been earmarked for all town and community councils provided they submitted an application, and it was emphasised that several months' notice had been given of the application period. Reference was made to children's playgrounds and green spaces as examples of the type of projects that could be supported to improve community facilities.

In response to the comments regarding collaboration between departments and parking charges, it was confirmed that the comments had been noted and that the Service would be keen to further develop the cross-departmental work over the following months.

In terms of the definition of different towns, it was explained that the Service had not attempted to create a new definition of town centre, but had used the framework that had already been included in the Local Development Plan. It was noted that the scheme identified Bangor as a sub-regional retail centre, Caernarfon, Porthmadog and Pwllheli as urban retail centres, along with a number of local retail centres. Within the National Park area, it was noted that Dolgellau and Bala were identified as local service centres, with Aberdyfi and Harlech being service settlements. It was emphasised that there was a need to be aware that smaller towns could face greater challenges, and that this was one of the reasons for monitoring the number of vacant units across all towns. It was noted that a high percentage of vacant units in a particular town could provide grounds for further consideration of intervention.

Reference was made to the empty property data, noting that the figure given for Harlech did not seem to match the situation on the ground.

In response, it was explained that an Empty Property Officer visited all town centres in May each year and counted the vacant units on the ground floor. It was noted that the area under consideration was based on the town centre boundary in the planning policies, and therefore it could be a relatively limited area. It was explained that the information was then shared with the Research Unit and adapted where necessary. It was explained that the system was not perfect, but that it had been adopted because there was no other consistent method of identifying vacant properties in local areas. It was emphasised that its main value was to provide a consistent snapshot from year to year to be able to identify trends. It was confirmed that the data for Harlech related to the town centre according to the planning definition.

Reference was made to the wider challenges facing local businesses, including large empty buildings such as former pubs or shops that had left town centres. It was noted

that the rural economic situation, wider economic changes, lack of money in residents' pockets and rising energy costs all affected the viability of local businesses. Reference was made to non-domestic rates support as one way the Council could assist businesses to take up empty properties.

A request was made for an update regarding a vacant building, the Corbett Arms Hotel in Tywyn, noting the ongoing cost to taxpayers and concern about how long the issue had taken to be resolved. In response, it was confirmed that work was underway and that a report would be submitted to the Cabinet in September. It was explained that the work had been affected by wildlife matters, and it was recognised that the building was a significant problem that the Council had inherited.

In relation to empty properties more generally, it was noted that the Service was already working with developers and owners through a range of grant schemes. It was noted that contacting some owners was difficult, particularly in Bangor, as many lived outside the area or even outside Wales. Concern was expressed that some individuals were buying properties at a relatively low price, keeping them as assets and allowing them to decline. As a result, it was noted that enforcement options needed to be considered.

It was explained that a grant scheme was in place in Bangor, but it was acknowledged that there were limitations to what could be achieved through grants alone. It was reported that work was underway to consider more proactive options, including whether the Council could directly purchase, restore and lease buildings, or work with local partners to do so. It was noted that such an approach would have implications, but that it could give more control over problematic properties.

The community fund was welcomed and it was noted that it had worked well for many rural community councils. It was questioned whether not-for-profit community companies, which operated shops, cafés or other enterprises and created local jobs, might be eligible to apply. In response, it was noted that the matter could be considered in future, but it was explained that the main purpose of the specific fund was to improve the image of communities through town and community councils, rather than providing direct economic support to businesses. It was noted that other funds were available that may be more suitable for such enterprises.

Reference was made to an idea that had been raised regarding the use of a multi-storey car park in Bangor as a park-and-ride site for Ysbyty Gwynedd, with the possibility that this could attract more people to the city centre. It was noted that there was no certainty that the idea would be feasible, but the view was expressed that there was a need to be prepared to consider different ideas and new approaches to attract people to town centres.

RESOLVED

- **To accept the report and note the observations.**
- **To ask the Cabinet Member for Economy and Community to discuss car parking fees and the impact of changing enforcement hours in car parks on the local economy with the relevant Cabinet Members and departments.**

7. EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD PROGRAMME 2026/27

The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee's draft work programme for 2026/27 was submitted for adoption.

During the discussion, the following observations were made:

Reference was made to the length of the discussion on the Finance Performance Report earlier in the meeting, noting that a large number of questions had been raised. The view was expressed that it might be more appropriate, where possible, for performance reports to be placed towards the end of meetings rather than at the beginning. It was noted that members tended to be particularly active in raising questions at the beginning of a meeting, and that changing the order of items could assist in better management of the Committee's time.

In response, it was noted that the order of the performance reports varied between meetings, and that the reports had already been placed towards the end of some meetings. It was confirmed that the order of items could be changed in the future if the Committee wished performance reports to be considered towards the end of the meeting.

It was questioned whether the current arrangements for performance scrutiny had been reviewed since their introduction, noting that the reports created a considerable workload for members and took up a significant proportion of meeting time. It was questioned whether any assessment had been carried out to see whether the scheme was more or less effective than the previous arrangements. In response, it was noted that comments had been submitted through the Scrutiny Forum and that discussions were taking place regarding the format of the reports. It was noted that too much information could sometimes affect the effectiveness of scrutiny, and that members' comments about previous arrangements were taken into account. It was explained that this did not necessarily mean that there would be a significant change, but that the arrangements would be reviewed.

It was questioned whether the number of scrutiny meetings during the year could be increased in order to increase the Committee's capacity to carry out its responsibilities. In response, it was explained that this depended on the resources available, along with the need to conduct scrutiny investigations and task and finish groups. It was noted that the matter was one that could be considered further.

Concern was expressed that the performance reports were reducing the time available to scrutinise other items, as well as creating a very significant amount of reading for members. The view was expressed that consideration should be given to reverting to the previous procedure where scrutiny members attended Performance Challenge meetings, but with a more formal procedure to report back to the Committee. It was noted that there had been benefits to the previous procedure, although some Performance Challenge meetings had been cancelled due to lack of availability of officers. It was noted that the current arrangement was more transparent as the scrutiny took place in a public meeting, but that the time burden was significant.

Objection was expressed to imposing an overly strict time limit on discussions. It was emphasised that while meetings could take a long time, it was important that members had the opportunity to raise their matters rather than feeling frustrated because there was no opportunity for them to contribute.

The opinion was expressed that the current system of scrutiny was not working as effectively as it could. Reference was made to previous discussions about changing the structure of scrutiny and clarification was sought of the other models that had been considered. In response, it was noted that local authorities were implementing different models, and that the arrangements in Gwynedd had been reviewed following the work of Audit Wales. It was explained that the current changes needed time to be implemented and evaluated, and it was noted that an election was due to take place in May which would result in new members joining the Council, and therefore this needed to be borne in mind when considering any changes to the existing arrangements.

It was questioned whether previous documents on the alternative scrutiny models were available to share with members. It was confirmed that reports had been submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee and to the Full Council, and they could be shared.

The view was expressed that submitting questions in advance on performance reports and receiving written responses could be another way of reducing discussion time, subject to the time available to prepare the reports. In response to this, concern was expressed that such an arrangement would limit members' ability to ask follow-up questions arising from officers' responses or other members' contributions. It was emphasised that written questions could be submitted directly to officers or Cabinet Members anyway, and that one of the main benefits of a scrutiny meeting was to be able to develop the discussion live.

The view was expressed that there might be value in scrutiny sub-committees to give more attention to departmental matters.

Reference was made to the Education items that had been programmed for December, and concern was expressed that recent performance reports had included a large number of measures but very little direct information about pupils' attainment, their results, literacy and numeracy standards and their core skills. It was emphasised that members, such as corporate parents and governors, had a responsibility to scrutinise pupils' attainment and ensure that children and young people were enabled to fulfil their potential. The view was expressed that data on attainment, including GCSE results in the core subjects, should be included in the performance report in December.

It was noted that the Committee had already made a recommendation at a previous meeting to consider including information and data on pupils' attainment in future performance reports. It was explained that there were Welsh Government restrictions on what data the Education Department could publish, but that the Department would be reminded of the request and be asked about what information could be provided.

The view was expressed that the Committee should consider scrutinising the assurance arrangements and the process of preparing Cabinet reports in complex legal matters, in light of the matters and costs that arose from the Article 4 Direction. In response, it was noted that the item had been included in the list of potential matters for scrutiny during 2026/27 but the item had not been prioritised. Reference was made to recent scrutiny by the Communities Scrutiny Committee and the committee's recommendations in relation to the need to ensure that appropriate external legal advice was received and that risks were fully considered.

Surprise was expressed that the matter had not been considered a priority, given the costs, financial risk and reputational risk to the Council. It was noted that the Education

and Economy Scrutiny Committee had responsibility for scrutiny of the Legal Service, and the view was expressed that the Scrutiny Forum should give further consideration to the matter.

Consideration was given as to when it would be timely to receive an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools Scrutiny Investigation. It was concluded that the Chair and the Scrutiny Adviser should discuss and agree when the item should be programmed.

RESOLVED to adopt the work programme for 2026/27.

The meeting commenced at 10:30am and concluded at 3:30pm

Chair

Meeting:	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	08 October 2026
Title:	Update on the Progress of the Response Plan: Our Bravery Brought Justice
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Nia Jeffreys – Council Leader
Contact Officer:	Dafydd Gibbard - Chief Executive
Reason for Scrutiny:	The item has been included on the scrutiny work programme following the committees' previous consideration in January 2026 and as part of the need to scrutinise the progress of the Response Plan.

1. Why it needs scrutiny

- 1.1. *Our Bravery Brought Justice* (Child Practice Review Report by North Wales Safeguarding Board) was published on 4 November, 2025.
- 1.2. Prior to that, the Council had adopted its original Response Plan in January 2025 and following the publication of *Our Bravery Brought Justice* a revamped Response Plan was submitted to the Response Board on 8 December, the Care Scrutiny Committee on 13 January 2026, the Governance and Audit Committee on 15 January 2026, the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 19 January 2026 and the Full Council on 5 February.
- 1.3. Following input from the above Committees the Cabinet adopted the final Plan, on 10 March 2026.
- 1.4. This report is presented to provide an update on the progress of the Response Plan. It is recognised that delivering the Response Plan involves more than completing individual tasks. Further work continues on more long-term matters related to culture change, measuring impact and embedding improvements sustainably. In any programme of significant change such as this, elements such as embedding culture are ones that will need to continue for a significant period of time and will need to be continually revisited over the coming years.
- 1.5. The report also sets out the actions taken in response to members' comments and recommendations during the forward scrutiny, provides an overview of progress made across the work-streams and outlines the next steps.

- 1.6. The purpose of the scrutiny is to enable members to consider and challenge the progress made, how the work has been influenced by the committees' previous comments and recommendations, and what the arrangements are to continue to ensure progress.

2. What exactly needs scrutiny?

2.1. The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note and scrutinise the progress made in delivering the Response Plan.
- b) Consider the response to the comments and recommendations submitted by the Scrutiny Committees in January 2026.
- c) Offer any further comments on the work that is underway.
- ch) Note the suggestion regarding the future scrutiny arrangements of the Response Plan.

3. Progress update

- 3.1. Since the publication of the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report in November last year, significant progress has been made across all themes of the Response Plan's work programme.
- 3.2. Following the publication of the report the Council stated clearly that we would implement the recommendations in full.
- 3.3. *Our Bravery Brought Justice* made 27 specific recommendations and placed the responsibility for taking action on various local and national organisations. The report emphasised not only the need to improve arrangements locally, but also the need to learn the lessons and improve nationally if we are to give the best chance of preventing such horrific crimes in the future. The recommendations and the responsibility for taking action can be summarised as follows:

Recommendation for whom?	Number
Cyngor Gwynedd	1
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	1
Regional Safeguarding Board / Regulators	4
All Organisations / Local Authorities	8
Welsh Government	13

- 3.4. Although there was only one recommendation specifically for Cyngor Gwynedd, we stated clearly that we would act on all possible recommendations. Whilst it was not possible for us to act on a recommendation to the Health Board (1), we were able, and indeed needed, to ensure that we were ahead in terms of the recommendations that had been designated for "All Local Authorities" and also to try to do everything within our power to deliver the Regional and National recommendations, whilst accepting that we would not be able to fully deliver these until other organisations had carried out their work.
- 3.5. In addition to this, it was also made clear that our Response Plan would go further than the specific recommendations set out in Our Bravery Brought Justice. We went through the body of the report with a fine comb identifying every opportunity for us to learn, thereby strengthening our arrangements and the safeguarding culture. We had also commissioned a number of independent investigations and specific recommendations had stemmed from these and it was therefore important that they were included in our Response Plan.
- 3.6. Therefore, the Response Plan consists of a total of 55 work-streams, and these can be summarised as follows:

WORK-STREAMS	QUANTITY
OBBJ Recommendations (to Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	9
OBBJ Recommendations (National/Regional)	17
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	29

- 3.7. In order to carry out this enormous work, a detailed work programme was developed consisting of over 200 individual actions and tasks. It was agreed to give the highest possible priority to delivering the work. A Theme Leader was identified to correspond to each theme within Our Bravery Brought Justice and in setting a budget for 2026/27 the Council decided to invest an additional £600,000 of revenue budget into areas of work related to Safeguarding. In due course other Authorities will need to invest similar amounts, if they are to incorporate everything that was in Our Bravery Brought Justice into their working arrangements.
- 3.8. One year later the delivery and progress across all work-streams in the Response Plan can be summarised as follows:

WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Incorporated permanently (in Gwynedd)	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	9	8	1	0
OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	17	9	1	7
TOTAL OBBJ RECOMMENDATIONS	26	17	2	7
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	29	26	2	1
TOTAL OF ALL RESPONSE BOARD WORK-STREAMS	55	43	4	8

- 3.9. As can be seen from the table, 43 out of all 55 work-streams have now been delivered and/or incorporated as ongoing arrangements and activities within the Council's services.
- 3.10. 8 out of the 9 Our Bravery Brought Justice recommendations that had been designated to Cyngor Gwynedd (or all Councils) have been delivered with the remaining one in the pipeline and scheduled for completion before Christmas.
- 3.11. 9 of the 17 Our Bravery Brought Justice recommendations designated to Regional and National organisations have been delivered in Gwynedd. 3 of these have been delivered by those organisations, with the other 6 delivered by the Council itself. The remaining 8 recommendations are dependent on factors beyond the direct control of the Council, as they are regional and/or national matters that are dependent on implementation by those organisations.
- 3.12. A further 4 work-streams are underway and nearing completion, with the timetable to complete these before Christmas.

- 3.13. We will therefore have completed all work-streams that are within our control as a Council by the end of 2026.
- 3.14. In addition, the vast majority of recommendations received from the scrutiny committees, the Governance and Audit Committee and the full Council have now been fully implemented, with 28 of the 30 completed. The remaining two recommendations are in the pipeline, with the progress and impact of which detailed in part 5 of this report.
- 3.15. It is recognised that delivering the Response Plan involves more than completing individual tasks. Further work continues on more long-term matters related to culture change, measuring impact and embedding improvements sustainably. In any programme of significant change such as this, elements such as embedding culture are ones that will need to continue for a significant period of time and will need to be continually revisited over the coming years. This is detailed in part 6 of this report.
- 3.16. The Response Board has monitored progress across each of the work themes and has established thematic reporting arrangements to enable detailed attention to progress, risks, actions and measuring impact. These arrangements have matured further since the last reporting period and provide greater certainty about the delivery of the work programme. This, and the work of the Ministerial Assurance board, is detailed in part 7 of this report.
- 3.17. In response to feedback and requests from the Scrutiny Committees and others, this year further progress has been made in strengthening transparency and accountability by publishing the Response Board papers on the Council's website and developing more accessible materials. This includes a version of the Response Plan for children and families, along with infographics, to make key information easier to understand to a wider audience. (See **Appendices 3, 4 and 5**)
- 3.18. Members will be aware of the commitment to commission further investigations into certain areas. These were commissioned by Cabinet on 19 May 2026 and a copy of that report can be seen at **appendix 7**. All of these have been commissioned and have followed/are following the timetable agreed at the time.

4. What has been achieved per Response Plan theme?

- 4.1. The Our Bravery Brought Justice report was divided into 6 Themes, and as set out in 3.7 above, the Council identified an individual Theme Leader to accompany each of these Themes and lead on the delivery of all the resulting work-streams.

4.2. The Themes, and the Theme Leaders, are as follows:

Theme	Leader
Theme 1: Voice of the Child and Supporting Victims	Gwern ap Rhisiart, Head of Education
Theme 2: Managing Allegations and Concerns About Adults Working with Children	Sharron Williams Carter, Head of Children and Supporting Families Department
Theme 3: Training and Policies	Ian Jones, Head of Corporate Services
Theme 4: School Governance	Alison Halliday, Assistant Head of School Support
Theme 5: Restrictive Practices	Llion Williams, Safeguarding and Well-being Quality Leader
Theme 6: Crisis Planning and Crisis Response	Catrin Love, Assistant Head of Corporate Services

4.3. To provide more detail on the progress made, please see below a summary of the main developments under each of the themes of the Response Plan.

4.4. Theme 1 – The Voice of the Child and Supporting Victims

THEME 1 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	6	6	-	-
OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	1	-	-	1
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	2	2	-	-
TOTAL	9	8	-	1

4.4.1. All recommendations under Theme 1 that are within the Council's control have now been completed or incorporated into ongoing arrangements that are established and operational.

4.4.2. Key developments include:

- Developing the Voice of the Child Strategy from an early draft to a comprehensive strategy with four specific appendices. It will be submitted to Cabinet in October to be formalised.
- Extensive consultation and engagement with the Youth Forum throughout the period.
- Ensuring that all schools now have access to an electronic system to record concerns and changes in behaviour.
- Creating a work programme for trauma-informed and compassionate training, and children's rights training for the workforce.
- Continuing to support victims through regular engagement, ISVA support and interventions tailored to the needs of individuals and families. This is an ongoing area of work that provides long-term support.
- Ensuring that all children named as part of a referral have the opportunity to have a conversation with a social worker so that their voice can be heard.

4.4.3. The only remaining recommendation* under this theme is one that depends on national curriculum changes by the Welsh Government, and is therefore outside the Council's direct control.

**Recommendation 8 OBBJ: That the Welsh Government develop the curriculum to ensure pupils have the knowledge to understand grooming behaviour by adults and know how to report this safely to an adult*

We cannot act until the national curriculum has been adapted

4.5. Theme 2 - Managing Allegations and Concerns About Adults Working with Children

THEME 2 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	1	1	-	-

OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	6	4	-	2
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	8	7	-	1
TOTAL	15	12	-	3

4.5.1. All recommendations under Theme 2 that are within the Council's control have now been completed or incorporated into ongoing arrangements that are established and operational.

4.5.2. Key developments include:

- Developing and implement a new Quality Assurance Framework across the Children's Department.
- Ensuring that information on historical claims is considered as part of the Part 5 threshold assessment process.
- Holding a successful pilot of *Beam Notes* (formerly Magic Notes). Beam Notes has now been incorporated as part of wider developments within Social Services recording arrangements. Training was provided to the entire workforce, with a particular emphasis on the proper recording of safeguarding matters.
- Reviewing the arrangements for the transfer and sharing of information in relation to safeguarding and employment matters.
- Providing additional funding to the Children's Department, enabling the creation and filling of new posts to strengthen the capacity of the service.
- Carrying out an audit of Part 5 referrals, reviewing historical referrals to ensure that concerns have been addressed and dealt with appropriately.

4.5.3. The remaining recommendations* under this theme are subject to national changes and reviews, as well as the results of the referral form pilot. Although preparatory work and a number of tasks have been completed internally, it has not been possible to implement all the proposed changes until decisions are made at a national level.

**Recommendation 10 OBBJ: That the Welsh Government ensure that the review of Section 5 procedures is informed by this Review and takes into account what has been learnt from it*

There are inconsistencies between the new Part 5 procedures and the OBBJ recommendations, and Cyngor Gwynedd has raised the issue with the Welsh Government.

**Recommendation 15 OBBJ: That the Welsh Government consider requiring schools to develop a 'Adult Conduct of Concern Policy' (known as the 'Low-level Concerns Policy' in England), and consider providing guidance on safe working practices.*

We are awaiting guidance from the Welsh Government.

Cyngor Gwynedd has consistently raised this issue through the Ministerial Assurance Group.

**Further Response Plan Work-stream: Ensure that the public is aware of the referral procedure, and that the referral form for professionals is accessible and simple to complete.*

As the referral form has been adopted on a regional basis, any changes require the agreement and support of partners across the region.

4.6. Theme 3: Training and Policies

THEME 3 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	2	1	1	-
OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	5	2	1	2
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	10	9	1	-
TOTAL	17	12	3	2

4.6.1. Three-quarters of the recommendations under Theme 3 that are within the Council's control have now been completed or incorporated into ongoing arrangements that are established and operational.

4.6.2. The two remaining work-streams are underway and relate to the roll-out of the NSPCC grooming training module across the whole workforce and the completion of the establishment of appropriate training levels across the workforce, with development work already underway through the Safeguarding Operational Group.

4.6.3. Key developments include:

- The Council formally adopted the Whistleblowing Policy, with further work underway to promote awareness of the policy amongst the workforce.
- Introducing mandatory training on "Whistleblowing" for the workforce.
- Developing bespoke safeguarding training in the form of a video for frontline staff.
- Reviewing and strengthening the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.
- Increasing the percentage of the workforce who completed the safeguarding e-module from 36.4% to 77.8% over the year, although it should be noted that a change in the reporting method contributed in part to this increase.
- Completing an internal audit of workforce awareness of the Council's safeguarding procedures, with a view to repeating the exercise before the end of the year in order to measure further progress.

4.6.4. The remaining recommendation under this theme depends on the Welsh Government's work to develop a national training resource based on the findings of Our Bravery Brought Justice, for use across schools and other agencies working with children.

4.7. Theme 4: School Governance

4.7.1. Progress under this theme has been largely dependent on the Welsh Government's review of school governance arrangements. Despite this, significant work has been carried out locally to strengthen internal arrangements and support developments in the field in the interim.

4.7.2. The Council has maintained an ongoing dialogue with the Welsh Government regarding the need for necessary changes to the national arrangements, and has ensured that local views and experiences are reflected by contributing to the consultation.

THEME 4 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	-	-	-	-
OBBJ Recommendations	3	2	-	1

(Regional and National)

Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	4	4	-	-
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TOTAL	7	6	-	1
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4.7.3. The key developments under Theme 4 include:

- Strengthening the capacity of the governance service by doubling the size of the team from two to four members of staff.
- Piloting the GovernorHub platform with a sample of schools to support communication, governance and information sharing.
- Introducing a new questionnaire to assess governors' confidence in their role as critical peers and to inform the future development of training
- Establishing a regular forum to support engagement and sharing of good practice among governors.
- Raising concerns about the status and role of governors to the Welsh Government, contributing to the national debate on reforming governance arrangements.
- Providing a comprehensive training programme and revised training for Safeguarding Designated Governors and Chairs of Governors.

4.8. Theme 5: Restrictive Practices

4.8.1. Theme 5 has progressed significantly beyond the original scope of the Our Bravery Brought Justice recommendation, which focused on school events filming arrangements*. This particular recommendation could not be delivered as it relied on national action by the Welsh Government.

**Recommendation 25 OBBJ: That the Welsh Government publish an appendix to the 2022 Framework guidance for reducing restrictive practices involving adults filming events and provide guidance on the retention period of such videos*

The Council is awaiting any further guidance or revisions from the Welsh Government.

4.8.2. Nevertheless, the work-stream was used as an opportunity to strengthen wider arrangements that support the safety and well-being of children and young people in relation to restrictive practices.

THEME 5 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond
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			of the year	the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	-	-	-	-
OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	1	-	-	1
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	5	5	-	-
TOTAL	6	5	-	1

4.8.3. The key developments under Theme 5 include:

- Strengthening school monitoring arrangements to ensure consistent adoption and implementation of the Regional Policy, with all schools visited having adopted the model policy.
- Undertaking a comprehensive external evaluation of the Reasonable Force Policy and Arrangements, informing a programme of further work to strengthen the existing arrangements.
- Establishing an internal group made up of representatives from the Safeguarding and Well-being, Education and Inclusion services to oversee this area, monitoring the implementation of existing arrangements and driving further improvements.

4.9. Theme 6: Crisis Planning and Crisis Response

THEME 6 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	-	-	-	-
OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	1	1	-	-
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	-	-	-	-

TOTAL	1	1	-	-
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4.9.1. The key developments under Theme 6 include:

- Developing and refining a Crisis Plan in consultation with schools and key partners, ensuring that it reflects the needs of schools of different sizes.
- Preparing a collaboration agreement with North Wales Police, establishing a more flexible model for a multi-agency response, including the possibility of seconding a social worker when required.
- Preparing an awareness raising programme to be delivered during the autumn term 2026 to ensure a consistent understanding of the relevant arrangements and responsibilities.

4.9.2. The focus of Theme 6 has now shifted to monitoring the implementation of the arrangements and ensuring consistent understanding across schools. To avoid duplication and integration of this work with existing processes, this will be incorporated as part of the regular Health and Safety visits to schools.

4.10. Theme 7: Ysgol Friars

4.10.1. In addition to the 6 themes in Our Bravery Brought Justice, another theme has been added to our Response Plan in order to support and stabilise Ysgol Friars.

4.10.2. Significant work has been done to stabilise arrangements at Ysgol Friars. A strong emphasis has been placed on the well-being of pupils and staff by widening access to counselling services, establishing bespoke well-being spaces and strengthening the support available to pupils with emotional and well-being needs. Additional investment from the Council, combined with grant funding from the Welsh Government, has enabled the school to further strengthen this provision and begin to deliver trauma-informed training to staff.

4.10.3. In terms of leadership and governance, a new governing body and management team are now in place. The appointment of a permanent Headteacher and the implementation of a clear plan in response to the Estyn inspection have provided a solid foundation for continuous improvement.

4.10.4. The school continues to play a full part in the work of the Programme Board, contributing openly and constructively and demonstrating an ongoing commitment to the improvement programme.

- 4.11. Appendix 2 includes the full suite of Programme Board progress reports, providing further details on the implementation and progress against each theme in the period since January.

5. What changes have been made as a result of scrutiny?

- 5.1. The comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Committees have led to 28 definite changes to the work of the Response Board. These include reforming the Response Plan, strengthening safeguarding and quality assurance arrangements, extending the scope of further inspections and reviews to test the effectiveness of arrangements, developing new training and resources, improving the accessibility of information for children and the public, and increasing transparency through wider publication of information and reports.
- 5.2. There are two remaining scrutiny recommendations in the pipeline, mainly relating to the development of measuring the more long-term impact of the plan (see part 6 below).
- 5.3. A detailed response to the comments and recommendations submitted through the Scrutiny Committees is provided in **Appendix 1**.
- 5.4. Attention is also drawn to **Appendices 1a** which include work commissioned or developed directly as a result of requests made by Members during scrutiny sessions

6. Measuring impact and culture change

- 6.1 In trying to achieve change, and embedding that change across all parts of a large and broad organisation such as a Local Authority, some elements of change are easier than others to implement and their impact measured.
- 6.2 As can be seen in parts 3 and 4 above, most of the tasks and actions that needed to be focused on have now been completed. Staff resources clearly had to be prioritised and allocated to achieving that as a matter of urgency; our priority was to ensure that we responded to the recommendations contained in the report, as well as the improvements that were needed to our working arrangements.
- 6.3 We have now started to move from delivery to the implementation phase of the new arrangements, and as a result, measuring what a difference this has all made/will make to ensure that our safeguarding arrangements are to the highest possible standard.

- 6.4 We have a cache of anecdotal evidence showing that the change in our Safeguarding arrangements is now leading to a change of culture across the organisation. Safeguarding and challenging are being discussed more naturally across the organisation in departments beyond those which deal with the day-to-day work of child protection. We see this in management team meetings across the council, in performance challenge meetings and in informal situations in our offices.
- 6.5 While formal arrangements to measure impact over time are not yet fully established, there are a number of sources of information available that provide an initial picture of the current situation and provide a baseline for measuring future progress. These include:
- A questionnaire to Governing Bodies to gauge members' level of confidence in carrying out their responsibilities and to identify what additional support would help them to act more effectively as critical friends.
 - Independent research by Dr Ceryl Davies, Bangor University, as part of the Scrutiny Investigation into safeguarding arrangements in schools has provided insight into children and young people's awareness of processes to raise concerns, highlighting strengths and areas for development.
 - An internal audit of staff awareness has provided a picture of staff's understanding of the Council's safeguarding policies and procedures, helping to identify areas where further support or communication is needed.
 - A staff experience questionnaire of the Section 5 referral process distributed to a sample of staff who have made a referral in order to understand their experience of the process and identify opportunities to improve guidance and support.
- 6.6 Together, these activities provide an important baseline and offer a picture of the current situation. However, these measures will need to be tracked over time in order to be able to demonstrate change and evaluate the impact of the work more robustly.
- 6.7 Therefore, we have developed impact measures across each of the themes, as follows:

What is being
measured?

How will we measure impact?

Timeline

To what extent children and young people feel that their voice is heard and taken into account in decision-making.	Through the Voice of Children and Young People Questionnaire, measuring the extent to which children and young people feel that their views are heard and taken into account, that they can influence decisions, and that they know where to go for help when needed.	Annually, with the questionnaire being conducted in secondary schools one year and primary schools the following year.
Victim support	Gathering feedback from victims through support officers and IDVAs, asking if they are getting the support they need and if there are areas that could be improved.	Every 6 months
Employee experience of making part 5 referrals to Children's Services.	Through a follow-up questionnaire to the referral process, including questions about the experience of the process, any obstacles faced, and whether they would be willing to make a referral again in the future.	The pilot questionnaire has been sent to individuals who have made part 5 referrals between January and September 2026.
Staff confidence, awareness and understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities.	By repeating an internal audit of staff's awareness and understanding of safeguarding procedures, and measuring their confidence to identify and act on safeguarding concerns.	Annually
Confidence of staff to raise concerns and use Whistleblowing arrangements.	Through the Staff Voice Questionnaire, measuring staff confidence levels to raise concerns and awareness of the support and arrangements available. Results will be compared with the previous survey where possible.	Next round of staff voice
The confidence and ability of governors to fulfil their role as effective critical friends.	By repeating the governors' self-assessment questionnaire annually and comparing the results with the baseline collected before summer 2026. This will measure changes in governors' confidence in challenging, scrutinising and holding school leaders to account.	Annually

The effectiveness of school arrangements in relation to restrictive practices.	Through monthly monitoring arrangements by an internal group that reviews trends, incident data and the quality of records, including consideration of the voice of the child and the follow-up actions taken.	Monthly
Understanding and implementation of the Crisis Plan in schools.	Assess staff understanding through feedback at the end of training workshops, and then check the implementation of the arrangements through monitoring visits to schools.	Workshops in October 2026, with ongoing monitoring through school visits.

6.8 As many of the things that have been achieved so far have not been in place for a long time, they need to be implemented for some time before it can be measured whether they are really effective or not. As themes are scrutinised in the future we will be able to focus more on showing evidence of the impact over a period of time. This is what the Response Board has emphasised from the outset and this is what the Ministerial Assurance Group is likely to focus on over the next period as well.

6.9 In addition to the above measures, we have developed a brief, assisted by the Chair of the Response Board, to commission a series of Focus Groups between now and Christmas. This work will build on the approach used as part of the previous scrutiny investigation. This will include focus groups with a sample of:

- School Governors to assess their confidence to fulfil their role as critical friends and to understand their experience of the new support, training and arrangements.
- The Council's workforce to assess their confidence in safeguarding and raising concerns, and their views on the changes made to the existing arrangements.
- Elected Members to examine their understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, Whistleblowing and their confidence in the Council's arrangements.
- Inclusion Service staff in terms of their confidence in decision-making and responding in accordance with the Restrictive Practices Policy.
- Parents to understand their perceptions of safety, communication and the support available to children and families.
- Children and young people, building on work already undertaken through the Safeguarding in Schools Scrutiny Investigation.

- 6.10 The Focus Groups' conclusions will allow us to receive an honest and open view of our current situation, and will also help feed into the Chief Executive-led review of work culture.

7. How does the Response Board ensure progress?

- 7.1. The Response Board accepts and challenges **regular progress reports** on each of the work themes. This approach has enabled the Board to focus on specific areas in greater detail, monitor progress against actions, consider risks and barriers to delivery, and provide regular opportunities for Board members to further question, challenge and advise.
- 7.2. While significant progress has been made in delivering the actions committed to, the Board has recognised the need to strengthen the arrangements for measuring and evaluating the impact of the work. As a result, further work is underway to:
- develop impact measurement arrangements;
 - use focus groups to gather stakeholder perspectives;
 - develop criteria for the transfer of work to normal business arrangements;
 - ensure that progress and supporting documents are publicly available.
- 7.3. The independent Chair of the Board, Professor Sally Holland, assesses progress by presenting a **quarterly report to Cabinet**. In her recent reports, she has noted that the Board's reporting and scrutiny arrangements have matured, providing a clearer picture of progress and enabling a higher level of challenge, assurance and oversight. However, she also stresses the need to strengthen impact and outcomes measurement in order to understand the difference that the changes make in practice.
- 7.4. The **Welsh Government Ministerial Assurance Board** provides a further layer of assurance and oversight. This two-way relationship enables the Response Board to share progress and learning, whilst also keeping track of relevant national developments and changes to ensure that Gwynedd's work continues to fit into the wider context.
- 7.5. In a Written Statement in March 2026, Lynne Neagle, former Cabinet Secretary for Education, acknowledged the positive and constructive collaboration between Cyngor Gwynedd and the Ministerial Assurance Group:

"I would like to place on record my thanks to Councillor Jeffreys and her team for their constructive co-operation and engagement throughout the work of the Assurance Group. Their willingness to consider challenges and show progress has been central to this process."

- 7.6. The arrangements of the Ministerial Assurance Group have continued under the new Government, with the first formal meeting between representatives of the Board and the Welsh Government taking place in July 2026. This gives confidence that the positive relationship and two-way assurance arrangements established to date continue to support supervision and learning at a national and local level.

8. What is the timescale for doing this?

- 8.1. The Response Board does not consider that the work will cease when individual actions have been completed.
- 8.2. While good progress has been made in delivering the actions set out in the Response Plan, the focus is now shifting towards ensuring that the changes are sustainably embedded in practice, influence organisational culture and lead to better outcomes for children and young people.
- 8.3. Work over the next period will focus on:
- Monitoring the impact of the delivery.
 - Focus groups with stakeholders.
 - Continuing to report publicly on progress.
 - Completing the remaining activities within each theme.

**9. What difficulties and challenges have they faced, and how have they overcome them?
Are there barriers to delivery?**

- 9.1. As already noted, significant progress has been made in delivering the Response Plan. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the work has not been straightforward. The broad nature of the plan, the size of the organisation, and the need to operate across a number of services and partners have meant that a number of practical challenges have arisen along the way.
- 9.2. One of the challenges was to turn some of the recommendations into practical arrangements that work in real situations. For example, when strengthening the voice of the child in safeguarding arrangements, there have been cases where parents did not wish their children to be interviewed, particularly where the child is a witness rather than the child who is at the centre of the concern.
- 9.3. The size and complexity of the Council has also been a factor. In an organisation with over 5,000 staff and a very wide range of services, ensuring that changes are consistently understood, implemented and incorporated is time-consuming. This is particularly true in relation to frontline staff who do not have regular access to computers or digital devices. In response to this, a dedicated officer has been

appointed to strengthen communication, support access to information and promote training opportunities.

- 9.4. Challenges have also arisen because some of the workflows are dependent on decisions or actions by other bodies. This includes elements that require regional or national change, such as Welsh Government guidance or action by other partners. Where the Council is unable to act fully on its own, we have tried to do as much as is reasonably within our control, including putting temporary arrangements in place until any national/regional change has been introduced whilst raising issues through the appropriate forums and continuing to press for progress.
- 9.5. Staff capacity and resources have also been a challenge. Implementing the recommendations of *Our Bravery Brought Justice*, together with the additional workstreams identified by the Council, has resulted in significant work for a number of services in addition to their usual responsibilities. This work was the priority and as a result, some activities have had to be prioritised at times, and additional capacity has had to be invested. The Council has already committed over £500,000 of an additional annual revenue budget to strengthen safeguarding and support this work.
- 9.6. In addition, some of the training packages or resources referred to in the recommendations were not readily available to be bought. It was therefore necessary to develop new content, adapt materials and ensure that they were relevant in the Gwynedd context. This has taken more time than expected in some areas, but it has also resulted in more bespoke and workforce-friendly materials.
- 9.7. While these are real challenges, they have not prevented the Response Plan from moving forward. Rather, they have influenced the way the work is scheduled, prioritised and delivered. Currently, there is nothing internal preventing the Council from completing the work under its control by the end of 2026. The main remaining risks relate to issues that are beyond the Council's direct control, and the Response Board will continue to monitor them, escalate them where necessary, and put mitigation arrangements in place where possible.

10. Future scrutiny arrangements

- 10.1. The Response Plan's work programme is a substantial one and therefore as we approach the completion of the individual actions the activity will be incorporated into normal business arrangements, and therefore in the future it is recommended to adopt a more thematic approach to scrutiny. Rather than presenting all the themes to each scrutiny committee, it is recommended:
 - That each theme be allocated to the most relevant scrutiny committee.
 - That all themes are subject to detailed scrutiny with a focus on ensuring that the new arrangements are successfully incorporated into day-to-day work and that there is no future slippage.

- That cross-cutting or strategic matters are reported to more than one committee as required.
- That these arrangements enable members to focus on the most relevant matters and to offer a more detailed challenge.

10.2. This approach would ensure that the governance arrangements of the Response Plan are both robust and effective. It would also enable the committees to spend more time scrutinising specific themes in detail, strengthening the challenge and assurance provided.

10.3. In line with the areas of scrutiny of the individual Committees, the following is recommended:

Theme	Committee
Theme 1: The Voice of the Child	Education and Economy Committee (Education Portfolio)
Theme 2: Managing allegations and concerns	Care Scrutiny Committee (Children and Safeguarding Portfolio)
Theme 3: Training and Policies	Education and Economy Committee (Corporate Services Portfolio)
Theme 4: School Governance	Education and Economy Committee (Education Portfolio)
Theme 5: Restrictive Practices	Education and Economy Committee (Education Portfolio)
Theme 6: Crisis Arrangements	Education and Economy Committee (Corporate Services Portfolio)

11. Consultation

11.1. The report has been prepared on the basis of discussions and preparatory work across the Leadership Team, Response Plan theme leaders and relevant officers. The work also reflects comments received from the scrutiny committees in January 2026.

11.2. The report will be presented to the Response Board for discussion at its next meeting. The Chair's most recent assessment of progress is set out in her latest report to Cabinet (**appendix 6**), with a further report due in November, providing an additional opportunity to reflect on progress.

11.3. Further work is underway to involve stakeholders through focus groups, building on the approach used as part of the previous scrutiny investigation.

12. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Five Ways of Working	How the Response Plan contributes
Involvement	Focus group work and the voice of the child work provide an opportunity for stakeholders, children and young people to contribute to the way progress is measured and understood.
Collaboration	The Response Board brings together relevant services and includes collaboration between Education, Social Services, Human Resources, Democracy and Corporate services as well as a number of external Agencies.
Prevention	The work focuses on preventing failures from happening again by strengthening safeguarding, training, recording, governance and arrangements for raising concerns.
Long-term	The plan has been amended to emphasise sustainable change and long-term support rather than just short-term steps.
Integration	The actions link to the Council's policies, training, school arrangements, governance work and wider assurance arrangements.

13. Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-Economic Duty

- 13.1. The Response Plan is directly concerned with safeguarding children and young people, ensuring their voices are heard, and improving access to information and support. As the Work Programme develops the Board will continue to consider the accessibility of information for children, young people, families and victims and address the impact on people who face disadvantage or barriers to accessing support.

14. Next Steps

Next Step	Description	Proposed timeframe
Develop impact measures	Continue to work with theme leaders to define how impact will be demonstrated in practice.	October 2026 onwards / to be confirmed by the Response Board
Hold focus groups	Use focus groups with stakeholders to test and challenge the progress and impact of the work.	October 2026 onwards / to be confirmed by the Response Board
Review thematic progress	Continue to submit theme-by-theme progress reports to the Response Board.	October 2026 onwards / to be confirmed by the Response Board

Arrange future scrutiny	Agree a thematic scrutiny programme in which each theme will be scrutinised at least once a year by the most relevant committee.	October 2026 onwards / to be confirmed by the Response Board
Continue to publish information	Ensure that accessible and public materials continue to be updated as work progresses.	October 2026 onwards / to be confirmed by the Response Board

APPENDICES

- **Appendix 1:** A response table to all the recommendations from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee, the Care Scrutiny Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee.
 - **Appendix 1a:** Trauma-informed and Children's Rights Work Programme
- **Appendix 2:** Thematic progress reports (February – July 2026)
- **Appendix 3:** New Response Plan website: [Our Bravery Brought Justice: Cyngor Gwynedd's Response Plan](#)
- **Appendix 4:** Infographic "What's changed?"
- **Appendix 5:** Response Plan for Children and Families: [Response Plan](#)
- **Appendix 6:** Quarterly Reports of the Chair of the Response Board
- **Appendix 7:** [Cabinet Report - Commissioning Investigations](#)
- **Appendix 8:** Our Bravery Brought Justice Progress against Recommendations

OTHER DOCUMENTS:

- **Cyngor Gwynedd's Response Plan:** [Response Plan](#)

APPENDIX 1 - A response table to all the recommendations from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee, the Care Scrutiny Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee.

Committee	Recommendation / Comment	Progress Made	Status
Care Scrutiny	Report on progress towards Child-Friendly and Trauma-Informed status	A separate work programme was developed in this area and an update was presented to the Leadership Team. Details of the Work Programme are provided in Appendix 1a .	Completed
Care Scrutiny	Ensure that external female safeguarding information and contact details are available in schools	The Safeguarding and Well-being Team's phone number has been included rather than the contact details of a designated individual. Team members offer anyone who contacts the service the choice of speaking with a male or female.	Completed
Care Scrutiny	Pay more attention to the voice of the family as well as the voice of the child	Included within the development of the Voice of the Child Strategy and the wider work of the workstreams.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Develop measurable arrangements to show how the voice of the child influences decisions	Measuring impact is now part of the Voice of the Child Strategy. Further work to develop impact measures for the Board is ongoing.	Underway
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Ensure long-term support for victims	The Response Plan has been reviewed to place more emphasis on long-term support and change. This aligns with the Welsh Government's National 10 Year Strategy.	Completed. This is ongoing work.
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Ensure that safeguarding information is accessible and child-friendly	Annual assurance visits have confirmed that safeguarding information is visible and accessible in all schools visited.	Completed

Education and Economy Scrutiny	Strengthen arrangements for managing allegations and concerns about adults	The collaboration between Education and Children has been strengthened. Multi-agency arrangements are now a key part of the process.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Consider incidents that do not directly involve children	An audit of the transferable risks, employment procedures and requirements under Part 5 was carried out.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Ensure an appropriate transition between HR and Part 5 processes	The audit confirmed that these arrangements had operated appropriately in the cases reviewed.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Extend the Part 5 audit period	The scope of the audit was extended back to 2020 and findings were presented to the Strategic Safeguarding Panel.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Gather evidence of change and impact	The Board has prioritised the development of impact measurement arrangements and further work in this area will take place over the coming weeks.	Underway
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Ensure a rapid corporate response to systemic concerns	The matter has been included within the governance and assurance arrangements of the Response Board.	Completed. This is ongoing work.
Full Council	Share safeguarding referral forms more widely	It was confirmed that this arrangement was already in place and the work programme has been updated to reflect that.	Completed

Care Scrutiny	Report on the implementation of the Whistleblowing Policy	This area has been included within the Theme 3 progress reports.	Completed
Care Scrutiny	Deliver training on grooming	A bespoke training package has been developed with the NSPCC for staff, elected members and schools. It will be available from autumn 2026 onwards.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Ensure that grooming is given specific attention in training	The new training focuses on this matter, including learning and awareness of the Finkelhor Model to strengthen understanding and practice in this respect.	Completed
Governance and Audit	Update on the Whistleblowing Policy and Safeguarding Policy	Both policies have been formally adopted by the Council and Cabinet.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Address unconscious bias	Training in this area is already available, and further content is being added to school training.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Ensure clear arrangements for employees who raise safeguarding concerns.	Reporting arrangements are included in the Safeguarding Policy and on the intranet.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Regularly review safeguarding records	A new Quality Assurance Framework has been developed and quality capacity within the Children's Department has been strengthened.	Completed
Care Scrutiny	Raise concerns about the role of governors with the Welsh Government	A formal letter has been sent to the Welsh Government and regular discussions have taken place with officers, including through the Ministerial Assurance Group.	Completed

Education and Economy Scrutiny	Develop training for Designated Safeguarding Governors	The training has been adapted to include a greater emphasis on challenge and safeguarding assurance.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Ensure a proper understanding of the use of Reasonable Force	The theme has been expanded and included in the Board's work programme. The original recommendation focused solely on filming incidents.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Strengthen communication and clarity of roles in an emergency	An Emergency Plan has been developed with the Schools. An ongoing training programme will be developed to accompany the Plan.	Completed
Care Scrutiny	Include a greater emphasis on children's well-being within the theme of Ysgol Friars	The wording of the Response Plan has been amended.	Completed
Governance and Audit	Produce a more accessible and easy-to-read summary	A bespoke website, a child-friendly version and public infographics have been developed.	Completed
Governance and Audit	Receive regular updates on progress	Arrangements have been put in place to report regularly to the relevant scrutiny committees.	Completed
Full Council	Publication of a simpler and more accessible version of the Plan	A website, a child-friendly version and infographics have been developed.	Completed
Education and Economy Scrutiny	Ensure a clear overview of the work streams	The Board now receives thematic reports by work stream.	Completed

**Education and
Economy
Scrutiny**

Ensure greater transparency

The Response Plan Programme Board's papers are now publicly available.

Completed

APPENDIX 1a: Cyngor Gwynedd's journey to become a child-friendly, caring and trauma-informed Council.

The trauma-informed and child-friendly areas of work have gained momentum within the Council over the past few years, particularly following the publication of the Our Bravery Brought Justice report. Following a request from the Scrutiny Committee in January, this paper provides an update on the progress to date and outlines the next steps for developing this agenda across the Council.

1. Trauma-Informed Work in Gwynedd

1.1. Mapping work and understanding the current situation

- 1.1.1. The mapping and engagement work carried out across the Council's departments shows that levels of awareness, confidence, learning needs, training provision and barriers vary significantly between services.
- 1.1.2. Trauma-informed work has already developed strongly in some areas of the Council, particularly in Social Services, the Homelessness Service, the Early Years and within schools and teams in the Education Department. These services have invested in specialist training, including diploma-level training and Trauma-Informed Schools training programmes.
- 1.1.3. In developing the work programme, models, training and good practice from other organisations have been reviewed. There is no single solution or single approach that will achieve this vision, so the programme includes a range of courses of action that complement each other and will continue to evolve as we learn and develop.

1.2. Setting up a tiered training programme

- 1.2.1. A tiered training programme is planned to be developed which aligns with the National Trauma Aware Framework for Wales, and builds on existing arrangements across the Council to take the agenda forward.
- 1.2.2. Our approach to workforce development recognises that different levels of knowledge and skills are required according to the role and responsibilities of staff. At the bottom of the framework is compassionate practice providing the foundation for all, reflecting the Council's values and linking directly to our Learning and Development Framework.
- 1.2.3. Moving through the layers, the framework provides opportunities to develop more specialist knowledge and competencies, including trauma-informed practice where appropriate. This approach emphasises the importance of understanding people's experiences and circumstances without rushing to label individuals or situations as being trauma-related. Rather, the aim is to build the confidence of staff to respond in a compassionate, curious and considerate way, seeing the individual first and focusing on their strengths, needs and unique experiences.

1.2.4. The table below explains the tiers involved:

What?	How?
Tier 1: Senior leadership and understanding	Further training is commissioned for specific groups such as Headteachers, Assistant Headteachers and Cabinet Members. This will strengthen their understanding of the impact of trauma and the implications for service leadership, decision making and policy development. In addition, shorter awareness sessions will be offered to managers through the Managers Network, drawing on the expertise of Early Years officers.
Tier 2: Raising general awareness	A corporate e-learning module, " <i>An Introduction to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma-Informed Practice</i> ", is now available to staff and councillors via the E-learning Portal. It aims to provide a basic understanding of trauma, ACEs, and the impact that adverse experiences can have on individuals throughout their lives. To date, over 300 individuals have completed this training.
Tier 3: Compassionate skills for frontline staff	The third tier will focus on staff who work directly with residents and service users on a day-to-day basis. The aim is to give staff the tools and confidence to respond in a positive, empathetic and supportive way to people facing challenges or trauma. (Compassionate Service Delivery)
Tier 4: Specialist trauma training	The proposal does not interfere with the good work already taking place within services with specialist requirements. Services such as Social Services, Homelessness, Early Years and schools will continue to organise and commission the training best suited to their specific needs, building on the strong foundations already in place.

1.3. Culture

- 1.3.1. Initial discussions have begun with Bangor University to explore good practice that supports the creation of the environment and culture needed to deliver services in a compassionate way. This work will inform training development, policy reviews, and the way procedures and processes are interpreted and implemented across the organisation.
- 1.3.2. The Learning and Development Service will review the current Learning and Development Framework to ensure that it aligns with the Council's values and provides a solid foundation for the development of compassionate practice across all services.
- 1.3.3. As a further sign of commitment to leading by example, the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families is completing a Trauma-Informed Practice Diploma, supporting the promotion of a trauma-informed understanding and culture across the organisation.

1.4. Monitoring and Learning

1.4.1. It is planned to re-run the mapping questionnaire with Gwynedd Heads of Department and School Headteachers in November 2026 in order to assess the extent to which the desired principles and behaviours are embedded across the organisation, and to use the findings to inform further work.

1.5. Work Programme

Action	By when?
A trauma-informed Virtual Reality (VR) workshop and training was held in June 2025.	June 2025
A questionnaire sent out to Heads of Department to understand Council Departments' awareness of trauma-informed working.	November 2025
Discussed and planned potential options for trauma-informed training with the Learning and Development Service.	December 2025
Introduced an E-module Training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma-Informed Practice.	March 2026
Prepared a work programme to present to the Leadership Team.	March 2026
Submitted a Cabinet Report stating the corporate commitment setting out the ambition to develop the Council as a child-friendly, caring and trauma-informed organisation.	May 2026
Training sessions held Collaborative Conversations have been held for frontline staff who work directly with residents and service users.	May 2026
Explored how the Council's policies, procedures and processes can be reviewed through a trauma-informed lens.	July 2026
Conducted a trauma-informed training session using VR for Cabinet Members and the Corporate Management Team.	October 2026
Hosting a trauma-informed training session using VR for the Assistant Heads' Forum.	November 2026
Awareness-raising session on Trauma-Informed Practice in the Managers' Network (requesting a presentation from the Early Years Unit).	November 2026
Re-assessing the level of Departmental awareness by circulating a further questionnaire to Heads of Department.	December 2026
Scoping and commissioning the work of policy proofing and developing a more detailed work programme following the feedback of the Departmental questionnaire for Year 2.	March 2027

2. Gwynedd Child-Friendly Work

2.1. As members will be aware, ensuring that the voice of children and young people is heard and considered is central to the work of the Response Plan Programme Board. A solid foundation has already been set through the work of the Youth Forum and the development of the Children and Young People's Voice Strategy, which provides a clear direction for this area of work.

2.2. This workstream is intended to build on existing work and support Council departments to understand their role in promoting children's rights and ensure that the voice of children and young people is given due consideration in the development of policies, services and decisions.

2.3. Mapping Work

2.3.1. Research has been completed into the various accreditation schemes in place in other areas. While UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities and Communities accreditation has been considered, that scheme is not currently available. As a result, it is intended to adopt the principles of *The Right Way*, which is promoted by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

2.3.2. This approach provides a practical framework for embedding children's rights into policy, practice and decision-making across the organisation, without the need for a formal accreditation process.

2.4. Familiarising with "The Right Way" Training

2.4.1. To support this, a training programme is being developed. Work has already started through sessions for Heads held through the Response Plan Programme Board and the Public Services Board. In addition, an e-learning module on Children's Rights is available on the E-learning Portal to raise awareness and a basic understanding across the workforce.

2.4.2. The next step will be to work with the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales and use *The Right Way* framework to carry out a self-assessment in three services. This will provide a basic understanding of the level of awareness and understanding of Children's Rights across those services and inform further steps to strengthen practice.

2.4.3. In order to strengthen capacity and ensure the ability to maintain the momentum of this work in the longer term, it is planned to appoint an additional resource to support in equality. It is expected that this will increase the ability to co-ordinate, support and develop the Children's Rights agenda across the Council, complementing the arrangements already in place.

2.5. Work Programme

Child-friendly Outcome	By when?
Desktop Research for UNICEF's "Child-friendly Cities" accreditation	December 2025
"Children's Rights" Workshop held for Cabinet Members, Scrutiny Chairs and the Management Team	February 2026
Prepared a work programme to present to the Leadership Team	March 2026
Corresponded with the Welsh Government in relation to a request for funding to hold a second "Children's Rights" workshop in conjunction with the Public Services Board	March 2026
A second "Children's Rights" workshop held in conjunction with the Public Services Board	March 2026
Submitted a Cabinet Report stating the corporate commitment setting out the ambition to develop the Council as a child-friendly, caring and trauma-informed organisation	May 2026
Held a "The Right Way in Action" workshop in conjunction with the Public Services Board	July 2026
Self-assessment in three Services in terms of awareness and understanding of "Children's Rights" using the "The Right Way" Framework	October 2026
Holding a "children's rights" session at the Managers' Network	November 2026

3. Progress and Next Steps

- 3.1. The work programmes are now under the care of the Supporting People Working Group, which is a cross-departmental working group that brings together officers from a range of services to support, co-ordinate and monitor the work. The Supporting People Working Group will continue to take responsibility for overseeing the progress of both work streams, providing a constructive challenge and appropriate support to ensure that the principles of Children's Rights and compassionate practice are increasingly embedded in the Council's culture, arrangements and practices.
- 3.2. In addition, the working group already oversees the Gafael Llaw pilot and the Collaborative Conversations programme, ensuring coherence between the different pieces of work and learning opportunities across the whole programme.
- 3.3. This is recognised as being an area that is still developing. As a result, the work programme will evolve over time as we learn from our own experiences, evaluate the impact of the activities and take into account good practice and new developments.

Our Bravery Brought Justice - Cyngor Gwynedd's Response Plan

Progress Report

02.03.2026

Theme 1 - Voice of the Child and Supporting Victims Reporting Officer: Gwern ap Rhisiart	
1. Theme Aim:	• Ensure that children are listened to, and that they are believed and taken seriously. • Give a voice to children and young people in processes that have been planned to keep them safe. • Do everything within our ability to support the victims and survivors.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	• Initial discussion has been held on creating a practical action plan which states the priorities, responsibilities and clear timeframes to incorporate a culture which is child-focused across all services - by April 2026. The discussion has led to the intention of introducing a Voice of Children and Young People Strategy in an attempt to capture everything in one co-ordinated plan. • The strategy will highlight 5 main things; ○ The voice of Children and Young People in the safeguarding procedure ○ The voice of Children and Young People in education ○ The voice of Children and Young People across Council Services ○ Influence on Corporate Processes ○ Impact • Draft strategy drawn up and discussion with the Youth Forum has been arranged to ensure the voice of children and young people in the strategy itself. • The Children's Service has presented an initial draft of a voice of the child policy • The Education Department has commenced the work of drawing up guidance of the very best practice in terms of the voice of learners within education, drawing on national best practice and guidance. • A workshop with Sally Holland and the Children's Commissioner team has been held with representatives of the Youth Forum, service heads, Cabinet members and representatives of scrutiny committees present.

	• Every primary school is now using an electronic recording system to note incidents of concern with those who did not have a system (5 small schools) now using Bromcom. • Cross-departmental work has been undertaken to identify appropriate training in Grooming for Council and school staff. A cross-departmental panel has considered packs from two national providers. • Contact has been made with the boys who had been identified in the report as victims. Assistance has been offered to them.		
4. Challenges faced:	• Quite a lot going on, and therefore there is a risk of us duplicating work. Creating a Strategy will ensure coherence and consistency. Also a focus on impact so that we do not do anything without considering the impact from the very beginning. • A wish for us to move to be a Child-Friendly Authority. This has now been removed from this theme but is going ahead under the guidance of the Children's Services.		
5. Next steps / key milestones:	• The intention is to develop a charter on listening to the voice of the child and child-friendly versions of the strategy with a completion date of by April 2026.. • Implement training for staff to identify and document behavioural changes in children which could be a sign of grooming or abuse - by March 2026. • Supporting the victims of trauma and tailor support to align with the needs of the individual - Ongoing • Introduce the new Bromcom system across all Gwynedd schools, alongside a training and awareness raising campaign - by September 2027 • Include the County Youth Forum and seek approval in terms of the content of our Voice of Children and Young People Strategy -March 2026		
6. Risks / Resources:	Resources: • Ensure that we are able to hear the voice and opinion of specific cohorts of children and young people who are harder to hear. Have had new resources to target this work. • Awaiting further guidance: • Regional and national guidance on grooming training		
7. Communication Considerations	•		
8. Timelines:	CPR - 1 (1)	Listen to the voice of the child	April 2026
	CPR - 2 (2)	Systems / measures / reporting - the voice of the child	April 2026
	CPR - 3 (3)	Training - identify change in behaviour	March 2026
	CPR - 4 (4)	Recording - change in behaviour	September 2027
	CPR - 6 (5)	Speak with the child - Part 5	
	CPR - 7 (6)	Contact outside school (reporting concerns)	January 2026

	CPR - 8 (7)	Curriculum changes	September 2026
	CPR - 9 (8) RP - A4 RP - A1	Supporting the victims	Ongoing
	RP- A5 (9)	Compensation claims	Ongoing
	NEWYDD – 1 (10)	Embed a culture of listening to the voice and experiences of children / young people	March 2026

Theme 2 - Managing Allegations and Concerns about Adults working with Children
Reporting Officer: Dylan Owen

1. Theme Aim:	- Protect children by ensuring that concerns are taken seriously and acted upon quickly. - Ensure that Part 5 arrangements support a consistent and robust multi-agency response to allegations and concerns about adults working with children.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to: - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps. Specific guidance: - Highlight risk in terms of speaking with every child who is the subject of a P5 referral. - Ensure agreement on the decision regarding the work on Low-Level Concerns Policies (No. 14). - Draw attention to the fact that some of the recommendations in the work programme have been merged, as they are a part of the quality assurance and audit programme work of the Children's Department. - Also draw attention to the fact that recommendations stemming from the ESTYN / CIW report (November 2025) have been added to the work programme.

3. Progress to date:	<u>Part 5 referrals:</u> • The discussion and strategy meetings templates have been adapted and they are being used to ensure that previous safeguarding information is being checked. • A social worker speaks with <u>every</u> child that is the subject of Part 5. • Threshold decisions are not made by only one person (Referrals Team Leader / LADO and/or DOS every time). • The referral form for professional adults has been highlighted on the website. It can be seen here: Child abuse. We have asked about the arrangements and timeframe for the proposed national changes to the referral form. There are also plans to look at how MOSAIC could support creating a digital form when the system goes live in the autumn. • A decision has been made to trial the use of Magic Notes during the strategy meetings. Piloting to begin in the next month after confirming with the company. <u>Schools Safeguarding and Well-being Team</u> • Welsh Government funding has been used to recruit and appoint an additional officer for the safeguarding team. The officer will begin before the end of February. <u>Quality Assurance Framework</u> • An initial draft of the Framework was prepared and presented to the Ministerial Assurance Group. • The intention is to present the draft to the Board meeting on 25.2.26.
4. Challenges faced:	<u>Speak with Children who are the subject of a P5 Referral</u> Some parents feel very uncomfortable about a social worker speaking with their child and, consequently, refuse permission. Such complaints are logged and will be monitored continually. Initial discussions have also been held with a legal expert in order to review the rights of parents and children in accordance with safeguarding procedures. <u>Low-level Concerns Policy.</u> Following the last Response Board meeting and the need for guidance from Welsh Government on the "Low-level Concerns Policy" matter, and we have now received confirmation: <i>That the Government is giving consideration to introducing a Concerns Policy regarding the Behaviour of Adults (similar to the Low-level Concerns Policy in England) in schools, as part of the work to review the guidance on school staff disciplinary and dismissal procedures. This will be done alongside Keeping Learners Safe, the intention is to consult on it following the Senedd elections.</i> During a meeting of the Task and Finish Group on 4 February the options that could be considered to be carried out internally were discussed.

	In terms of creating a Low-level Concerns Policy, following confirmation from Welsh Government of its intentions, the Council will not implement or proceed with new arrangements until the relevant guidance is published by Welsh Government. In terms of reviewing the internal central list: • The IT service (via the Head of Corporate Services) will make arrangements to provide access to the Children's Department Safeguarding Officer to the names on the current staff database, which has not been used since COVID. As this list is not being used for any checking purposes, there is no basis to keep the data. • The Children's Department Safeguarding Officer will check and cross-reference the individual records on the list in order to ensure that all relevant information is transferred to WCCIS. They will also check if any relevant safeguarding records involve the Adults Department, and these will be passed on to the appropriate team as and when necessary. • Social Services are currently preparing to transfer to a new data capture system (MOSAIC) which will allow us to see immediately if there are previous allegations/referrals and check that against the name and details of the person. • With two new systems being introduced (MOSAIC and the new Human Resources system) it is possible that further solutions will come in terms flagging matters, automation and case management. Those discussions will continue to be held between the Head of Corporate Services, Children's Department Safeguarding Officer and the IT Service. • In terms of informal concerns, the favoured approach is to bring every concern in to a formal process. Rather than holding informal discussions, every concern, including low-level concerns, will be logged on the new MOSAIC system in order to ensure that a clear record is available. Systems such as Magic Notes may also assist to simplify this process. • The Data Protection Officer will also review the guidance created back in 2013 in terms of defining concerns. The decision therefore is to ask for the Board's agreement to close the recommendation formally until system / technology developments are in place (October 2026).
5. Next steps / key milestones:	• March/April - Appoint DOS/Quality Assurance Officer • October - transfer to the MOSAIC system
6. Risks / Resources:	Resources: • Corporate bid has already been submitted in order to implement the recommendations in Theme 2. Risk: <u>Recruitment risk</u>

	A corporate bid was submitted for several new jobs in order to increase the capacity in the Children's Department. As recruitment for social work posts is challenging within the current climate, it is possible that alternative methods will have to be considered in order to fill the roles and decide on creative ways of recruiting.		
7. Communication Considerations	Any support for recruitment and raising awareness of the new jobs would be appreciated.		
8. Timelines:	CPR –11 (11)	Listen to the voice of the child	Completed - monitoring
	CPR - 14 (12)	RSB scrutinising - managing allegations	To be confirmed - Regional Safeguardig Board
	RP- B5 (13)	Estyn Inspections - safeguarding arrangements	Completed - monitoring
	CPR - 15 RP- C2 RP - C2a (14)	Low-level Concerns	Oct 25 - April 26
	CPR - 12 (15)	Decisions in consultation	To be confirmed - some delay in terms of contact with the Police
	CPR – 5 (16)	Consider safeguarding information on the record of the child when assessing risk	Completed - need to put monitoring arrangements in place
	NEW- 2 NEW - 3 (17)	Part 5 implementation arrangements	Ongoing - appointing to post March / April
	NEW- 4 (18)	Part 5 referral form	Short-term - highlight the form - completed Long term - digital form - October 2026 onwards
	NEW- 5 (19)	A transparent and open culture of dealing with referrals	Ongoing
	CPR – 10 (20)	Lessons to be learned / Part 5 - Welsh Government	To be confirmed - awaiting a copy from WG
	CPR 16 (21)	10 year strategy - Welsh Government	Beginning of March 2026

	RP- B2 (22)	Establish a Schools Safeguarding and Well-being Service	Ongoing
	NEW- 8 (23)	Improve relationship with schools - referrals procedure	Ongoing
	NEW- 9 (24)	Communication between children/education departments	Ongoing
	NEW- 10 (25)	Record Strategy Discussions	Pilot Magic Notes - March 2026 Appointing to post March / April

Theme 3 - Training and Policies Reporting Officer: Ian Jones	
1. Theme Aim:	Ensure that staff are trained to "think the unthinkable" and understand that "it could happen here".
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	- We ask the Board to - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	Whistleblowing - The Cabinet approved the Whistleblowing Policy for Staff at its meeting on 20 January. The policy will be adopted formally as part of the Council's Constitution by the Full Council i March, 2026. The Cabinet asked for urgent work in terms of developing a similar policy for Members as well, and that work has started. - As a result of this decision, we will proceed to introduce a draft work programme for communicating and raising awareness amongst all Council staff regarding the content of the Policy. We will present the work programme to the Whistleblowing Task Group at its next meeting. - Every school has received a request to adopt a Whistleblowing Policy provided by Welsh Government and we will monitor this into the future. Safeguarding Training - An Internal Audit was completed on Mandatory Training arrangements within the Council and the actions of that report will be adopted by the Task Group. - Work to analyse the training needs of various cohorts of staff in relation to Safeguarding is underway. - Work on developing a series of video clips has started in order to assist with the task of reaching every cohort of staff with appropriate messages. That work has

	included making contact with many other councils and organisations in the public sector across Wales in order to identify good practice. - The percentage of staff who have completed the mandatory training is 75.7% currently. Scrutiny Investigation - A slippage in the timetable but the final report is expected in the near future.		
4. Challenges faced:	- A request by the Cabinet to develop a similar procedure for Whistleblowing for Members is likely to have a short-term impact on the Task Group's work programme. - Access to IT systems for front-line staff continues to be a specific challenge.		
5. Next steps / key milestones:	- Adopting the amended Whistleblowing Policy - Cabinet (January 26), Full Council (March 26) and implement the Policy (April 26) - A clear communication plan for all Council staff, ensuring that it meets the needs of front-line teams - March 2026. - Sub-group to develop and produce practical equipment to reiterate and promote the importance of safeguarding training across the Council - February 2026. - Add training on keeping records of safeguarding in addition to the current e-module with the agreement of the SCW - Completed. - Scrutiny Investigation Report (Safeguarding Arrangements) - February 2026 - Further review of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy - April 2026		
6. Risks / Resources:	Resources The appointment of the Human Resources Advisory Service Manager to a post with another Council will have a short-term impact on the resources available for the Whistleblowing Task Group. Recruitment and appointment process has begun and a new manager is expected to be appointed in February.		
7. Communication Considerations:			
8. Timelines:	CPR - 17 (29)	WG Review (Training)	To be confirmed by WG
	CPR - 18 (30)	Grooming Training	To be confirmed
	CPR - 19 (31)	Assurance of this for the Safeguarding Board.	To be confirmed (see CPR-18)
	CPR - 20 (32)	Whistleblowing Policy	April 2026
	CPR - 13 (33)	LADO Officers Training/supervision	to be confirmed
	CPR - 24 (34)	DSP/Supervision by social workers	to be confirmed

	RP- C2 (35)	Training on keeping safeguarding records.	December 2025
	RP- B1b (36)	Departmental Safeguarding/VAWDASV Training	Ongoing
	RP- B2 (37)	Schools safeguarding training package	Complete
	RP- C2d (38)	Mandatory safeguarding training - safeguarding decisions	Ongoing
	NEWYDD - 11 (39)	"Advanced" Safeguarding Training	to be confirmed
	RP- B1 (40)	Review Safeguarding Policy	April 2026
	RP- B2 (41)	Review Safeguarding Policy (Schools)	to be confirmed
	RP- B1a (42)	Internal audit - safeguarding arrangements	June 2026
	RP- B1c (43)	Monitoring DBS compliance	Complete
	RP- B5 (44)	Monitor safeguarding arrangements in Schools	Complete
	RP- B6 (45)	Scrutiny Investigation - safeguarding	December 2025

Theme 4 - Governance Reporting Officer: Alison Halliday	
1. Theme Aim:	• Ensure that school governors understand their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe. • Ensure that systems are in place which measure the wider health and culture of schools.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps. Specific guidance: - Timeframes are a risk at present - it is anticipated that the Welsh Government review will take between 6 and 9 months. Can we proceed more swiftly with some of the recommendations? How?
3. Progress to date:	• Mandatory safeguarding training in place for every Chair and Safeguarding Designated Governor in schools. • Make it mandatory for Governors to complete basic safeguarding training • A new governor handbook has been shared with all governors and on the Gwynedd website • Start to collate information to assess the school's situation including health and wider culture • Meetings with neighbouring authorities to identify best practices in terms of clerking and effective and efficient governance arrangements. • Investigate a dashboard to capture all governance information and data in one convenient and manageable place.

4. Challenges faced:	Dependencies - awaiting further guidance from WG following its review of governance arrangements within schools
5. Next steps / key milestones:	- Empower the governance arrangements of our schools by ensuring that all Governing Bodies receive professional and high quality clerking support. Consider holding a professional clerk pilot for those schools who do not have a clerk by March 2026. - Review and amend the training programme for Chairs and Governing Bodies in order to respond to current needs. This will include training such as grooming and unconscious bias in line with local requirement. - Ensure training for heads on the basics of effective governance with a continued focus on developing the role of the body as a Critical Friend by establishing a culture of honesty and transparency as central themes. Future Leaders programme / prospective Heads have received a presentation January 2026. New Heads Programme to be introduced by March 2026. - Education Department to develop and circulate a standing agenda for Gwynedd school governing bodies, which will focus on safeguarding and well-being matters, as well as providing appropriate data to help them to assess the schools' situation by March 2026. The work of reviewing and amending meeting agenda will have been completed by January 2026. Training for Clerks and new procedure in place by March 2026. - Respond promptly to and implement all the recommendations of the Welsh Government Review of governance arrangements in schools in Wales - timetable to be specified in accordance with the review - Appoint an additional governance support officer to support schools with all aspects of governance and complaints by April 2026. Job description and person specification confirmed January 2026.
6. Risks / Resources:	Resources: RP-Ch7 (51)- An additional officer will be required to support 94 governing bodies. We currently have one officer. We have received a grant from WG which will allow us to appoint an additional officer. Resources: CPR-22 (47) - We will require resources to create a dashboard which will facilitate the collection of such data. Resources: (46.10) Additional resources will be required to establish a professional clerking model.
7. Communication Considerations:	

8. Timelines:	CPR - 21 (46)	Governors' Responsibilities	to be confirmed by WG
	CPR - 22 (47)	Dashboard	to be confirmed by WG
	CPR - 23 (48)	Accurate minutes	May 2026
	NEWYDD-12 (49)	Investigation and prevention procedure	June 2026 / Ongoing
	RP- C3 (50)	ICP Recommendations	Ongoing
	RP- Ch7 (51)	Training	Ongoing
	RP- Ch6 (52)	Compare arrangements	May 2026

Theme 5 - Restrictive Practices Reporting Officer: Llion Williams	
1. Theme Aim:	Update guidelines on filming restraint in the past by adults, and how filming records should be kept.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	- The offender's actions were contrary to the Schools Policy by filming cases - this is not standard practice. - During Quality Assurance visits we always look at the restrictive practice policy to ensure that it aligns with the exemplar policy provided. - Training is provided free of charge via the inclusion team - Pupil suspension records highlight training requirements in schools - the inclusion team contact and support schools in addition to the ongoing training schedule. - Appoint an additional Safeguarding and Well-being Officer to the Team in order to be able to carry out the annual quality visits - A company is commissioned to: - Evaluate the current policy against national guidelines and statutory requirements - Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the policy, identifying good practices, gaps and risks in terms of compliance and restorative practice. - Recommend practical improvement steps which ensure full compliance and integrate restorative approaches and conversations. - Recommend clear implementation arrangements with roles, accountability and restorative approach embedded in daily practice. - Evaluate the training plan for staff in policy requirements and restorative conversations. - Establish clear reporting arrangements for incidents, concerns and outcomes of restorative conversations.

	7. Implement firm monitoring and intervention arrangements An Education/Safeguarding/ALN Working Group has been set up to lead and facilitate the actions that will stem from the evaluation.		
4. Challenges faced:	- Welsh Government to implement the recommendation of publishing an appendix to the Framework Guidance in order to reduce restrictive practices. - Ensure that all schools are able to release staff in order to keep training current - Staff appointments and movements mean that the situation in terms of training varies during the year - department and schools capacity to keep current		
5. Next steps / key milestones:	- Establish a Working Group to lead and facilitate action - December 2025 - Establish a brief to evaluate the policy and current arrangements - December 2025 - Identify and commission an external company to evaluate policy, training arrangements, school support, pupil support, compliance monitoring methods - January 2026 - Establish an action plan following the evaluation – March 2026 - Establish and implement monitoring and compliance with policy procedure - March 2026 - Review strategy and training plan - Tbc - Strengthen the reporting and monitoring of school reports data arrangements - Tbc		
6. Risks / Resources:	Risks: - The process of commissioning and completing the work to evaluate the policy and arrangements take longer than expected - Ongoing compliance of schools Resources: - Resources and a system will be required to record 53.5 - collaborating with the IT Department to establish a system/Power App to keep data		
7. Communication Considerations:			
8. Timelines:	CPR 25 (53)	Appendix to guidance - WG	Waiting for the Government
	53.1	Establish a sub-group - investigating	December - Completed
	53.2	Review the Policy	January 2026
	53.3	Adopt the policy	February and annually
	53.4	Provide training	February 2026
	53.5	Monitoring	March 2026 and annually

Reporting Officer: Catrin Love	
1. Theme Aim:	• Ensure that a clear, strategic and co-ordinated plan is in place in an emergency
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise progress - Offer any comment or guidance, and guidance specifically on point 26d
3. Progress to date:	• Project group established. • Have stepped back of the original intention in order to have a better understanding of the current situation and guidance. • Key conversation has already taken place with a Detective Inspector from the Police's arrest team which has significantly improved understanding and changed the course of the content. Decision not to speak to the staff at the School. • Understand which formal Information Sharing protocols are in place in within safeguarding and emergency planning in order to establish whether this is a matter of raising awareness of them or that new agreements need to be created. WASPI agreements are in place within Safeguarding and for specific aspects of Emergency Planning and the ICO have clear guidance in terms of sharing information in an emergency therefore no need for a new guidance. • An early draft of a Strategic and operational Crisis Plan is in place. • Discussions have been held with the Policy on seconding a Social Worker to the Police in a serious safeguarding case. Favour having a flexible response in order to have the most appropriate arrangements for every individual case. That could be joint victim liaison teams (Police and Social Workers), it could be an open access arrangement for the Police or a formal secondment.
4. Challenges faced:	• Establishing what is already in place in the fields that overlap here - safeguarding, safety and emergency. • Tie all the documents already in place into one simple and concise document which addresses health and safety, safeguarding, emergency and information. • This is a requirement on all Councils by now as a result of the Government's letter to leaders and therefore there are questions around having standard templates / documents across North Wales counties. It is a statutory requirement but there is no national guidance. • It will be challenging to reach everyone in all schools and the initial work of mapping the training process has started to eliminate any delays once the Plan has been approved.

5. Next steps / key milestones:	• Consultation (end of March 2026) • Mapping training and preparing training resources (Summer 2026 school term) • School staff training (To be confirmed)		
6. Risks / Resources:	• Once the work of mapping the training has been completed the resources required will become clearer however a bid for additional resources has been submitted.		
7. Communication Considerations:	•		
8. Timelines:	CPR - 26a (54)	Review the strategic serious incidents plan	Draft Plan by 31/1/26 Consultation period 31/3/26 Training Programme Summer Term 2026 Recommendation for the Board to agree in order to complete the action.
	CPR - 26b (55)	Official protocol - information sharing	Completed
	CPR – 26c (56)	Plan in place / rapid support steps	Completed
	CPR - 26d (57)	Move a social worker to work on secondment with the Police	April 2026

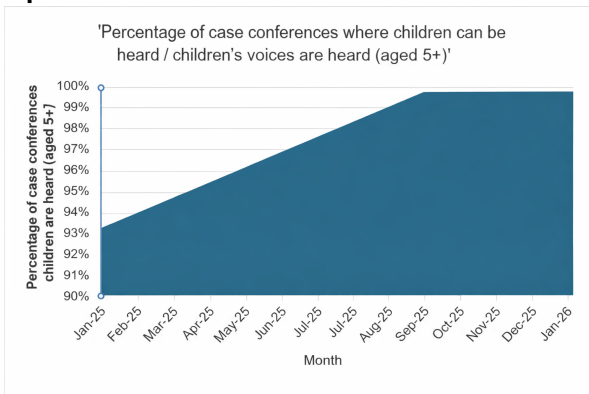
***Our Bravery Brought Justice - Cyngor Gwynedd's
Response Plan
Progress Report***

27.04.2026

THEME 1 - VOICE OF THE CHILD AND SUPPORTING VICTIMS Reporting Officer: Gwern ap Rhisiart	
1. Theme Aim:	• Ensure that children are listened to, and that they are believed and taken seriously. • Give a voice to children and young people in processes that have been planned to keep them safe. • Do everything within our ability to support the victims and survivors.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to: • Challenge and scrutinise the progress • Offer any further guidance on the next steps
3. Progress to date:	<u>The Voice of the Child Strategy</u> A draft Voice of the Child Strategy has been completed. Observations have been received on the content by the members of the recovery board and have been incorporated in the current version. Work has been done to draw up some appendices, but not all. The appendix on the voice of children and young people in education is ready for discussion with the Children and Young People Forum, Education Strategic Groups and Gwynedd Governors Forum. There is work to be done to amend the current guidance of the Children's Services so that it becomes a natural part of the Strategy as a whole; the current content is wholly appropriate, but its format needs to be amended so that it reads as one. The content needs to be discussed with the Children and Young People Forum. This may be a task for the Engagement Coordinator that is currently in the process of being appointed. <u>Recording</u> Every school has the ability to record changes in the behaviour of children digitally on the Bromcom system or one of the previous systems, such as MyConcern. <u>Trauma Informed and Child Friendly</u> A work programme has been prepared which looks at: a) developing Gwynedd as a child-friendly county, placing the rights of children at the heart of decisions; b) moving towards being trauma-informed, kind and empathic organisations. The programme focuses on long-term changes and developing culture by means of: - A corporate and specialist training programme;

	- Policy and procedure checks; - Self-assessments; - Monitoring and evaluating impact. The Action Plan and its delivery continues under the Caring Gwynedd Priority Area, and the Supporting People Cross-departmental Working Group (instead of directly to the Board), in order to embed the whole-Council approach to the themes. The work programme can be seen in Appendix 1 (Additional Papers). <u>Contact Outside School</u> Quality checking visits continue to check that there are contact numbers that children can use if they wish to contact external agencies. This is a part of the continuous monitoring cycle of the safeguarding and well-being team. There has been no example where the team has not seen appropriate alternative contact details at any school.
4. Challenges faced:	One of the main challenges is the increasing demand on our Children and Young People Forum. Although they are more than able to consider and give their opinions, they also have their own priorities and this in itself places pressure on them. It appears that everyone wishes to hear the views of the forum on a broad range of fields, and we need to consider that they have exams, for example, and that it is not acceptable to take them out of their lessons all the time. It is something that needs to be considered moving forward, and officers will consider an annual programme with the Forum during their next meetings. As a result, we will delay the completion of work on the strategy until the end of June, beginning of July, as the examination period will have drawn to a close by then.
5. Next steps / key milestones:	• Refine the content of the current guidance of the Children's Services to correspond with the strategy's format. • Commence the work of considering corporate changes to ensure the voice of the child. • Draw up a realistic timetable for consulting with the Children and Young People Forum, considering the increasing demand on them as representatives.
6. Risks / Resources:	The availability of our Children and Young People Forum, particularly over the examination period.
7. Communication Considerations	

8. Timelines:	Number	Priority	What?	Timetable
	1	1	The Voice of the Child Strategy	July 2026
	6	1	Contact outside school (reporting concerns)	To be confirmed
	4	2	System for recording a change in behaviour	September 2027
	8	2	Support for victims	Ongoing
	10	2	Walking on the corporate culture: Trauma-informed and The Right Way (Children's Rights)	Long-term work programme
	2	3	Systems / measures / reporting - the voice of the child	To be confirmed
	7	4	Welsh Government to implement changes to the National Curriculum	WG noted September 2026
	5	5	Social Worker to speak with every child	Completed - monitoring
	9	5	Compensation claims	Ongoing
	3	Combined with number 30 (Theme 3)	Training - identify change in behaviour / grooming	See: Number 30 Theme 3
Grey = Completed or unable to implement as we are waiting for a national / regional change				
Measures (Impact)				
Regular opportunities for victims / survivors to provide feedback to Cyngor Gwynedd about the quality and sufficiency of the support	Update: The intention is to discuss with the advocates during April. A verbal update could be provided if this has not happened by the time the papers have been shared with Board members.			Timetable: Board Meeting April 2026 (verbal)
Confidence and experience of safeguarding in schools	Update: A Youth Forum has been developed and a questionnaire has been circulated to gather the views of young people about their confidence and the experience of safeguarding within schools. 1291 young people across the County have responded. The responses show that over 80% pupils noted that they were able to speak with someone at the school if support is needed, 14% were not able to speak with someone at the school and 6% did not respond.			Timetable: Annual - results Feb / March

	75% noted that they knew where to go for support, 6% were uncertain, 15% did not respond and 4% did not know where to go for support.																													
Health and Well-being of Gwynedd Schools (School Life)	Update: The Report on the results of the <i>Survey on the Health in Schools Research Network (SHRN): Improve the health and welfare of learners</i> has not been published by Public Health Wales yet.	Timetable: Delay from reporting as the SHRN report has not yet been published. July 2026 Board																												
Percentage of case conferences where the voice/views of the child (5+ years old) were heard	Update: 'Percentage of case conferences where children can be heard / children's voices are heard (aged 5+)' <table><thead><tr><th>Month</th><th>Percentage of case conferences children are heard (aged 5+)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Jan-25</td><td>93%</td></tr><tr><td>Feb-25</td><td>94%</td></tr><tr><td>Mar-25</td><td>95%</td></tr><tr><td>Apr-25</td><td>96%</td></tr><tr><td>May-25</td><td>97%</td></tr><tr><td>Jun-25</td><td>98%</td></tr><tr><td>Jul-25</td><td>98.5%</td></tr><tr><td>Aug-25</td><td>99%</td></tr><tr><td>Sep-25</td><td>99%</td></tr><tr><td>Oct-25</td><td>99%</td></tr><tr><td>Nov-25</td><td>99%</td></tr><tr><td>Dec-25</td><td>99%</td></tr><tr><td>Jan-26</td><td>99%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Month	Percentage of case conferences children are heard (aged 5+)	Jan-25	93%	Feb-25	94%	Mar-25	95%	Apr-25	96%	May-25	97%	Jun-25	98%	Jul-25	98.5%	Aug-25	99%	Sep-25	99%	Oct-25	99%	Nov-25	99%	Dec-25	99%	Jan-26	99%	Timetable: This is a measure that it reported regularly to the Children's Performance Challenge meeting. The next Performance Challenge meeting will be held in May.
Month	Percentage of case conferences children are heard (aged 5+)																													
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Nov-25	99%																													
Dec-25	99%																													
Jan-26	99%																													
Percentage of part 5 referrals where a social worker has made a proactive effort to visit and listen to the voice of the child (5+yrs)	Update: Number of children seen during the assessment (Dec-Jan) = 97% Three children not seen during assessment The reasons for this include children not wanting to leave their bedroom/not wishing to be a part of the assessment. There was one case where a parent refused a visit, telephone assessment only. A strategy discussion was held and escalated to Strategy 47 for access without parental consent.	Timetable: This is a measure that it reported regularly to the Children's Performance Challenge meeting. The next Performance Challenge meeting will be held in May.																												
Outputs to date																														



A social worker makes a proactive effort to hear the voice of every child subject to a Safeguarding Referral (Section 5)



All schools display information about an independent person that pupils can talk to if they have safeguarding concerns.



A special role has been appointed to help develop the Gwynedd Youth Forum.



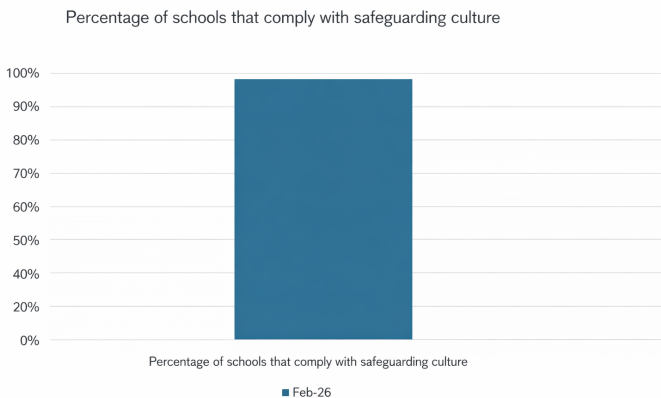
The Council works together with partners in order to offer ongoing support to the victims.



All schools have access to an electronic data management system so that changes in a child's behavior can be recorded.

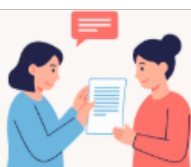
THEME 2 - MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AND CONCERNS ABOUT ADULTS WORKING WITH CHILDREN Reporting Officer(s): Dylan Owen / Sharron Carter Williams	
1. Theme Aim:	- Protect children by ensuring that concerns are taken seriously and acted upon quickly. - Ensure that Part 5 arrangements support a consistent and robust multi-agency response to allegations and concerns about adults working with children.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	- The Quality Assurance Framework has been completed (copy for information included in the pack). - The Magic Notes pilot has been commenced, with positive results thus far, as staff note that it facilitates their work. - An application was submitted to be a part of a national pilot to trial the new national referral form. We are waiting to hear if the application has been successful.
4. Challenges faced:	- Although the initial meeting with the Police was positive in terms of establishing a TEAMS channel, they have currently refused the request, noting that the current arrangements work effectively. Further contact will be made to explain the situation further. - With the funding for additional posts confirmed, the Department will move to advertise them. However, as recruiting social workers is already a challenge, there is an actual risk that these roles cannot be filled.
5. Next steps / key milestones:	- Follow-up conversations to hold with the Police (April 2026) - Appoint to the DOS/Quality Assurance Post (May/June 2026) - Evaluate the Magic Notes Pilot (July 2026)
6. Risks / Resources:	With the funding for additional posts now confirmed, the Department will move to advertise them. However, as recruiting social workers is already a challenge, there is an actual risk that these roles cannot be filled.
7. Communication Considerations	- Work will be needed to raise the awareness of the Children's Department workforce about the new Quality Assurance Framework. - A challenge is expected in wording the recruitment to additional posts. A further public and internal campaign will need to be considered as required.

8. Timelines:	Number	Priority	What?	Timetable
	15	1	Safeguarding (Part 5) decisions being made on a multi-agency basis, and not by the LADO alone	Delay – awaiting discussions with the Police
	17	1	Part 5 and Quality Assurance Framework implementation arrangements	Framework completed
	23	1	Improve the relationship between the children's teams and schools	Ongoing
	24	1	Strengthen collaboration / Communication between the Children and Education Departments	Ongoing
	25	1	Quality of Strategy Discussions recording (Part 5)	July - 2026
	18	2	Ensure that the Part 5 referral form will be easy to find and easy to use.	Oct-2026
	14	4	Welsh Government to develop a Low-level Concerns Policy	Awaiting implementation by WG
	11	4	Welsh Government to note that the Voice of the Child needs to be heard following the Part 5 referral	Awaiting a copy from WG
	12	4	Regional Safeguarding Board to scrutinise the Welsh Government's arrangements for dealing with allegations	Awaiting confirmation from the RSB
	20	4	Welsh Government to review the Part 5 procedures	Awaiting a copy from WG
	21	4	Welsh Government to publish the 10-Year Strategy on Preventing the Sexual Abuse of Children	Published
	13	5	Collaborate with schools on any safeguarding issues that arise following the ESTYN inspections	Ongoing
	16	5	Consider historical safeguarding information on a child's records	Completed
	19	5	A transparent and open culture of dealing with referrals	Ongoing
	22	5	Establish a Schools Safeguarding and Well-being Service	Continuous Review
Grey = Completed or unable to implement as we are waiting for a national / regional change				
Measures (Impact)				
Staff confidence and experiences of Part 5 referrals and dealing with	Update: We are considering whether something can be done as part of the internal investigation of the awareness of the safeguarding workforce (internal audit), seeking the		Timetable: October 2026 Board.	

low-level concerns	views of an individual who has experience of making a safeguarding referral or conduct a joint inspection with the Safeguarding and Well-being Team.	We are delaying before conducting an internal audit on the workforce's awareness in order to give time for the materials produced by the Corporate Safeguarding Promoter to take root.
Attendance of the Chair of Governors or deputy at a Part 5 strategy meeting if there is an allegation about a member of a school's workforce.	Update: Our intention is to try and report on this per quarter. Please note, however, that this cannot be done by using the current data system and some manual administrative work will have to be done in order to calculate it.	Timetable: Aiming to start reporting on this measure to the Board in July 2026
Estyn inspection reports : numbers who comply with safeguarding culture	Update:  Percentage of schools that comply with safeguarding culture Percentage of schools that comply with safeguarding culture ■ Feb-26	Timetable: Reported quarterly
Outputs to date		



The **form for referring allegations of abuse** is easier to find on the Council's website and on the Schools' "hub" website.



No **safeguarding decisions** are made by **one employee** alone.



Historical information on a child's record is checked each time a Safeguarding Referral is made (Section 5).



Historical information is also checked on the **record of the professional adult** who is the subject of a Section 5 enquiry.



"Magic Notes" is being **piloted** to facilitate the recording of safeguarding meetings (Section 5).

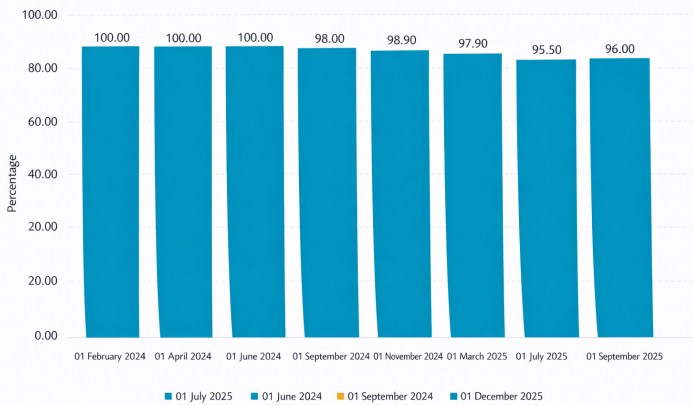


The **Quality Assurance Framework** has been **completed** to help ensure the Children's Department works effectively and consistently.

THEME 3 - TRAINING AND POLICIES Reporting Officer: Ian Jones	
1. Theme Aim:	Ensure that staff are trained to "think the unthinkable" and understand that "it could happen here".
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	<u>Whistleblowing Policy</u> The amended Whistleblowing Policy was adopted by the Full Council in March 2026, and work is afoot to raise awareness of the policy across the Council. We have also committed that relevant officers attend specialist training from the Protect organisation during the coming months (exact dates to be confirmed). <u>Safeguarding Training</u> Progress has also been made in terms of converting Safeguarding training into video presentations so that they can be introduced to frontline staff across the Council. Work has also commenced on mapping the training needs of staff beyond the basic module so that they can support staff in the workplace. Group F training has also been carried out by an External Expert for the Council's Members. <u>Grooming Training</u> The NSPCC will be commissioned to prepare the grooming training pack. The training will include two parts: 1. An on-line class for up to 5000 for officers across the Council, raising awareness of the signs of grooming, and how to respond, etc. The training will also be available to elected members and school Governors. 2. Face-to-face training for 20 officers (5 sessions booked, therefore 100 officers in total). This is specific for front-line workers; Social Workers, Teachers, Designated Safeguarding Persons in Schools and Headteachers. The aim is to start the sessions in June. There was some delay as a result of the need for bilingual materials.
4. Challenges faced:	Access to all Council staff to the Council's IT systems remains a challenge. However, a financial bid has recently been approved to facilitate the work, and a further work is in place to realise the ambition.
5. Next steps / key milestones:	<u>Whistleblowing Policy</u> April – July 2026 > Raise awareness of the Whistleblowing policy amongst Council staff. April - December 2026 > Attend training sessions April - September 2026 > Introduce sessions to frontline staff on Safeguarding July 2026 - Complete mapping work on the training needs of Managers and Team Leaders
6. Risks / Resources:	Work priorities continue to be challenging as a result of the Council's broader work programmes.

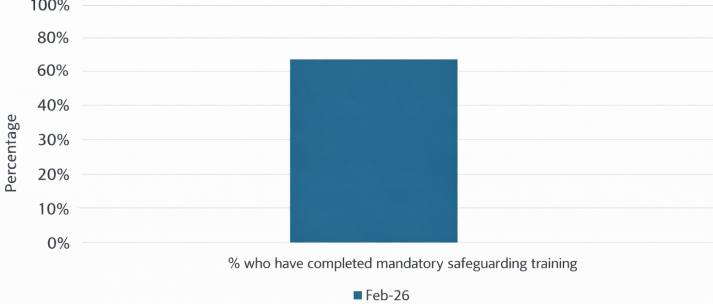
7. Communication Considerations:	Internal communication messages to be prepared in terms of Whistleblowing and Safeguarding matters			
8. Timelines:	Number	Priority	What?	Timetable
	32	1	Whistleblowing Policy	April 2026
	35	1	Training on keeping safeguarding records	April 2026
	45	1	Safeguarding Scrutiny Investigation	To be confirmed
	30	2	Grooming Training	To be confirmed
	38	2	Safeguarding Training - higher levels and training	To be confirmed
	34	3	Supervision of Designated Safeguarding Persons by social workers	To be confirmed
	29	4	Welsh Government to Commission a Training Resource	To be confirmed by WG
	31	4	Assurance for the Regional Safeguarding Board of the grooming training that will be held	To be confirmed
	33	4	Regional Safeguarding Boards have assurances that the LADO has received training	To be confirmed by the RSB
	36	5	Departmental Safeguarding/VAWDASV Training	Completed - ongoing monitoring
	37	5	Review the schools safeguarding training package	Ongoing
	40	5	Review the Corporate Safeguarding Policy every two years	Ongoing
	41	5	Review the Safeguarding Policy (Schools) every year	Ongoing
	42	5	Internal audit: The workforce's awareness of safeguarding	July 2026
	43	5	Monitoring DBS compliance	Ongoing
	44	5	Visits to monitor safeguarding arrangements in schools (Safeguarding and Welfare Team)	Ongoing
	39	Combined with number 38	"Advanced" Safeguarding Training	Combined with number 38
Grey = Completed or unable to implement as we are waiting for a national / regional change				
Measures (Impact)				

DBS rates for staff	Percentage of staff who have not renewed their DBS in a timely manner Blwyddyn ● 2024-2025 ● 2025-2026 <table><tr><th>Month</th><th>2024-2025 (%)</th><th>2025-2026 (%)</th></tr><tr><td>April</td><td>0.9%</td><td>0.9%</td></tr><tr><td>May</td><td>0.9%</td><td>0.9%</td></tr><tr><td>June</td><td>1.1%</td><td>0.9%</td></tr><tr><td>July</td><td>1.2%</td><td>1.1%</td></tr><tr><td>August</td><td>1.2%</td><td>1.2%</td></tr><tr><td>September</td><td>1.2%</td><td>1.2%</td></tr><tr><td>October</td><td>1.1%</td><td>1.1%</td></tr><tr><td>November</td><td>1.0%</td><td>1.0%</td></tr><tr><td>December</td><td>1.0%</td><td>1.0%</td></tr></table>	Month	2024-2025 (%)	2025-2026 (%)	April	0.9%	0.9%	May	0.9%	0.9%	June	1.1%	0.9%	July	1.2%	1.1%	August	1.2%	1.2%	September	1.2%	1.2%	October	1.1%	1.1%	November	1.0%	1.0%	December	1.0%	1.0%	Timetable: This is a measure that it reported regularly to the Corporate Performance Challenge meeting. The next Performance Challenge meeting will be held in April. The figures per department are also scrutinised through the Safeguarding Operational Group.
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April	0.9%	0.9%																														
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Completing mandatory safeguarding training	Update: Summary of Completion Percentages (%) <table><tr><th>Category</th><th>July – 2025</th><th>August – 2025</th><th>September – 2025</th><th>November – 2025</th><th>March – 2026</th></tr><tr><td>Domestic Abuse</td><td>~55%</td><td>~58%</td><td>~65%</td><td>~70%</td><td>~72%</td></tr><tr><td>Safeguarding</td><td>~58%</td><td>~60%</td><td>~68%</td><td>~70%</td><td>~72%</td></tr></table> <i>It is expected for the percentage to increase as a result of the mandatory training video presentation sessions for frontline staff.</i>	Category	July – 2025	August – 2025	September – 2025	November – 2025	March – 2026	Domestic Abuse	~55%	~58%	~65%	~70%	~72%	Safeguarding	~58%	~60%	~68%	~70%	~72%	Timetable: This data is scrutinised at the Safeguarding Operational Group. The data is now also included in the performance challenge of every Department.												
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% staff completed training on sex offenders and grooming	Update: As a result of the delay to secure bilingual materials, the data will now be collected from June onwards.	Timetable: The intention is to start reporting on this data at the Board's meeting in July 2026.																		
Staff and members' confidence in the Council's Whistleblowing arrangements	Update: Further work is needed between April and July in order to raise awareness of the in-house arrangements.	Timetable: Aiming to start reporting on this measure to the Board in September 2026.																		
Outputs to date																				
 The Council has added information about "grooming" to the safeguarding training that is presented to all schools.  We are now looking at how many staff have completed Safeguarding training as part of the performance monitoring arrangements of each Department.  The Cabinet has adopted a new Whistleblowing Policy for Council staff.  Appointed a Corporate Safeguarding Champion to raise awareness of safeguarding across the Council.  A new Education Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team was established in 2024.  The Education Safeguarding and Welfare Team visits each school once a year to check that the correct rules are being followed.  The capacity of the Education Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team was increased - 4 members of staff now work for the team.  A video has been produced to deliver safeguarding training to frontline staff.																				

THEME 4 - GOVERNANCE	
Reporting Officer: Alison Halliday	
1. Theme Aim:	• Ensure that school governors understand their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe. • Ensure that systems are in place which measure the wider health and culture of schools.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; – Challenge and scrutinise the progress – Offer any further guidance on the next steps
3. Progress to date:	<u>Safeguarding Training</u> • Mandatory safeguarding training in place for every Chair and Safeguarding Designated Governor in schools • Basic Safeguarding Training is mandatory for every Governor • A new Governor Handbook has been shared with all Governors and on the Gwynedd website <u>Appointment of a Governance Support Officer</u> • A Governance Support Officer has been appointed and will commence in the role in May 2026 <u>Effective Governance as a Critical Friend</u> • Every leadership development programme in the authority gives purposive attention to the importance of effective governance with the need to foster a culture of honesty and transparency to ensure that governing bodies implement their role as a critical friend. • New headteachers and headteachers in charge, along with participants from the primary and secondary future leaders, have now received this training. <u>Training for Clerks</u> • Meeting agendas have been amended to ensure a specific and purposeful focus on the voice of the child, well-being and safeguarding. These programmes have been shared with the Authority's clerks of school governing bodies in April 2026 <u>Welsh Government</u> • We have attended meetings with the Welsh Government to gain more information and updates regarding the review. A Welsh Government Representative will attend the next meeting of the Gwynedd Governance Forum to share an update and receive input on the governance challenges of smaller and rural schools. <u>Professional Clerk</u> • Awaiting job evaluations.
4. Challenges faced:	Dependencies - awaiting further guidance from Welsh Government following its review of governance arrangements within schools.

5. Next steps / key milestones:	• Induction of the new Governance Support Officer to their role - May 2026 onwards • Ensuring a comprehensive training programme for Governing Bodies June 2026 onwards • Appointment of a Professional Clerk to meet the demand and needs of schools for a clerk • Prompt response and implementation of all recommendations in the Welsh Government Review of governance arrangements. September 2026 onwards • Continue discussions with the Governance Hub company to respond to the need for a dashboard to capture all data and information in a convenient location. • Draw up a questionnaire for governors to measure the impact of training on the culture and their confidence as a critical friend of the school June - July 2026 • Implement any findings, empowering a training programme for governing bodies																																
6. Risks / Resources:	Risk: • Adapt the Authority's mandatory training in terms of governance before receiving national guidance following the review • The authority unable to meet the needs and demands of schools for a governing clerk from September onwards. Resources: • (Number 46) - Additional resources will be required to establish a professional clerking model.																																
7. Communication Considerations:	• Information will need to be shared with Governors, including a comprehensive training programme. • We will appoint a Professional Clerk to meet the demand and needs of schools.																																
8. Timelines:	<table><tr><th>Number</th><th>Priority</th><th>What?</th><th>Timetable</th></tr><tr><td>46</td><td>2</td><td>Welsh Government to highlight the responsibilities of Governors</td><td>To be confirmed by WG</td></tr><tr><td>47</td><td>2</td><td>Governors dashboard on the health and well-being of schools</td><td>to be confirmed by WG</td></tr><tr><td>48</td><td>2</td><td>Governors to keep accurate records of safeguarding decisions</td><td>May 2026</td></tr><tr><td>49</td><td>2</td><td>Highlight the role of Governors in an investigation and suspension procedure</td><td>June 2026 / Ongoing</td></tr><tr><td>52</td><td>3</td><td>Compare the Governance arrangements of YF and other schools</td><td>May 2026</td></tr><tr><td>50</td><td>4</td><td>Learn lessons when dealing with complaints in the future</td><td>Ongoing - a case similar to ICC 2019 has not happened</td></tr><tr><td>51</td><td>4</td><td>Training and Support for Governors</td><td>Awaiting the findings of the WG review</td></tr></table> Grey = Completed or unable to implement as we are waiting for a national / regional change	Number	Priority	What?	Timetable	46	2	Welsh Government to highlight the responsibilities of Governors	To be confirmed by WG	47	2	Governors dashboard on the health and well-being of schools	to be confirmed by WG	48	2	Governors to keep accurate records of safeguarding decisions	May 2026	49	2	Highlight the role of Governors in an investigation and suspension procedure	June 2026 / Ongoing	52	3	Compare the Governance arrangements of YF and other schools	May 2026	50	4	Learn lessons when dealing with complaints in the future	Ongoing - a case similar to ICC 2019 has not happened	51	4	Training and Support for Governors	Awaiting the findings of the WG review
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Measures (Impact)						
% of school governing bodies reporting that all members have completed mandatory training	Safeguarding - % of Gwynedd Governors who have completed mandatory safeguarding training  <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Month</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Feb-26</td><td>65%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Month	Percentage	Feb-26	65%	Timetable: This information is collected once a year during the Autumn Term by means of the Annual Safeguarding Questionnaire.
Month	Percentage					
Feb-26	65%					
The Governing Body's confidence in their ability to be a Critical Friend of the school.	Update: To be introduced in September 2026.	Timetable: Information being collected before the end of the Summer term in order to be able to report to the Board at the beginning of the new term (September 2026).				
Outputs to date						
 A new Governor's Handbook has been created and shared with all Gwynedd School Governors.	 A new Officer has been appointed to support School Governors.	 A training program for clerks is available to all School Governing bodies.				

THEME 5 - RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES	
Reporting Officer: Llion Williams	
1. Theme Aim:	Update guidelines on filming physical restraint by adults, and how filming records should be kept.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	- An external company has been commissioned to: - Evaluate the current policy against national guidelines - Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the policy. - Recommend practical improvement steps which ensure full compliance and integrate restorative approaches and conversations. - Recommend clear implementation arrangements with roles, accountability and restorative approach embedded in daily practice. - Evaluate the training plan for staff in policy requirements and restorative conversations. - Establish clear reporting arrangements for incidents, concerns and outcomes of restorative conversations. - Number of associated policies shared to facilitate the evaluation - Meeting held between the Headteacher of the Camu i'r Copa Referral Unit, Inclusion Manager and the officer who completes evaluation work to explain the implementation arrangements of the policy and the current training plan. - Final steps are completed in the evaluation work before the report is submitted. - After this, an action plan will be drawn up, and the implementation will respond to the findings. - Scrutiny of the restrictive practice / early intervention policy has been added to the quality visits of the Safeguarding and Well-being Team since the end of February 2026 - Every school that has received a visit so far has adopted the lead policy of the Education Department - The policy adoption / review date will be a part of the annual safeguarding questionnaire to Schools (Circulated annually in October) - The Regional Safeguarding Group is developing an additional clause in the Regional policy to give guidance to schools on filming physical restraint by adults - this is not recommended in accordance with GDPR regulations and relevant legislation. The clause is in the process of being verified by the legal department of the lead County.
4. Challenges faced:	- Drawing up and implementing improvements following the external consultation, subject to the company's completion timetable - Current training data includes the schools of Anglesey and other agencies - There will be a need to develop and adapt the method of monitoring the need and numbers of staff who need/have been trained.
5. Next steps / key milestones:	- Establish an action plan following the evaluation - March 2026 - Establish and implement monitoring and compliance with policy procedure - March 2026 - Review the training strategy and plan - To be confirmed following the evaluation feedback

	Strengthen the reporting and monitoring of school reports data arrangements - To be confirmed following the evaluation feedback																														
6. Risks / Resources:	Risks: - The process of commissioning and completing the work to evaluate the policy and arrangements take longer than expected - Ongoing compliance of schools Resources: - Resources and a system will be required to record 53.5 - collaborating with the IT Department to establish a system/Power App to keep data																														
7. Communication Considerations:	-																														
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Measures (Impact)																															
% of school staff completing training on restrictive practices	Update: Over 300 staff in 85 Gwynedd schools have received training over the past 3 years. This includes refresher training. The training programme is being managed and monitored by the inclusion team. Currently, training is being held based on need, applications or recommendations by the inclusion service. It is expected that this procedure will be refined following the findings of the evaluation. Further work needs to be completed in order to collect the data more effectively.		Timetable: Refine the collection arrangements following the evaluation by the external company																												
% of schools complying with the restrictive practice model policy.	Update: Scrutiny of the restrictive practice / early intervention policy has been added to the quality visits of the Safeguarding and Well-being Team since the end of February 2026 - Every school that		Timetable: Data being collected through the annual safeguarding																												

	has received a visit so far has adopted the lead policy of the Education Department Every school that has responded to the annual safeguarding questionnaire (October 2025), confirming that they have adopted the lead policy of the Education Department.	questionnaire / visits of the Safeguarding and Well-being Team
Quality of Safeguarding – Policy compliance, level of training, reporting and evaluation processes are carried out during the annual visits.	Update: During the new cycle of Safeguarding quality visits, the 29 schools that have received a visit confirm that they have adopted and that they comply with the Education Department's lead policy (100%). The adaptations, following the external evaluation, that will be implemented in the reporting procedure will become an additional part of the quality check visits	Timetable: This aspect is being added to Quality of Safeguarding visits from the beginning of February 2026.
Reporting on the following two measures in performance challenge meetings: - Number of reports of use of restrictive practices by schools. - % of reports that have received the child's voice as part of the report	Update: These actions are subject to the recommendations deriving from the external evaluation.	Timetable: Awaiting the results of the external company's evaluation.
Outputs to date		
No restrictive practices infographic at present.		

THEME 6 - CRISIS PLANNING AND CRISIS RESPONSE	
Reporting Officer: Catrin Love	
1. Theme Aim:	• Ensure that a clear, strategic and co-ordinated plan is in place in a crisis situation
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	A consultative process has been held with specific schools that were involved with events on the day of the arrest at the school, in order to gain a better understanding. A draft Crisis Plan is in place which has incorporated all recommendations in the CPR report. Draft submitted to a small cohort of School Headteachers (mix of small and larger schools and Secondary schools), with several observations received. A draft of a collaboration agreement with the Police has been completed following discussions. It establishes a flexible framework for working together, which may at times include secondements, as well as an open-door approach and collaboration with victim contact teams.
4. Challenges faced:	The needs and ability of schools are different, subject to their size. First draft version identifying 7 key roles in schools in a crisis but, in practice, there are only 7 members of staff in total in a small school. Headteachers feel that there are too many documents and procedures relating to crisis in schools, with a request made to reconcile documents and incorporate them into a single document, e.g. fire / lockdown / safeguarding / crisis procedures. Need to adapt the original proposal in terms of communicating the Plan with the schools, Headteachers do not feel that a short presentation in a Business Meeting is sufficient.
5. Next steps / key milestones :	Re-introduce the Crisis Plan to the same cohort of School Headteachers, with their original comments incorporated within it. April 2026 Agree on the communication and training method of every school May 2026 Share collaboration agreements with the Police for comments, with the intention of adopting it formally. April 2026
6. Risks / Resources:	Risks A suggestion that national guidance are to follow in this field which may change the content.

	Resources Budget for an additional resource has been approved and in the process of advertising a post.			
7. Communication Considerations:	Need to communicate with school Governors Need to include broader sites than schools alone, e.g. leisure centres, residential homes, etc.			
8. Timelines:	Number	Priority	What?	Timetable
	54	2	Review the strategic serious incidents plan	Consultation period 31/3/26. Training Programme <i>Summer Term 2026</i>
	56	5	Plan in force which sets out steps to obtain swift support during a traumatic event	June 2026
	55	5	Official protocol to share information	Completed
	57	2	Arrange a secondment for a social worker to work with the Police (in accordance with the need)	Completed
	Grey = Completed or unable to implement as we are waiting for a national / regional change			
Measures (Impact)				
Number of schools / staff / Governors in each school who have received Emergency / Crisis Plan training.	Timetable: Training to be scheduled		Update: Reporting on this continues to be premature as there is a need to update and consult on the Plan before putting appropriate training in place.	
Number of satisfactory emergency plans on the Council's sites	Timetable: A programme of annual inspections to commence from September 2026.		Update: Reporting on this continues to be premature as there is a need to offer appropriate training and for it to be in place before establishing a monitoring programme.	
Outputs to date				



There is an **agreement to collaborate with the Police in an emergency**. This may involve a social worker being seconded to work with the Police for a period of time.

Theme 7 - Ysgol Friars

Reporting Officer: Margaret Davies

1. Theme Aim:	Supporting Ysgol Friars
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	Review the Governing Body's ability to implement the recommendations that will result from the CPR, realistically assessing what steps are beyond its capacity. - Governance arrangements for wellbeing and safeguarding continue to strengthen. Governors demonstrate confidence in evaluating the wellbeing and safeguarding report, and a structured programme of support and challenge meetings between the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) and the Safeguarding Governor takes place each term. There is clear evidence of a developing data pack, shaped in response to governor feedback—for example, termly attendance comparisons—which is improving the quality of strategic oversight. - The termly report to GB provides governors with data in relation to safeguarding referrals, child protection and looked after children - The school has established a wellbeing sub-committee that meets regularly to share information on high level data, patterns and actions/ responses school is taking on concerns - The governing body scrutinises the safeguarding policies prior to ratification at full GB meeting. These are ratified annually. - The school is working closely with local authority named safeguarding officers and an external specialist. The local authority is supporting the Governors as they develop their critical friend role. - Safeguarding SER is now completed annually and presented to full Governing Body - The governing body have been briefed on the potential recommendations from the Child Practice Review and will be working closely with school leaders to ensure that all

	recommendations pertinent to school have been completed in a timely manner • The Authority's Safeguarding Officer continues to attend the governing body and Wellbeing and Safeguarding sub-committee to provide constructive support and challenge, and ensure regular feedback to the Authority regarding progress against the recommendations, and strengthen the working relationship between the school and the Authority. • The Safeguarding Lead meets with the Head/Designated Safeguarding Lead every three weeks and attends Governing Body meetings. Strengthen training and support for governors in the areas of safeguarding, strategic accountability, and performance monitoring. • All governors have completed the NSPCC training, • A special meeting of the Governing Body was held on 1 December to focus on Safeguarding as follows: ○ Self-evaluation form for Safeguarding and Child Protection – Estyn ○ Local Authority Audit ○ Comfortable Environment Protocol: Pre and Post Bereavement Support Protocol for Ysgol Friars Pupils ○ Safeguarding Training - Staff and Governors ○ Programme Board - Child Practice Review Outcome ○ Role and responsibilities of the Well-being and Safeguarding Sub-Committee Support the interim Headteacher, Deputy and the two new Assistant Headteachers as they develop as a strong management team. • The SIA visited during the CPR publication and in preparation for the Estyn inspection. SIA continues to visit as needed during the year to discuss improvements to the school • 'Safe space' - half termly sessions have been arranged for all members of the leadership team by 'trauma informed schools'. • There is monthly supervision of the Designated Person by an independent consultant to support pressure on DSP at this time. • Cross-School collaboration – the school is continuing to work the A55 alliance which focus on literacy skills, and also with Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen, Ysgol Brynrefail and Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen in relation to the Gwynedd. A formal agreement has been developed between four schools and the first focus is inclusion.
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	Support the recruitment and transition to a permanent Headteacher during 2026, reassuring staff and parents that robust arrangements are in place Cynfor Gwynedd • Permanent Headteacher appointed for 1 September 2026 start. Strengthen middle leadership and ensure that school management processes are operational and transparent. • Link Governors have been appointed and 'School Guidance for Supportive Visits by Governors' has been adopted by the Governing Body. Meetings have taken place with the faculties and are ongoing. General overview record form following a supportive visit to the school by a member of the Governing Body is sent to the Headteacher and Head of Faculty. • A first round of quality assurance has been completed, and a report of whole school-findings has been presented to the Governing Body. Whole school areas for further improvement have been included in the Schools Development Plan. • The Governing Body has adopted the PDR Policy. There has been a pause in national leadership development programmes this year, but they will be starting in September. The PL needs of staff currently being collated following their initial PDR meetings. Pupil Voice • Leaders and governors place a high value on pupil voice, and this commitment is increasingly evident in the school's developing structures and processes. A designated governor now attends school council meetings regularly, providing an effective link between pupils and the governing body and ensuring that learners' perspectives inform strategic discussions. Head pupils meet routinely with the headteacher to raise important issues, and this dialogue is beginning to shape aspects of school development in a meaningful way. As a result, pupils feel that their views are listened to and that they can influence change within the school. However, leaders recognise that pupil voice is stronger at whole-school level than within tutor groups and year groups, where opportunities for consultation and participation remain inconsistent. Strengthening these layers of pupil voice, alongside establishing purposeful sub-committees to support the wide-ranging work of the school council, is therefore a clear next step. Initial training planned with the Children's Commissioner for Wales is a timely and positive development that is expected to further enhance pupils' confidence, advocacy skills, and the overall impact of pupil voice across the school community.
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Review and strengthen counselling and emotional support arrangements, ensuring sustainable and high quality provision for children and young people.

Wellbeing centre

- A 'Wellbeing centre report' was presented to Governing body in March 2026. There are currently 4 school based counsellors and a total of 53 students have been referred in this period (01/09/25-31/01/26) (KS3-31 students, KS4-10 students, KS5-12 students). Meetings with the school counselling team, DSP and Safeguarding Officer happen on a half termly basis. Initial meetings focused on the referral process, improving communication of appointments, improving communication between school-based counsellors and safeguarding team. Additional support sessions from the school-based counsellors have been agreed where there have been possible 'trigger' days. So far these have been on the:
 - Release of the CPR report
 - GCSE Maths results day
 - Don't steal my future workshop day (RASASC)

The rooms in the wellbeing centre are used regularly by a number of additional support services:

The School Nursing Service is based in the Centre and offers support and advice to children, young people and their families or carers to help ensure that they reach their full potential during their school aged years and beyond. Confidential advice and support can be offered for a wide range of issues.

Be' Di'r Sgôr - The Gwynedd and Anglesey Young People's Drug and Alcohol Abuse Service. The service is available to any young person up to the age of 25 who is or has been affected by drugs or alcohol, directly or through someone else. They work confidentially with young people to offer one to one support and advice, drop-in sessions in the community, education and prevention resources, and Guidance for families and professionals. Two members of the team have set up a weekly clinic at Ysgol Friars. This work includes:

- Holding targeted one to one or group sessions with pupils
- Offering advice and support sessions to staff, if it is useful

CAMHS Hub - Every month, there is a meeting of the CAMHS hub. This is early intervention prevention and promotion services. The purpose of the hub is:

- To provide advice, guidance and support to the multidisciplinary school environment.
- To upskill those working around the child within the school setting.
- To identify mental health difficulties, refer and intervene early within the school environment.

	• To increase awareness and knowledge of child mental health, and how to influence and foster resilience. • To enable the education system to positively influence mental health <u>Multi-agency work- Supporting attendance</u> - The wellbeing centre is also being used to support students in returning to school following lengthy periods of absence. Agencies who are supporting students with long term absences have started to schedule sessions in the wellbeing centre to bridge the gap between home and school. This is currently taking place with two student in Year 9 who have not attending school this academic year. The wellbeing centre is also used for meetings with social workers, support workers, police interviews and parent meetings. Support staff to build a culture of safety, trust and respect, providing additional training where necessary. Since 2023, the school reviewed its training model for safeguarding and child protection. In line with Gwynedd County Council, the school is compliant with the Group A, B and C training. We will continue to review this training model based on feedback from staff and local authority officers. • In May, all Senior Leaders have completed the NSPCC Group C Designated persons training. New members of the senior leadership team have completed the training in September 2025 • In addition, the safeguarding officer has also completed their Group C training • In addition, the designated safeguarding person has attended Group C training facilitated by Gwynedd County Council • In September 2025, the senior leadership team have commissioned an independent trainer to facilitate Group B training to all staff during INSET day. This was a comprehensive training package that meets requirements of Group B training. • The school have also commissioned the independent trainer to work closely with our new designated safeguarding person to support, challenge and improve our safeguarding and child protection arrangements. This is an ongoing support Service for our DSP and safeguarding team on a monthly basis. • In addition, all staff have completed the online Group A training, Prevent and Violence against Women training which are online training modules • The school maintains records and ensures that all staff are appropriately trained child protection and safeguarding, prevent and sexual violence • All staff are aware of different levels aware of children's needs and aware on how to respond to their needs in different situations.
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	• The school has moved towards a designated safeguarding team that can respond in an appropriate and timely manner to ensure that support is available at the time of need and referrals are made in a timely manner. • As of June 2025, all new staff are provided with safeguarding training as part of their induction. This is facilitated by our designated safeguarding person. • The local authority designated safeguarding lead meets with the school safeguarding team monthly to discuss trends and support. Training for safeguarding and child protection is a priority at Ysgol Friars. The school is compliant with the local authority policy in providing Group A and Group B training. Designated and deputy designated persons are trained to Group C. This team approach ensures that there are robust arrangements in place to provide guidance to staff and liaises with Gwynedd County Council to ensure that we are up-to-date and compliant. To carry out regular safeguarding audits and provide ongoing assurance to the Authority and the Programme Board. • Estyn's safeguarding self-evaluation and Gwynedd audit presented to governors. • A school audit is in place and feeds into the action plan. • LA safeguarding visit completed • Termly reports are presented to governors in relation to child protection / safeguarding and staff roles. Communication and Transparency • Parental communication remains an area for development. Plans for the creation of dedicated focus groups next term provide a clear route forward and offer the potential for more meaningful parental engagement in safeguarding and wellbeing conversations.
4. Challenges faced:	Continue to clerk the Governing Body until sustainable arrangements are in place. • The school has advertised three time for the role of the Clerk to the Governing Body but have been unsuccessful in appointing. The school will re-advertise again in the coming weeks following the publication of the Estyn Report. In the meantime, the current clerk continues to work closely with the Project Lead. Strengthen training and support for governors in the areas of safeguarding, strategic accountability, and performance monitoring. • Waiting to hear how compulsory training will change nationally before detailing further.

5. Next steps / key milestones:	• To further embed pupil voice by working closely with the children's commissioner's team • To ensure that recommendations in our Estyn report are incorporated into whole school planning • To further develop our graduated response to social emotional and challenging behaviour
6. Risks / Resources:	Ensure that the role of the temporary additional Safeguarding Officer is effectively integrated, with a clear framework in terms of accountability and oversight. • Finance and staffing committee to consider the future following receipt of next year's budget.
7. Communication Considerations	Communication and Transparency • Parental communication remains an area for development.
8. Timelines:	

Our Bravery Brought Justice - Cyngor Gwynedd's Response Plan

Progress Report

15.07.2026

THEME 1 - VOICE OF THE CHILD AND SUPPORTING VICTIMS	
Reporting Officer: Gwern ap Rhisiart	
1. Theme Aim:	- Ensure that children are listened to, and that they are believed and taken seriously. - Give a voice to children and young people in processes that have been planned to keep them safe. - Do everything within our ability to support the victims and survivors.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to: - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps
3. Progress to date:	The Voice of the Child Strategy A Voice of the Child Strategy has now been fully drawn up in draft form, with the following specific appendices developed to support the strategy as a whole: - The Voice of the Child in Children Services - The Voice of the Learner in Education - The Voice of Children and Young People Forums - The Voice of the Child Strategic Integration and Governance The strategy and appendices set a clearer procedure on how the voice of children and young people is heard, recorded and used to steer decisions and integrated into the Council's governance arrangements. (copy shared with Board for information) A full day has been arranged for 16 July to go through the whole strategy with the Children and Young People's Forum. This will give them an appropriate opportunity to consider the strategy and appendices in detail, to discuss the content and consider the proposed arrangements before proceeding to the next steps. The Forum's feedback will be an important part of the process of refining the strategy before its final approval and embedment across relevant services. We have advertised twice and have interviewed twice for the Engagement Officer post. Unfortunately, we failed to appoint and we have now advertised for the third time. We will use the Council's communication team to promote the role through our social media websites. Recording There has been no significant change in terms of recording arrangements since the previous report, but positive progress has been made in ensuring that all schools now have access to an electronic system to record relevant matters. Therefore, every school now has the ability to record changes in behaviour, concerns or relevant information digitally, either on Bromcom or current systems such as MyConcern.

	It is important to note that the majority of schools still use MyConcern, but all schools have now got access to a suitable electronic system. This gives a more consistent basis for recording work and reduces the risk of relying on paper arrangements or inconsistent processes. Trauma-informed and Child Friendly The Trauma-informed e-modules are now live on the learning portal, providing the basic knowledge for all staff and councillors. Work is also underway to arrange training sessions for Cabinet Members, Department Heads and Assistant Department Heads, while the Cabinet Member for Children completes a Diploma in trauma-informed practice. Progress is also continuing on the work of Children's Rights across the Council, which includes collaborating with the Highways Service to develop a more child-friendly method of engagement when planning playing fields. There is a need to prepare and support every department to incorporate children's rights in their day-to-day work and develop a stronger corporate awareness of these principles - there is an e-module training (via the Welsh Government's hub) and it is intended to arrange sessions on children's rights for managers and teams in the autumn. Contact Outside School Quality checking visits continue to check that contact numbers and appropriate information are available for children to use if they wish to contact external agencies or ask for support outside school. This is a part of the continuous monitoring cycle of the Safeguarding and Well-being Team. Since the last meeting, no example has arisen where the information available to learners has been found to be inadequate or inappropriate.
4. Challenges faced:	One of the main challenges in taking this work forward is the increasing demand on the Children and Young People's Forum. While Forum members are fully capable of considering, challenging and giving opinions on important areas, it is necessary to recognise that they also have their own priorities and pressures, including school commitments, exams and other activities. It is clear that an increasing number of areas of work wish to have input from the Forum, and this is something that will need to be carefully managed. It is not appropriate to continually pull young people out of lessons, and bringing together young people from across Gwynedd to one setting is also a significant practical challenge. Another challenge that needs to be recognised is the concern that the priorities of the Youth Forum could be pushed aside due to the Department's agenda and the requirements of the Response Plan. While this work requires clear and purposeful input from children and young people, it is also important that this does not mean that their priorities are lost or downgraded. The balance that needs to be struck is that the Forum can meaningfully contribute to the priorities of the Response Plan, but also remain a space where young people can raise the issues that matter most to them. A date has now been scheduled for a meeting with the Forum on 16 July, when there will be an opportunity to go through the complete strategy and associated appendices. This will give the young people appropriate time to consider the content in a meaningful way. It also needs to be recognised that the end of the school year period brings a natural change in the membership of the Forum, as some young people leave education or move on to a new era.

	In addition, the Department's ability to devote the necessary time and capacity to this work remains a challenge, given the many strategic and practical priorities currently in place. However, work continues to progress, and officers will consider a more structured annual programme with the Forum to ensure that their input is carefully planned and used effectively. Moving forward, it will be necessary to ensure that the Forum's work programme gives sufficient space to the young people's own priorities, whilst also ensuring that their voice contributes directly to the improvement work that is part of the Response Plan. This will help maintain the credibility of the Forum, reduce pressure on members, and ensure that the arrangements remain meaningful and fair for the young people involved. With this in mind, the completion of work on the strategy will be timed following the session with the Forum on 16 July, so that the feedback from the young people can be appropriately incorporated before moving on to the next stages. Another challenge will be recruiting for the Engagement Officer post. We are now starting the process for the third time. This is a reflection on a lack of suitable people out there to do the work.
5. Next steps / key milestones:	• Hold a full session with the Children and Young People's Forum on 16 July to discuss the Voice of the Child Strategy and associated appendices in their entirety, giving the young people an adequate opportunity to consider the content and offer meaningful feedback. • Incorporate the Forum's feedback into the final strategy and appendices, ensuring that young people's views are clearly reflected before proceeding to formal approval. • Complete and refine the specific appendices for: ○ The Voice of the Child in Children Services; ○ The Voice of the Learner in Education; ○ The Voice of Children and Young People Forums; ○ The Voice of the Child Strategic Integration and Governance. • Develop an annual work programme with the Youth Forum, to ensure an appropriate balance between the young people's own priorities and the need to receive their input on the priorities of the Recovery Plan. • Consider practical and sustainable arrangements for engaging with young people from across Gwynedd, including travel challenges, meeting timing, and natural changes to Forum membership at the end of the school year. • Continue to strengthen corporate arrangements for the child's voice, ensuring that the strategy influences relevant decision-making processes, governance arrangements and service plans. • Confirm the recording arrangements across schools, noting that all schools now have access to an electronic system, while continuing to monitor the consistent and effective use of systems such as MyConcern and Bromcom. • Continue the monitoring cycle through quality check visits, including checking that appropriate information is available to learners about how to contact external agencies or get support outside of school. • Appointment of Engagement Officer.

6. Risks / Resources:	The main risks are the availability and capacity of the Children and Young People Forum, especially considering exam pressures, travel distances and the natural change in the Forum's membership at the end of a school year. There is also a risk that the priorities of the Youth Forum are pushed aside by the requirements of the Response Plan, along with the challenge of ensuring sufficient capacity within the Department to move the work forward.																																											
7. Communication Considerations	A clear communication plan will be required when publishing the strategy, ensuring that children and young people see where their input has influenced the work. An accessible and child-friendly version will be required, along with clear messages for schools, governors, services and partners. It will also be important to manage expectations and clearly show how the voice of children and young people leads to action.																																											
8. Timelines:	<table><tr><th>Num ber</th><th>Priority</th><th>What?</th><th>Timetable</th></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>The Voice of the Child Strategy</td><td>July 2026</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>Systems / measures / reporting - the voice of the child</td><td>To be confirmed</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>1</td><td>System for recording a change in behaviour</td><td>September 2027</td></tr><tr><td>6</td><td>1</td><td>Contact outside school (reporting concerns)</td><td>To be confirmed</td></tr><tr><td>8</td><td>1</td><td>Support for victims</td><td>Ongoing</td></tr><tr><td>9</td><td>1</td><td>Compensation claims</td><td>Ongoing</td></tr><tr><td>10</td><td>1</td><td>Working on the corporate culture: Trauma-informed and The Right Way (Children's Rights)</td><td>Long-term work programme</td></tr><tr><td>7</td><td>3</td><td>Welsh Government to implement changes to the National Curriculum</td><td>WG noted September 2026</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>4</td><td>Social Worker to speak with every child</td><td>Completed - monitoring</td></tr></table> Gray = Delay until a national / regional change is implemented Green = Completed (monitoring)				Num ber	Priority	What?	Timetable	1	1	The Voice of the Child Strategy	July 2026	2	1	Systems / measures / reporting - the voice of the child	To be confirmed	4	1	System for recording a change in behaviour	September 2027	6	1	Contact outside school (reporting concerns)	To be confirmed	8	1	Support for victims	Ongoing	9	1	Compensation claims	Ongoing	10	1	Working on the corporate culture: Trauma-informed and The Right Way (Children's Rights)	Long-term work programme	7	3	Welsh Government to implement changes to the National Curriculum	WG noted September 2026	5	4	Social Worker to speak with every child	Completed - monitoring
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Regular opportunities for victims / survivors to provide feedback to Cyngor Gwynedd about the quality and sufficiency of the support	Update: Continue meetings with the advocates of victims, with continuous discussions about the level of support available, or required, this includes the needs of the family as well as the individual. Four out of five of the victims are in contact with either ISVAs or social services. Conversations are now taking place on an individual level with the ISVA's to tailor bespoke support packages. In addition, one-to-one contact with one of the victims takes place, either on a face-to-face basis or on Teams based on the wishes of the individual; again, in order to discuss needs on an individual and family level. One of the largest challenges is identifying specialist services / interventions for victims in a therapeutic field in the area. There is an agreement to map the availability of therapeutic services locally / across the region.	Timetable: Board Meeting July 2026
Confidence and experience of safeguarding in schools	Update: The Youth Forum developed a questionnaire to gather the views of young people about their confidence and the experience of safeguarding within schools, with 1,291 responses across the county. The responses showed that over 80% of pupils noted that they were able to speak with someone at the school if support is needed, while 14% said that they could not and 6% did not respond. Also, 75% noted that they knew where to go for support, 6% were uncertain, 4% did not know and 15% did not respond. <u>Scrutiny and Safeguarding Committee Report</u> The report shows that there is a solid foundation of confidence and safeguarding experience in Gwynedd schools, with staff and governors taking their responsibilities seriously, but that consistency of training, clarity of reporting pathways, and everyone's confidence to act immediately when there is any concern need to be strengthened.	Timetable: Annual Review (March) Reported to the Board in April 2026. July 2026 Update: Scrutiny Committee Report
Health and Well-being of Gwynedd Schools (School Life)	Update: The Report on the results of the <i>Survey on Health in Schools Research Network (SHRN): Improve the health and welfare of learners</i> for Secondary Schools has not yet been published by Public Health Wales. After receiving the results, they will be analysed by the department's data officers.	Timetable: October 2026 Board

Percentage of case conferences where the voice/views of the child (5+ years old) were heard	Update: Percentage of case conferences where the child's voice/opinion was heard (aged 5+) - 96%	Timetable: Data for April – June 2026
Percentage of section 5 referrals where a social worker has made a proactive effort to visit and listen to the voice of the child (5+yrs)	Update: Percentage of section 5 referrals where a social care worker has made a proactive effort to visit and listen to the child's voice (aged 5+) - 90%	Timetable: Data for January – June 2026

Outputs to date



A social worker makes a proactive effort to hear the voice of every child subject to a Safeguarding Referral (Section 5)



All schools display information about an independent person that pupils can talk to if they have safeguarding concerns.



A special role has been appointed to help develop the Gwynedd Youth Forum.



The Council works together with partners in order to offer ongoing support to the victims.



All schools have access to an electronic data management system so that changes in a child's behavior can be recorded.

THEME 2 - MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AND CONCERNS ABOUT ADULTS WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Reporting Officer: Dylan Owen / Sharron Williams Carter

1. Theme Aim:	- Protect children by ensuring that concerns are taken seriously and acted upon quickly. - Ensure that Section 5 arrangements support a consistent and robust multi-agency response to allegations and concerns about adults working with children.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	WCCIS form changes - WCCIS forms to receive referrals were changed to ensure that broader, historical and associated information is checked. - WCCIS forms to decide on the actions of a referral were changed to ensure that a multi-officer and multi-agency discussion is held where appropriate. Referral Form - It was ensured that the referral form and referral methods were clear on our corporate website and on the intranet. - A request was made to trial the new national referral form. <i>(See the Briefing Paper that explains the changes in detail)</i> Multi-agency Discussion - It was ensured that multi-officer and multi-agency conversations and discussions are held to agree on actions following the receipt of referrals. - Discussions were held with partners to ensure regular and consistent collaboration and co-production systems. It was agreed to implement a direct contact system to discuss referrals on a consistent and regular basis and this is in place with applications made to agencies to nominate a link for section 5 meetings. This will develop the relationship and expertise in the field and ensure consistency when following processes and making decisions. See attached paper; <i>(See the Briefing Paper that explains the changes in detail)</i> Recording Safeguarding Concerns - Additional training on recording safeguarding matters was prepared for the social services workforce (adults and children) as part of the presenting and training system on Beam notes (previously Magic Notes), which will be implemented at the beginning of July. Quality Assurance Framework - The new Quality Assurance Framework was developed for the Children's Department in its entirety and it has now been implemented; - Additional funding was secured for the admissions team for a DOS/Quality Assurance post. These jobs were advertised and there were recent appointments with start dates in the jobs soon; Recruitment - As a result of appointing a head of Children's Department for a year, there was a domino effect and now several posts have been filled across the Department at all levels of the organisation;

	- Discussions were held with the Training Unit and the University on the Department's ability to recruit adequate social workers in light of the increased demand and additional funding. It was agreed that the Department would create additional trainee posts working with the Training Unit to ensure support for the prospective trainee; - It was agreed to fund and create a workforce planning job with internal funding (not new funding) to collaborate with the Human Resources Department to develop a plan and implement it; Collaboration with the Education Department - First joint meetings were held between school headteachers and senior managers of the Council's Children's Department; - Management Team (Education and Children Departments) meetings were held on a joint basis for some months and the Assistant Head responsible for the education welfare service will regularly join the Children's Management Team; Responding to requests from the Education Scrutiny Committee - At the request of the Education Scrutiny Committee, a Section 5 inspection was carried out looking at multiple referrals for individuals back to 2020, considering whether those issues were appropriately implemented and if those issues needed to be revisited. That inspection will be reported to the Strategic Safeguarding Panel in early July; - At the request of the Education Scrutiny Committee, an inspection was carried out on arrangements to consider transferable risks from Human Resources and Discipline matters of the education workforce to a Section 5 referral. That inspection will be reported to the Strategic Safeguarding Panel in early July.
4. Challenges faced:	- There was uneasiness in parts of the Children's Department that could mitigate the risk appetite due to the resentful atmosphere seen publicly on social media in general, but that situation seemed to gradually improve; - Similarly, the new management appointments meant that many new officers were gaining their first experiences of managing and leading on higher levels; - Our use of Beam was challenged by the Police and the Health Board, with both organisations stating that they would not be involved in meetings if Beam was used in them. Clearer guidance is expected on this.
5. Next steps / key milestones:	- National communication was received on the new operating systems that will be implemented for Section 5 matters. There will be a need to work to ensure that the Council systems correspond and meet the need of the new statutory guidance; - Using Beam, it is intended to enable the recording of strategy discussions (Section 5) automatically, with the need to check accuracy only by the LADO. This enables the development of a consistent and quality systematic recording system; - It is noted that the Quality Assurance Framework and Section 5 operating systems are coloured grey to show their completion in the table on the next page, but it will be necessary to check that these issues remain operational and effective over time. It is intended to revisit to consider that in 6 months (14 January 2027) with the Children's Department management team to check and provide further assurance of the lasting effects.

6. Risks / Resources:	• While work is underway on workforce planning and creating apprenticeship jobs, there are recognised recruitment challenges that can lead to some positive growth. • There is concern about the intentions of a television production company that has expressed an interest in the story surrounding Friars School and the <i>Our Courage</i> Brought Justice report. The Council is seeking to establish further details about this.
7. Communication Considerations	• With the press narrative on other historical cases suggesting shortcomings in the Council's safeguarding methods, a plan will be required to give public assurance, especially through the work of the Response Board, external inspectors and collaboration with the Government on providing assurance of effective services. • The possible intentions of the television production company could reignite public attention and create challenges for the Council, as well as affect workforce confidence in its safeguarding work.

8. Timelines:	Number	Priority	What?	Timetable
	18	1	Ensure that the Section 5 referral form will be easy to find and easy to use.	To be confirmed
	25	1	Quality of Strategy Discussion recording (Part 5)	September-2026
	14	3	Welsh Government to develop a Low-level Concerns Policy	Awaiting implementation by WG
	11	3	Welsh Government to note that the Voice of the Child needs to be heard following the Section 5 referral	Awaiting a copy from WG
	12	3	Regional Safeguarding Board to scrutinise arrangements for dealing with Welsh Government allegations	Awaiting confirmation from the RSB
	20	3	Welsh Government to review the Section 5 procedures	Awaiting a copy from WG
	21	3	Welsh Government to publish the 10-Year Strategy on preventing the sexual abuse of children	Published
	13	4	Collaborate with schools on any safeguarding issues that arise following the ESTYN inspections	Ongoing
	15	4	Safeguarding (Section 5) decisions being made on a multi-agency basis, and not by the LADO alone	Arrangements being implemented and refined
	16	4	Consider historical safeguarding information on a child's records	Completed
	17	4	Section 5 and Quality Assurance Framework implementation arrangements	Framework completed
	19	4	A transparent and open culture of dealing with referrals	Ongoing
	22	4	Establish a Schools Safeguarding and Well-being Service	Continuous Review
	23	4	Improve the relationship between the children's teams and schools	Ongoing
	24	4	Strengthen collaboration / Communication between the Children and Education Departments	Ongoing
Gray = Delay until a national / regional change is implemented Green = Completed (monitoring)				
Measures (Impact)				

Staff confidence and experiences of Section 5 referrals and dealing with safeguarding concerns	Update: We are considering whether something can be done as part of the internal investigation of the awareness of the safeguarding workforce (internal audit). We are delaying before conducting an internal audit on the workforce's awareness in order to give time for the materials produced by the Corporate Safeguarding Promoter to take root. The application is being submitted to the Strategic Safeguarding Panel in July for consideration.	Timetable: Awaiting the decision of the Strategic Safeguarding Panel. To be reported by the Board meeting in October 2026.
Attendance of the Chair of Governors or deputy at a Section 5 strategy meeting if there is an allegation about a member of a school's workforce.	Update: This is regularly monitored as part of the Section 5 Strategy meetings. There are challenges in terms of reporting on the data through the current system (WCCIS), and there is currently a need to undertake manual administrative work to count the information. Further work is ongoing to examine ways of simplifying the process and facilitating the work of data reporting in future.	Timetable: October 2026 Board.
Estyn inspection reports: numbers who comply with safeguarding culture	Update: 18/19 schools comply with safeguarding culture according to ESTYN findings - one school needs to follow Safeguarding recruitment arrangements more accurately	Timetable: Reported quarterly

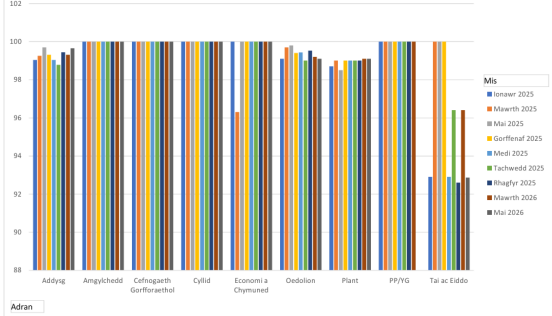
Outputs to date

 Managers from the Children's and Education Departments meet regularly to strengthen collaboration.	 No safeguarding decisions are made by one employee alone.	 Historical information and records are checked each time a Safeguarding Referral is made (Section 5).	 The form for referring allegations of abuse is easier to find on the Council's website and on the Schools' "hub" website.
 "Magic Notes" is being piloted to facilitate the recording of safeguarding meetings (Section 5).	 The Quality Assurance Framework has been completed to help ensure the Children's Department works effectively and consistently.	 We have appointed a Quality Assurance Manager to ensure that the correct procedures are followed in the Children's Department.	

THEME 3 - TRAINING AND POLICIES Reporting Officer: Ian Jones	
1. Theme Aim:	Ensure that staff are trained to "think the unthinkable" and understand that "it could happen here".
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	Safeguarding Training - The percentage of Council staff who have completed the mandatory Safeguarding training - 76.6% - The collective training for workers (via video) who do not have access to the Council's digital system has commenced. The feedback has been very positive with a positive response in terms of the form of the training and the discussion among staff has been very good. 67 workers have received the training in this format so far. - The new intranet site is also up and running in terms of promoting and offering guidance and if you have access to the site, here is the link for your convenience: Safeguarding - It's everyone's responsibility. - A video has also been produced to promote that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone in the workforce. A copy of the video can be viewed as an attachment. - The work of identifying cohorts of staff who require the specialist training on Safeguarding continues and is being monitored by the Strategic Safeguarding Panel. Review of the Safeguarding Policy - The Cabinet adopted a revised Safeguarding Policy at its meeting on 7 July, following a comprehensive review undertaken between January and June 2026: Safeguarding Policy (June 2026). - The Policy was strengthened by making the process for raising safeguarding concerns more prominent at the beginning of the document, clarifying roles, responsibilities and accountability at all levels, and introducing clearer safeguarding responsibilities when commissioning services. - New governance measures were introduced to strengthen oversight, including monitoring safeguarding training completion rates through the Performance Challenge process, establishing safeguarding as a standing agenda item for the Corporate Management Team and departmental management teams, and continuing the annual reporting arrangements to the Care Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Full Council. Grooming Training - Following several questions raised at the Board meeting in April, a briefing note has been prepared to explain the scope of the grooming training and to provide a clearer timetable for delivery. (See the Briefing Paper that explains the changes in detail) Whistle-blowing - The new Whistle-blowing Policy has now been adopted by the Council and a further amendment was approved by the Full Council on 2 July. This

	was done in order to extend the reportable complaints to include complaints about sexual harassment in light of a legislation change. • The new E-module in terms of the policy has now been developed and it is anticipated that we will release it to all Council staff before the end of July. In addition, approximately 120 Council managers have received a presentation on the new policy as part of the recent managers' network meetings. • As a result of the collaboration with the Protect organisation, specialist training on whistle-blowing will be introduced in October this year and it is anticipated that this will lead to further similar sessions in future. • For information alone, the Whistle-blowing Policy for Members was also adopted by the Full Council at its meeting on 2 July.
4. Challenges faced:	The Safeguarding Promotion Officer had to be absent from work recently due to surgery, therefore, there was a slippage of a few weeks in terms of presenting the video to others. This is expected to change soon so that the momentum can continue.
5. Next steps / key milestones:	1. Continue to hold collective training sessions on safeguarding for staff who do not have access to the Council's digital systems. 2. Complete and introduce a new E-module on the Whistle-blowing Policy for all Council staff. 3. Identify alternative ways in terms of presenting the Whistle-blowing training for those staff who do not have access to the Council's digital systems.
4. Risks / Resources:	
5. Communication Considerations:	

6. Timelines:	Number	Priority	What?	Timetable
	32	1	Whistle-blowing Policy	Completed
	35	1	Training on keeping safeguarding records	September 2026
	30	1	Grooming Training	September 2026
	38	1	Safeguarding Training - higher levels and training	To be confirmed
	34	2	Supervision of Designated Safeguarding Persons by social workers	To be confirmed
	29	3	Welsh Government to Commission a Training Resource	To be confirmed by WG
	31	3	Assurance for the Regional Safeguarding Board of the grooming training that will be held	To be confirmed
	33	3	Regional Safeguarding Boards have assurances that the LADO has received training	To be confirmed by the RSB
	36	4	Departmental safeguarding/VAWDASV training level	Completed - ongoing monitoring
	37	4	Review the schools safeguarding training package	Ongoing
	40	4	Review the Corporate Safeguarding Policy every two years	Ongoing
	41	4	Review the Safeguarding Policy (Schools) every year	Ongoing
	42	4	Internal audit: The workforce's awareness of safeguarding	Completed
	43	4	Monitor DBS compliance	Ongoing
	44	4	Visits to monitor safeguarding arrangements in schools (Safeguarding and Welfare Team)	Ongoing
	45	4	Safeguarding Scrutiny Investigation	Completed
	Gray = Delay until a national / regional change is implemented			
	Green = Completed (monitoring)			
Measures (Impact)				

DBS rates for staff	Siem o Carran DBS (%)  Update: Compliance rates remain high across the departments, with every department higher than 90%. The main reasons for any DBS that has not been renewed include maternity leave, long-term sickness leave and waiting for the renewal process to be completed.	Timetable: This is a measure that is reported regularly to the Corporate Performance Challenge meeting. The figures per department are also scrutinised through the Safeguarding Operational Group.
Completing mandatory safeguarding training	Update: 76.6% of all Council staff have now completed the Safeguarding training. 67 workers have received the training in video form so far.	Timetable: This data is scrutinised at the Safeguarding Operational Group. The data is now also included in the performance challenge of every Department.
Number and percentage of school quality check visits	Update: Since January 2026, until the end of May 2026, 52 schools (55%) have received a quality monitoring visit. 13 other visits have been arranged for the summer term. This means that 65 schools (70%) will have received a monitoring visit in a term in two school terms from the calendar year. The remaining 29 schools will receive a visit in the 14 school weeks between September and December. The Service is on track to visit every school at least once in a calendar year. As well as the monitoring visits, the service holds additional support visits in response to requests or need.	Timetable: This is a measure that is reported regularly to the Education Performance Challenge arrangements.

Compliance with school safeguarding policies	Update: The Education Department provides a model policy for schools annually. The annual Safeguarding survey confirms that every school has adopted the model safeguarding policy. In addition, annual quality visits verify that the policy has been adopted and that it has not been changed.	Timetable: This is a measure that is reported regularly to the Education Performance Challenge arrangements.
% of staff completed training on sex offenders and grooming	Update: As a result of the delay to secure bilingual materials, the data will now be collected from September 2026 onwards.	Timetable: The intention is to start reporting on this data at the Board's meeting in October 2026.
Staff and members' confidence in the Council's Whistleblowing arrangements	Update: Further work is needed between April and July in order to raise awareness of the in-house arrangements.	Timetable: Aiming to start reporting on this measure to the Board in September 2026.

Outputs to date



The Council has added information about "grooming" to the safeguarding training that is presented to all schools.



We are now looking at how many staff have completed Safeguarding training as part of the performance monitoring arrangements of each Department.



The Cabinet has adopted a new Whistleblowing Policy for Council staff.



Appointed a Corporate Safeguarding Champion to raise awareness of safeguarding across the Council.



A new Education Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team was established in 2024.



The Education Safeguarding and Welfare Team visits each school once a year to check that the correct rules are being followed.



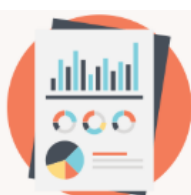
The capacity of the Education Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team was increased - 4 members of staff now work for the team.



A video has been produced to deliver safeguarding training to frontline staff.



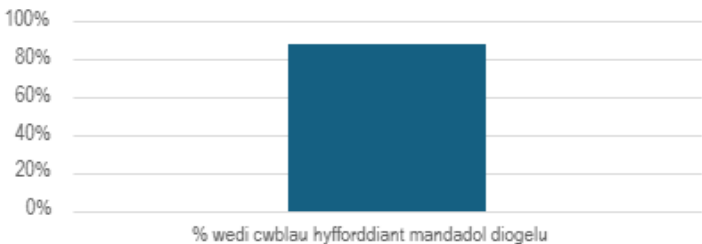
The Council has adopted a revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy.



The Scrutiny Investigation into safeguarding in schools has been completed. We will look at implementing its recommendations.

THEME 4 - GOVERNANCE Reporting Officer: Alison Halliday	
1. Theme Aim:	• Ensure that school governors understand their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe. • Ensure that systems are in place which measure the wider health and culture of schools.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; – Challenge and scrutinise the progress – Offer any further guidance on the next steps
3. Progress to date:	Governance Support Officer The Governance Support Officer has now commenced in her post and has familiarised with her new duties successfully. The officer has attended several meetings with similar officers on a regional and national basis, and has also created a questionnaire to gather the opinions of governing bodies about their confidence when carrying out their role as a critical friend and further training needs. Questionnaire for Gwynedd School Governors A questionnaire to measure the impact of training on the culture and confidence of members to act as a critical friend has been distributed. To date, we have received 23 responses, which is equivalent to 26% of our governing bodies. Early findings offer a useful insight into the running of bodies and has been the basis of creating a draft training programme to meet needs and empower our governing bodies from September 2026 onwards. Safeguarding Training for Governors Mandatory Safeguarding training for Chairs and Designated Safeguarding Governors who failed to attend during the year is held on 7 July. Training for Clerks Training was presented to clerks at the end of April 2026. 23 clerks attended the training which represents 46% of our governing bodies. Positive feedback was received from 19 clerks. We will hold the training again at the beginning of September 2026. We intend to establish a Clerks Forum to meet every term and regularly share good practice. Governance Review - Welsh Government The Education Department has offered comments formally to the review. A Welsh Government representative will attend the Gwynedd Governors Forum on 8 July to gather opinions and input on the governance challenges of smaller and rural schools.
4. Challenges faced:	• Dependence - awaiting further guidance from the Welsh Government following its review of governance arrangements within schools. • Lack of representation from every governing body on the clerking training. • The professional clerk post had been re-advertised due to a lack of interest.

5. Next steps / key milestones:	• Appoint a professional clerk to add capacity to the Governance Support Department and to ensure that we meet the demand for clerks from amongst our schools. By September 2026. • Analyse the data from the Governors Survey to report on the confidence of our Governing Bodies when carrying out their role as a Critical Friend at our meeting in September 2026. Use the findings to steer our training programme for Governors for 2026-27. • Draw up a comprehensive Training programme for Governing Bodies that ensures that new Chairs and Vice-chairs complete mandatory training within statutory deadlines, namely 6 months from commencing in their role. • Establish a Clerks Forum to ensure that regular training is offered to clerks and an opportunity to regularly share good practice. September 2026 onwards • Establish a Chairs Forum to share regular updates about specific aspects e.g. policies.																																
6. Risks / Resources:	Risk • Adapt the Authority's arrangements in terms of excessive governance before receiving national guidance following the review. • Failure to appoint to the role of professional clerk and, as a result, failure to meet the needs and requirements of schools for a clerk from September onwards. • Overload our governors with training. It must be ensured that our training programme has been rationalised over time.																																
7. Communication Considerations:	• Any change in our expectations will need to be communicated clearly and unambiguously so that the Chair and governors understand that there is a deadline to complete any mandatory training.																																
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% of school governing bodies reporting that all members have completed mandatory training	Diogelu - % Llywodraethwyr Gwynedd wedi cwblhau'r hyfforddiant mandadol diogelu  The chart is a bar graph with a vertical axis labeled from 0% to 100% in increments of 20%. A single blue bar extends to the 100% mark. Below the bar, the text reads '% wedi cwblhau hyfforddiant mandadol diogelu'.	Timetable: Reported Annually - This information is collected during the Autumn Term by means of the Annual Safeguarding Questionnaire.
The Governing Body's confidence in their ability to be a Critical Friend of the school.	Update: To be introduced in September 2026.	Timetable: Information being collected before the end of the summer term in order to be able to report to the Board at the beginning of the new term (September 2026).
Outputs to date		
 A new Governor's Handbook has been created and shared with all Gwynedd School Governors.	 A new Officer has been appointed to support School Governors.	 A training program for clerks is available to all School Governing bodies.

THEME 5 - RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES	
Reporting Officer: Llion Williams	
1. Theme Aim:	Evaluate the early intervention training policy and structure and update guidance to schools about filming physical intervention.
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	An external company has been commissioned to: - Evaluate the current policy against national guidelines - Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the policy. - Recommend practical improvement steps which ensure full compliance and integrate restorative approaches and conversations. - Recommend clear implementation arrangements with roles, accountability and restorative approach embedded in daily practice. - Evaluate the training plan for staff in policy requirements and restorative conversations. - Establish clear reporting arrangements for incidents, concerns and outcomes of restorative conversations. The findings of the external evaluation noted: The review confirms that the Authority has a sound policy basis, based on the principles of human rights, prevention and a pupil-focused approach. The current model policy corresponds appropriately with the Reducing Restrictive Practices Framework (Wales, 2022), and effectively reflects the statutory duties noted in relevant legislation. However, although the policy basis is strong, the review reaches a consistent conclusion, namely: - that the lack of operational system development, monitoring and evaluation limits the effectiveness of the existing arrangements. - This identifies the need to shift the strategic focus from further policy development to strengthening the system of implementation and accountability that underpins its operation. Legislative Framework and Policy Current arrangements include several substantial strengths, including: - clear commitment to human rights principles, dignity and well-being of pupils - strong emphasis on prevention, de-escalation and early intervention - firm understanding of the legal framework regarding the use of reasonable force The reviews have noted several key gaps that hinder effectiveness: Governance; Roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms are not clearly defined across the system. Using Data; Although data is gathered, it is not analysed or used systematically to steer strategic decisions. Consistency of Practice; There is variation between schools in terms of interpreting and implementing the policy. Training; There is no authority-wide framework to ensure continued competence or to monitor training. Quality of Recording; There is a lack of clarity in some records regarding the rationale and risk of harm that justifies the use of force.

	Action: The evidence shows that the matters highlighted mainly involve the implementation of systems rather than shortcomings in the policy itself. Practically, this means that the strategic challenge includes: • shifting from a policy-focused approach to an implementation-focused approach • converting theoretical principles into regular and measurable practice • ensuring that every school operates within general and consistent expectations The strategic response seeks to establish an integrated system of implementation that enables the Education Department to monitor, challenge and improve practice in a systematic manner. Action Areas: • Governance and Supervision A clear Governance structure will be established that defines roles and responsibilities on a School, Authority and Strategic level. • Using Data A central data system has been developed to enable the Education Department to collect and analyse information from each School in a consistent manner to be able to identify patterns and trends, identify inconsistencies between Schools and target training and support and any further preventive work. A working group has been established which includes representation from the Safeguarding, Health and Safety and Inclusion Team to analyse and evaluate the reports on a monthly basis. In addition to the early intervention data, cross-referencing will occur with Health and Safety reports and school exclusions. • Amending the Policy The current policy will be updated to strengthen operational elements, including: ○ clarity on Governance and monitoring pathways ○ specific requirements for logic and risk recording ○ clear guidance on thresholds for intervention specific guidance on recording (including prohibiting the use of personal devices) • Workforce Training and Development An Education Department training strategy will be established, based on a three-level model: ○ awareness level for each staff member ○ practice level for key staff ○ specialist level for leaders and trainers An action plan has been drawn up by the working group with clear actions, outcomes, completion timetable and responsibilities with the principle of implementing in three steps: Short Term: amending policy, establishing Governance structures Medium Term: developing a data system and implementing training Long Term: evaluating impact and ensuring consistency across the Authority
4. Challenges faced:	• A slippage in the timetable to complete the external evaluation has led to the extension of the implementation timetable. • The need to report on incidents via the HS11 system and to the Education Department is a risk that one report is submitted instead of two. Reporting

	requirements and method for the Education Department has been mitigated to respond to this.																														
5. Next steps / key milestones:	- Establish an action plan following the evaluation - March 2026 - Establish and implement monitoring and compliance with policy procedure - March 2026 - Review the training strategy and plan - Operational by September 2026. - Strengthen the reporting and monitoring of school reports data arrangements - June 2026																														
6. Risks / Resources:	Schools' continuous compliance - Monitoring system established to respond to this																														
7. Communication Considerations:	-																														
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% of school staff completing training on restrictive practices	Update: Over 300 staff in 85 Gwynedd schools have received training over the past 3 years. This includes refresher training. The training programme is being managed and monitored by the inclusion team. Currently, training is being held on the grounds of need, applications or recommendations by the inclusion service. It is expected that this procedure will be refined following the findings of the evaluation. Further work needs to be completed in order to collect the data more effectively. The new training strategy will be operational from September 2026 onwards. In addition, it will be included in the annual safeguarding training and Safeguarding Designated Person (Group C) training.		Timetable: Refine the collection arrangements following the evaluation by the external company September 2026																												

% of schools complying with the restrictive practice model policy.	Update: Every school that has responded to the annual safeguarding questionnaire (October 2025) confirm that they have adopted the lead policy of the Education Department. During the new cycle of Safeguarding quality visits, the 62 schools (66% of Gwynedd schools have received a visit so far) confirm that they have adopted and that they comply with the Education Department's lead policy (100%). The Safeguarding Quality Visits verify that the school has adopted the Education Department's model policy and a discussion is held about implementation and compliance. It will be possible to report on this data when the new reporting method is implemented in September 2026	Timetable: Data being collected through the annual safeguarding questionnaire / visits of the Safeguarding and Welfare Team and the reporting system.
Reporting on the following two measures in performance challenge meetings: - Number of reports of use of restrictive practices by schools. - % of reports that have received the child's voice as part of the report	Update: As part of the response strategy, a system has been established for the Safeguarding, Health and Safety Team and the Inclusion Team to evaluate reports on a monthly basis. This data will be reported to the Assistant Head of Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion and then discussed at the Education Management Team meetings.	Timetable: Operational from September 2026 onwards

Outputs to date



The standard **Restrictive Practices Policy** has been adopted by all schools in Gwynedd.



An **independent review of restrictive practices** has been completed, with some recommendations identified

THEME 6 - CRISIS PLANNING AND CRISIS RESPONSE																								
Reporting Officer: Catrin Love																								
1. Theme Aim:	Ensure that a clear, strategic and co-ordinated plan is in place in an emergency																							
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.																							
3. Progress to date:	A final (operational) Crisis Plan is in place. This follows a consultation with a group of School Headteachers and Trade Unions to include Education Unions. All comments have been incorporated. The Plan is ready to be shared and communicated with schools and governors with a plan in place to do so at the beginning of September. This is in order to reach new Headteachers/new Chairs of Governors at the start of the new term rather than at the end of this term when there is a natural turnover. Work is being undertaken to review our strategic arrangements to correspond with this to ensure that all elements have been included within the Strategic Emergency Plan that already exists.																							
4. Challenges faced:																								
5. Next steps / key milestones:	- Present the Plan to schools in September and then consult with school Headteachers on the exact level of support they will need. - As a minimum, this is likely to include a series of workshops with school leaders. - Engage with chairs of Governors (via the Chairs forum) to present the Plan and ensure that all bodies are aware of the Plan's importance. - Ensure that arrangements fit into wider monitoring arrangements in moving forward e.g. annual safeguarding questionnaire along with health and safety site checks etc.																							
6. Risks / Resources:	Additional resource approved and arrangements underway for appointment to temporary post																							
7. Communication Considerations:																								
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Measures (Impact)		
Number of schools / staff / Governors in each school who have received Emergency / Crisis Plan training.	Timetable: Training to be scheduled Training expected in September 2026	Update: Reporting on this continues to be premature as there is a need to update and consult on the Plan before putting appropriate training in place.
Number of satisfactory emergency plans on the Council's sites	Timetable: A programme of annual inspections to commence from September 2026.	Update: Reporting on this continues to be premature as there is a need to offer appropriate training and for it to be in place before establishing a monitoring programme.
Outputs to date		
 There is an agreement to collaborate with the Police in an emergency. This may involve a social worker being seconded to work with the Police for a period of time.		

Our Bravery Brought Justice - Cyngor Gwynedd's Response Plan

Progress Report

15.07.2026

Theme 7 - Ysgol Friars Reporting Officer: Margaret Davies	
1. Theme Aim:	Supporting Ysgol Friars
2. Guidance sought from the Board:	We ask the Board to; - Challenge and scrutinise the progress - Offer any further guidance on the next steps.
3. Progress to date:	Review the Governing Body's ability to implement the recommendations that will result from the CPR, realistically assessing what steps are beyond its capacity. - Governance arrangements for wellbeing and safeguarding continue to strengthen. Governors demonstrate confidence in evaluating the wellbeing and safeguarding report, and a structured programme of support and challenge meetings between the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) and the Safeguarding Governor takes place each term. There is clear evidence of a developing data pack, shaped in response to governor feedback—for example, termly attendance comparisons—which is improving the quality of strategic oversight. - The termly report to GB continues to provide governors with data in relation to safeguarding referrals, child protection and looked after children - The school has established a wellbeing sub-committee that meets regularly to share information on high level data, patterns and actions/ responses school is taking on concerns - The governing body scrutinises the safeguarding policies prior to ratification at full GB meeting. These are ratified annually. - The school is working closely with local authority named safeguarding officers and an external specialist. The local authority is supporting the Governors as they develop their critical friend role. - Safeguarding SER is now completed annually and presented to full Governing Body - The governing body have been briefed on the potential recommendations from the Child Practice Review and will be working closely with school leaders to ensure that all recommendations pertinent to school have been completed in a timely manner

	• The Authority's Safeguarding Officer continues to attend the governing body and Wellbeing and Safeguarding sub-committee to provide constructive support and challenge, and ensure regular feedback to the Authority regarding progress against the recommendations, and strengthen the working relationship between the school and the Authority. • The Safeguarding Lead meets with the Head/Designated Safeguarding Lead every three weeks and attends Governing Body meetings. Strengthen training and support for governors in the areas of safeguarding, strategic accountability, and performance monitoring. • All governors have completed the NSPCC training, • A special meeting of the Governing Body was held on 1 December to focus on Safeguarding as follows: ○ Self-evaluation form for Safeguarding and Child Protection – Estyn ○ Local Authority Audit ○ Comfortable Environment Protocol: Pre and Post Bereavement Support Protocol for Ysgol Friars Pupils ○ Safeguarding Training - Staff and Governors ○ Programme Board - Child Practice Review Outcome ○ Role and responsibilities of the Well-being and Safeguarding Sub-Committee • The termly report to GB continues to provide governors with data in relation to safeguarding referrals, child protection and looked after children Support the interim Headteacher, Deputy and the two new Assistant Headteachers as they develop as a strong management team. • The SIA visited during the CPR publication and in preparation for the Estyn inspection. SIA continues to visit as needed during the year to discuss improvements to the school. • 'Safe space' - half termly sessions have been arranged for all members of the leadership team by 'trauma informed schools'. • There is monthly supervision of the Designated Person by an independent consultant to support pressure on DSP at this time. • Cross-School collaboration – the school is continuing to work the A55 alliance which focus on literacy skills, and also with Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen, Ysgol Brynrefail and Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen in relation to the Gwynedd. A formal agreement has been developed between four schools and the first focus is inclusion.
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	Support the recruitment and transition to a permanent Headteacher during 2026, reassuring staff and parents that robust arrangements are in place Cyngor Gwynedd • Permanent Headteacher appointed for 1 September 2026 start. Strengthen middle leadership and ensure that school management processes are operational and transparent. • Link Governors have been appointed and ‘School Guidance for Supportive Visits by Governors’ has been adopted by the Governing Body. Meetings have taken place with the faculties and are ongoing. General overview record form following a supportive visit to the school by a member of the Governing Body is sent to the Headteacher and Head of Faculty. • A first round of quality assurance has been completed, and a report of whole school-findings has been presented to the Governing Body. Whole school areas for further improvement have been included in the Schools Development Plan. • The Governing Body has adopted the PDR Policy. There has been a pause in national leadership development programmes this year, but they will be starting in September. The PL needs of staff currently being collated following their initial PDR meetings. Pupil Voice • Leaders and governors place a high value on pupil voice, and this commitment is increasingly evident in the school’s developing structures and processes. A designated governor now attends school council meetings regularly, providing an effective link between pupils and the governing body and ensuring that learners’ perspectives inform strategic discussions. Head pupils meet routinely with the headteacher to raise important issues, and this dialogue is beginning to shape aspects of school development in a meaningful way. As a result, pupils feel that their views are listened to and that they can influence change within the school. However, leaders recognise that pupil voice is stronger at whole-school level than within tutor groups and year groups, where opportunities for consultation and participation remain inconsistent. Strengthening these layers of pupil voice, alongside establishing purposeful sub-committees to support the wide-ranging work of the school council, is therefore a clear next step. Initial training planned with the Children’s Commissioner for Wales is a timely and positive development that is expected to further enhance pupils’ confidence, advocacy skills, and the overall impact of pupil voice across the school community.
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Review and strengthen counselling and emotional support arrangements, ensuring sustainable and high quality provision for children and young people.

Wellbeing centre

The School Based Counselling (SBC) team is based in the Wellbeing centre and offers:

- An opportunity to speak to an independent person
- Help to deal with emotional problems
- Help to develop self-awareness
- Help to understand and deal with negative emotions
- A source of personal empowerment and resourcefulness

There are currently 5 school-based counsellors, and a total of 60 students have been referred during the period 31.01.26 – 06.07.26.

- KS3-40 students
- KS4-12 students
- KS5- 8 students

During the exam period there have been drop in sessions available after morning exam sessions for students who require additional support.

Meetings with the school based counselling team

The Schools Safeguarding officer is the link between the service and school. A phone has been installed in the wellbeing centre so that absences can be communicated and there will be a check in with students to determine reason of absence by the Safeguarding officer. Actions since last report:

- Self-referral process
- GCSE and AS/A level key dates for counsellor to be on site.
- Exam student check in sessions for students after exams.
- Continued dialogue about the services that can be offered apart from 1-2-1 sessions.
- DSP to continue to promote the Counselling Service during year group morning assembly.
- Feedback from SBC Team meeting shared.

The rooms in the wellbeing centre are used regularly by a number of additional support services as follows:

The School Nursing Service is based in the Centre and offers support and advice to children, young people and their families or carers to help ensure that they reach their full potential during their school aged years and beyond. Confidential advice and support can be offered for a wide range of issues.

Be' Di'r Sgôr - The Gwynedd and Anglesey Young People's Drug and Alcohol Abuse Service. The service is available to any young person up to the age of 25 who is or has been affected by drugs or alcohol, directly or through someone else. They work

	confidentially with young people to offer one to one support and advice, drop-in sessions in the community, education and prevention resources, and Guidance for families and professionals. Two members of the team have set up a weekly clinic at Ysgol Friars. This work includes: • Holding targeted one to one or group sessions with pupils • Offering advice and support sessions to staff, if it is useful Development of CAMHS Hub This has developed into fortnightly meetings focusing on a multi-agency approach to supporting young people. This is early intervention prevention and promotion services to identify mental health difficulties, refer and intervene early within the school environment. The attendees to the hub can be any of the following: • Pastoral staff • ALNCO • Heads of year • Family engagement workers • Educational welfare officers • School nursing • Youth service School counselling service are also now invited to join these meetings. Action for Children have attended all CAMHS hub meetings and this has led to several referrals to support some of our young carers at Ysgol Friars. The development of the CAMHS hub has led to further conversations about supporting mental health within the pastoral team. CAMHS early intervention team have offered MHFA (Mental Health First Aid) training for all of the pastoral team and this has taken place during July. <u>Multi-agency work- Supporting attendance</u> - The wellbeing centre is also being used to support students in returning to school following lengthy periods of absence. Agencies who are supporting students with long term absences have started to schedule sessions in the wellbeing centre to bridge the gap between home and school. This is currently taking place with two student in Year 9 who have not attending school this academic year. The wellbeing centre is also used for meetings with social workers, support workers, police interviews and parent meetings. New services using the wellbeing centre: Intuitive Thinking The aim is to provide credible skills which enable people to become truly independent. The service “empower people through education to take back control of their lives”, using a unique
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	approach to developing knowledge and thinking tools. They see people's lived experience as an asset, a place where people draw experience, knowledge, strength and skills and properly redirected become highly resourceful problem solving tools. They work effectively across sectors including criminal justice, drugs and alcohol, employment, domestic abuse and homelessness. Communication and interaction team The team provides specialist advisory support and training for children and adults with speech, language, and social communication difficulties. The wellbeing centre is also used for meetings with social workers, support workers, police interviews and parent meetings. Support staff to build a culture of safety, trust and respect, providing additional training where necessary. Strengthening safeguarding and child protection processes at Ysgol Friars continues to be a priority, ensuring all adults understand and fulfil their responsibilities, and that pupils feel safe, supported and confident their voices are heard. Since 2023, the school reviewed its training model for safeguarding and child protection. In line with Gwynedd Council, the school is compliant with the Group A, B and C training. Specialist safeguarding training completed: - Group C compliant Safeguarding Training - Gwynedd DSP Training - HSB (Harmful Sexualised Behaviours) - Brook training delivered by Tim Emrallt - Adult at Risk Safeguarding Training (Introduction) - BCUHB WEST Child & Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH) School In-Reach Service - Youth Mental Health First Aid training - NSPCC training course Masterclass: Tackling misogyny We will continue to review this training model based on feedback from staff and local authority officers. The school have also commissioned an independent trainer to work closely with our designated safeguarding person to support, challenge and improve our safeguarding and child protection arrangements. This is an ongoing support Service for our DSP and safeguarding team on a monthly basis. The school maintains records and ensures that all staff are appropriately trained child protection and safeguarding, prevent and sexual violence. All staff are aware of different levels aware of
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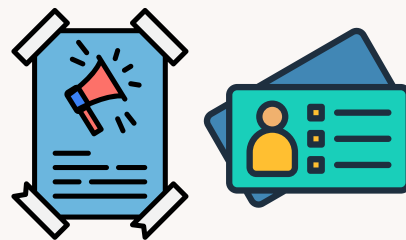
	children's needs and aware on how to respond to their needs in different situations. The school has moved towards a designated safeguarding team that can respond in an appropriate and timely manner to ensure that support is available at the time of need and referrals are made in a timely manner. As of June 2025, all new staff are provided with safeguarding training as part of their induction. This is facilitated by our designated safeguarding person. The local authority designated safeguarding lead meets with the school safeguarding team monthly to discuss trends and support. Training for safeguarding and child protection is a priority at Ysgol Friars. The school is compliant with the local authority policy in providing Group A and Group B training. Designated and deputy designated persons are trained to Group C. This team approach ensures that there are robust arrangements in place to provide guidance to staff and liaises with Gwynedd County Council to ensure that we are up-to-date and compliant. To carry out regular safeguarding audits and provide ongoing assurance to the Authority and the Programme Board. • Estyn's safeguarding self-evaluation and Gwynedd audit presented to governors. • A school audit is in place and feeds into the action plan. • LA safeguarding visit completed • Termly reports are presented to governors in relation to child protection / safeguarding and staff roles. Communication and Transparency • Parental communication remains an area for development. Plans for the creation of dedicated focus groups next term provide a clear route forward and offer the potential for more meaningful parental engagement in safeguarding and wellbeing conversations.
4. Challenges faced:	Continue to clerk the Governing Body until sustainable arrangements are in place. • The school has advertised numerous times for the role of the Clerk to the Governing Body but have been unsuccessful in appointing. Moving forward, the school has committed to the Local Authority's SLA for the provision of a Clerk to Governors service. Strengthen training and support for governors in the areas of safeguarding, strategic accountability, and performance monitoring.

	Waiting to hear how compulsory training will change nationally before detailing further in line with the findings of Welsh Government Review of School Governing Bodies.
5. Next steps / key milestones:	- To further embed pupil voice by working closely with the children's commissioner's team - To ensure that recommendations in our Estyn report are incorporated into whole school planning - To further develop our graduated response to social emotional and challenging behaviour
6. Risks / Resources:	Ensure that the role of the temporary additional Safeguarding Officer is effectively integrated, with a clear framework in terms of accountability and oversight.
7. Communication Considerations	Communication and Transparency Parental communication remains an area for development.
8. Timelines:	

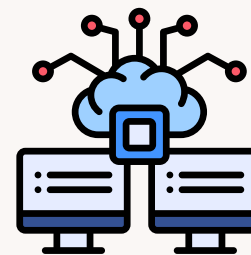
Voice of the Child



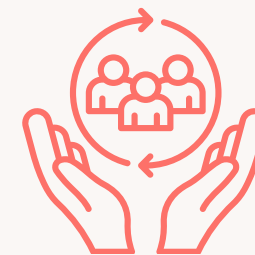
A social worker makes a proactive effort to hear the voice of every child subject to a Safeguarding Referral (Section 5)



All schools display information about an independent person that pupils can talk to if they have safeguarding concerns.



All schools have access to an electronic data management system so that changes in a child's behavior can be recorded.



The Council works together with partners in order to offer ongoing support to the victims.



The Council has developed a **Children's Voice Strategy**.



The Council now has a programme of work in place to **embed children's rights** across the Council.



A special role has been appointed to help develop the Gwynedd Youth Forum.



The Council has an **extra member of staff** to listen to more children and young people, including children in care and disabled children.

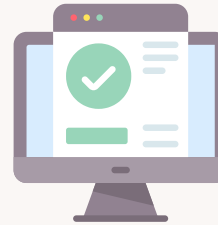
Part 5 Safeguarding Arrangements (Concerns about Practitioners and Those in a Position of Trust)



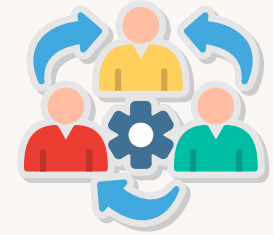
No safeguarding decisions are made by one employee alone.



Historical information and records are checked each time a Safeguarding Referral is made (Section 5).



The form for referring allegations of abuse is easier to find on the Council's website and on the Schools' "hub" website.



The Council, the Police and other services are now working better together to keep children and young people safe.



"Magic Notes" is being piloted to facilitate the recording of safeguarding meetings (Section 5).



The Quality Assurance Framework has been completed to help ensure the Children's Department works effectively and consistently.



We have appointed a Quality Assurance Manager to ensure that the correct procedures are followed in the Children's Department.



Managers from the Children's and Education Departments meet regularly to strengthen collaboration.

Corporate Arrangements, Policy and Training



We are now looking at **how many staff have completed Safeguarding training as part of the performance monitoring arrangements** of each Department.



Appointed a **Corporate Safeguarding Champion** to raise awareness of safeguarding across the Council.



A video has been produced to deliver **safeguarding training** to frontline staff.



The Council has adopted a revised **Corporate Safeguarding Policy**.



The Council has worked with the NSPCC to create **specific training on recognising the signs of grooming**.



The Council has adopted a **new Whistleblowing Guide** for Gwynedd Councillors.



The Cabinet has adopted a **new Whistleblowing Policy** for Council staff.



The Council has introduced **training on the Whistleblowing Policy** for all Gwynedd staff and Councillors.

What has changed so far following the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report?

September 2026

School Safeguarding and Wellbeing



A new **Education Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team** was established in 2024.



The **Education Safeguarding and Welfare Team** visits each school once a year to check that the correct rules are being followed.



The **capacity of the Education Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team** was increased in March 2026 - 4 members of staff now work for the team.



The **Scrutiny Investigation into safeguarding in schools** has been completed. We will look at implementing its recommendations.

Stabilising the School

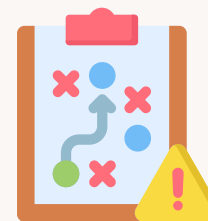


There is a **new Headteacher and Leadership Team** at Ysgol Friars.

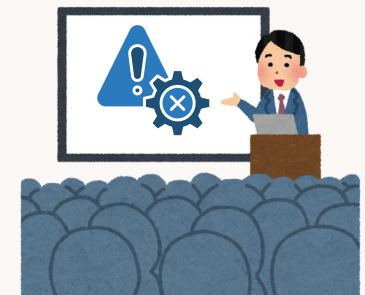
Crisis Plan



There is an **agreement to collaborate with the Police in an emergency**. This may involve a social worker being seconded to work with the Police for a period of time.



A new **School Emergency Plan** is now in place to help schools know what to do in an emergency.



The Council is providing an **Emergency Plan training workshop** for every school.

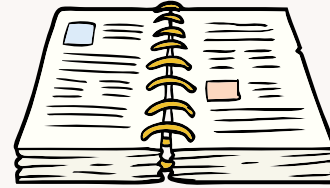
School Governance



A new **Officer** has been **appointed** to support School Governors.



Chairs and Governors with responsibility for safeguarding **receive additional training** to support them in their role.



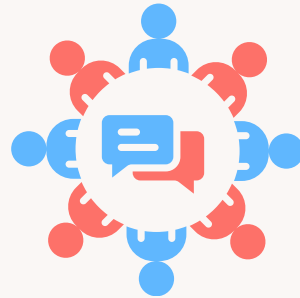
A new **Governor's Handbook** has been created and shared with all Gwynedd School Governors.



A **Professional Clerk** is now in place to support School Governors.



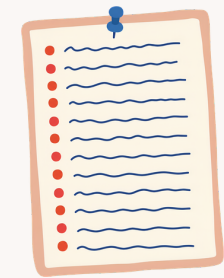
The Council is piloting GovernorHub to support School Governors by providing them with clear information about the **health and wellbeing** of their school.



Clerks' and Chairs' Forums have been established to share good practice and strengthen the support available.



Since September 2026, a **stronger training programme** has been in place for School Governors.



Each Governing Body now receives a **clear list of the important things** they should discuss regularly.

Arferion Cyfngol



The standard **Restrictive Practices Policy** has been adopted by all schools in Gwynedd.



An **independent review of restrictive practices** has been completed, with some recommendations identified



A group of officers from across the Council meets to **review and monitor cases where restrictive practices are used.**

QUARTERLY REPORT TO CABINET: RESPONSE PLAN PROGRAMME BOARD

PROFESSOR SALLY HOLLAND: CHAIR OF THE RESPONSE BOARD

DATE: 10th March 2026

Introduction

Since my last report to Cabinet in November 2025, the Response Plan Programme Board (“the Board”) has continued to meet and oversee progress in response to the Child Practice Review (‘Our Bravery Brought Justice’ report) and the wider Response Plan.

This report summarises key Board activity, developments, and oversight work since the last quarterly update.

Current Position

Strategic Phases of Work

Cyngor Gwynedd has undertaken the response work in two overlapping phases, and the Board’s discussions, scrutiny and advice has reflected this.

a. *Immediate Response to the Crimes and ‘Our Bravery Brought Justice’ Report Publication–*

The initial response plan and actions were primarily ameliorative including support for victims and survivors, supporting and stabilizing Ysgol Friars and improving policies, procedures and uptake of training.

The Board supported and scrutinized Cyngor Gwynedd through the period surrounding the CPR ‘Our Bravery Brought Justice’ report’s publication, with a focus on ensuring appropriate support for the victims and survivors of the crimes, and on assisting the Council in preparing for the publication and response planning.

b. *System-Wide Response and Monitoring –*

The CPR (‘Our Bravery Brought Justice’) report was published on 4 November, 2025 and this led to the biggest change to the Response Plan since its adoption. There has been a shift in emphasis towards a whole-system approach to ensure that measures to prevent harm are in place alongside suitable responses when harm may have occurred.

The Response Plan has been revamped to reflect the key recommendations and learning identified in the Our Bravery Brought Justice report including streamlining priorities and ensuring existing plans are fully integrated into the Response Plan.

The seven key themes are;

1. Voice of the Child and Supporting Victims
2. Managing Allegations and Concerns About Adults Working with Children

3. Training and Policies
4. School Governance
5. Restrictive Practices
6. Crisis Planning and Crisis Response
7. Supporting Ysgol Friars

A detailed work plan is circulated to members prior to the Response Board meetings and an overview report is also now included for each of the 7 themes with a 'theme leader' identified to strengthen accountability. Overview reports include updates on key milestones achieved since the previous meeting and priorities moving forwards including any dependencies, risks and resource issues.

Child-Centred Focus and Victim Engagement

A continued priority has been advancing child-centred approaches within the Response Plan activities. The Board has supported Cyngor Gwynedd in its efforts to further embed child-centred practice, and in my role as Chair I have worked with Jan Pickles who led the CPR review and SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) to explore ways to communicate with victims and seek their views on progress in a manner that is sensitive, meaningful, and respectful.

Children's Rights and Participation

The Board has also engaged with efforts to strengthen children's rights and participation across the local authority. A children's rights training day was held on 2 February, bringing together young people, Cabinet members, directors, heads of department and other staff. The event focused on how children's rights can be integrated into Council policy. In addition to ensuring that everyone present had a shared understanding of children's rights, and local authority's duties to uphold them, the session included discussion about using Children's Rights Impact Assessments and the development of a participation strategy. I am grateful to officers from the Children's Commissioner for Wales office for working with me to plan and lead the session.

I was encouraged by the draft children's participation strategy that was shared at the last Board meeting, and I look forward to seeing it implemented in Cyngor Gwynedd.

Board members welcomed the energy and commitment shown by all participants at the training day to drive forward these endeavours. Further work will be required to ensure that this approach is embedded into the processes and culture of Cyngor Gwynedd.

Examples of how this might be done include;

- Development and implementation of the Voice of the Child Strategy
- Further development of the Youth Forum and their involvement in policy and service-development in Cyngor Gwynedd

- Involving the youth forum with the work of the response board, e.g. attending Board meetings to share the work they are doing; consideration for how Gwynedd might involve them and be accountable.
- Work on the principles (5 Principles of the Right Way Approach) that underpin a preventative and foundational approach to safeguarding to create the conditions for children in Gwynedd to thrive.

Scrutiny and Assurance

Welsh Government

The Welsh Government has established a Ministerial Assurance Board following the publication of 'Our Bravery Brought Justice'. The Response Board does not have formal governance links with the Ministerial Board, but as Chair I attended the January meeting of the Board to update Ministers on the continuing work of the Response Board.

Joint safeguarding inspection by Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales

This report was published in January 2026 and was shared with the Board. The recommendations from that report are included in the response plan, and therefore Cyngor Gwynedd's progress in meeting these will be available for scrutiny and advice by the Board.

Evolving Role of the Board

In my view, during the last few months the Board's role has continued to mature in terms of scrutiny. While continuing to provide advice and support to Cyngor Gwynedd, the Board has increasingly exercised a robust scrutiny function. The Chair notes that internal members and elected members of the Board are taking a stronger lead in scrutiny activity, complementing the valuable contribution of external Board members.

Triangulating Insight and Engagement

To strengthen understanding of progress beyond formal Board meetings, the Chair has implemented structured triangulation activities, including:

- Quarterly bilateral meetings with external Board members and individual Cabinet members to review progress and agree key priorities.
- Engagement with key informants outside the Board, including representatives from SARC, RASASC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre), and Ysgol Friars leadership (including the Headteacher / Chair of Governors), to ensure diverse perspectives on system changes.

These activities enhance assurance about progress and support the Chair's oversight role.

Measuring Impact

Work to develop and refine rights-based impact measures continues. The Board emphasises the importance of tracking meaningful indicators of progress, including training completion rates, qualitative conversations with young people, parents, and staff, routine surveys and

other outcome measures. At the most recent Board a new set of outcome measures was presented to align with the new work programme.

Transparency and Governance

In line with the Board's commitment to transparency and accountability, Board minutes and papers will be published routinely.

Next Steps

As the Board moves into the next quarter, it will:

- Continue to review and advise on the implementation of the Response Plan and relevant priorities arising from the CPR.
- Support further embedding of safeguarding improvements across services.
- Maintain robust scrutiny of progress through enhanced triangulation and engagement.
- Continue work with partners to embed rights, participation, and impact measurement in a sustainable way.

The Board continues to review how long it should continue as a separate entity. This has also been discussed with the Welsh Government Ministerial Assurance Board. Current plans are for the Board to continue until the summer of 2026, with a further review at that point.

Closing Remarks

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the commitment shown by Board members during what has been a complex and sensitive period of work. Attendance and participation continues at a high level. The Board recognises that strengthening safeguarding arrangements and embedding a child-centred, rights-based approach across a whole system takes time, sustained leadership, and requires careful scrutiny. I am encouraged by much of the progress being made and the willingness to learn and adapt. The Programme is ambitious and will continue to demand senior staff time and other resources to be successful. The Board will continue to provide constructive support and robust oversight to Cabinet as this work progresses, with a continued focus on impact, transparency, and the lived experiences of children and young people.

Professor Sally Holland

Chair of the Response Plan Programme Board

23/02/26

QUARTERLY REPORT TO CABINET: RESPONSE PLAN PROGRAMME BOARD

PROFESSOR SALLY HOLLAND: CHAIR OF THE RESPONSE BOARD

DATE: 7th July 2026

Introduction

Since my last report to Cabinet in March 2026, the Response Plan Programme Board has continued to oversee the Council's response to the recommendations arising from the Child Practice Review, *Our Bravery Brought Justice*, and the wider Response Plan.

This report summarises the key developments and progress made during the last quarter.

Current Position

Work continues across all areas of the Response Plan against the seven key themes:

1. Voice of the Child and Supporting Victims
2. Managing Allegations and Concerns About Adults Working with Children
3. Training and Policies
4. School Governance
5. Restrictive Practices
6. Crisis Planning and Crisis Response
7. Supporting Ysgol Friars

Detailed progress reports are presented to the Board by the theme leads, highlighting achievements, priorities, risks and challenges, dependencies and resource implications. Board members have welcomed the improved reporting arrangements, noting that they provide greater clarity regarding progress, measures and outcomes.

This quarter's developments have included:

Estyn Inspection of Ysgol Friars

The recent Estyn inspection outcome for Ysgol Friars, has been shared with the Board. It was encouraging to note the recognition of the progress made since the appointment of Headteacher Margaret Davies in April 2025. Whilst the report identified areas requiring further attention, improvements were noted in safeguarding arrangements, leadership and school governance. This report provides an important external view to supplement the internal reports about the school's progress that the Board has previously received.

Voice of the Child

The Voice of the Child Strategy has been developed and updated following feedback from Board members. Supporting appendices are currently being finalised, with engagement planned with the Children and Young People's Forum, Education Strategic Groups and the Gwynedd Governors Forum following the GCSE examination period.

I have sought assurance that the voices of children and young people are being captured from a sufficiently broad range of groups and experiences. In particular, I was keen to understand how the Council engages with young carers, disabled children, care-experienced children, homeless young people and other groups whose voices may not always be routinely heard. I was encouraged to learn that Cyngor Gwynedd is recruiting a dedicated Engagement and Participation Officer to help strengthen this work.

This work marks an important step in Gwynedd's ambition to become a Child-friendly County, following a framework set out by UNICEF. This proactive and longer-term approach marks a transition from responding to immediate gaps, following the Our Bravery Brought Justice process, towards a long-term, preventative approach.

Safeguarding Awareness and Training

Further work has been undertaken to strengthen safeguarding awareness across the workforce. A new safeguarding awareness video has been developed to improve accessibility, particularly for staff who do not routinely access Council systems. Whilst the Board welcome these developments, the focus must now be on impact. It is important that these initiatives lead not only to improved completion rates but also to a greater understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and how concerns should be recognised and reported in practice. Additionally, staff must feel confident that their concerns will be taken seriously.

Crisis Planning

Progress continues on the development of crisis planning arrangements for schools. I have been encouraged by the engagement with headteachers throughout this process, who have provided appropriate challenge and constructive suggestions for improvements. This has helped to ensure that arrangements are informed by operational experience and are practical for schools to implement. As this work progresses, it will be important to ensure that plans are well understood, tested and embedded.

Public Accountability and Transparency

I welcome the development of a public-facing website, a child and family-friendly summary document, and supporting infographics outlining both the progress made to date and the

areas where further work remains ongoing. These resources should help improve transparency and understanding amongst residents, stakeholders and survivors.

I am also pleased that the Board's Terms of Reference have been revised and that Board papers are now published following each meeting. This is an important step in strengthening openness and public accountability.

Prioritisation of Activity

The Board has reviewed a revised prioritisation framework for the Response Plan. Given the scale of activity underway, the introduction of a clearer approach to prioritisation is welcomed. Whilst all actions remain important, the framework should help ensure that attention, capacity and resources remain focused on those areas presenting the greatest risk and requiring the most urgent action.

In March, a budget of approximately £600k was approved to support the workstreams under the Programme Board. I welcome this allocation, which provides a clear resource commitment to support delivery and help progress the programme at pace. The focus now will be on ensuring that the funding is used effectively to support the priorities across all work areas.

Scrutiny and Assurance

Outcome Measures

Work continues to develop and refine impact measures. The Board has reiterated the importance of focusing on meaningful indicators of progress, including qualitative feedback from children and young people. While a significant amount of work has been undertaken to develop policies, frameworks and procedures, the Board continues to emphasise the need to move beyond a compliance approach. The adoption of policy should be seen as the starting point rather than the end point. The key priority now is to understand the real impact of these changes on workforce practice, organisational culture and, most importantly, the safety and wellbeing of children. Some outcome measures are beginning to be presented to the Board, and the Board members are keen to see more of these in the coming months.

Quality Assurance Framework

The Quality Assurance Framework for children's services has been completed and presented to the Board. I am encouraged to see this important piece of work now in place. It sets out the vision, values and expectations for quality assurance activity across the service, including responsibilities, learning arrangements, supervision requirements and mechanisms for continuous improvement.

The focus now needs to shift to ensuring it is effectively communicated across the workforce and embedded in day-to-day practice, so that the intended improvements are realised in practice rather than remaining at a procedural level.

Welsh Government Assurance Group

As previously noted, the Welsh Government has established a separate Ministerial Assurance Board following the publication of *Our Bravery Brought Justice*. Following the Senedd election, there is currently some uncertainty regarding timelines and future engagement, as new Ministers establish their priorities and working arrangements. At this stage, the longer-term position of this group remains unclear, although further clarity is expected to emerge as the new administration becomes established.

Welsh Government representatives in the Board have provided updates on the ongoing national reviews of safeguarding governance and of school governing bodies. The findings of these are expected to have implications for all local authorities and regional safeguarding boards.

Next Steps

As the Board moves into the next quarter, it will:

- Continue to review and advise on the implementation of the Response Plan and relevant priorities arising from the CPR.
- Continue work on impact measurement, ensuring this is developed in a proportionate and sustainable way.
- Keep under review the Board's ongoing role and lifespan as a separate entity, including how this aligns with wider Council governance and scrutiny arrangements. This was discussed with the Welsh Government Ministerial Assurance Board prior to the election. Future arrangements will now need to be considered with the new Government.

Closing Remarks

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the commitment shown by Board members during what has been a period of continued development and growing maturity in the Board's arrangements. There has been significant work to strengthen reporting, and I would also commend the contribution of theme leads for their ongoing work in developing and delivering the programme areas. External members and elected members have continued to provide constructive scrutiny, challenge and supportive advice throughout.

As the Board moves into its next phase, there will need to be a stronger focus on measuring impact and ensuring that changes are properly embedded in practice. As part of this, it will also be important to continue to consider the Board's longer-term role, ensuring arrangements remain proportionate and aligned with wider governance structures. In addition, the implications of the recent Senedd election will need to be kept under review as future governance and oversight arrangements develop under the new administration.

As a final remark, I wish to acknowledge the recent reporting of child abuse at Canolfan Brynffynnon up to its closure in 2014, together with the prolonged employment issues which followed. The Response Board does not have a role to investigate past events, but instead to focus on current and future safeguarding. Nonetheless, I acknowledge the continued impact of serious past safeguarding failings on the confidence of Gwynedd's children, parents, staff and wider population regarding the Cyngor's ability to safeguard children in education. This makes it even more necessary for the Cyngor to take clear and transparent steps to regain that confidence and to demonstrate not only policy changes but also changes in everyday practice and culture.

Professor Sally Holland

Chair of the Response Plan Programme Board

Progress on the Our Bravery Brought Justice recommendations August 2026

a) Recommendation to Cyngor Gwynedd

Ref / no	The recommendation of the report	Has the Council achieved what was required of us?	Any other matters or relevant barriers
Listen to the voice of the child			
7.	LA1 should consult with pupils to identify the best way to enable them to access an individual/service outside school to report concerns. Contact details should be prominently displayed in all schools.	Yes. The Council has implemented the recommendation by consulting with children and young people about their experience and their confidence in safeguarding arrangements. The Council has strengthened the visibility of safeguarding information in schools, ensuring that contact details and appropriate ways to raise concerns are shown clearly and are accessible for pupils.	

b) Recommendations for every organisation / every Local Authority

Ref / no	The recommendation of the report	Has the Council achieved what was required of us?	Any other matters or relevant barriers
Listen to the voice of the child			
1.	All organisations working with children must ensure that their policies in relation to listening to the voice of the child are revised, implemented in full and reflect what has been learned from this Review.	Yes. The Council has reviewed and strengthened its arrangements to ensure that the voice of the child steers decisions through the work of the Youth Forum and ensure the participation of children and young people across services. The Voice of the Child Strategy has been developed over the last year, and the Cabinet will be required to formally adopt it in the autumn. In terms of safeguarding, a social worker makes a proactive effort to listen to the voice of every child who is subject to a Part 5 safeguarding referral (see recommendation number 6)	-
2.	Organisations must be able to show evidence to their professional Board and Regulators that they have a process in place for listening to children and that it	Yes. The Council has embedded arrangements to listen to the voice of children and young people through formal participation structures, regular engagement through the	-

	is embedded and operational in the organisation.	Youth Forum, and governance arrangements that ensure that children's perspectives are considered when making decisions and are reported through the relevant accountability structures.	
3.	That all agencies ensure that their staff are trained to detect and record a change in a child's behaviour that may indicate that adults are grooming them and/or that they are being abused.	Yes. As a specific training pack on the subject did not already exist, the NSPCC was commissioned to develop a comprehensive training pack. The pack will be presented in two parts: firstly, a webinar to all Council staff to raise awareness of grooming; and secondly, more specialist sessions tailored to specific groups, including social workers and schools' designated safeguarding individuals. The training has started to be used, and the provision will be introduced to all Council staff over the coming months. This pack will also be available for other authorities to use or purchase, ensuring that the investment contributes to improving practice on a wider level.	An 'off the shelf' training pack did not exist, although we contacted several companies and organisations. Consequently, the NSPCC was commissioned to develop a comprehensive training pack. This has led to some delay in developing the pack. However, to ensure that school staff receive the necessary training in the meantime, we adapted the existing safeguarding training to address the main requirements and the key messages about grooming.

4.	In schools, these changes must be recorded on an electronic data management system.	Yes. Every school in Gwynedd now records on an electronic data management system.	-
5.	When a referral is made under Section 5 of the Safeguarding Procedures for Wales, all safeguarding information on the child's record on the data management system must be taken into account when assessing risk and vulnerability.	Yes. The internal recording form has been adapted so that it is a requirement for every agency present at Part 5 meetings to provide and record relevant background information and history.	-
6.	When a referral is made under Wales Safeguarding Procedures Section 5 and is third party, the child who is subject of the referral must be spoken to by children's social care, even where they have not made a disclosure themselves.	Yes. Cyngor Gwynedd has introduced these arrangements.	There were some challenges in implementing this procedure, including occasions where a parent refuses to give consent to speak to the child, and other occasions where the child themselves refuses to engage. In these cases, the child was only named as a witness or a potential witness, instead of an individual that the allegation related to directly. Should the allegation relate to abuse against the child itself, the Council would ensure that the voice and experience of that child were heard as part of the process.

9.	Local Authorities should show evidence of how they support and advocate for victims of trauma, on a case-by-case basis, where their ability to access education has been limited due to their experiences. This would include ensuring that victims have access to further and higher education, and the funding needed to do so, when the requirements for grades and attendance have not been met due to the trauma they have been through.	Yes. Cyngor Gwynedd has declared and offered support to any one impacted, offering a support pack to the school community's direct and indirect victims. The Council has also committed to facilitate access to the education of trauma victims when it is restricted due to their experiences and have done so in this specific case.	
Managing allegations and concerns about adults working with children - multi-agency response			
18.	That all members of staff, volunteers (including administrative and facilities officers) and school Governors receive training on sex offenders' modus operandi and their methods of grooming using the Finklehor model.	In progress. The "Finklehor model" and methods of grooming from sex offenders have been included in the new training that has been developed by the NSPCC. It will be available to all Council staff (including Governors and Elected Members). This will be provided to all staff over the coming months (see explanation of recommendation 3)	An 'off the shelf' training pack did not exist, although we contacted several companies and organisations. Consequently, the NSPCC was commissioned to develop a comprehensive training pack. This has led to some delay in developing the pack. However, to ensure that school staff receive the necessary training in the meantime, we adapted the existing safeguarding training to address the main requirements and the key messages about grooming.

c) Recommendations for the Regional Safeguarding Board

Ref / no	The recommendation of the report	Has the Council achieved what was required of us?	Any other matters or relevant barriers
Managing allegations and concerns about adults working with children - multi-agency response			
13.	Safeguarding Boards are assured that their area's LADO officers receive regular training and supervision.	Yes. The Safeguarding Board holds professional networks that focus on the Part 5 practice and procedures. Council officers attend and contribute to these to support ongoing improvements in practice and processes.	
14.	Safeguarding Boards receive and scrutinise Local Authority reports on managing allegations at least once a year, and that reporting of the allegations becomes part of the regulatory requirements of Estyn and CIW.	Yes. In accordance with the demand, the Council provides quarterly updates to the Regional Safeguarding Board, which includes information about activity, outcomes and trends that arise about Part 5 matters.	The Council will work with the Safeguarding Board, Estyn and CIW to respond to any further reporting requirements that could arise in the future.
The need for training - think the 'worst possible' and understand that 'it could happen here'			

19.	That assurances are given to Safeguarding Boards that this training [sex offenders and their methods of grooming modus operandi] is delivered to Local Authority Education, Children and Human Resources Services officers, who lead on managing concerns or responding to concerns about adults working with children.	In progress. The "Finklehor model" and methods of grooming from sex offenders have been included in the new training that has been developed by the NSPCC. It will be available to all Council staff (including Governors and Elected Members) This will be provided to all staff, including the officers of Education, Children and Human Resources Services, over the coming months (see explanation of recommendation 3)	An 'off the shelf' training pack did not exist, although we contacted several companies and organisations. Consequently, the NSPCC was commissioned to develop a comprehensive training pack. This has led to some delay in developing the pack. However, to ensure that school staff receive the necessary training in the meantime, we adapted the existing safeguarding training to address the main requirements and the key messages about grooming.
20.	That the Safeguarding Board is reassured that Local Authorities have clear Whistleblowing policies, and that attention is drawn to them and that all staff can use them safely.	Yes. Cyngor Gwynedd has adopted a whistleblowing policy in February 2026 and a comprehensive programme to promote amongst managers, team leaders and all staff.	The Council will continue to work with the Safeguarding Board to respond to any requirements about assurance or further reports that could arise in the future.

Ch) Recommendations to the Welsh Government

Ref / no	The recommendation of the report	Has the Council achieved what was required of us?	Any other matters or relevant barriers
Listen to the voice of the child			
8.	That the Welsh Government develops the curriculum to ensure pupils have the knowledge to understand grooming behaviour by adults and know how to report this safely to an adult.	No.	We cannot act until the curriculum has been adapted.
Managing allegations and concerns about adults working with children - multi-agency response			
10.	That the Welsh Government ensures that the review of Section 5 procedures is informed by this Review and takes into account what has been learnt from it.	Yes. Cyngor Gwynedd has introduced new procedures, but as a result of inconsistencies with OBBJ recommendations, the Council goes beyond what is set out in these procedures.	There are inconsistencies between the new Part 5 procedures and the OBBJ recommendations, and Cyngor Gwynedd has raised the issue with the Welsh Government.
11.	The revised procedures state that the voice of the child must be heard, even if the child has not made any disclosure.	Yes. Cyngor Gwynedd has introduced these arrangements.	

12.	That decisions about the threshold for using the procedures are required to be made in a multi-agency meeting and not by the LADO alone, and that previous concerns, complaints and allegations be taken into account.	Yes. Robust arrangements have been established with the Police to support the process, and multi-agency meetings are being held. Decisions are not made solely by one officer. The Council has invested in an additional Designated Officer for Safeguarding (DOS) to strengthen those arrangements.	Although Cyngor Gwynedd has amended its arrangements in accordance with OBBJ recommendations, the new national procedures for Part 5 do not reflect or fully address those changes. The new Guidelines state: <i>"the Local Authority's Designated Officer/Designated Officer for Safeguarding is responsible for receiving, responding to, making decisions and monitoring every report in relation to allegations against practitioners/individuals in a position of trust."</i> This is a cause for concern to the Council, because the procedures do not acknowledge or reflect the operational model that has been established locally following the OBBJ recommendations.
15.	That the Welsh Government considers requiring schools to develop an 'Adult Conduct of Concern Policy' (known as the 'Low-level Concerns Policy' in England), and consider providing guidance on safe working practices.	No For this to be effective, a national arrangement is required as OBBJ states.	We are awaiting guidance from the Welsh Government. Cyngor Gwynedd has consistently raised this issue through the Ministerial Assurance Group.

16.	The new Strategy (child abuse prevention 10-year strategy) is proven against the findings of this review and that any lessons learned are incorporated into the new strategy.	Yes. The strategy has been published and there is a Group of internal officers ensuring that the strategy's objectives are being implemented.	The new strategy has been published.
The need for training - think the 'worst possible' and understand that 'it could happen here'			
17.	That Welsh Government commissions a training resource based on the findings of this Review, for use by all schools in Wales. It should be adaptable so that other agencies working with children can use it.	No.	We are waiting for the Welsh Government to share the training.
School Governance in Wales			
21.	That the Welsh Government commences a review of governance arrangements in schools across Wales, that clearly outline the responsibilities of Governors to change from focusing primarily on financial management and outcomes to a situation where safeguarding, health and well-being are accepted as the appropriate foundation to learn and thrive.	Yes. The Council has taken many steps to strengthen the support available to schools' governing bodies. An additional Governors' Support Officer has been appointed, as well as a Professional Clerk, to provide more support, guidance and an appropriate challenge to governors in carrying out their responsibilities.	Cyngor Gwynedd raises the need for a review of school governance arrangements regularly with the Welsh Government. The review is underway. The Welsh Government is expected to publish the result of the review in the autumn.

		The Council has raised its concerns regarding the existing procedures with the Welsh Government and has called for a review of the arrangements, drawing attention to the challenges and the shortcomings noted during their implementation. In addition, a questionnaire has been distributed to each governing body to establish a baseline of their development needs and to note the fields where more support or training is required. The results of this work will steer a comprehensive training programme which will be introduced from September 2026 onwards.	
22.	That the Welsh Government commences a review of governance arrangements in schools across Wales, which supports the development and implementation of an easy-to-understand dashboard which provides simple information about the health and wider culture of the school.	Yes. The Council has set a clear expectation that every governing body follows a standing agenda as a basic requirement. This ensures that key matters, including safeguarding, health and well-being, are considered regularly and consistently, providing the minimum level of assurance and supervision across every school.	Cyngor Gwynedd raises the need for a review of school governance arrangements regularly with the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government is expected to publish the result of the review in the autumn.

		This guidance will be submitted annually as a point of order from now on. The Council has started to pilot a <i>Governor Hub</i> dashboard with 10 schools from September onwards. (An easy-to-understand dashboard to keep all the documentation and training of Governing Bodies in one accessible central place).	
23.	That the Welsh Government commences a review of governance arrangements in schools across Wales, asking the Governors to keep correct records about decisions made in relation to safeguarding matters and report on them to the Local Authority, especially when the decision made does not follow the Local Authority's guidelines.	Yes. Work has been done to improve the support and resources available to clerks, acknowledging their key role in ensuring that decisions and discussions are recorded correctly and comprehensively. The Council has appointed a central officer to act as a clerk in many schools when that support is required for specific schools. A programme of bespoke training has been introduced to clerks to strengthen their understanding of their role and responsibilities. A Clerks Forum will be established early in September to share good practices and provide ongoing support to every clerk.	Cyngor Gwynedd raises the need for a review of school governance arrangements regularly with the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government is expected to publish the result of the review in the autumn.

24.	That the Welsh Government undertakes a review of governance arrangements in schools across Wales, which ensures that the Designated Safeguarding Persons and their deputies are subject to external supervision by qualified Social Workers from the relevant local authority.	In progress. Funding has been allocated to strengthen the provision of support and supervision for Designated Safeguarding Individuals and their deputies. Currently, discussions are ongoing about the most suitable model to achieve this, considering options such as commissioning external provision.	Cyngor Gwynedd raises the need for a review of school governance arrangements regularly with the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government is expected to publish the result of the review in the autumn.
Restrictive Practices			
25.	That the Welsh Government publishes an appendix to the 2022 Framework guidance for reducing restrictive practices involving adults filming events and provides guidance on the retention period of such videos.	Yes, but awaiting guidance from the Welsh Government. It is a requirement for every school to adopt the relevant Regional Policy, and the Schools Safeguarding and Well-being Team are conducting regular checks and monitoring to ensure that these arrangements are implemented appropriately. In addition, the Council has commissioned an external review of the use of restrictive practices across schools, including reviewing policies, procedures and the training provided. The findings of this review will steer an action plan to further strengthen arrangements.	The Council is awaiting any further guidance or revisions from the Welsh Government.

Emergency Management			
26.	That the Welsh Government ensures that each Local Authority has a strategic serious incidents plan which sets out the procedures to be followed in order to respond in an immediate and collective multi-agency manner. a. That the plan includes arrangements for caring for the victim, protecting evidence and managing the alleged offender b. That the plan includes an official protocol for sharing information with other Local Authorities that may be affected c. That a strategic plan is in place to have easy-to-access on-site support for children and adults in institutions where there has been a significant traumatic incident d. In a serious incident such as this, consider moving a social worker to work on secondment with the Police investigations team to ensure that the evidence and information are considered from a safeguarding as well as a criminal perspective	Yes. An Emergency Response Plan has been developed in collaboration with schools to ensure a quick and coordinated response to serious incidents. In addition, the Council has extended its collaboration with regional partners through WASPI arrangements to strengthen information sharing protocols and ensure regular discussions with the Police and other partners. Positive discussions have also been held with the Police about the arrangements of working together in exceptional circumstances, including secondments or appropriate staffing arrangements if required.	

d) Recommendations for the Safeguarding Partners

Ref / no	The recommendation of the report	Has the Council achieved what was required of us?	Any other matters or relevant barriers
Recommendations for the Safeguarding Partners			
27.	That the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board a. Considers sharing anonymous CAMHS information with Local Authorities to note places with a high demand and thematic concerns b. Gives assurances to the Regional Child Safeguarding Board that professional health workers seek safeguarding advice when a child comes to an appointment with a third party, without parental consent	The recommendation does not ask for any actions from the Council at this time.	These are recommendations that have been specifically referred to the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. No actions have currently been requested by the Local Authority, but we would continue to monitor any developments or responses arising from these recommendations.

MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	8/10/2026
TITLE	The Youth Service's 5-Year Strategy
REASON TO SCRUTINISE	Council Plan 2023-28 - Gwynedd Yfory (Tomorrow's Gwynedd)
AUTHOR	Steffan Williams, Youth Service Manager
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Dewi Jones

1. Why it needs scrutiny?

- 1.1. This Strategy is part of a project to extend opportunities for play and socialising for the county's children and young people that has been included in the Council Plan.
- 1.2. All local authorities are required to draft a five-year strategic plan for their area. The main purpose of the strategic plan is to state the objectives in terms of youth work for that period. The objectives must be based on evidence of needs and represent the main focus areas to develop youth work over the plan's period.
- 1.3. Scrutiny of the draft strategy will be an opportunity for the Committee to give its input prior to the adoption of the Strategy.

2. What exactly needs scrutiny?

- 2.1. The forward scrutiny of the Strategy will allow the Committee to consider the content of the Youth Service's 5-Year Strategy and to offer observations.

3. Summary of the Key Matters

- 3.1. The Youth Service is included as one of the priorities of the Council Plan, under the Tomorrow's Gwynedd project - which includes the ambition to ensure that play areas and suitable facilities are available for children and young people in their leisure time.
- 3.2. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the content of the Youth Service's Five-year Strategy and to give guidance regarding the future work direction of the Youth Service.
- 3.3. The strategy notes several key strategic priorities, including:

- to promote the voice of young people and ensure that they can influence decisions;
 - support the mental health and well-being of young people;
 - early intervention to stop homelessness among young people;
 - extend opportunities to volunteer and participate;
 - ensure equitable access to youth work provision throughout the county.
- 3.4. The Strategy emphasises the importance of working in partnership across the agencies. This will build on the current joint working with schools, Council services, the third sector and regional and national organisations, with the aim of improving outcomes for young people.
- 3.5. The Strategy also includes clear arrangements to monitor and evaluate progress. Performance measurements and milestones will be used to assess any progress made and to ensure that the Service can respond to the changing needs of young people throughout the Strategy's period.

4. Background / Context

- 4.1. The five-year Youth Work Strategy has been developed in response to the changing needs of young people, social and economic changes, and the national expectations of the Welsh Government for youth work provision. The Strategy provides a framework for developing and directing Youth Work over the period 2027-2032.
- 4.2. A comprehensive process of engagement and consulting young people, schools, volunteer organisations, statutory partners and local stakeholders was undertaken to ensure that the Strategy's priorities reflect the needs and ambitions of the young people of Gwynedd.
- 4.3. The Strategy builds upon the strengths of the current provision that includes community youth work, provision in schools, targeted projects, volunteering opportunities, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and extensive partnership work across the county.
- 4.4. Seven strategic objectives have been noted for the period 2027-2032, focusing on the following areas:
- Support the mental health and well-being of young people,
 - Improve employability and develop skills,
 - Reduce inequalities and increase opportunities,
 - Strengthen community and volunteering opportunities,
 - Promote the voice and participation of young people,
 - Develop and maintain a skilful and sustainable workforce,
 - Promote and strengthen the use of Welsh in all aspects of the Service's work.
- 4.5. The Strategy supports the wider aims of the Council's Plan and national priorities for youth work, trying to ensure that every young person in

Gwynedd has access to support, opportunities and positive experiences that enable them to reach their potential.

5. Consultation

- 5.1. A comprehensive consultation programme was carried out with organisations and voluntary partners when developing the Strategy. The aim was to ensure that the Strategy reflected the needs of the young people of Gwynedd and took advantage of the expertise and experience of the organisations who work with them daily.
- 5.2. As part of the process, a series of consultation workshops were arranged in six locations across Gwynedd, namely Caernarfon, Bangor, Bala, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Pwllheli and Tywyn. A wide range of partners were invited, including voluntary organisations, youth work providers, community organisations, statutory partners and other stakeholders who work with young people aged between 11 and 25 years old.
- 5.3. The workshops were an opportunity to share information about *Youth Work in Wales: Delivering for Young People*, discussing and challenging some of the common myths about youth work, and providing a background to the process of developing of the new Strategy. The facilitation sessions afforded participants the opportunity to provide feedback, contribute ideas, discuss local challenges and identify priorities for the next strategic phase.
- 5.4. In addition to the workshops, the Gwynedd Youth Network was used as a platform to engage with partners and ensure that there were ongoing opportunities to contribute to the development of the Strategy. The responses received showed a strong consensus on many key priorities.

Partners emphasised the importance of ensuring equitable access to youth work opportunities throughout the county, including in rural communities. The need was also noted to strengthen collaboration between organisations, improve communication and information sharing, and increase opportunities for young people to participate in decisions that affect them.

- 5.5. The value of youth work as a medium to support health and well-being, develop skills, build resilience and promote community participation was highlighted. Attention was also drawn to the need to ensure that services and activities are inclusive and accessible to every young person, including those facing socio-economic, geographical or personal barriers.

- 5.6. The feedback gathered through the workshops and discussions with partners was used to inform the Strategy's priorities, objectives and actions. Consequently, the Strategy reflects the direct contribution of voluntary organisations and local partners and provides a strong foundation for continuous collaboration during its implementation period.

6. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 6.1. The Strategy builds upon the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by supporting personal development, learning and the participation of young people. By implementing the five ways of working, the Youth Service contributes positively to the seven well-being goals, helping to create healthier, more equitable, resilient and connected communities.
- 6.2. The Strategy adopts the long-term needs of young people, by focusing on developing skills, resilience and opportunities that enable young people to thrive in education, employment and community life. Service decisions and priorities are based on evidence, local and national data, together with input from partners and young people themselves.
- 6.3. Have you involved residents / service users? If not, when and how do you intend to consult them?

Young people, schools and stakeholders have contributed directly to the Strategy's development through a comprehensive programme of engagement, comprising local workshops, questionnaires, group discussions and forums such as 'Llais Pobl Ifanc'. This participatory method has ensured that views, experiences and the needs of young people have informed the priorities and the actions noted in the Strategy.

- 6.4. How have you considered the long term and what will people's needs be in years to come?

The Youth Service is also considering the long-term needs of young people by adopting a strategic method that focuses on developing skills, resilience and opportunities that prepare them for the future. The Service uses a wide range of evidence to inform its plans, including questionnaires, 'Llais Pobl Ifanc' forums, engagement with partners, performance data and information about social and economic trends.

By working with partners in education, employment, health (through SHRN findings) and support services, the Strategy seeks to ensure that young people receive appropriate support and resources to develop to become

confident, resilient and responsible adults. This method enables the Service to foresee and respond to changing needs over time, contributing to the long-term well-being of individuals and communities.

- 6.5. To ensure integration, have you considered the potential impact on other public bodies?

The Strategy supports and complements the aims of several services and partner organisations including schools, health services, social services, housing services, employability and third sector organisations. By strengthening collaboration arrangements, sharing information and coordinating activity, the Strategy contributes to providing more effective services and towards improving outcomes for young people throughout Gwynedd.

The Strategy places a strong emphasis on early intervention and prevention. The priorities noted in the Strategy include supporting mental health and well-being, reducing the risk of social isolation, preventing homelessness among young people, reducing the risk of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and developing personal and social skills.

By providing support, activities and positive opportunities early on, the Youth Service helps young people to develop the skills and resilience they need to overcome challenges. As well as improving individual outcomes, this preventative method contributes to reducing the long-term demand on statutory services.

7. Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-Economic Duty

- 7.1. In developing the Five-year Youth Work Strategy, consideration was given to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Reducing inequalities in access to youth work has been noted as one of the strategic aims of the Strategy. The Strategy is committed to ensuring that every young person, whatever their background or circumstances, can benefit from youth work opportunities and services. This includes young people with disabilities, additional learning needs, those who have been looked after, or those living in rural or communities that are at risk of being disadvantaged areas.
- 7.2. Full consideration has been given to the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 when developing the Strategy. Promoting and increasing the social use of Welsh among young people has been noted as one of strategic aims of the Strategy. The Youth Service will

continue to provide Welsh-medium and bilingual activities and services, creating opportunities for young people to use Welsh in community, social, cultural and volunteering activities.

- 7.3. Attention was given to the Socio-Economic Duty by ensuring that the Strategy prioritises support for young people who face socio-economic challenges, the risk of being NEET, or challenges such as homelessness. The Strategy includes actions to improve employability, develop skills, expanding community opportunities and ensuring access to services for those most in need.

By implementing the priorities noted in the Strategy, it is expected that this will contribute to creating more equal opportunities for young people throughout Gwynedd, promoting Welsh as a living language within communities, and reducing the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on life opportunities for young people in the long-term.

8. Next Steps

- 8.1. Following the scrutiny process and approval, the Five-year Youth Work Strategy will be completed and submitted to the Welsh Government, including any amendments, observations or recommendations received from the Scrutiny Committee.
- 8.2. Appropriate governance and monitoring arrangements will be established to support the implementation of the Strategy. This will include regular meetings of the Gwynedd Youth Work Strategic Group and the Gwynedd Youth Network to supervise progress, review performance and ensure effective collaboration between partners.
- 8.3. To support the delivery of the strategic aims a detailed Action Plan will be developed. This plan will note specific actions, responsibilities, timeframes, targets and performance measures to be able to monitor progress and evaluate the impact of the Strategy on the young people of Gwynedd over the period 2027-2032.

The Youth Service will continue to engage with young people, partners and stakeholders throughout the Strategy's operational period to ensure that services continue to respond to the changing needs of young people and to reflect local and national priorities that develop over time.

9. Background Information

Youth Work in Wales: Delivering for Young People <https://www.gov.wales/youth-work-wales-delivering-young-people-html>

<https://www.cwvys.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GWAITH-IEUENCTID-YNG-NGHYMRU-EGWYDDORION-A-DIBENION.pdf>

Appendices

- Youth Service's Draft 5-year Strategy
- Q+A - Additional Questions by the Scrutiny Committee

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee 8/10/26

Title	5 Year Youth Work Strategy
Reason for Scrutiny	Council Plan 2023-28 – Tomorrow’s Gwynedd
Additional Questions	
Have parents, schools and organisations such as the Urdd and Young Farmers been involved, and how?	
As part of developing the Youth Service 5-Year Strategy, an extensive consultation process was undertaken with key stakeholders, including young people, schools and partner organisations. Schools were involved through regular meetings with school contacts and focus groups with pupils. The needs of young people, local priorities and the future direction of youth provision were discussed. Input was also received from over 60 organisations through attendance at six workshops across Gwynedd. Invitations were shared with all organisations and services working with young people aged 11-25 in Gwynedd. Young people themselves were central to the process through the Youth Forum, surveys, participation sessions and local engagement activities. Parents’ views were gathered through consultations linked to service activities, community events and feedback received through schools and partners. All feedback collected was used to inform the priorities within the strategy, ensuring that it reflects the needs, aspirations and experiences of young people and the wider network of adults and organisations that support them.	
Will there be club provision in every area? How will transport to clubs be addressed?	
The strategy does not propose a youth club in every community, but it aims to ensure that young people across Gwynedd have access to appropriate, high-quality youth work opportunities. Provision will vary according to local need and will include a mix of youth clubs, outreach work, targeted projects, school-based activities and community opportunities. Transport is a significant challenge in some rural areas, and the Youth Service recognises that this can limit participation for some young people. However, within current resources, the service is not in a position to provide regular transport for young people to attend clubs or activities. Instead, the service will seek to locate activities as locally as possible and consider accessibility when planning provision. In addition, the strategy outlines a clear intention to strengthen partnerships with third-sector organisations and community groups to help address geographical gaps in provision. By working with local partners, the aim is to expand the range of opportunities available to young people in areas where there is no direct Youth Service provision, ensuring fairer and more consistent access to personal development opportunities across the county.	

• How will you continue to obtain young people's input throughout the lifetime of the strategy?
Young people's input will continue to be a central element of the implementation and evaluation of the strategy throughout its lifetime. The Youth Service will use a variety of participation methods to ensure that young people's voices influence decisions, priorities and service developments. This will include the ongoing work of the Youth Forum, regular surveys, consultation sessions in clubs and schools, focus groups and digital participation activities. Youth workers will also gather feedback regularly during sessions and activities, ensuring that young people's views inform local provision. In addition, young people will be represented within the strategy's review and monitoring processes, ensuring that their experiences and priorities are considered when measuring progress and determining any changes to provision. This will help ensure that the strategy remains relevant, responsive and reflective of the changing needs of young people in Gwynedd over the five-year period.

Youth Work Strategic Plan 2027-32 – template

Part 1

1. Name of Local Authority
Cyngor Gwynedd

2. Lead officer - as set out in Section 8 of the Youth Support Services (Provision of Youth Work) (Wales) Directives 2026	
Name	Steffan Williams
Your job title	Youth Services Manager

3. The current youth work offer Note a high-level profile of the current youth work provision for young people in your local authority area, and how this varies across the area. This should include youth work provision provided directly by your local authority, provision by other organisations in partnership with the local authority, and provision provided independently by other organisations. (No more than 500 words)
Gwynedd Youth Service provides a wide range of Welsh-medium and bilingual youth work opportunities for young people aged 11-25 across the county. The service operates through a combination of community-based provision, youth work in schools, targeted projects and partnership working to ensure that young people in all parts of the county can access support and developmental opportunities. The local authority delivers youth work services directly through a network of community youth clubs, holiday activities, youth work in secondary schools, accreditation and qualifications programmes, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme, and volunteering opportunities. Youth workers are based in every secondary school in Gwynedd, providing universal support, group work and one-to-one interventions. The service also delivers a 16-25 Project, which supports young people who are at risk of becoming disengaged from education, employment or training, or who are facing challenges such as potential homelessness. Three cross-cutting themes underpin provision across the county. Firstly, Youth Voice is central to service planning and development. Young people are provided with opportunities to share their views through youth forums, consultations, evaluations and participatory activities, enabling them to influence local activities and service priorities. Secondly, Mental Health and Wellbeing is a theme that runs throughout all provision. Youth workers provide safe spaces for discussion, offer informal emotional support and work closely with schools, wellbeing hubs and partner services to support young people with low to moderate mental health needs, promoting resilience, confidence and positive relationships.

Thirdly, Early Homelessness Prevention is a key priority. Through partnership working with housing services, the 16-25 Project, schools and other services, the Youth Service identifies young people who may be at risk before a crisis develops. Support includes one-to-one interventions, life skills development, advice and guidance, alongside referrals to specialist support where required.

Provision varies across Gwynedd to respond to local needs. In rural areas and smaller communities, the service uses outreach approaches, mobile provision and partnership activities to ensure accessibility. In towns and more densely populated areas, a wider range of youth clubs, projects and regular activities is available.

Overall, Gwynedd's youth work offer is a combination of universal and targeted provision, with a strong emphasis on youth voice, mental health and wellbeing, and early homelessness prevention, ensuring that young people across the county receive the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

4. Local partnership

Note the local governance and accountability structure that underpins the development and implementation of this plan.

This should include the following:

- how the partnership has been developed
- how it operates, including the mechanism to appoint the Chair and recruit members
- a list of all members of the local partnership.

(No more than 500 words)

This plan has been developed through a multi-agency partnership approach which ensures effective collaboration between the organisations working with young people aged 11 to 25 across Gwynedd. The governance arrangements have been established to provide strategic leadership, clear accountability and robust mechanisms for developing, implementing and monitoring the plan over the period of the strategy.

In order to develop this strategy, the Gwynedd Youth Network was established which includes a wide range of organisations working with young people aged 11 to 25. The network was developed by inviting key statutory, voluntary and community partners that have a role in supporting and providing opportunities for young people in Gwynedd.

The network was responsible for contributing towards the development of the strategy, identifying local priorities and ensuring that a broad range of viewpoints and experiences informed the plan. The Gwynedd Youth Network will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to share information, monitor progress and ensure that the strategy continues to reflect the needs of young people and local communities.

As well as the Gwynedd Youth Network, a Gwynedd Youth Work Strategic Group will be established to provide strategic leadership and supervision to deliver the plan over the five-year period.

The Strategic Group will be responsible for:

- Scrutinising the progress of the plan and monitoring performance.

- Developing and prioritising strategic activities.
- Ensuring collaboration between key partners.
- Monitoring risks and opportunities.
- Acting as the principal accountable body for the plan's delivery.
- Providing regular updates to the Gwynedd Youth Network.

The Strategic Group's membership will include organisations that lead on youth work and that operate in accordance with the relevant national legislation and expectations. The group will meet regularly throughout the lifespan of the plan.

It is intended to adopt a rotational chairpersonship model, with the Chair being appointed through the members' agreement. This will ensure joint ownership of the strategy and provide opportunities for different partners to lead on different stages of the work.

New members will be recruited by nomination from existing partner organisations or by invitation from the Strategic Group where a need for additional expertise, representation or contribution is identified. Membership will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains representative of the youth work and related services sector in Gwynedd.

Members of the Gwynedd Youth Network

Urdd
Frân Wen
GISDA
GLIM
Mantell Gwynedd
Barnardo's
Street Games
Young Farmers
Adra
Byw'n Iach
Careers Wales
Menter Iaith Gwynedd
Hwb West End
Adra
Y Bont
Cyfle
Scouts Cymru
Betsi Cadwaladr - CAMHS
Yr Orsaf
Porthi Dre
Outdoor Partnership
Youth Justice
Representation from the Children, Education and Economy Departments - Cyngor Gwynedd

and other organisations.

5. Young people's contribution

Note the pathways in place to enable young people to express their needs and inform the development of this plan, and for reviewing the extent to which they consider that the objectives of the plan are being delivered.

This should include details about the following:

- how young people were involved in the formulation of this plan and its objectives
- the pathways available for their participation and ongoing review
- how you will ensure that young people's participation is inclusive and representative.

(No more than 500 words)

Young people's participation has been central to the development of this plan and it will remain a key element when monitoring and evaluating its implementation over the period of the strategy.

In formulating the plan and its objectives, an extensive engagement exercise was carried out with young people aged 11 to 25 across Gwynedd. 832 responses were received from young people through questionnaires and consultation activities, providing valuable information about their experiences, their needs and their priorities. In addition, 8 focus groups were visited in secondary schools in Gwynedd, giving young people an opportunity to discuss matters that are important to them in more detail and to contribute ideas to develop the plan. Discussions were also held with Young People's Voice Forums, ensuring that the views of young people already active in participatory structures were reflected in the strategy.

The information gathered through all of these processes was used to note the main themes, priorities and objectives that have informed the contents of the plan. This has helped to ensure that the plan reflects the needs, aspirations and lived experiences of Gwynedd young people.

Several pathways are available to enable the continuous participation of young people during the implementation period of the plan. These will include working through existing Young People's Voice Forums, engagement opportunities through projects with local youth services, periodic surveys, focus groups, consultation workshops and participatory events. Feedback from young people will be shared with the Gwynedd Youth Network and the Gwynedd Youth Work Strategic Group to steer decisions and ongoing developments.

Progress against the plan's objectives will be regularly reviewed with young people by gathering feedback on their experiences of services, their views about the opportunities available to them, and their assessment of how well the plan achieves its aims. This will ensure that the evaluation of the plan will include the voices of young people alongside performance data and information from partners.

To ensure that participation is inclusive and representative, we will work with a wide range of partners to reach young people from different backgrounds, communities and circumstances. This will include young people using statutory and voluntary youth services, learners in schools and colleges, young people in rural areas, and those who face barriers to participation. A range of engagement methods, including face-to-face and digital, will be used to ensure that as many young people as possible are

able to contribute. This will help ensure that the development and implementation of the plan is informed by a wide range of young people's voices and experiences across Gwynedd.

6. Evidence

Note the evidence used to inform your strategic objectives. This should include the following:

- profile of young people in the local authority area
- profile of the young people currently involved with youth work
- breakdown of the number of these young people by age, gender and protected characteristics
- profile of the current youth work workforce
- qualitative evidence of youth and young people's work in the area, including evidence from organisations with strong links to specific groups or communities and information about the needs of those groups or communities.

(No more than 500 words)

The strategic objectives of Gwynedd Youth Work have been steered by a combination of statistical data, qualitative evidence and viewpoints of young people and stakeholders. The ONS Mid-year 2024 Population Estimates, Census 2021 and local demographic data were used to develop an in-depth understanding of Gwynedd's young people's population, including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, use of the Welsh language and geographical distribution. This evidence shows that Gwynedd is a rural county with a dispersed population, strong Welsh-speaking communities and challenges in accessing services in some areas.

The profile of young people participating in youth work is based on service monitoring data, attendance records and information from partners that provide youth services. This data is analysed according to age, gender and protected characteristics to assess how inclusive the provision is and identify any groups that are under-represented or need additional support.

Local and national NEET data was used to understand the number and characteristics of young people who are not in education, employment or training, and the factors that increase the risk of disengagement. This evidence has helped inform preventative work, targeted interventions and support for young people who face barriers to educational progress or employment.

Mental health and well-being have been a key focus when setting strategic priorities. Findings from the *Mental Health of Children and Young People – Wave 4* study and SHRN data were used, which indicate high levels of mental health concerns among young people, as well as the links between well-being, poverty, bullying and social participation. The evidence also highlights the specific needs of certain groups of young people, including girls and those from less well-off socio-economic backgrounds.

Information from North Wales Police and community safety partners was used to understand matters such as anti-social behaviour, community safety, youth offending and exploitation risks. This has

contributed to developing provision that supports the resilience, safety and well-being of young people in local communities.

The youth work workforce profile has been developed using Education Workforce Council (EWC) data, including the number of registered workers, their qualifications and information about individuals who have achieved Level 3 qualifications in youth work. This has helped to identify the strengths of the workforce and the need for continuous professional development.

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative evidence was used from young people's questionnaires, participation sessions and workshops with third sector organisations working with specific groups such as disabled young people, young carers, LGBTQ+ young people, looked after young people and those living in poverty or in rural areas. These insights have provided a deeper understanding of the needs, challenges and aspirations of young people in Gwynedd, ensuring that the strategic objectives reflect their voices and experiences.

7. Consultation

Note how you have consulted organisations and voluntary partners in developing this plan in accordance with your statutory duty to consult under section 125 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

This should include the following:

- a summary of the consultation carried out when developing the plan
- a summary of any responses received to that consultation.

(No more than 500 words)

A comprehensive consultation programme was carried out with organisations and voluntary partners when developing this plan. The aim was to ensure that the strategy reflected the needs of Gwynedd young people and took advantage of the expertise and experience of the organisations working with them on a daily basis.

As part of the process, a series of consultation workshops were arranged in six locations across Gwynedd, namely Caernarfon, Bangor, Bala, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Pwllheli and Tywyn. A wide range of partners were invited, including voluntary organisations, youth work providers, community organisations, statutory partners and other stakeholders who work with young people aged between 11 and 25.

These workshops provided an opportunity to share information about Youth Work in Wales: Delivering for Young People, discussing and challenging some of the common myths about youth work, and providing background on the development of the new strategy. Facilitation sessions also enabled participants to provide feedback, contribute ideas, discuss local challenges and identify priorities for the next strategic phase.

In addition to the workshops, the Gwynedd Youth Network was used as a platform to engage with partners and ensure that there were ongoing opportunities to contribute to the development of the plan. The responses received showed a strong consensus on many key priorities. Partners emphasised the importance of ensuring equitable access to youth work opportunities throughout the county, including in rural communities. The need was also noted to strengthen collaboration between organisations, improve communication and information sharing, and increase opportunities for young people to participate in decisions that affect them.

The value of youth work as a medium to support health and well-being, develop skills, build resilience and promote community participation was highlighted. Attention was also drawn to the need to ensure that services and activities are inclusive and accessible to every young person, including those facing socio-economic, geographical or personal barriers.

The feedback gathered through the workshops and discussions with partners was used to inform the plan's priorities, objectives and actions. Consequently, the strategy reflects the direct contribution of voluntary organisations and local partners and provides a strong foundation for continuous collaboration during the implementation period of the plan.

Part 2

8. Objectives

State below your key objectives for the development of youth work over the period of this plan. Objectives should:

- set out how the local authority, working with partners and voluntary organisations where appropriate, will meet the priority needs of young people in the local authority area;
- note whether there are any inequalities in the provision of youth work and, if so, how they are addressed;
- note what provision will be made for future demand for youth work during the plan period.

Objective 1	Young people's mental health, emotional well-being and resilience
What evidence has been used to prioritise this as a strategic objective?	Mental health and emotional well-being has become an increasing concern among young people in Wales in recent years. National and local evidence shows: • An increase in the number of young people who report anxiety, stress, loneliness and mental health issues. • The ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on social relationships, education, confidence and resilience. • Feedback from young people in Gwynedd noting mental health as one of their main concerns.

	• Data from schools, CAMHS services, counselling services and partners, which shows and increasing demand for emotional support. • Welsh Government priorities through the Mental Health Strategy and the Youth Work Strategy which emphasise the importance of early intervention and resilience development. This evidence highlights the need for youth services that provide safe spaces, positive relationships and opportunities to develop coping skills and confidence.
Key milestones	Staff and volunteers will receive relevant training to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to identify young people's needs, provide appropriate support and refer individuals to specialist services when needed. The service will also strengthen its partnerships with health, education and community services to ensure that young people have timely access to help and support. The youth provision will offer a wide range of activities that promote emotional well-being, including creative, physical, cultural and outdoor activities that nurture confidence, positive relationships and coping skills. Opportunities will also be developed for young people to support each other through peer mentoring and support, strengthening their sense of belonging and their ability to overcome personal and social barriers. During the strategy period, the Youth Service will work to ensure that every location and activity contributes to the creation of safe, welcoming and inclusive environments that support well-being. The impact of the work will be regularly monitored and evaluated by gathering feedback from young people, staff and partners, using this information to inform continuous improvements. This will help to ensure that the service responds effectively to the changing needs of Gwynedd young people and provides sustainable support that contributes to their mental health and long-term resilience.
Partners involved in achieving this objective	➤ Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. ➤ CAMHS and children and young people mental health services. ➤ Gwynedd secondary schools and special schools. ➤ The Council's Well-being and Early Intervention Teams. ➤ Medrwn Môn and local voluntary organisations. ➤ NSPCC, Barnardo's, GISDA and relevant charities. ➤ Cyngor Gwynedd's Families and Children Services.

	➤ Local sports, arts and community clubs. ➤ Young people and youth voice forums.																
How will you measure success?	• More young people reporting that they feel safe, confident and are receiving support. • Better emotional resilience and ability to cope with life's challenges. • Reduced feelings of loneliness and social exclusion among participants.																
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Objective 2	Increase opportunities for employability, skills and transition to work
What evidence has been used to prioritise this as a strategic objective?	Data shows that some young people continue to face barriers to employment, including a lack of work experience, lack of confidence, limited transferable skills and challenges related to social and economic inequality. Feedback from young people, employers and partners highlights the need for more opportunities to develop life skills, work skills and practical experiences. The Welsh Government's priorities, the Young People's Guarantee and the Youth Work Strategy emphasise the importance of supporting young people to achieve their potential and make successful transitions to the world of work, education and training. This evidence shows that the Youth Service has an important role when helping young people to develop confidence, aspirations and skills that improve their future prospects.
Key milestones	The Youth Service will extend the opportunities available for young people to develop employability, leadership and enterprise skills through its programmes and activities. Young people will have opportunities to develop skills such as communication, working in a team, problem-solving, decision-making and self-control, namely skills that are appreciated by employers and support success in education and work. Stronger partnerships will be developed with local employers, colleges, training providers and employment services to create clearer pathways to education, training and work. The service will promote volunteering experiences, community projects, mentoring and work experience opportunities where possible, enabling young people to gain valuable experiences and increase their aspirations for the future. Specific support will be provided to young people facing additional barriers to employment or education, ensuring that every individual has fair access to development opportunities. The impact of the provision will be regularly monitored by tracking young people's progress, gathering feedback and evaluating outcomes to ensure continuous improvement and achieve long-term positive results.
Partners involved in achieving this objective	➤ Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai ➤ Gwynedd Secondary Schools ➤ Careers Wales ➤ Jobcentre

	➤ Local businesses and employers ➤ Regional and national training providers ➤ Advocacy and support services for young people ➤ Volunteering services and the third sector ➤ Young people and youth voice forums																
How will you measure success?	• Improved confidence, resilience and transferable skills among young people, measured through feedback, self-assessments and evaluations. • Increased number and strength of partnerships with employers, colleges, training providers and employment services. • More opportunities for work experience, mentoring and work-related activities available to young people. • Increased participation from young people facing additional barriers to employment, education or training. • Positive feedback from young people, employers and partners regarding the quality and impact of the provision. • Evidence that young people feel better prepared to make decisions about their future and to progress to the next stages of their education or career.																
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Objective 3	Reducing inequalities in access to youth work through inclusive and accessible provision
What evidence has been used to prioritise this as a strategic objective?	Local and national evidence shows that some young people face additional barriers to participation, including poverty, disability, additional learning needs, mental health challenges, geographical location, lack of transport, and linguistic or cultural barriers. Gwynedd's demographic profile, with its rural and dispersed communities, means that ensuring equal access to services can be challenging for some young people. Feedback from young people, families, schools and partners highlights the need to ensure that services are accessible, inclusive and reflective of the diverse needs of all communities. There is also growing evidence of the need to develop and build upon provision that can meet the needs of young people with additional learning needs and neurodivergent young people, ensuring that they can access the same youth work opportunities as their peers in environments that are appropriate, supportive and inclusive. The Equality Act 2010, the Wales Youth Work Strategy and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act also emphasise the need to reduce inequalities and ensure fair opportunities for all. This evidence highlights the importance of delivering a service that reaches every young person, regardless of their background, needs or circumstances, and ensuring that no young person is excluded from benefiting from youth work opportunities because of barriers to access or participation.
Key milestones	The Youth Service will review and develop its provision to ensure that young people from all backgrounds can receive access to high-quality youth work opportunities. Flexible delivery methods will be developed, including community youth work, outreach, digital provision and activities in locations that are convenient for young people across the county. The service will work closely with partners to identify and engage with young people at risk of being excluded or less likely to participate in mainstream services. Particular attention will be given to meeting the needs of young people with disabilities, additional learning needs, young carers, looked after young people or young people who have left care, and those living in rural or economically disadvantaged areas. The service will also strengthen participation practices to ensure that the voice of young people influences the planning and development of

	services. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will help identify gaps in provision and ensure that resources are effectively targeted to the young people who need them most.	
Partners involved in achieving this objective	➤ Cyngor Gwynedd's Children and Families Service ➤ Gwynedd special schools ➤ Derwen ➤ Tim Niwro Cyngor Gwynedd ➤ Regional Youth and Community Services ➤ Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board ➤ Cyngor Gwynedd Public Health ➤ Mantell Gwynedd ➤ Gwynedd and Anglesey Youth Justice Service ➤ Advocacy and Children's Rights Services ➤ North Wales Police ➤ Gwynedd Youth Forum and local participation groups ➤ Third Sector Organisations.	
How will you measure success?	• More young people can access youth work regardless of their circumstances. • Increased participation by under-represented groups. • Better sense of belonging, inclusion and equality among young people. • Reduction in access gaps between different communities and groups of young people. • Increased engagement of young people with additional learning needs and neurodivergent young people in youth work services, with participants reporting that provision is accessible, appropriate and meets their needs. • More inclusive opportunities where young people with additional learning needs and neurodivergent young people can participate alongside their peers in youth work activities and experiences.	
How will achieving this objective contribute to the seven well-being goals as noted in the Well-being of Future Generations Act³?	Well-being Goal	Contribution
	A prosperous Wales	Ensuring equal access to development opportunities enables more young people to achieve their potential.
	A resilient Wales	Stronger and more inclusive communities help young people develop resilience and positive connections.

	A healthier Wales	Access to support, activities and positive relationships contribute to health and well-being.
	A more equal Wales	This objective contributes directly to reducing inequalities and improving equity.
	A Wales of cohesive communities	Inclusive youth work strengthens participation, belonging, and community engagement.
	A Wales with a vibrant culture and a thriving Welsh language	Ensuring access to bilingual and Welsh-medium provision supports the use and development of the Welsh language.
	A globally responsible Wales	Promoting inclusion, rights and equal opportunities develops active and responsible citizens.

Objective 4	Extending community opportunities, activities and safe spaces for young people
What evidence has been used to prioritise this as a strategic objective?	Feedback from young people in Gwynedd highlights the importance of having accessible spaces where they can socialise, develop new skills and receive support from reliable youth workers. Demographic changes, transport challenges in rural areas, cost-of-living pressures and the reduction in some traditional community opportunities have affected young people's ability to participate in meaningful activities. Evidence also shows that participation in sports, arts, outdoor activities, volunteering and community activities contributes positively to mental health, social relationships and skills development. This evidence highlights the need to extend the range and availability of opportunities for young people across Gwynedd, ensuring that they have safe and supportive spaces to develop and thrive.
Key milestones	The Youth Service will work to extend the range of activities, projects and opportunities available for young people by collaborating with local communities, voluntary organisations and strategic partners. There will be an emphasis on providing activities that reflect the needs, interests and aspirations of young people, including sports, creative, cultural and environmental activities and activities that develop life skills.

	The service will strengthen and develop safe spaces where young people can meet, build positive relationships and get access to informal support. Opportunities will be created for young people to participate in their communities, participate in local projects and develop a sense of pride and belonging to their areas. The voice of young people will play a central part when planning and developing community activities and provision. Regular monitoring and review will ensure that the provision continues to meet the needs of various communities in Gwynedd and responds to new trends and needs as they arise.							
Partners involved in achieving this objective	➤ Town and Community Councils ➤ Cyngor Gwynedd's Corporate Support and Communities Departments ➤ Gwynedd schools and school clusters ➤ Young Farmers ➤ Mantell Gwynedd ➤ Sport clubs / Healthy Living ➤ Dref Werdd ➤ Urdd Gobaith Cymru ➤ GISDA ➤ Porthi Dre ➤ West End Bangor ➤ Gwynedd Youth Forum and local participation groups							
How will you measure success?	• More young people participating in meaningful, community activities. • Better sense of belonging, connection and community pride. • More safe spaces where young people feel they are appreciated and supported. • Strengthening relationships between young people, organisations and local communities.							
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	A healthier Wales	Social, creative and physical activities contribute to physical and emotional health and well-being.
	A more equal Wales	Providing accessible activities helps ensure that all young people are able to participate.
	A Wales of cohesive communities	The objective strengthens the community ties, belonging and engagement of young citizens.
	A Wales with a vibrant culture and a thriving Welsh language	Welsh-medium community and cultural activities support the use of the Welsh language and local identity.
	A globally responsible Wales	Encouraging volunteering, community action and active participation develops responsible and active citizens.

Objective 5	Strengthen the voice, participation and leadership of young people
What evidence has been used to prioritise this as a strategic objective?	Feedback from young people in Gwynedd indicates that they want more opportunities to influence decisions, plan services and contribute to the development of their communities. Research and youth work experience shows that active participation increases confidence, self-esteem, a sense of belonging and leadership skills. The Youth Work Strategy for Wales and the Welsh Government's priorities also emphasise the importance of working with young people as partners in the formulation of policies and services. This evidence highlights the need to ensure that young people have real opportunities to voice their opinions, influence decisions and develop as leaders in their communities.
Key milestones	The Youth Service will develop a culture where young people's participation is an integral part of service planning, provision and evaluation. Opportunities will be created for young people to contribute to decisions that affect their lives, their communities and the services they use. Participation mechanisms will be strengthened and developed to ensure that a wide range of viewpoints and experiences are represented. The service will support young people to develop leadership, communication, advocacy and decision-making skills through projects, steering groups, youth forums, volunteering and community enterprises.

	There will be an emphasis on ensuring that young people play an active role when leading activities, developing new projects and influencing service priorities. The Youth Service will work with local, regional and national partners to extend participation opportunities and to ensure that the voices of young people are heard in broader forums. Regular monitoring and evaluation processes will be used to measure the impact of participation and ensure that young people can see how their input leads to real change.	
Partners involved in achieving this objective	➤ Gwynedd Youth Forum ➤ Schools and school councils ➤ Welsh Youth Parliament ➤ Children's Rights Wales ➤ Mantell Gwynedd ➤ Advocacy and Children's Rights Services ➤ Children's Commissioner for Wales ➤ Young People Organisations and Services ➤ Local young people groups and networks	
How will you measure success?	• More young people feel that their opinions are heard and valued. • Increase in leadership, communication and advocacy skills. • More young people participating in civic and community activities. • Clear evidence that young people's contributions influence policies, services and activities.	
How will achieving this objective contribute to the seven well-being goals as noted in the Well-being of Future Generations Act⁵?	Well-being Goal	Contribution
	A prosperous Wales	Developing leadership and participation skills helps young people achieve their potential and contribute to the economy and society of the future.
	A resilient Wales	Empowering young people to participate in decisions creates stronger, more active, and resilient communities.
	A healthier Wales	Feeling that a voice is being heard and that change can be influenced contributes to emotional well-being and self-esteem.
	A more equal Wales	Ensuring equal opportunities to participate helps to include various voices and reduce inequalities.
	A Wales of cohesive communities	Active participation strengthens links between young people, services and their communities.

	A Wales with a vibrant culture and a thriving Welsh language	Providing bilingual participation opportunities supports the use of the Welsh language and the development of young Welsh language leaders.
	A globally responsible Wales	Nurturing active, aware and responsible citizens encourages democratic participation and social responsibility.

Objective 6	Workforce Development
What evidence has been used to prioritise this as a strategic objective?	The quality and sustainability of youth services depend on a skilled, qualified and diverse workforce. The challenges of recruiting and retaining staff, coupled with the growing demand for support for young people, have highlighted the need to strengthen the youth work workforce across Gwynedd. The Youth Work Strategy for Wales emphasises the importance of developing a professional workforce that has the skills and qualifications to respond to the changing needs of young people. It is also clear that the involvement of the third sector, voluntary organisations and community groups is vital to providing opportunities for young people across the county. However, there are not enough qualified youth workers operating outside the statutory provision in some areas. Clearer learning and professional development pathways need to be developed to increase the number of youth workers with recognised qualifications, particularly at Level 3. This evidence shows the need to invest in workforce development, increase the number of qualified workers and support the growth of youth provision within the third sector and the community.
Key milestones	The Youth Service will work with local, regional and national partners to strengthen the youth work workforce across Gwynedd. Priority is given to develop recruitment, training and development pathways that encourage individuals to join the profession and to develop their skills and their qualifications over time. The service will support an increase in the number of youth workers who gain the Level 3 qualification in Youth Work, ensuring that more staff and volunteers have the knowledge, the skills and confidence to provide high-quality youth work. Continuous professional development opportunities

	will be available to the workforce to respond to the new needs and priorities of the service. Specific work will be undertaken to strengthen the capacity of the third sector and community providers by supporting local organisations to recruit, develop and retain qualified youth workers. This will expand the provision available to young people and strengthen collaboration between the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. Regular monitoring will help assess workforce strength, skills gaps and progress towards development targets.	
Partners involved in achieving this objective	➤ Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) / Education Workforce Council (EWC) ➤ Grŵp Llandrillo Menai ➤ Welsh Government ➤ Education Workforce Council ➤ Mantell Gwynedd ➤ Urdd Gobaith Cymru ➤ Agored Cymru ➤ North Wales Local Authorities Youth Services ➤ Wales Principal Youth Officers Association ➤ Welsh Youth Training Body ➤ Third sector organisations that work with young people	
How will you measure success?	• More qualified youth workers working across Gwynedd. • Measurable increase in the number of staff with a Level 3 qualification in Youth Work. • Strengthen the youth work provision within the third sector and local communities. • Improved quality, sustainability and reach of youth services. • More opportunities for young people to access skilled and qualified youth workers.	
How will achieving this objective contribute to the seven well-being goals as noted in the Well-being of Future Generations Act⁶?	Well-being Goal	Contribution
	A prosperous Wales	A qualified and skilled workforce strengthens services and supports economic and social development.
	A resilient Wales	A strong and sustainable workforce ensures the continuity and resilience of community services.

	A healthier Wales	Trained youth workers are able to provide high-quality support that improves the health and well-being of young people.
	A more equal Wales	Expanding the workforce increases access to support and opportunities throughout the county.
	A Wales of cohesive communities	Local youth workers play a key role in strengthening communities and supporting young people.
	A Wales with a vibrant culture and a thriving Welsh language	The development of a bilingual workforce supports the provision of Welsh medium and the use of the Welsh language among young people.
	A globally responsible Wales	A professional workforce contributes to the development of active, knowledgeable and responsible citizens.

Objective 7	The Welsh Language
What evidence has been used to prioritise this as a strategic objective?	Although the county has a high percentage of Welsh speakers compared to the rest of Wales, there is evidence that social use of Welsh among young people varies between areas and that the language is not always used outside of school or home. Census data, local and national Welsh language promotion schemes, as well as feedback from schools, partners and young people, highlight the need to create more informal opportunities to use the Welsh language in social, community and leisure activities. Evidence also shows that regular use of Welsh in social situations increases young people's confidence to use the language naturally in their daily lives. This evidence highlights the need to support young people to use Welsh voluntarily in their leisure time, particularly in areas where community use of the language is less prominent or under pressure.
Key milestones	The Youth Work will increase the opportunities for young people to use the Welsh language in informal, social and leisurely environments. Welsh-medium and bilingual activities, projects and events will be developed in partnership with local communities to make the use of the Welsh language a natural and enjoyable experience for young people.

	There will be particular emphasis on supporting areas where community use of the Welsh language is weaker, developing targeted projects that encourage young people to use the language with their peers, in their communities and when taking part in youth activities. The service will work to bridge the use of Welsh between school, home and community so that young people see value and a sense of belonging in using the language in different aspects of their lives. Welsh-medium leadership, volunteering and participation opportunities will be developed to enable young people to be ambassadors and role models for their peers. Digital methods and social media will also be used to support the use of the Welsh language in ways that are relevant to young people and that reflect their interests and communication methods.								
Partners involved in achieving this objective	➤ Menter Iaith Gwynedd ➤ Urdd Gobaith Cymru ➤ Gwynedd primary and secondary schools ➤ Young Farmers ➤ Local arts and cultural organisations ➤ Community and voluntary operators ➤ Gwynedd Youth Forum ➤ Local sports clubs and community activities								
How will you measure success?	• Increase in the number of young people who use the Welsh language voluntarily in their leisure time. • More social use of the Welsh language in youth and community activities. • Improved confidence among young people to use the Welsh language in a wider range of situations. • Strengthen the connection between young people, their communities and the Welsh language as a day-to-day living language. • More Welsh-medium opportunities available in areas where use of the Welsh language is less strong.								
How will achieving this objective contribute to the seven well-being goals as noted in the	<table> <tr> <th>Well-being Goal</th><th>Contribution</th></tr> <tr> <td>A prosperous Wales</td><td>Strong Welsh language skills expand opportunities for education, employment and economic participation.</td></tr> <tr> <td>A resilient Wales</td><td>Strengthening the Welsh language supports the sustainability of communities and local identity.</td></tr> <tr> <td>A healthier Wales</td><td>A stronger sense of belonging, identity, and</td></tr> </table>	Well-being Goal	Contribution	A prosperous Wales	Strong Welsh language skills expand opportunities for education, employment and economic participation.	A resilient Wales	Strengthening the Welsh language supports the sustainability of communities and local identity.	A healthier Wales	A stronger sense of belonging, identity, and
Well-being Goal	Contribution								
A prosperous Wales	Strong Welsh language skills expand opportunities for education, employment and economic participation.								
A resilient Wales	Strengthening the Welsh language supports the sustainability of communities and local identity.								
A healthier Wales	A stronger sense of belonging, identity, and								

Well-being of Future Generations Act?		cultural connection contributes to emotional well-being.
	A more equal Wales	Increasing opportunities to use the Welsh language ensures that all young people can benefit from the bilingual life of Wales.
	A Wales of cohesive communities	The Welsh language contributes to the creation of strong, connected and active communities.
	A Wales with a vibrant culture and a thriving Welsh language	This objective contributes directly to increasing social and community use of the Welsh language among young people.
	A globally responsible Wales	The protection and promotion of a minority language contribute to cultural diversity and international understanding.

Part 3

9. Signatures	
Chair of the local partnership	
Name	Steffan Williams
Role	Cyngor Gwynedd's Youth Services Manager
Signature	
Date	25/08/2026
Chief Executive of the local authority	
Name	Dafydd Gibbard
Signature	

Date	
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The strategic plan should be returned by 30 September 2026.

Any enquiries should be referred to gwaithieuenctid@llyw.cymru

DRAFT

MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	08 October 2026
TITLE	Gwynedd Culture Plan
REASON TO SCRUTINISE	Pre-scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 - A Prosperous Gwynedd
AUTHOR	Roland Evans Assistant Head Economy and Community
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr R. Medwyn Hughes

Why does it need to be scrutinised?

1. The Plan will give future direction for the arts and heritage fields. It will also set a framework for City/Town of Culture applications.
2. Discussions have been held with the culture sector to discuss the vision and objectives.
3. Pre-scrutiny of the Plan prior to its adoption would be an opportunity for the committee to recommend matters that should be considered.

What exactly needs to be scrutinised?

- Opportunities and challenges in the field
- Who has been included in developing the plan?
- Is the vision ambitious enough?
- How is it intended to realise the aims?
- How will the Plan's impact be monitored and measured?

Summary and the Key Matters

4. Cyngor Gwynedd has no vision or plan for supporting Culture or the culture sector in the County. This has been highlighted as an issue to be prioritised in the Council Plan.
5. Through collaboration with the culture sector, a vision, principles and action plan have been co-developed.
6. The report summarises the process that has been followed, sets out the vision and principles and presents the draft action plan that has been developed to give members of the Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to identify the opportunities and challenges and comment on the ambition, action plan and monitoring and performance measuring arrangements.

Background / Context

7. The culture field has experienced a challenging period over the past few years. According to the [A Decade of Cuts](#) report by Senedd Cymru's Culture Committee, Wales ranks second from the bottom among European countries in terms of expenditure per head on cultural services.

8. The report makes a number of key recommendations and calls on the Welsh Government to provide:
 - a) More money: More money for culture and sports until expenditure per head is comparable to similar countries.
 - b) Preventative expenditure: Introduce a category of 'preventive' expenditure in future budgets to recognise the value of culture and sport in improving physical and mental well-being and fund them appropriately.
 - c) Strategic support: Develop a collaborative cross-departmental strategy for funding culture and sport, ensuring that these sectors are recognised as key to achieving the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
9. That report also underlines the importance of culture and sport in enriching lives, supporting communities, and improving physical and mental well-being. It calls for immediate action to prevent further decline in these sectors.
10. In 2025, the Welsh Government published 'Priorities to Support Culture in Wales'. Since the election in May 2026, the new Government has initiated a review of the Priorities with the desire to create a clear strategy for Wales.
11. The Welsh Programme for Government 2026-2030 highlights the following relevant priority areas:
 - a) Work with the sector, including our creative industries, to develop and deliver a targeted Culture and Sport Strategy to create a healthier, richer and more resilient Wales.
 - b) Prioritise equal access to the arts, culture, heritage and sport for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, considering how our access policies can support this.
 - c) Invest in the preventive role of culture, heritage and sport to promote good health for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.
12. The recent priorities of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales include placing culture at the heart of Wales's well-being agenda, strengthening cultural rights for the people of Wales, and exploring the case for a Culture Bill for Wales that would provide a stronger statutory basis for public bodies to protect, promote and invest in culture as part of their long-term responsibilities.
13. Culture is important to Gwynedd, and Gwynedd is important to Welsh culture, but nevertheless, budget challenges have directly impacted the sector within the County due to savings and cuts.
14. The priority of a Prosperous Gwynedd within the Gwynedd Plan 2023-2028 includes: *Promoting our Culture and a Sustainable Visitor Economy*. Within this priority, considering the Development of a Culture Plan for Gwynedd is an operational priority.
15. In terms of 'culture' the cultural sector is broadly defined, in line with Welsh Government practice, to include the arts, museums, libraries, archives, the historic environment and the Creative Industries.

Co-development of vision and principles

16. Given the recent challenges and the fact that Cyngor Gwynedd does not have a culture strategy or plan, we brought together the culture sector within the County to promote networking and get views on establishing a vision and a culture plan/strategy for the County. This was made possible through the UK Government's Shared Prosperity funding

through the 'Diwylliesiant' project and later through funding from the Welsh Government through their revenue support for local cultural sectors in Wales.

17. Many within the sector as well as the Council's cultural services felt that there was a clear gap in Gwynedd without a cultural plan or strategy – particularly when applying for funding and competitions such as the UK City or Town of Culture.
18. The first ever conference and workshops for the sector were held on 18 February 2025 in Nyth, Bangor through a commission to Cwmni'r Frân Wen. Nearly 70 people attended that conference.
19. In light of the conference, there was a strong view that the sector did not want to see a detailed strategy or plan developed, but there was a genuine desire and enthusiasm to establish a vision and principles for the future of the sector with 'action' as a priority rather than 'words' on a shelf.
20. It was therefore agreed to formulate a vision and principles for culture in Gwynedd supported by a relevant Action Plan.
21. A workshop was held on 15 October 2025 to try to move further along the process of developing a vision and principles for culture in Gwynedd. Over 80 people were invited with over 30 attending the workshop at Neuadd Dwyfor, Pwllheli.
22. On the basis of the group discussions and following further consultation with the facilitators, the Council's culture services and the wider sector, a draft vision and principles were agreed.
23. The 'Gwynedd Culture: For Everybody's Well-being' event was held in Portmeirion on the afternoon of 4 March 2026 where there was an opportunity to share the vision and principles, as well as an opportunity to hear about the SPF project – 'Diwylliesiant', which had supported so much cultural activity in Gwynedd over two years. It was also an opportunity to hear examples of how culture supports well-being here in Gwynedd and to share information about the intention to establish a new Culture Network for Gwynedd and introduce the members of the Network's Shadow Steering Board.
24. The following is proposed as a draft vision and principles that have been co-developed with the sector for Gwynedd culture.

Draft vision:

"Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world.

Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and into the future".

25. Originally, 10 principles for supporting the vision were identified, but following further discussions on 7 July 2026 with the Shadow Steering Board, it was agreed to seek to reduce this number.
26. There are now 6 principles that support the vision:

- i. **Proud of Our Identity, Heritage and the Welsh Language**
Culture celebrates and promotes Gwynedd's unique identity, heritage, creativity, and the Welsh language, sharing them confidently with Wales and the wider world.
- ii. **Culture at the Heart of Life**
Culture is an essential part of the health, wellbeing, education and happiness of the people of Gwynedd, enriching everyday life and creating opportunities to have fun, learn and socialise.
- iii. **Community-Led, Inclusive, Kind and Connected**
Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging.
- iv. **Ambitious, Challenging and Bold**
Culture inspires new ideas, embraces or challenges change, sets high standards and makes the most of opportunities and investment to realise and measure the impact of ambitions.
- v. **Enriching People and Places**
Culture enhances wellbeing, develops skills and talent, and contributes to a strong local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
- vi. **Sustainable and Responsible for Future Generations**
Culture protects and enriches resources, the environment, and the unique qualities of Gwynedd, ensuring long-term benefits for future generations.

The Value of Gwynedd Culture

27. To support this work, a commission has been set up by the Council with Welsh Government funding which has enabled us to appoint experts to assist us in supporting our understanding of the culture sector in Gwynedd. The objective of the brief was to:
- a) Produce an assessment of the economic and social value of the culture sector to the Gwynedd area.
 - b) Create bilingual case studies (film and written) of good practice within the sector locally.
 - c) Create a measurable Action Plan for the sector that reflects the vision and principles.
 - d) Support the Gwynedd Culture Network through a series of networking events, meetings and training.
28. This research strengthens the case for ensuring that we continue to invest in culture in Gwynedd and highlights the economic and social value of the cultural sector.
29. The analysis (**Appendix A**) finds that the cultural sector in Gwynedd generates an estimated total of £316.07 million of annual economic contribution. This includes £121.98 million of direct economic activity generated by cultural organisations and businesses themselves, £135.54 million of indirect impact through supply chain spending, and £58.55 million of induced impact resulting from wage and earnings expenditure within the broader regional economy.

30. Together, these findings show that culture is a significant economic sector in Gwynedd, which supports economic activity that extends far beyond the organisations that directly provide cultural services and activities.
31. The direct contribution of the sector reflects the breadth and diversity of cultural activity taking place throughout the county. The largest proportion of the direct economic value generated is that derived from the Creative Industries and the wider cultural business sector, which is estimated to contribute £77.63 million per annum.
32. Heritage attractions, museums and archives contribute an additional £28.62 million, emphasising the importance of Gwynedd's unique historic environment and its internationally renowned cultural assets.
33. The performing arts and events, applied crafts and arts, libraries and literature, along with the visual arts and galleries, all make valuable additional contributions. This shows that the sector is acting as a coordinated cultural economy, rather than a series of separate and independent activities.
34. A further finding from the report is that the cultural sector generates significantly wider social value. Using well-being valuation methods that are in line with HM Treasury's Green Book guidance, the assessment estimates that cultural activity in Gwynedd generates £178.02 million of social value each year.
35. This includes value related to economic outcomes, health and well-being, social and community cohesion, education and skills, environmental stewardship, and cultural identity.
36. Although the main focus of the report is the economic impact, the magnitude of the wider social value identified reinforces the conclusion that culture makes a significant contribution not only to the economy of Gwynedd, but also to the quality of life of its residents and the strength of its communities.
37. These findings show that investing in culture provides benefits that extend far beyond just economic activity, supporting individual well-being, community resilience, skills development, the Welsh language, and the county's unique cultural identity.
38. These findings show that culture is not only an important part of Gwynedd's identity and heritage, but is also a significant economic sector that sustains employment, supports businesses, attracts and drives visitor spending, and contributes to the wider economic resilience of the county.

Action Plan for Culture in Gwynedd 2027 - 2035

39. By considering the research into economic and social value, the agreed vision and principles, as well as the feedback from the sector that action is the most important thing rather than 'words'; an action plan for culture in Gwynedd was developed.
40. A workshop of the Gwynedd Culture Shadow Steering Group to develop an Action Plan was held virtually on 9 June 2026 and in person at Storiell on 7 July 2026.
41. The draft Action Plan (**Appendix 2**) highlights areas of action to be adopted to support and develop the culture sector in Gwynedd.
42. Up to 30 actions are highlighted that have been divided into foundational, short term, medium term and ambitious implementation periods.
43. It is expected that the Culture Steering Board will take ownership of monitoring the implementation and delivery of the Action Plan once arrangements have been confirmed.

44. The final Plan will identify appropriate measures that the sector can adopt to monitor the implementation and delivery of the action plan.

Resources and funding

45. It should be noted that additional resources will not derive from the formulation of a vision, principles and action plan – but it will be a way of pulling together the culture sector in Gwynedd and a means of applying for financial resources from external funding sources.
46. In parallel with the vision and principles, it is also planned to establish the Gwynedd Culture Network as a forum that will share good practice, support networking and own the vision and principles. A Shadow Board has already been set up and membership has been agreed for 2026.
47. This network will be an evolution of the Creative Gwynedd network already established as an arts network in the county, and will build on the success and learn from the operation of that network while adapting into a cultural network for Gwynedd.
48. This is the first time that Gwynedd has supported a network for the culture sector as a whole and will be an evolution of the Creative Gwynedd forum.
49. It is suggested by the culture sector that these are visions and principles that could be adopted by Cyngor Gwynedd, but with support and ownership from the sector to be realised through the new culture network and culture steering board.

Consultation

50. Extensive consultation was carried out in the development of the Vision, principles and Action Plan through representatives from the culture sector in Gwynedd as well as Cyngor Gwynedd's culture services.
51. The consultation sessions held are highlighted in the report.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

52. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out clear well-being goals to ensure the well-being of future generations.
53. This work addresses each of the 7 well-being goals and this is highlighted in the agreed vision and principles.
54. Recently, the Future Generations Commissioner's Office has been prioritising the field of 'A Wales with a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language', and a representative from Cyngor Gwynedd attended a study visit to Bradford where they had placed Culture at the centre of their corporate plans. We received a presentation from a representative of the Future Generations Commissioner's Office during our event at Portmeirion in March 2026, highlighting the importance of culture to the act and highlighting the Office's priorities, and we have kept in contact with the Office when developing this work.
55. Residents and service users were **included** by holding a public culture event at the beginning of the process for anyone who had an interest in the field of culture in Gwynedd. Over 70 people attended that meeting at Nyth, Bangor. The vision, the principles and the Action Plan were all developed following this initial meeting. A second public meeting was held in Portmeirion to present and receive feedback on the work.

56. **Collaboration** has taken place throughout the process of developing a vision and principles for Culture in Gwynedd, as well as the Action Plan. This ensures joint-ownership of the work when looking to the future and establishing a Culture Network for Gwynedd will ensure that the collaboration will continue in the future as we implement and support the culture sector.
57. The establishment of a Gwynedd Culture Network with a Steering Board will ensure that we **prevent** problems from arising or being able to respond to them in partnership before they worsen. Regular networking and collaboration will ensure that we prevent problems from arising.
58. It has been agreed for the vision and principles to be **long-term** in order to pull the sector together. The Action Plan which will be reviewed regularly sets out priorities for action over the short, medium and long term and there will be an opportunity to revise and evolve during the annual review process.
59. To ensure **integration**, other public bodies were invited to attend the events to develop the vision, principles and Action Plan including: Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Arts Council of Wales, Welsh Government, Eryri National Park Authority, Cyngor Gwynedd Cultural Services and other cultural partners from North Wales.

Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-economic Duty

60. A Composite Impact Assessment has been prepared and can be found in [Appendix 3](#).
61. The Assessment highlights the opportunities that exist through the development of this work to collaborate to ensure that everyone benefits from Gwynedd's culture.
62. The Plan will ensure that Culture in Gwynedd collaborates towards a single vision and principles and action plan that will ensure the best for the people of Gwynedd.
63. It highlights how implementation is planned to be monitored and assessed and the structure proposed to be established through the Gwynedd Culture Network supported by a Strategic Board to promote collaboration, the implementation of the Action Plan and to monitor the success of the plan.

Next Steps

64. It is intended to consider any comments and suggestions made by the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in further discussions with the Shadow Steering Board before the vision, principles and Action Plan are discussed and adopted by the Cabinet during their meeting on 10 November.
65. It is intended to launch the work on 19 November 2026 at an event to celebrate the value of Gwynedd's culture.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Assessment of the Economic and Social Value of The Culture Sector in Gwynedd

Appendix 2 – Draft Action Plan

Appendix 3 – Composite Impact Assessment

ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VALUE OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR IN GWYNEDD

Economic Assessment

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Background and aims of the study
3. Scope of the study
4. Report Findings
5. Methodology
6. Data sources and proxy values
7. Conclusions
8. Appendix 1. Sources and proxy measures used in the assessment

Assessment of the economic value of the cultural sector in the Gwynedd area

Executive Summary

This report assesses the economic and wider social value of the cultural sector across Gwynedd and provides an evidence base to inform future investment, policy development, and the implementation of the Gwynedd Cultural Action Plan. The assessment has been prepared to demonstrate the contribution that culture makes to Gwynedd's economy through employment, organisational activity, visitor expenditure, supply chains, and wider local economic resilience, while also recognising the broader wellbeing and community benefits generated by cultural participation and investment.

The analysis finds that the cultural sector in Gwynedd generates an estimated total annual economic contribution of £316.07 million. This comprises £121.98 million of direct economic activity generated by cultural organisations and cultural businesses themselves, £135.54 million of indirect impact through supply-chain expenditure, and £58.55 million of induced impact generated by the spending of wages and earnings within the wider regional economy. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that culture is a significant economic sector within Gwynedd and one that supports activity well beyond the organisations directly delivering cultural provision.

The direct contribution of the sector reflects the breadth and diversity of cultural activity taking place across the county. The largest element of direct economic value is generated by the Creative Industries and wider cultural business sector, estimated at £77.63 million per annum. Heritage attractions, museums, and archives contribute a further £28.62 million, underlining the importance of Gwynedd's distinctive historic environment and internationally recognised cultural assets. Performing arts and events, craft and applied arts, libraries and literature, and visual arts and galleries each make additional contributions, demonstrating that the sector functions as an interconnected cultural economy rather than a set of isolated activities.

The analysis also shows that the cultural sector has strong multiplier effects across Gwynedd's wider economy. Indirect effects are generated as cultural organisations purchase goods and services from businesses in areas such as maintenance, transport, marketing, retail, construction, and professional services. Induced effects arise when those employed directly and indirectly through the sector spend their income locally. These wider impacts are substantial and show that the economic value of culture extends beyond immediate organisational income to support broader business activity, jobs, and expenditure across Gwynedd.

A further finding of the report is that the cultural sector generates significant wider social value. Using HM Treasury Green Book-aligned wellbeing valuation methods, the

assessment estimates that cultural activity in Gwynedd generates £178.02 million of social value annually. This includes value associated with economic outcomes, health and wellbeing, social and community cohesion, education and skills, environmental stewardship, and cultural identity. While the main emphasis of this report is economic, the scale of wider social value reinforces the conclusion that culture contributes materially to Gwynedd's quality of life as well as to its economy.

The report has been developed using a robust and proportionate methodology designed to reflect the characteristics of Gwynedd's cultural economy. The assessment combines national and local datasets, evidence from cultural organisations, visitor economy information, case study material, and established multiplier techniques. Direct effects are estimated from observed turnover, expenditure, attendance, and organisational activity where data are available, while indirect and induced effects are modelled using recognised economic relationships and assumptions on local capture, leakage, and household expenditure. Social value is treated as a separate analytical strand, using recognised proxy measures and wellbeing valuation approaches to estimate outcomes that are not directly priced in markets.

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that culture should be understood as an important part of Gwynedd's economic infrastructure rather than as a discretionary or peripheral activity. The sector supports local employment, attracts visitors, sustains supply chains, strengthens towns and communities, and contributes to the attractiveness of Gwynedd as a place to live, work and visit. The findings provide a clear basis for continued investment in cultural infrastructure, programming and organisational capacity, and they establish an evidence base from which future priorities can be identified and progress monitored over time.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Deyton Bell and Counterculture on behalf of Cyngor Gwynedd to assess the economic and social value of the cultural sector across Gwynedd.

The study has been commissioned as part of Cyngor Gwynedd's wider programme to support and strengthen culture across the county, following successful funding secured through the Welsh Government's *Priorities for Culture – Extended Local Support for the Museums, Archives and Libraries Sector* programme. The commission responds to a growing recognition of the importance of culture in supporting thriving communities, economic resilience, wellbeing, identity, and the Welsh language throughout Gwynedd.

The cultural sector, as defined by Welsh Government, encompasses the arts, museums, libraries, archives, the historic environment, and the Creative Industries. Collectively, these activities and organisations make a substantial contribution to the quality of life of Gwynedd residents, support employment and local businesses, attract visitors, safeguard heritage, and create opportunities for participation, learning, and creativity.

The purpose of this assessment is to establish a robust evidence base demonstrating the current contribution of culture to Gwynedd's economy and society. The findings are intended to support future investment, inform decision-making, strengthen advocacy for the sector, and be a foundation for the development of the Gwynedd Cultural Action Plan.

The report examines both the measurable economic impacts generated by cultural activity and the wider social value created through participation, engagement, volunteering, wellbeing, community cohesion, cultural identity, and the promotion of the Welsh language. The assessment draws upon national and local datasets, evidence provided by cultural organisations and partners, stakeholder engagement, and a series of case studies highlighting examples of good practice from across the county.

This work has also been informed by discussions already undertaken through the Gwynedd Cultural Network and the development of a shared vision for culture in Gwynedd. That emerging vision recognises culture as a vital and innovative force rooted within communities, enriching wellbeing, strengthening identity, supporting economic prosperity, and celebrating the Welsh language and the unique heritage of Gwynedd. The objectives of this report are to:

- Assess the economic value of the cultural sector in Gwynedd.
- Assess the social value and wider community benefits generated through cultural activity.
- Identify examples of effective practice and innovation within the sector.
- Highlight current strengths, challenges, and opportunities.
- Provide an evidence base to inform the Gwynedd Cultural Action Plan and future investment priorities.

- Support the continued development of a connected and resilient cultural sector across Gwynedd.

The report should be viewed as both an assessment of the sector's current contribution and a strategic resource to support the future development of culture in Gwynedd.

2. BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

2.1 Background

Culture plays a significant role in the economic life of Gwynedd. The county is home to a diverse range of cultural organisations, activities, venues and practitioners, including museums, libraries, archives, heritage sites, arts organisations, festivals, creative practitioners, and community-led cultural initiatives. Together, these contribute to local employment, support tourism, attract external investment and generate spending across a range of sectors.

Cyngor Gwynedd has undertaken significant work in recent years to strengthen collaboration across the cultural sector, including the establishment of the Gwynedd Cultural Network and engagement with cultural organisations throughout the county. These discussions have highlighted the importance of culture not only as a social and community asset, but also as an economic driver that contributes to the vitality and resilience of Gwynedd's communities.

The cultural sector also plays a key role in supporting wider policy objectives, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Welsh Government cultural priorities, economic development ambitions, and the promotion of the Welsh language. Culture contributes directly to employment and business activity while also supporting tourism, place-making, community confidence, and the attractiveness of Gwynedd as a place to live, work and visit.

Despite this importance, there has not previously been a comprehensive assessment of the economic value generated by the cultural sector across Gwynedd. This study seeks to address that evidence gap and provide a clear understanding of the contribution culture makes to the local economy.

2.2 Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to assess the economic value of the cultural sector within Gwynedd and to establish a robust evidence base to support future decision-making and investment.

The study seeks to:

- Quantify the direct economic contribution of the cultural sector within Gwynedd.
- Assess the indirect and induced economic impacts generated through cultural activity, employment, and supply chains.
- Examine the contribution of culture to visitor expenditure and the wider visitor economy.
- Identify the economic value generated through publicly funded cultural activity and investment.
- Demonstrate the contribution of culture to local economic resilience, employment, and creative business growth.

- Provide evidence to support future funding applications, policy development, and strategic planning.
- Inform the development and implementation of the Gwynedd Cultural Action Plan.

The assessment is intended to provide both a snapshot of the current economic contribution of culture and a framework that can support future monitoring and evaluation of the sector.

3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This assessment examines the economic contribution of the cultural sector within Gwynedd. The study considers the broad definition of culture adopted by Welsh Government, encompassing the arts, museums, libraries, archives, and the historic environment, and the Creative Industries.

3.1 Areas of Analysis

The assessment focuses on the following dimensions of economic impact:

- Employment and workforce impacts, including jobs directly supported by cultural organisations and activities.
- Organisational expenditure and local supply chain impacts arising from the purchase of goods and services.
- Income generation through cultural activity, including ticket sales, admissions, memberships, commissions, grants, and commercial activity.
- Visitor expenditure associated with cultural participation, including spending on accommodation, food and drink, transport, retail, and other local services.
- Indirect and induced economic effects generated through spending by cultural organisations, employees, and visitors.
- The wider contribution of culture to economic development, place attractiveness, and the visitor economy.

3.2 Exclusions

This report focuses solely on the economic contribution of culture within Gwynedd.

The study does not seek to provide a detailed assessment of social, cultural, educational or wellbeing impacts, which are considered separately within the wider commission. Similarly, the assessment does not quantify environmental impacts, carbon reduction benefits or wider societal outcomes generated by cultural activity.

3.3 Limitations

The findings presented within this report should be interpreted in the context of several limitations.

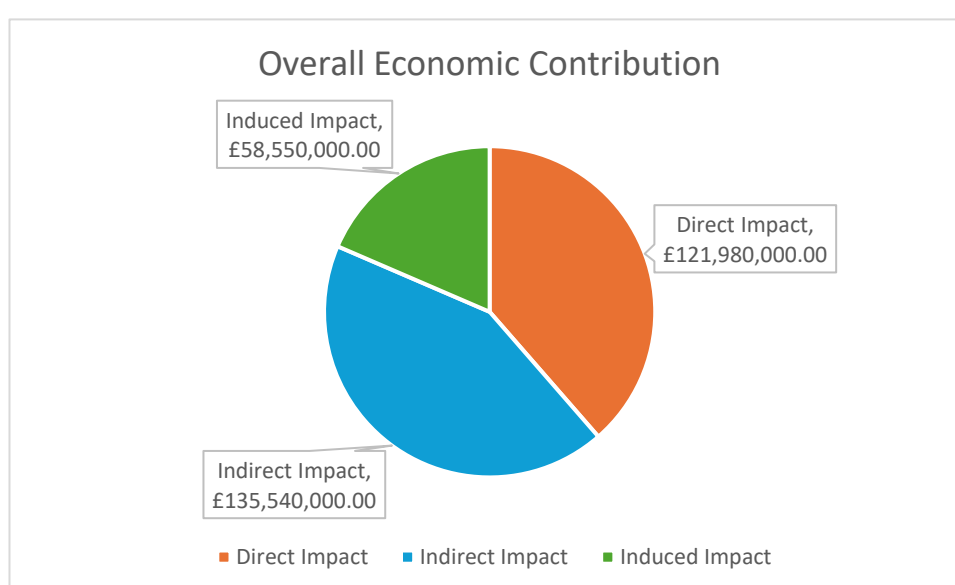
The availability and consistency of data across the cultural sector varies significantly between organisations and activities. In some cases, estimates and assumptions have been applied using recognised economic modelling approaches where complete local data is unavailable.

The assessment is intended to provide a robust estimate of economic value rather than an exact measure of all economic activity generated by culture.

4. REPORT FINDINGS

4.1 Overall Economic Contribution

The assessment estimates that the cultural sector generates a total annual economic contribution of **£316.07 million** for Gwynedd. This comprises direct, indirect, and induced impacts generated through cultural organisations, visitor expenditure, supply chains, and employee spending. The findings demonstrate that culture is a significant contributor to Gwynedd's economy, supporting businesses, employment, and wider economic activity across the county.



Component	Value (£m, p.a.)	Comment
Direct impact	£121.98m	GVA/output generated by cultural organisations in Gwynedd
Indirect impact	£135.54m	Additional Supply-chain effects
Induced impact	£58.55m	Wage-spend effects in the Gwynedd / regional economy
Total economic benefits	£316.07m	Overall economic contribution
Social value	£178.02m	Monetised wellbeing and wider social outcomes (Green Book-aligned)

Direct impacts account for approximately £122 million of economic activity generated by cultural organisations themselves. A further £135.5 million is generated through supply chain activity, while employee expenditure contributes an estimated £58.6 million through

induced effects. This demonstrates that the benefits of cultural investment extend well beyond the organisations delivering cultural activity.

4.2 Direct Economic Contribution

Direct economic impacts represent the value created through the operation of cultural organisations, attractions, and creative businesses within Gwynedd. This includes employment, organisational expenditure, admissions, trading income and associated economic activity.

Activity	Benefits	Comment
Heritage, Museums & Archives	£28.62m	Includes Castles, Slate, Railways, Portmeirion etc.
Libraries & Literature	£1.42m	
Performing Arts and Events	£6.51m	Includes; Theatres and cultural events
Visual Arts & Galleries	£1.18m	
Craft & Applied Arts	£6.62m	
Creative Industries & Wider Cultural Business	£77.63m	Includes the Creative Industries (e.g. design, media, publishing, music and the audio-visual sector) and other cultural and creative businesses operating across Gwynedd
Total Direct Benefits	£121.98m	

The largest direct contribution comes from the Creative Industries and wider cultural business sector (£77.63 million), reflecting the breadth of creative enterprises operating across Gwynedd. Heritage attractions, museums, and archives contribute £28.62 million, underlining the importance of Gwynedd's internationally recognised heritage assets to the local economy. Performing arts, festivals, craft industries, libraries, and visual arts all make important contributions despite their comparatively smaller scale.

4.3 Indirect and Induced Effects

The analysis demonstrates that the cultural sector has substantial multiplier effects throughout the wider economy. Organisations purchase goods and services from local suppliers, creating indirect impacts estimated at £135.54 million. Staff employed within the sector also spend their earnings within the local economy, generating a further £58.55 million in induced economic activity.

4.4 Social Value

Although this report focuses primarily on the economic contribution of the cultural sector in Gwynedd, the analysis also identifies substantial wider social value generated through cultural participation and investment. Using HM Treasury Green Book-aligned wellbeing valuation methodologies, the assessment estimates that the cultural sector generates approximately £178.02 million of social value annually.

The greatest proportion of this value is associated with economic outcomes, including employment opportunities, visitor spending, and supply chain activity. Significant additional value is generated through improvements in health and wellbeing, strengthened community cohesion, volunteering, education and skills development, environmental stewardship, and the preservation and promotion of Gwynedd's unique cultural identity and Welsh language.

These findings reinforce the view that investment in culture delivers benefits well beyond direct financial returns. Cultural organisations and activities contribute to healthier communities, stronger local identity, increased civic participation and improved quality of life, while also supporting broader public policy objectives across health, education, regeneration, and community development.

Component	Value	Comment
Economic	71.21m	Jobs, GVA, visitor economy, supply-chain effects
Health and wellbeing	44.51m	Wellbeing valuation, avoids NHS/mental health costs communities
Social and community	26.72m	Social capital, reduced isolation, volunteering communities
Education and skills	17.78m	Attainment, creative skills, Welsh language skills
Environmental/place	8.39m	Heritage asset condition, sustainable practices
Cultural and identity	9.41m	Pride in place, cultural distinctiveness, language
Total	178.02m	

A separate companion report considers the wider social, community and wellbeing impacts generated by culture across Gwynedd.

4.5 Economic Significance

The analysis reveals that the sector supports strong levels of local employment, sustains supply chains, attracts visitors, and contributes to the vitality of towns and communities across the county. The scale of economic activity identified within this assessment

reinforces the importance of continued investment in cultural infrastructure and programming.

4.6 Wider Economic Context

To help place these findings in context, this section compares the scale of the cultural sector's economic contribution against the size of the wider Gwynedd and Welsh economies. According to Office for National Statistics Regional Accounts data published via StatsWales, Gwynedd's total economic output, measured as Gross Value Added (GVA), was estimated at £2,842 million in 2023, the latest year for which figures are available (provisional). Wales' total GVA over the same period was estimated at £81,458 million.

On this basis, the cultural sector's total annual economic contribution of £316.07 million represents approximately 11% of Gwynedd's entire economic output – a substantial share for a sector that is sometimes perceived as a discretionary or peripheral part of the local economy. Even considering only the direct economic activity generated by cultural organisations and cultural businesses themselves (£121.98 million), culture accounts for over 4% of Gwynedd's GVA, placing it on a scale comparable with other recognised sectors of the local economy. At a national level, Gwynedd's cultural sector contribution of £316.07 million is equivalent to approximately 0.4% of the total GVA of Wales as a whole, reflecting the fact that Gwynedd accounts for a relatively small, though economically significant, share of the wider Welsh economy.

Metric	Value	Source / Basis
Gwynedd total economic output (GVA), 2023 [p]	£2,842m	ONS Regional Accounts, via StatsWales
Wales total economic output (GVA), 2023 [p]	£81,458m	ONS Regional Accounts, via StatsWales
Cultural sector total economic contribution as a share of Gwynedd GVA	~11%	£316.07m ÷ £2,842m
Cultural sector direct economic contribution as a share of Gwynedd GVA	~4%	£121.98m ÷ £2,842m
Cultural sector total economic contribution as a share of Wales GVA	~0.4%	£316.07m ÷ £81,458m
Total jobs supported in Gwynedd (workplace-based)	69,000	ONS Jobs Density estimates (Nomis)

These comparisons illustrate that culture is not a marginal contributor to Gwynedd's prosperity, but one of the county's significant economic sectors, generating economic activity on a scale that stands alongside other core parts of the local economy. For further context on the scale of Gwynedd's wider economy, the county supported an estimated 69,000 jobs (workplace-based) according to the latest available ONS labour

market statistics, providing an additional benchmark against which the scale of cultural sector activity identified in this assessment can be understood, even though a directly comparable employment headcount specifically for the cultural sector falls outside the scope of the data available for this report. As with the other estimates in this report, these comparative figures should be treated as broad indicators of scale rather than precise measures, given differences in the base years, methodologies and revisions between datasets.

5. METHODOLOGY

The methodology set out an analytical approach to calculate the economic value of Gwynedd's cultural sector and should be read as the technical underpinning to the main report. The report defines the cultural sector broadly, in line with Welsh Government practice, to include the arts, museums, libraries, archives, the historic environment, and the Creative Industries, and it assesses direct, indirect, and induced effects within Gwynedd alongside the contribution of culture to the visitor economy.

The assessment is designed to provide a robust estimate of economic value rather than a precise census of every transaction generated by culture. This reflects the report's stated use of mixed evidence sources, including national and local datasets, information supplied by organisations, visitor economy evidence, case studies, and recognised multiplier-based economic impact techniques.

5.1 Analytical framework

The methodology is built around a standard local economic impact model with four main components: direct effects, indirect effects, induced effects, and social value. In the main report, these were brought together to estimate a total annual economic contribution of £316.07 million, comprising £121.98 million of direct impact, £135.54 million of indirect impact and £58.55 million of induced impact, with a separate social value estimate of £178.02 million.

For economic assessment purposes, the direct effect captures the activity generated by cultural organisations and cultural businesses themselves, including turnover, operational expenditure, employment, and visitor-related income directly attributable to cultural activity. The indirect effect captures the supply-chain activity generated when those organisations purchase goods and services from other businesses, while the induced effect captures the additional household expenditure supported by wages and salaries associated with direct and indirect employment.

5.2 Sector definition and scope

The main report adopts a deliberately broad cultural definition so that the assessment reflects the structure of Gwynedd's local cultural economy rather than a narrow arts-only model. The sector therefore includes heritage attractions, museums, archives, libraries, literature activity, performing arts and events, visual arts and galleries, craft and applied arts, and the Creative Industries and wider cultural business base operating in Gwynedd.

The geographic core of the assessment is Gwynedd local authority area. However, the report recognises that some economic effects extend beyond the county boundary, especially where cultural activity attracts visitors from elsewhere in Wales, the wider UK and overseas, so the method distinguishes between impacts that occur locally within Gwynedd and broader spillover effects where evidence allows.

5.3 Evidence base and data collection

The methodology draws on both primary and secondary evidence. The report states that evidence was assembled from national datasets published by Welsh Government, the Office for National Statistics and other public bodies; monitoring and performance information from cultural organisations and projects; financial and operational information from organisations where available; visitor economy and tourism datasets; case study evidence; and multiplier techniques commonly used in economic impact assessment.

In practical terms, this means the model combines bottom-up evidence with top-down benchmarking. Bottom-up evidence is used where organisations can provide actual figures on employment, expenditure, turnover, admissions, participation, ticket sales, memberships, commissions, grant income, or visitor numbers, while top-down assumptions are used where local information is incomplete, inconsistent, or unavailable.

5.4 Estimating direct effects

Direct effects are estimated by identifying the gross economic activity generated by cultural organisations, venues, sites, events, and related cultural businesses within Gwynedd. This includes organisational turnover or output, employment supported directly by cultural activity, operating expenditure, admissions and earned income, and other forms of directly attributable commercial or grant-supported activity.

The direct model is structured by sub-sector to reflect the composition of Gwynedd's cultural economy. In the report, direct contributions are presented for heritage, museums, and archives; libraries and literature; performing arts and events; visual arts and galleries; craft and applied arts; and the Creative Industries and wider cultural business sector, which together sum to £121.98 million per annum.

5.5 Direct impact construction

The direct estimate is a synthesis of several evidence streams. Where audited or management accounts are available, turnover and expenditure data can be used directly; where attendance data exist for venues, attractions or events, these can be translated into expenditure effects using visitor-spend assumptions; and where only partial local data are available, benchmark relationships between employment, turnover and output can be applied using sector averages or comparable cultural evidence.

Care is required to avoid double counting within the direct estimate. For example, income received by one cultural organisation from another cultural organisation within Gwynedd should not be counted twice if both bodies are already included in the study population; similarly, grants and transfers should be treated carefully so that the methodology measures economic activity generated, rather than merely tracing the movement of funding between institutions.

5.6 Visitor economy effects

A central element of the methodology is the treatment of visitor expenditure associated with culture. The report explicitly identifies visitor spending on accommodation, food and drink, transport, retail, and other local services as part of the economic contribution being assessed, and it recognises culture's role in supporting the wider visitor economy of Gwynedd.

In methodological terms, visitor impacts have been estimated by applying an attribution approach. This involves identifying visitor volumes linked to cultural activity, distinguishing between residents and visitors from outside Gwynedd, and estimating the proportion of expenditure that can reasonably be attributed to the cultural offer rather than to general tourism demand.

Where survey evidence is available, the preferred method is to use locally observed expenditure and motivation data. Where this is not available, regional, or national tourism spend benchmarks have been applied to visitor counts, adjusted for trip purpose, origin, length of stay and the share of spend that is additional to Gwynedd rather than displaced from elsewhere in the county.

5.7 Estimating indirect effects

Indirect effects are estimated using expenditure patterns and multiplier relationships to show how cultural organisations support activity in their supply chains. The report describes this as the additional supply-chain effect generated by organisational spending and estimates it at £135.54 million per annum.

In practice, this stage requires the classification of organisational expenditure into broad input categories such as professional services, maintenance, utilities, catering, marketing, transport, retail supply, production services and construction or facilities-related spending. Local retention assumptions are then applied to estimate what proportion of this spending is captured by businesses within Gwynedd, after which multipliers are used to trace the additional rounds of business-to-business activity supported in the local economy.

5.8 Local capture and leakages

A key methodological issue is the treatment of leakages. Not all spending by cultural organisations remains within Gwynedd, particularly where specialist goods or services are procured from outside the county, so the model has applied realistic assumptions about local sourcing rather than assuming full local retention. A figure of 7.5% has been used in line with Green Book guidance.

This is especially important in a county economy such as Gwynedd, where some procurement may flow to suppliers elsewhere in North Wales, the rest of Wales or beyond. The indirect model therefore needs to estimate the proportion of expenditure captured locally, the share leaking outside the area, and the share that represents imports into the county economy.

5.9 Estimating induced effects

Induced effects measure the household-spending impact arising from wages, salaries and self-employed earnings supported by the cultural sector. In the Gwynedd report, this element is estimated at £58.55 million per annum and represents the spending of employees and workers whose income is supported directly or indirectly by cultural activity.

The induced model begins with labour income associated with the direct and indirect effects. A proportion of this income is then assumed to be spent within Gwynedd on consumer goods and services, with adjustments made for taxation, savings, commuting patterns, and spending leakages outside the county. Appropriate household expenditure multipliers are then applied to estimate the additional output or income supported in local retail, hospitality, transport, and service sectors.

5.10 Gross and net additionality

To ensure that the estimates are decision-useful, the methodology moves from gross effects towards net additional impacts wherever evidence allows. This requires explicit consideration of additionality factors including deadweight, displacement, leakage, and substitution.

- Deadweight considers the extent to which the identified activity would have happened anyway without the cultural organisation, asset, or intervention.
- Displacement considers whether spending or employment supported by culture simply diverts demand from other businesses or places within Gwynedd.
- Leakage considers the share of expenditure that leaves the Gwynedd economy.
- Substitution considers whether consumers or organisations are replacing one form of local activity with another rather than creating additional value.

In a strategic sector-wide study such as this, some estimates may remain closer to gross contribution than to fully net impact because of evidence limitations.

5.11 Treatment of employment, turnover and GVA

The report refers to economic value in broad terms and presents the main headline as total annual economic contribution. The methodology uses Turnover or output measures total business revenues or production value, whereas GVA measures the value generated after subtracting intermediate inputs and is the most appropriate measure for comparing sector contribution to the local economy.

For consistency, the approach used has built the model from observed turnover or expenditure and then convert to GVA and employment using sector-relevant ratios where direct GVA data are unavailable. This allows sub-sector estimates to be combined into a coherent framework and avoids double counting intermediate transactions.

5.12 Social value interface

The social value estimate of £178.02 million has been calculated using Green Book-aligned wellbeing valuation methods. Social value is therefore treated as a separate analytical strand and is not added into direct, indirect, or induced economic benefits until the reporting stage, to prevent conceptual overlap.

Social Value has been calculated by:

- Identifying a set of outcome domains (e.g. health and wellbeing, social and community, education and skills, environmental/place, cultural identity, economic outcomes).
- For Gwynedd, the report groups Social Value into six components with associated values: Economic, Health and wellbeing, Social and community, Education and skills, Environmental/place, and Cultural and identity.

We then established specific indicators and beneficiary groups

- For each outcome, identify measurable indicators (e.g. number of participants, volunteers, events, learning opportunities, heritage assets maintained, Welsh language use).
- Define who experiences each outcome: residents, visitors, volunteers, participants, organisations, specific communities.

We applied wellbeing valuation or proxy values

- Using HM Treasury Green Book-aligned wellbeing valuation and/or recognised social value proxies to convert outcomes into monetary values.
- Typical approaches include:
 - Wellbeing valuation (linking changes in life satisfaction to equivalent income changes).
 - Social Value Bank or similar proxy libraries for outcomes like “improved confidence,” “relief from anxiety/depression,” “frequent arts participation,” “feeling belonging to a community.”
 - Project-specific valuations for outcomes such as improved educational attainment or reduced health service use.

This approach underpinned the calculation of Social Value generated by the Gwynedd Cultural sector.

6. DATA SOURCES AND PROXY VALUES

This section sets out the data sources and proxy measures used to assess the economic and social value of the cultural sector in Gwynedd. The approach has been designed to provide a robust and proportionate evidence base, drawing on official statistics, local organisational information, recognised economic modelling techniques and established social value valuation frameworks. In line with the wider report, the findings should be understood as robust estimates of value rather than precise measures of every effect generated by cultural activity. The full list of Sources used to develop this report are detailed at Appendix 1.

6.1 Data sources for the economic assessment

The economic assessment has been informed by a combination of national, regional, and local evidence sources. These include official datasets published by the Office for National Statistics, Welsh Government evidence relating to the culture and creative sectors in Wales, local and project-level information supplied by organisations operating within Gwynedd, and economic studies previously undertaken for the arts, culture, and heritage sectors.

At a national level, Office for National Statistics sources provide the core evidence base for employment, turnover, gross value added and input-output relationships across relevant cultural and creative industries. In particular, the Annual Business Survey and the Business Register and Employment Survey provide benchmark data on the scale and structure of economic activity, while Supply-Use Tables and input-output modelling provide the basis for estimating indirect and induced effects.

At a Wales level, the assessment draws upon Welsh Government reviews of the culture sector evidence base and wider economic evidence relating to culture, creativity, and heritage. These sources provide context on the Welsh cultural economy and help to ensure that assumptions used within the Gwynedd model are grounded in the most relevant national and regional evidence available.

Sector-specific studies have also informed the assessment. These include economic impact work undertaken for Arts Council Wales and wider UK studies on the contribution of the arts and cultural sector to the economy. Such studies provide methodological benchmarks, ratios and parameters that can be adapted to the Gwynedd context where complete local data is unavailable.

Alongside these published sources, the model has been informed by local evidence supplied by cultural organisations, partners, and stakeholders in Gwynedd. This includes, where available, information on organisational expenditure, staffing, earned income, grants, attendance, participation, visitor activity, and wider operational performance. Local visitor economy evidence and relevant heritage and destination studies have also

been used to inform assumptions on visitor expenditure and the relationship between culture and the wider Gwynedd economy.

6.2 Sources used for social value assessment

The social value assessment has been developed using recognised wellbeing valuation and social value frameworks that are compatible with HM Treasury Green Book principles. These sources are used to assign monetary proxy values to outcomes that are not fully captured through market transactions, such as improved wellbeing, reduced isolation, increased community participation, educational gains, strengthened identity, and pride in place.

The Green Book provides the overarching framework for the treatment of non-market outcomes in appraisal and evaluation. It supports the use of wellbeing valuation and wider cost-benefit techniques to estimate the value of social and community outcomes generated through public investment.

To support the practical monetisation of outcomes, the assessment draws on recognised proxy frameworks including the National TOMs approach and the National Social Value Standard. These frameworks provide proxy values for a wide range of outcomes relevant to the cultural sector, including employment, volunteering, community cohesion, skills development, environmental improvements, and wider social benefits.

The assessment is also informed by wellbeing valuation sources such as the Social Value Bank and related outcome libraries, together with wider research on the creation and measurement of social value in the cultural sector. These sources help to identify suitable proxies for outcomes such as improved mental wellbeing, confidence, belonging, social connection and participation in arts and cultural activity.

In addition, culture-specific guidance and case study material has been used to sense-check the application of proxy values within the Gwynedd context. This includes good practice material on the social value of culture, heritage, and community projects, as well as guidance focused specifically on social value measurement in the cultural sector.

6.3 Use of proxy measures

Proxy measures are used where outcomes generated by cultural activity are real and significant but are not directly traded in markets and therefore do not have an observable price. In these instances, a monetary proxy is used as a reasonable estimate of the value created, drawing on established national frameworks and recognised valuation practice.

Within this assessment, proxy measures have been applied across the principal social value domains identified in the report. Economic proxies relate to outcomes such as employment, income generation, visitor expenditure, and local business effects. Health and wellbeing proxies relate to improved life satisfaction, reduced anxiety, reduced

isolation, and better mental wellbeing. Social and community proxies capture outcomes such as volunteering, stronger social capital, and increased participation. Education and skills proxies reflect learning, attainment, employability, and language development. Environmental and place proxies reflect stewardship, heritage condition, and place quality, while cultural and identity proxies relate to pride in place, cultural distinctiveness, and the Welsh language.

The choice of proxy in each case has been guided by relevance, comparability, and proportionality. Where more than one proxy may be applicable, the approach has been to select values that are credible, conservative, and appropriate to the nature and scale of the outcome being assessed. This is intended to ensure that the social value estimates remain robust and defensible within a strategic county-wide assessment.

6.4 Treatment of additionality and limitations

As with the economic assessment, the monetised social value estimates should not be interpreted as exact measures. They represent robust estimates based on the best available evidence and on the use of recognised valuation frameworks. In applying proxy measures, it is important to consider the extent to which outcomes are genuinely additional, the proportion that can be attributed to cultural activity, and the extent to which benefits may overlap across outcome categories.

Accordingly, the assessment has been guided by the principles of deadweight, displacement, leakage, attribution, and proportionality. While not every outcome can be observed directly at local level, the use of established frameworks and careful sense-checking against local evidence provides a sound basis for estimating the scale of social value generated by the cultural sector in Gwynedd.

Taken together, these data sources and proxy measures provide the evidence base underpinning the assessment of Gwynedd's cultural sector. They support a combined understanding of how culture contributes to economic activity, employment, visitor expenditure, wellbeing, identity, and community resilience across the county.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This assessment demonstrates that the cultural sector makes a substantial contribution to the economy of Gwynedd. The analysis estimates that cultural activity generates an annual economic impact of £316.07 million, comprising direct, indirect, and induced effects across the county. These findings demonstrate that culture is not only an important part of Gwynedd's identity and heritage, but also a significant economic sector that supports employment, businesses, visitor expenditure, and wider economic resilience.

The assessment highlights the diversity of Gwynedd's cultural economy. Heritage attractions, museums, archives, performing arts, creative businesses, visual arts, libraries, and craft industries each make important contributions, collectively supporting a vibrant and interconnected cultural ecosystem. The sector's economic benefits extend well beyond individual organisations, generating additional value through local supply chains, employee spending, and increased activity within the visitor economy.

Alongside these economic impacts, the wider assessment identifies considerable social value arising from cultural participation, including improvements in wellbeing, education, community cohesion and the preservation of Gwynedd's distinctive cultural identity and Welsh language. Together, these findings reinforce the importance of culture as a cross-cutting contributor to the county's economic, social, and environmental ambitions.

The evidence presented within this report provides a robust foundation for future decision-making and investment. It demonstrates that continued support for the cultural sector represents an investment in Gwynedd's wider economy, helping to sustain jobs, attract visitors, strengthen local businesses, and enhance the county's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit.

The findings will also inform the development of the Gwynedd Cultural Action Plan, providing an evidence base from which priorities can be identified, investment targeted and progress monitored over time. As the Cultural Network continues to develop and organisations work together across the county, there is a significant opportunity to build on these strengths, maximise economic impact and ensure that culture continues to play a leading role in Gwynedd's long-term prosperity.

APPENDIX 1: SOURCES AND PROXY MEASURES USED IN THE ASSESSMENT

Overview

This appendix sets out the principal sources used in the assessment of the economic and social value of Gwynedd's cultural sector. It is intended to provide a transparent reference point for the evidence base underpinning the report, including the data sources used in the economic assessment and the frameworks used to select and apply proxy measures within the social value assessment.

Economic evidence sources

The economic assessment draws on a combination of official statistics, Wales-specific evidence, sector studies, and local organisational information. These sources have been used to estimate the direct, indirect, and induced economic effects generated by cultural activity in Gwynedd.

Official statistics and national economic datasets

- **Office for National Statistics (ONS), Annual Business Survey (ABS).** Used to provide benchmark evidence on turnover and approximate gross value added across relevant arts, culture, and creative industry activities.
- **Office for National Statistics (ONS), Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES).** Used to inform assumptions on employment levels and workforce structure across relevant sectors.
- **Office for National Statistics (ONS), Supply–Use Tables and input-output relationships.** Used to support the estimation of indirect and induced multiplier effects through supply chains and household expenditure.
- **StatsWales / Office for National Statistics (ONS), Regional Gross Value Added (Balanced) by local authority.** Used to provide wider economic context in Section 4.6, benchmarking the cultural sector's contribution against total Gwynedd and Wales GVA (2023, provisional).
- **Nomis, Official Labour Market Statistics, Labour Market Profile - Gwynedd.** Used for the total workplace-based employment figure for Gwynedd cited in Section 4.6.

Wales-specific evidence

- **Welsh Government, Review of the Culture Sector Evidence Base in Wales.** Used to provide a Wales-specific overview of available data on the arts, museums, libraries, archives, and heritage sectors, and to identify the most relevant evidence sources for the assessment.

- **Alma Economics, Review of the Culture Sector Evidence Base in Wales.** Used as supporting material on the scope, structure, and evidence gaps within the Welsh cultural evidence base.
- **Welsh Government culture and creative sector evidence.** Used to provide contextual information on the wider Welsh cultural and creative economy and to ensure the Gwynedd assessment is aligned with national evidence and policy understanding.

Sector studies and benchmark reports

- **Arts Council of Wales, Economic Impact Report.** Used as a Wales-based benchmark on the economic contribution of arts and cultural activity and as a methodological reference point for the structure of the assessment.
- **Arts Council England / Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr), Contribution of the arts and culture industry to the UK economy.** Used as a benchmark source on the treatment of direct, indirect, and induced economic effects and on the wider contribution of culture to economic output, employment and value added.
- **Additional sector evidence on culture and place.** Wider cultural economy and heritage studies have been used as sense-checking sources where relevant to visitor economy assumptions, place impacts and the broader relationship between culture and local economic performance.

Local and organisational data

- **Financial and operational data supplied by cultural organisations in Gwynedd.** Used, where available, to inform estimates of employment, turnover, expenditure, attendance, participation, admissions, grants, and other aspects of operational activity.
- **Cyngor Gwynedd and partner monitoring information.** Used to support the understanding of local cultural activity, project performance, and the reach of cultural provision.
- **Visitor economy and heritage evidence for Gwynedd.** Used to inform assumptions relating to tourism, visitor behaviour, cultural attractions, and associated expenditure within the local economy.

Social value and proxy valuation sources

The social value assessment applies recognised valuation frameworks and proxy measures to estimate the monetary value of outcomes that are not directly priced within markets. These include outcomes relating to wellbeing, participation, identity, volunteering, education, community resilience, and place.

Core appraisal and valuation frameworks

- **HM Treasury, The Green Book, and associated appraisal guidance.** Used as the overarching framework for the treatment of non-market outcomes, proportionality, additionality, and valuation within public sector appraisal.
- **Wellbeing valuation approaches.** Used to support the monetisation of outcomes such as improved wellbeing, reduced isolation, increased confidence, belonging, and participation, where no direct market price exists.

Social value proxy frameworks

- **National TOMs (Themes, Outcomes and Measures).** Used as a recognised framework for measuring and monetising social value outcomes, including employment, volunteering, skills, community cohesion, and environmental impacts.
- **National Social Value Standard (NSVS).** Used as a contemporary measurement and proxy framework to support the selection of values for a range of social outcomes relevant to the cultural sector.
- **Social Value Bank and related wellbeing valuation libraries.** Used to identify suitable proxy values for outcomes such as mental wellbeing, social connection, confidence, reduced isolation, and broader quality of life improvements.

Culture-specific social value guidance

- **Social value of Culture, Heritage, Sports, and Community Projects.** Used as good practice guidance on the application of social value measurement in cultural and heritage settings.
- **Future Trends: Social value creation and measurement in the cultural sector.** Used as supporting guidance on the treatment of cultural participation, identity, wellbeing, and other sector-specific outcomes.
- **Research on social value creation and measurement in the cultural sector.** Used to inform the conceptual approach to cultural social value, including the valuation of belonging, community benefit, identity, and wider non-market cultural outcomes.

Proxy measure categories used in the assessment

Proxy measures have been applied across the principal domains of social value identified within the Gwynedd assessment. These categories are summarised below.

Domain	Indicative proxy areas	Principal source types
Economic	Employment, local business activity, visitor expenditure, supply-chain effects	National TOMs, NSVS, economic benchmark studies local.gov+2
Health and wellbeing	Improved wellbeing, reduced anxiety, reduced isolation, confidence, life satisfaction	Green Book, wellbeing valuation, Social Value Bank rics+2
Social and community	Volunteering, participation, social capital, cohesion, belonging	National TOMs, NSVS, culture-specific guidance local.gov+2
Education and skills	Learning, attainment, employability, language development	Green Book, NSVS, social value proxy frameworks rics+1
Environmental and place	Heritage stewardship, environmental quality, place condition, sense of place	Culture and heritage guidance, proxy valuation frameworks culturehive+1
Cultural and identity	Pride in place, cultural distinctiveness, Welsh language, identity and belonging	Culture-sector social value guidance and research ukri+2

Gwynedd Culture Action Plan – indicative timetable

The grouping is indicative and in draft form only. Actions can extend across more than one time period.

Foundations – set up in 2027

Ref	Action	Art Forms / Sub-sectors	Scale	Leader / Partners
A12	Place the Welsh language at the heart of cultural branding, interpretation and communication across locations and events.	All	Small	Cyngor Gwynedd; locations and partners
A17	Review and re-launch Creative Gwynedd as an independent Gwynedd Culture Network (committee, officers, website, membership), and seek funding in 2027 for it to be fully operational.	All	Small	Creative Gwynedd; Cyngor Gwynedd (Community Arts Service)
A18	Ensure a voice and representation for freelancers, and fair pay. Work to encourage the Welsh Government to publish a basic daily rate for artists' time.	All	Small	Gwynedd Culture Network
A23	Simplify and standardise the process of cultural data collection. Agree on 2-3 shared metrics	All	Small	Cyngor Gwynedd; sector partners
A24	Submit an application of around £20,000 to the Arts Council of Wales to fund county-wide data capacity	All	Small	Cyngor Gwynedd; Arts Council of Wales
A26	Align the plan with the Local Development Plan of the National Park and the Council (which are under review), the Well-being of Future Generations Act and other local and national policies (e.g. the Gwynedd Plan, cultural priorities)	All	Small	Cyngor Gwynedd; Eryri National Park Authority
A27	Co-ordinate a funding strategy to deliver the plan by creating a stream of funding applications	All	Small	Cyngor Gwynedd; Gwynedd Culture Network
A28	Agree on governance arrangements and an annual review cycle, reporting on progress against the six principles	All	Small	Cyngor Gwynedd; Gwynedd Culture Network

Delivery – 2027-29

Ref	Action	Art Forms / Sub-sectors	Scale	Leader / Partners
A01	Co-ordinated and organised collaboration across art forms, leading to exhibitions and public events	Visual arts, craft, multi-arts	Small	Gwynedd Culture Network; freelance artists
A02	Public art created by communities that bring together different groups (e.g. older people and primary school children)	Public art, mosaics, installations	Small	Freelance artists, schools; care and day placements; Cyngor Gwynedd
A10	Link the plan to the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales World Heritage Site and refurbishment of Amgueddfa Cymru (National Slate Museum)	Heritage, interpretation	Mixed	Amgueddfa Cymru (National Slate Museum); Cyngor Gwynedd
A11	A new "Slate Art" element: new creative work rooted in slate heritage and landscape	Visual arts, craft, sculpture	Small	Freelance artists, Slate Cymru partners
A13	Support capital works, and ongoing maintenance, which protect special cultural buildings and improve access and sustainability	Literature; multi-use venues	Large	Literature Wales (Tŷ Newydd) Neuadd Dyfi; Galeri, Pontio, Neuadd Dwyfor, Canolfan Sain, Theatr Bara Caws, Magic Lantern, Cyngor Gwynedd etc.
A14	Develop the cultural relationship with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, including social prescribing, with specific projects under it (e.g. "Coming to our Senses" Theatr Cynefin)	Nature-based creative practice	Mixed	Theatr Cynefin; Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
A16	Support artists and practitioners in all art forms working in the field of health and well-being	Creative writing, poetry	Small	Literature Wales; health partners
A19	Offer training and professional development (safeguarding, health and safety, tax/accounts, DBS, fund-raising, project management)	All	Small	Gwynedd Culture Network; partners (e.g. Literature Wales)
A21	Talent development pathway for young creatives (writers and artists aged 16-25, poet laureate and school work)	Writing; creative, broad	Small	Literature Wales (National Writing Cohort); schools; Network

Ref	Action	Art Forms / Sub-sectors	Scale	Leader / Partners
A22	Targeted support for visual artists, including studio space, exhibition opportunities and commissions	Visual arts, printmaking, applied arts	Small	Gwynedd Culture Network; Cyngor Gwynedd

Ongoing

Ref	Action	Art Forms / Sub-sectors	Scale	Leader / Partners
A03	Fund seasonal community events celebrating Welsh folk culture and villages	Folk, music, performance, seasonal traditions	Small	Community organisations; Cyngor Gwynedd
A04	Maintain low-cost, grass-roots' rural participation (from 5 years old to adult), with volunteering and development pathways	Circus skills, participatory arts	Small	Community partners
A05	Inclusive outreach through non-digital channels to reach older and rural audiences (not just online)	Cross-art	Small	Sector partners, libraries; Cyngor Gwynedd
A09	Small fund for experimental or unconventional commissions, with bold ideas that are not necessarily costly	All / experimental	Small	Gwynedd Culture Network
A15	Develop creative health, reminiscence and dementia work with health and social care partners	Music, reminiscence, craft	Small	Gwynedd Libraries; Dementia Actif Gwynedd; freelancers
A20	Develop provision of stable and affordable creative spaces. Start by understanding why the current provision is not being fully utilised, then work towards a proposal that meets the need, including a transitional space and a shared professional space for young people	All	Mixed	Cyngor Gwynedd; sector partners
A25	Develop mechanisms that make environmental and linguistic sustainability a key criterion in assessing and supporting creative and cultural proposals across the county	All	Mixed	All partners; Cyngor Gwynedd

Flagship period – Eisteddfodau 2027-28

Ref	Action	Art Forms / Sub-sectors	Scale	Leader / Partners
A06	A co-ordinated cultural programme working with and leading up to the two Eisteddfods: the National Eisteddfod (August 2027) and the Urdd Eisteddfod (May 2028)	Multi-art	Large	Cyngor Gwynedd; Eisteddfod Genedlaethol; Urdd Gobaith Cymru
A07	Commission a leading and transformative creative event in the spirit of Hedd Wyn's centenary in 2017	Performance, music, multi-art	Large	To be confirmed; Eisteddfod partners

Long-term ambition – up to 2035

Ref	Action	Art Forms / Sub-sectors	Scale	Leader / Partners
A08	Explore the possibility of submitting a bid for Bangor to be the UK City of Culture 2033, setting out the ambitions, milestones and challenges	All	Large	Cyngor Gwynedd; Steering Board

Composite Impact Assessment

This document assesses what impact the policy, procedure, plan, etc. will have on the county's population and will be implemented based on a number of legislations.

- **Equality Act 2010.** It places a duty on public organisations to give due attention to the effect of any new (or amended) policy, procedure or plan, etc. on persons with protected characteristics. We are required to
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment and unlawful victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
 - promote equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In Wales, the specific duty identifies the need to undertake an impact assessment following specific guidelines to consider the effect that any changes in policy or procedure (or the creation of a new policy or procedure), will have on persons with protected equality characteristics. A timely assessment must be made before any decision is taken on any relevant change (i.e. that affects people with protected equality characteristics).

- **Socio-economic Duty.** Wales has implemented this further duty which is part of the Equality Act 2010 and places a duty to address socio-economic disadvantages in strategic decisions.
- **Welsh Language Standards (Section 44 of the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011).** The Council is required to consider the impact that any change in policy or procedure (or the creation of a new policy or procedure), will have on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and to ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English. This document therefore ensures that these decisions safeguard and promote the use of the Welsh language.
- **Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.** The Council has a duty to implement the five ways of working and to respond to the seven national well-being goals.
- **Armed Forces Act 2021.** Councils must give due attention to the impact of this proposal on those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, as well as their families.

Assessment 21/09/2026: Gwynedd Culture Plan

Author: Roland Wyn Evans (ECON A CMND)

Job Title: Assistant Head Economy and Community

Date: 9/28/2026

Version: Draft I

STEP I - Main Aims and Objectives of the Policy or Practice

1. What kind of document or procedure is being assessed?

- Medium to long term plans (for example, corporate plans, development plans, service delivery and improvement plans)

2. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the policy or practice?

Developing a Vision, Principles, Network and Action Plan for culture in Gwynedd. The Plan will ensure that Culture in Gwynedd collaborates towards a single vision and principles and action plan that will ensure the best for the people of Gwynedd.

The draft vision that has been co-produced is:

"Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world.

Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future".

The six co-produced draft principles are:

- i. **Proud of Our Identity, Heritage and the Welsh Language**
Culture celebrates and promotes Gwynedd's unique identity, heritage, creativity, and the Welsh language, sharing them confidently with Wales and the wider world.
- ii. **Culture at the Heart of Life**
Culture is an essential part of the health, wellbeing, education and happiness of the people of Gwynedd, enriching everyday life and creating opportunities to have fun, learn and socialise.
- iii. **Community-Led, Inclusive, Kind and Connected**
Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging.
- iv. **Ambitious, Challenging and Bold**
Culture inspires new ideas, embraces or challenges change, sets high standards and makes the most of opportunities and investment to realise and measure the impact of ambitions.
- v. **Enriching People and Places**
Culture enhances wellbeing, develops skills and talent, and contributes to a strong local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
- vi. **Sustainable and Responsible for Future Generations**
Culture protects and enriches resources, the environment, and the unique qualities of Gwynedd, ensuring long-term benefits for future generations.

3. Who are the main consultative groups (stakeholders)?

Extensive consultation was held with the Gwynedd culture sector, including representatives from several communities and some with protected characteristics. An open invitation was extended to interested parties to attend a public meeting to celebrate the success of Gwynedd and identify future priorities.

STEP 2 - Engagement Data and Assessing the Impact

4. Has there been an attempt to comply with the duty to engage in accordance with what is described above and has enough information been gathered to move forward?

Yes

Details of the engagement. Please note any consultation or engagement you have undertaken or intend to undertake.

Action	Dates	Information
Gwynedd Culture Event + Workshop	18 February 2025	A one-day event was held to obtain an initial view on how to develop a Culture Plan for Gwynedd.
Workshop to refine the vision and principles	15 October 2025	A workshop was held in Neuadd Dwyfor to discuss the draft vision and principles. Agreed to establish a Steering Committee.
Gwynedd Culture Event: For Everyone's Wellbeing	04 March 2026	An event for the sector to share information about the vision and principles.
Meetings of the Gwynedd Culture Steering Group	07 July 2026	On-line and in person meetings at Storiel to discuss and agree on a prioritised Action Plan.

5. What information is available about the impact on each of the following characteristics and topics?

	Evidence, Information and Relevant Data	Potential Positive and/or Negative Impact
Race	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging. Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.

Disability	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging. Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
Gender	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world.

	Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging. Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
Age	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging.

		Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
Religion and Belief	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging. Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
Sexual Orientation	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future

	services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging. Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
Gender reassignment	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future".

		There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging. Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging. Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by

		creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging. Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
The Welsh Language	Culture and the Welsh language are an integral part of each other in an area like Gwynedd - but again, there is no Plan drawing the sector together and emphasising the link that currently exists. Gwynedd's	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states:

	culture maintains the Welsh language within our communities, creates opportunities to celebrate, use and hear the Welsh language in natural situations and promotes liveliness and creativity. A specific discussion about the Welsh language took place during consultation at our events, and Welsh was identified as a clear priority for any future plan. Translation services were provided at our meetings and workshops to ensure that everyone could follow the discussion and contribute in their language of choice. All documents are published bilingually.	"Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Proud of our Identity, Heritage and the Welsh language Culture celebrates and promotes the unique identity of Gwynedd, its heritage, creativity and the Welsh language, and they are shared confidently with Wales and the world. Through this work, there are opportunities to improve the opportunities available to people living in Gwynedd and to raise awareness of these opportunities in order to encourage the use of the Welsh language. There is also potential to reduce out-migration from Gwynedd by increasing and promoting employment opportunities, as well as the diversity of opportunities within the cultural sector through the medium of Welsh in Gwynedd.
Socio-economic Considerations	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes

	sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Culture at the root of life Culture is an essential part of the health, well-being, education and happiness of the people of Gwynedd, enriching everyday life and creating opportunities to enjoy, learn and socialise. Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging. Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
Those Who Serve or Who Have Served in the Armed Forces, As Well As Their Families	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services supports access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world.

	collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging. Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.
Human Rights	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging.

		Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd. Sustainable and Responsible for Future Generations Culture protects and enriches resources, the environment and the special features of Gwynedd, ensuring long-term interests.
Other	Culture can touch people from all backgrounds and by implementing it inclusively, the Council's cultural sector and services support access, participation and inclusion that is open to all. Currently, there is no single vision or principles that bind the sector together and state our mission and objectives. These, as well as a new Action Plan and network, will ensure effective collaboration and cooperation for the well-being of everyone from all backgrounds.	A new vision, principles, action plan and network ensures that we collaborate effectively in the future for the well-being of people from all backgrounds. The vision clearly states: "Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world. Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future". There are firm principles - particularly in terms of equality, including: Proud of our Identity, Heritage and the Welsh language Culture celebrates and promotes the unique identity of Gwynedd, its heritage, creativity and the Welsh language, and they are shared confidently with Wales and the world.

		Culture at the root of life Culture is an essential part of the health, well-being, education and happiness of the people of Gwynedd, enriching everyday life and creating opportunities to enjoy, learn and socialise. Community, Inclusive, Kind and Connected Culture belongs to everyone. It is welcoming and accessible, fostering strong networks, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging. Ambitious, Challenging and Bold Culture inspires new ideas, welcomes or challenges change, sets high standards and takes advantage of opportunities and investment to realise and measure the impact of ambition. Enriching People and Places Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd. Sustainable and Responsible for Future Generations Culture protects and enriches resources, the environment and the special features of Gwynedd, ensuring long-term interests.
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6. Are there any data or information gaps, and if so, what are they and how do you intend to address them?

Data on the attendees of cultural events and activities are often collected by the Gwynedd cultural organisations as evidence for Cyngor Gwynedd grant funds, as well as the Arts Council of Wales.

By collaborating on an Action Plan and establishing a Culture Network for Gwynedd, we intend to identify specific measures to measure the impact of culture and this collaboration. Some of these measures will specifically measure the impact of equality and language.

7. When considering other key decisions that affect these groups, is there an increasing impact (cumulative impact)?

I am not aware of any negative accumulative impact, but the collaboration to implement one vision and six clear principles for the culture sector will have a positive accumulative impact on protected characteristics, the Welsh language and the local economy.

8. What does the proposal include to show that you have given due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (to promote equality of opportunity; help eliminate discrimination, harassment or unlawful victimisation and foster good relationships and wider community cohesion) as covered by the 3 aims of the General Duty in the Equality Act 2010?

The vision, the principles and Action Plan have all been drawn up to remove unlawful discrimination, harassment or persecution. Promoting equal opportunities is explicitly clear within the principles and the new network will ensure that good relationships are being developed and nurtured between all of the different groups.

9. How does the proposal show that due regard has been given to the need to address inequality due to socio-economic disadvantage? (Note that this relates to closing inequality gaps, rather than just improving outcomes for everyone.)

The vision and principles clearly highlight the need to be inclusive for all and also highlights the need to create economic opportunities in terms of people, skills and places in Gwynedd through the Plan. Specifically, this principle addresses this:

Enriching People and Places

Culture improves well-being, develops skills and talent, and contributes towards the local economy by creating opportunities for people to live, work, create and succeed in Gwynedd.

10. How does the proposal demonstrate action in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011), to not treat the Welsh language less favourably than English, and to ensure opportunities for people to use Welsh? Also, how does the proposal operate in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Welsh Language Strategy and Policy to take advantage of every opportunity to promote the Welsh language (beyond providing bilingual services) and increase opportunities to use and learn the language in the community?

By co-developing this vision and principles, the Welsh language is highlighted as an essential element of the work and when looking towards the future. The vision is clear:

"Culture in Gwynedd is vital, innovative and rooted in our communities. It gives colour to life, promotes well-being, and reflects our diverse identities and our Welshness confidently to Wales and the world.

Culture in Gwynedd is vibrant and vivid and together, we want to maintain, support and grow a culture that belongs to everyone - today and in the future".

In addition, the first principle relates to the Welsh language and its importance to the culture of Gwynedd:

Proud of our Identity, Heritage and the Welsh language

Culture celebrates and promotes the unique identity of Gwynedd, its heritage, creativity and the Welsh language, and they are shared confidently with Wales and the world.

All events, meetings and workshops that have been held have included simultaneous translation and bilingual documentation. The final Plan will include bilingual case studies showcasing good practice. Our principle of sharing our culture and language with Wales and the wider world will further enhance the status of the Welsh language beyond Gwynedd alone.

The requirement to operate bilingually formed a core part of the commission to appoint consultants to work collaboratively with us in identifying and recognising the value of Gwynedd's culture.

11. How does this proposal meet the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act by implementing the five ways of working, and respond to the seven national well-being goals, including creating a More Equal Wales?

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 sets out clear well-being goals to ensure the well-being of future generations. This work addresses each of the 7 well-being goals and this is highlighted in the agreed vision and principles.

Recently, the Future Generations Commissioner's Office has been prioritising the field of 'A Wales with a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language', and a representative from Cyngor Gwynedd attended a study visit to Bradford where they had placed Culture at the centre within their corporate plans. We received a presentation from a representative of the Future Generations Commissioner's Office during our event at Portmeirion in March 2026, highlighting the importance of culture to the act and highlighting the Office's priorities, and we have kept in touch with the Office when developing this work.

Residents and service users have been **included** by holding a public culture event at the beginning of the process for anyone who has an interest in the culture field in Gwynedd. Over 70 people attended that meeting at Nyth, Bangor. The vision, the principles and the Action Plan were all developed following this initial meeting. A second public meeting was held in Portmeirion to present and receive feedback on the work.

Collaboration has taken place throughout the process of developing a vision and principles for Culture in Gwynedd, as well as the Action Plan. This ensures joint-ownership of the work when looking to the future and establishing a Culture Network for Gwynedd to ensure that the collaboration will continue in the future as we implement and support the culture sector.

Establishing the Gwynedd Culture Network with a Steering Board will ensure that we **prevent problems** from arising or that we can respond to them in partnership before they develop or get worse. Regular networking and collaboration will ensure that we prevent problems from arising.

It has been agreed for the vision and principles to be **long-term** in order to draw the sector together. The Action Plan which will be reviewed regularly and sets out priorities for action over the short, medium and long term and there will be an opportunity to add to it in review.

To ensure **integration**, other public bodies were invited to attend the events to develop the vision, the principles and the Action Plan, including: Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Arts Council of Wales, Welsh Government, Eryri National Park Authority, Cyngor Gwynedd Cultural Services and other cultural partners from north Wales.

STEP 3 - Procurement and Partnerships

I2. Will this policy or practice be carried out wholly or partly by contractors or in partnership with another organisation(s)?

Yes.

What actions will be taken to comply with the General Equality Duty, Human Rights and Welsh language legislation and the Socio-Economic Duty in relation to procurement and/or partnerships?

Procurement:

Plans may be developed as a part of the Action Plan over the coming years which will result in service procurement or support. Any procurement will comply with Cyngor Gwynedd's procurement policies, giving due attention to the equality duty, human rights, the Welsh language and the socio-economic duty.

Partnership:

The Plan is leading to creating a new culture network for Gwynedd. The network will be an evolution of the Gwynedd Greadigol forum, and it will adopt clear policies in terms of equality, the Welsh language, procurement and human rights, as it is being established.

STEP 4 - Dealing with Negative or Unlawful Impact and Strengthening the Policy or Practice

I3. When considering proportionality, does the policy or practice have a significantly positive or negative impact or create unequal outcomes?

Significant Positive Impact:

By collaborating on implementing a new vision and principles for culture in Gwynedd and by establishing a culture network for Gwynedd that is open and accessible to all; we trust that this policy will have a significant positive impact.

Significant Negative Impact:

It is not anticipated that any significant negative impacts will derive from this plan.

14. Any intentional negative impact and why it is believed there is justification for acting in this way should be explained (for example, on the grounds of improving equal opportunities or developing good relationships between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not or because of objective justification or positive action)

It is not anticipated that any intentional negative impact will derive from the Plan.

15. Will any of the negative impacts identified count as unlawful but unavoidable discrimination (e.g. funding reduction)?

No

Note the reason for stating this and the justification for proceeding

No unlawful discrimination will derive from the Plan.

16. What other measures or changes could be included to strengthen or change the policy/practice to demonstrate that due regard has been given to equal opportunity; helping to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation; and fostering good relations and wider community cohesion; as covered by an improvement aim of the General Duty of the Equality Act 2010?

An annual review will be carried out on the implementation of the Action Plan to ensure that we continue to act transparently and fair, promoting equal opportunities and promoting good relations through the network and its events.

Establishing relevant measures will ensure that we monitor implementation across the Plan and the Network.

17. What other measures or changes could be included to strengthen or change the policy/practice to demonstrate that due regard has been given to the need to reduce inequality of outcomes as a result of socio-economic disadvantage?

An annual review will be carried out on the implementation of the Action Plan to ensure that we continue to act transparently and fair, promoting equal opportunities and promoting good relations through the network and its events.

Establishing relevant measures will ensure that we monitor implementation across the Plan and the Network.

18. What other measures or changes could be included to strengthen or change the policy/practice to demonstrate that due regard has been given to the need to increase opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and to not treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language, in accordance with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and to reduce or prevent any adverse effects that the policy/practice may have on the Welsh language?

An annual review will be carried out on the implementation of the Action Plan to ensure that we continue to act transparently and fair, promoting equal opportunities and promoting good relations through the network and its events.

Establishing relevant measures will ensure that we monitor implementation across the Plan and the Network.

We will continue to represent Gwynedd through the medium of Welsh when communicating with other public organisations in Wales, in accordance with the Council's Language Policy.

19. Is there enough information to make a balanced judgement and move forward?

Yes

STEP 5 - Decision to Proceed

20. Considering the information gathered in Steps 1–4 above, is it possible to move forward with the policy or practice or not, and if so, on what basis? Choice of:

Continue with the policy or practice in its current form

STEP 6 - Actions and Arrangements for Monitoring Outcomes and Reviewing Data

The EqlA process is an ongoing one that doesn't end when the policy/practice and EqlA is agreed and implemented. There is a specific legal duty to monitor the impact of policies/practices on equality on an ongoing basis to identify whether the outcomes have changed since you

introduced or amended this new policy or practice. If you do not have the relevant data, you should be taking action to correct this in your action plan. See the EHRC guidance on data collection and you can review their [Measurement Framework](#)

21. What actions identified in Steps 1-5 or any additional data collection work would help to monitor the policy/practice when implemented:

Action	Dates	Timetable	Lead Responsibility	Add to the Service Plan
Establish the Gwynedd Culture Network	18 February 2025	Annual Meeting	Roland Evans	No
Establish a Shadow Steering Board	February 2026	Quarterly meeting	Ffion Strong / Corrie Zarach	No
Review the implementation and measure performance	April	Annually	Roland Evans	No
Elections to the Strategic Board	April	Annually	Roland Evans	No
Review and confirm the Action Plan	April	Annually	Roland Evans	No

22. What arrangements to monitor and review the ongoing impact of this policy or practice will be implemented, including timelines for when it should be formally reviewed:

Monitoring and Reviewing Arrangements (including where outcomes will be recorded)	Timetable and Frequency	Lead Responsibility	Add to the Service Plan
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Review the Action Plan	Annually	Roland Evans	No
Review performance data	Annually	Roland Evans	No
Elect to the Steering Board	Every 2 years	Roland Evans	No
Collect monitoring data	Quarterly / Annually	Ffion Strong / Corrie Zarach	No



MEETING	EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	8 October 2026
TITLE	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee Forward Programme
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	To adopt an amended work programme for 2026/27
AUTHOR	Bethan Adams, Scrutiny Advisor

1. A Forward Programme for 2026/27 was adopted at the Committee meeting on 14 July 2026.
2. The Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools Scrutiny Investigation's report was approved at the meeting. It was decided to ask for an update from the Cabinet Member for Education on the implementation per recommendation in approximately six months' time. An update is scheduled for the 16 March 2027 meeting.
3. At the informal meeting of the Committee on 3 September 2026, there was a discussion about the possibility of holding a Task and Finish Group to consider artificial intelligence and the behaviour of children and young people in schools. It was concluded that as it was not clear what exactly the task and finish group would be scrutinising, the proposal should not be proceeded with.
4. The item 'Secondary Education Finance ' was programmed for discussion at this meeting.
5. A request was received from the Education Department to move this item to the 10 December 2026 meeting, in order to allow more time to draw up proposals for responding to the financial situation and challenges.
6. Following consultation with the Chair, the request to move the item was agreed to ensure that the item is scrutinised in a timely manner to enable scrutiny to add value.
7. See attached as an appendix to the report, the amended work programme for 2026/27.
8. **The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee is asked to adopt the amended work programme for 2026/27.**

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2026/27

Date	Items	Reason for scrutiny
18/6/26	Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure for Members	Pre-decision Scrutiny / Ensure a clear and robust procedure
	Education Transport	Pre-decision Scrutiny / Overspending in the field
	Education Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Economy and Community Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Corporate and Legal Services Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
14/7/26	Finance Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools Scrutiny Investigation Report	Scrutiny Investigation
	Town Centre Vibrancy	Follow-up / Council Plan 2023-28 - A Prosperous Gwynedd
8/10/26	Response Plan to the Our Bravery Brought Justice Report	Assurance in terms of implementation
	Youth Work 5 Year Strategy	Council Plan 2023-28 – Tomorrow's Gwynedd
	Gwynedd Culture Plan	Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 – A Prosperous Gwynedd
10/12/26	Secondary Education Finance	The impact of funding on teaching in Secondary Schools
	Additional Learning Needs	Scrutinise the additional learning needs education provision
	Education Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Economy and Community Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
18/2/27	Pupils' attendance, behaviour and attainment in Gwynedd schools	Follow-up to the scrutiny in the 17 October 2024 meeting
	Finance Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Corporate and Legal Services Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments

16/3/27	School Support Service	Implementation of the new arrangements
	Progress Report on Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools Scrutiny Investigation Recommendations	Tracking Scrutiny Investigation Recommendations
	Supporting Businesses and Community Enterprises	Follow-up / Council Plan 2023-28 - A Prosperous Gwynedd

Item to be added when timely - Gwynedd Economy Strategy Action Plan

MEETING	EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	8 October 2026
TITLE	Performance Challenge Meetings
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	To nominate representatives to attend performance challenge meetings
AUTHOR	Bethan Adams, Scrutiny Advisor

1. Internal performance challenge meetings are held four times a year, in accordance with Council departments' area of work. Updates on the priority projects included in the Council Plan are considered, as well as day-to-day performance measures and the risk register.
2. Following calls from the Scrutiny Forum and members of the scrutiny committees, there is an intention to pilot inviting two representatives from each scrutiny committee to attend the performance challenge meetings of one department. Representatives will be expected to report back formally to their committee or informal meeting on what was discussed at the meeting.
3. The areas of work relevant to this Committee are Education, Legal, Finance, Economy and Communities, and Corporate Services. These are the dates set by the departments for the next performance challenge meetings.

Work Areas	When
Education	3 November 2026
Legal	27 October 2026
Finance	20 October 2026
Economy and Communities	2 November 2026
Corporate Services	20 October 2026

4. The Scrutiny Forum's recommendation is that the committee representatives attend the performance challenge meetings of the Education Department.
5. Members will be expected to attend the meeting, listen to the discussion and report back to committee members (see appendix 1) at either the formal or informal meeting.
6. **The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee is requested to nominate two members to represent the Committee at the performance challenge meetings of the Education Department.**

MATTERS ARISING REGARDING THE XXXXX DEPARTMENT'S PERFORMANCE BY SCRUTINY MEMBERS

Following the xxxx Department's performance challenge meeting, on xxxxx, please note your impressions of the department's performance below. Identifying what the department does as a whole should be avoided, focus on the department's performance.

COUNCIL PLAN - Priority Projects
Has significant progress been made with a priority project?
Is there a priority project that is causing concern due to a lack of progress?

PERFORMANCE – Performance Measures
What was good?
What was causing concern?

Is there a field that needs further scrutiny? What needs to be scrutinised and why?