

Complete Agenda

CABINET

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

DATE	Tuesday, 13th September, 2022
TIME	1.00 pm
LOCATION	Hybrid Meeting - Siambr Hywel Dda, Council Offices, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL55 1SH and on Zoom This Meeting will be webcast https://gwynedd.public-i.tv/core/portal/home
CONTACT POINT	Annes Siôn 01286 679490 / cabinet@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET MEMBERS

Members	
Dyfrig Siencyn	Leader of the Council
Nia Wyn Jeffreys	Deputy Leader
Craig ab Iago	Cabinet Member for Housing
Beca Brown	Cabinet Member for Education
Berwyn Parry Jones	Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal and YGC
Dafydd Meurig	Cabinet Member for Environment
Dilwyn Morgan	Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Elin Walker Jones	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Ioan Thomas	Cabinet Member for Finance
Menna Jones	Cabinet Member for Corporate Support

AGENDA

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THE CABINET 19/07/22

Present-

Councillors: Nia Jeffreys, Craig ab Iago, Beca Brown, Berwyn Parry Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Menna Jones, Dafydd Meurig and Dilwyn Morgan.

Also present-

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Siân Pugh (Group Accountant - Corporate and Projects) and Annes Siôn (Democracy Team Leader).

Item 6: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Dwyfor/Meirion Area Education Officer) and Rhys Gyn (Head of the Welsh Language Immersion Education System).

Item 7-9: Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department), Dylan Griffiths (Economic Development Programmes Manager) and Esyllt Rhys (Regeneration Programme Manager).

Items 11 and 12: Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Environment Department)

Item 13: Steffan Jones (Head of Highways and Municipal Department) and Huw Williams (Head of Gwynedd Consultancy)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Dyfrig Siencyn and Ioan Thomas.

Cabinet members and officers were welcomed to the meeting.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 14 AND 28 JUNE 2022

The Chair accepted the minutes of the meetings held on 14 and 28 June 2022 as a true record.

6. WELSH GOVERNMENT'S WELSH-MEDIUM EDUCATION CAPITAL GRANT PROJECTS

The report was submitted by Cllr Beca Brown

DECISION

It was agreed to proceed to submit full business cases to the Welsh Government to secure funding from the Welsh-medium Education Capital Grant scheme to deliver the purposes of the projects below:

- a) Project 1- Invest over £1.1m to increase capacity and improve the learning environment of Gwynedd Language Centres - the second phase.
- b) Project 2 - Invest over £1.5m in capital funding and £0.3m in revenue funding to increase the capacity of three schools (Llanllechid, Bro Lleu and Chwilog), in order to support Welsh communities of linguistic significance (i.e. the communities with over 70% of Welsh speakers) to thrive.

It was agreed to conduct a statutory consultation on the proposal to increase the capacity of Ysgol Chwiliog to 95, which is an increase of over 25% to the existing capacity, in accordance with the requirements of section 48 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, and report back to the Cabinet following the completion of the consultation.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that this was a request to submit two full business cases to Welsh Government. It was noted that the first was an investment to increase capacity and improve the learning environment of Gwynedd Language Centres, and the second was a capital and revenue application to increase the capacity of three schools within the county in order to support communities with over 70% of Welsh-speakers. It was explained that as the proposal was to increase the capacity of Ysgol Chwilog by over 25% a statutory consultation would need to be held in accordance with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

It was noted that Welsh Government had invited Councils to apply for the grant in order to facilitate the growth of Welsh-medium education within Wales and to promote the use of the Welsh language within schools. It was explained in relation to the Language Centres that the investment would be made in order to increase capacity and improve the learning environment by securing strategic locations. In relation to Ysgol Maesincla, it was stated that the existing centre needed to be extended, in Dolgellau the centre needed to be relocated to Ysgol Bro Idris and in terms of Ysgol Bro Cybi, the Centre would be relocated to the

Ysgol y Cymerau site. It was emphasised that there was a lot of exciting work happening within the centres and that the plans would build on the firm foundations already in place.

It was stated that three schools had been identified to increase their capacity - Ysgol Llanllechid, Ysgol Bro Lleu and Ysgol Chwilog) and that this was because the communities had over 70% of Welsh-speakers and that there were plans in place to build more houses in those areas. It was noted that this scheme showed the commitment to Welsh-medium education and to the County's children, and reflected the Council's commitment to developing and ensuring the Welshness of the County's children.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The business cases were welcomed and the need for this investment was noted.
- Members expressed support to the schemes and it was noted that they looked forward to seeing the schemes being realised.

7. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The report was submitted by Sioned Williams.

DECISION

To grant approval for the Council to undertake the 'lead authority' role for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for the purpose of submitting the 'Regional Investment Plan' required by the UK Government on behalf of the six north Wales counties.

To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department - in consultation with the Head of Finance Department, the Head of Legal Services and the Chief Executive - to agree with other north Wales counties on administrative arrangements and appropriate action to protect the Council's interests.

To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department – in consultation with the Leader, the Head of Finance and the Chief Executive – to agree on the content of the 'Regional Investment Plan'.

To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department - in consultation with the Head of Finance Department, the Head of Legal Services department and the Chief Executive - to establish appropriate arrangements for delivering the programme in Gwynedd.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that this fund had been launched in April this year, and that the region needed to submit a joint bid, after which the funding would be allocated to every county. It was noted that the Gwynedd allocation for the period until March 2025 was £24.4 million. In order to ensure access to the allocation, it is necessary to produce a Regional Investment Plan. It was noted

that this funding came from a fund which was part of a package of fund which had been launched since leaving the European Union. A prospectus had been included which highlighted that a wide range of things would be eligible. It was emphasised that what was being discussed today was the steps that needed to be taken to draw down the money to the county.

It was noted that the department had sought to contact stakeholders across the county. It was explained that the partners were aware that this decision was to make the arrangements to draw down the money to the region and there would be an invitation for partners to propose projects in October.

It was explained that one lead body would be required in the region, and it was noted that Gwynedd had been proposed to undertake this role and submit the bid on behalf of the North. In doing so, Gwynedd would be responsible for the budget for all North Wales counties. It was stressed that discussions were continuing regarding this partnership model together with the appropriate administrative and operational arrangements.

The Monitoring Officer noted that work had commenced on the legal aspect. It was stressed that the model of the Council leading on projects was not uncommon but that work was continuing to look at a model that would work for this programme.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Pride was expressed that Gwynedd was leading on so many regional schemes.
- It was noted that this scheme was complex, and that questions arose regarding the scheme with the change in leadership within the Conservative party. It was also noted that Welsh Government had noted its objection to this scheme.
- The need for Gwynedd Council to work with the UK Government to try to get the funding to ensure the best for the residents of Gwynedd was explained.
- Attention was drawn to 3.8 of the report which noted that £4.2 million of the total had been ringfenced to support adults to improve their numeracy skills, and more details on this were requested. It was explained that the money was to implement the scheme on behalf of the Government, and that discussions were ongoing with partners on how to implement the scheme.

8. SECOND PHASE OF THE ARFOR PROGRAMME

The report was submitted by Sioned Williams.

DECISION

To approve the second phase of the Programme as outlined in the report and authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department – in consultation with the Leader, the Head of Finance and the Chief Executive – to agree on the

content of the final programme.

To agree for Gwynedd Council to lead on the second phase of the ARFOR Programme on behalf of Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire Councils in terms of managing the Welsh Government's financial agreement, realising the joint schemes within the Programme and coordinating/administrating the Programme in its entirety.

To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department - with the Head of Finance Department and the Head of Legal Services - to review and update the governance arrangements between the four counties and to submit a further report if required.

On the basis of receiving an agreement in principle from the Welsh Government on the second phase of the Programme, to allow to proceed with the appointment of an ARFOR Regional Manager.

To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department to establish appropriate arrangements for delivering the programme in Gwynedd.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that the scheme was an exciting one to continue to collaborate with councils in the West of Wales. It was noted that this collaboration had arisen from running the scheme over the past two years. It was explained that, two years ago, a sum of £2 million had been invested in a series of projects with the aim of collaborating with businesses to encourage employment opportunities to keep the language and families within communities.

It was explained from the pilot scheme that good work had been done and jobs created in rural communities and beyond. It was stressed that this was the basis for a new scheme which had been agreed as part of a political agreement to fund the second phase of the scheme with a sum of £11 million over a period of three years. It was explained that this would be an opportunity to build on the relationship which had been formed with other counties, to learn from schemes and to focus on the schemes that made a real difference. It was explained that a request had been made for the Council to continue as the lead body for the scheme.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the fact that Gwynedd was leading on so many schemes showed the strength of the Council's departments.

9. THE LEVELLING UP FUND

The report was submitted by Sioned Williams.

DECISION

- a) To support the intention of targeting the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund for the Bywiogi Bangor, Llewyrch o'r Llechi and Ardudwy Green Corridor projects;
- b) To authorise the Head of Finance and the Head of Economy and Community Department and the Head of Environment to agree upon the details of the bids, to sign the applications and the offer letters if successful, for the Gwynedd Levelling Up schemes;
- c) To authorise the Head of Economy and Community Department, the Head of Environment and the Head of Finance to sign the applications and the offer letters when targeting the full funding packages to deliver these schemes.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that this fund was one of the UK Government's funds that was launched in April. It was noted last year that the Council had submitted bids but that Gwynedd had been placed in priority 3 band - the lowest of all the bands. It was further explained that the allocation had changed following a case made by the Council highlighting Gwynedd's situation and that by now the Council was a priority 1 area. It was noted that this had been a trigger to review the situation and that three cases had been identified to be submitted.

The first project was the Bywiogi Bangor project which was a cluster of projects to encourage people in to the centre of Bangor. It was explained that a health hub was central to the scheme which had been tied into other schemes such as establishing a Medical School in the city centre. It was stated that the investment was approximately £40 million and that the bid was for the maximum possible of £20 million.

The second scheme was the Ardudwy Green Corridor. This scheme stemmed from the Head of Environment Department who had looked at observations received regarding the Llanbedr by-pass and had looked at how to incorporate elements of active travel into the scheme. In doing so, there was an opportunity to build on the road infrastructure scheme and to add an active travel route which was an opportunity to improve and encourage alternative methods of travel. It was explained that this bid package was approximately £40 million.

It was explained that the third scheme, Llewyrch o'r Llechi, built on the World Heritage Site designation. It was noted that there was a limit of 3 post codes for the schemes and consequently it was not possible for scheme to cover the entire slate area. But by focusing on the three areas (Llanberis, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Bethesda) it would be possible to look at other funds to realise schemes in the communities which would not be a part of this bid. It was explained that the package was approximately £27 million in order for the communities to take advantage of the site designation and develop specific and different schemes within their areas.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Astonishment was expressed that the department was bidding for such

large amounts and it was asked if the department had the capacity to run all the schemes. It was noted that applying for so many grants highlighted the good work of the department and the need to review the department's staffing was noted. The Cabinet Member and the staff were congratulated for being so prepared and for having mature schemes ready to be submitted.

- It was noted that questions had arisen in terms of this grant and some had mentioned that it would be cancelled. It was noted that the bids were currently open and that the Government had committed a some of money for this round of the grant. It was explained that the department had tried its best to submit strong bids, but that a spending period was a period of three years which put pressure on spending the money and posed a challenge in terms of recruiting for such a short period of time.

10. THE CASE FOR CHANGE: PROVISION OF NURSING PLACEMENTS AS PART OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

The report was submitted by Cllr Dilwyn Morgan

DECISION

The case for change was approved and to ask the Adults, Health and Well-being Department to present an Outline Strategic Business Case by October 2022, to create a public sector partnership development on a site/sites in Gwynedd, in partnership with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the Cabinet Member was extremely enthusiastic about this item which was very innovative. It was noted that the Council was currently providing approximately 50% of the residential care provision to the county's residents, whilst the independent sector contributed the other half. It was explained that at present, the provision in the nursing sector was provided entirely by the independent sector as it had been illegal for the Council to provide it. It was stated that this was about to change with opportunities now possible.

Appreciation was expressed about the independent sector's contribution to the nursing care field but it was noted that the opportunities to provide in partnership as a Council meant that it was possible to improve the provision for the county's residents. It was explained that, at present, if no nursing placement was available, many people would have to wait for a long time or have to move outside their communities. It was stressed that this report was the start of the journey which highlighted the case for change as well as set out the risks involved with this change. It was noted that this was an opportunity to move on to the next step, which was to create a business case.

The Corporate Director added that one of the main duties of her role was to look after vulnerable people within the county, and that recent years had highlighted

that this element of the provision made it impossible to provide the best care to the residents of Gwynedd. She noted that she was proud that, at her last meeting in the role, she was able to submit this report which was an opportunity to work alongside the independent sector in order to stabilise the market. It was explained that the Council's presence within the residential and home care provision had strengthened the provision and therefore it was hoped that this step would also strengthen the nursing provision within the county. The Health Board was thanked for its willingness to discuss this field in such a challenging time.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Support for the report was expressed as well as gratitude for the work.
- Morwena Edwards was thanked for her leadership in this work and for all her work in recent years as Corporate Director.

11. FUTURE OF THE JOINT PLANNING POLICY UNIT (GWYNEDD AND ANGLESEY)

The report was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

It was agreed to:

- 1) To extend the current collaboration agreement for the provision of the Joint Planning Policy Service until 31 March 2023;
- 2) That the collaboration agreement, and therefore the Joint Planning Policy Service and the Joint Planning Policy Committee is terminated after 31 March 2023, and that a new Planning Policy Service is created for the Gwynedd planning authority area;
- 3) That the new Planning Policy Service were prepares an Amended Local Development Plan for the Gwynedd planning authority area only;
- 4) That arrangements for supporting and making decisions on the process of preparing an Amended Local Development Plan and relevant planning policy matters are drawn up for the Gwynedd planning authority area;
- 5) To delegate powers to the Head of Environment Department to agree on collaboration arrangements with Anglesey to ensure that the Council continues to meet the statutory requirements (and any associated work), required to monitor the Joint Local Development Plan;
- 6) Since this is a matter of the highest priority, the Cabinet is requested to pre-empt the annual bids process and approve a bid for £70,000 from the permanent revenue budget now, to address the additional cost of establishing the Gwynedd Planning Policy Service.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and the background for the item was noted. It was explained that an agreement had been made between Gwynedd Council and Anglesey Council to establish a Joint Planning Policy Service in 2011. It was noted that the main task for the team was to create the Local Development Plan.

It was highlighted that the scheme had been in existence for over 10 years now and that it would come to an end at the end of the month. It was explained that there were two main options moving on, namely to extend the agreement or end the agreement. It was stated that the main advantage of combining the work of 10 years previously was the sharing of resources.

Discussions had been held regarding the creation of two separate units, which was currently seen as the preferred option. It was explained that in creating the policy specifically for Gwynedd, it would be possible to have 100% ownership of the needs of Gwynedd and adapt the Local Development Plan accordingly. It was stressed that it would not be a straightforward matter to undo the arrangement as there were joint governing arrangements and staff. But as part of the decision, it was asked to extend the existing agreement to the end of March 2023 in order to carry out the necessary work.

It was noted that the same report would be submitted to Anglesey Council today and that they had expressed their desire to create their own unit.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was asked if the Anglesey decision was the same, and it was noted that in moving forward the decisions needed to be exactly the same by both Councils.

12. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The report was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that this was the Cabinet Member's first performance report back as the portfolio leader in the field. It was explained that he was happy on the whole with what he had seen at first glance. Attention was drawn to the Climate Change Emergency Plan noting that the meetings had now restarted and that they were looking at moving from planning to implementing. It was noted that progress had been seen in many of the priorities.

In terms of the department's performance, it was noted that it was very encouraging that there had been an increase in the Planning Service's performance with the average number of days taken to deal with planning applications reducing from 103 to 78. However, it was stressed that further work was needed to reach the statutory timeframe of 56 working days. Another challenge was outlined regarding the number of planning enforcement applications increasing, with 45 received during the first two months of this financial year. It was noted that work was underway to deal with the applications.

It was emphasised that good work was being undertaken by the Public Protection service, with over 90% of the 2180 businesses in Gwynedd being given a food hygiene score of between 3 and 5. In terms of the department's financial situation, it was noted that it was fairly healthy with savings schemes on track to be completed on time.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was asked if the department would tackle the need to ensure active travel routes across the county. It was explained that work was being carried out and that the consultation was currently open, and everyone was encouraged to voice their opinions in it.
- With the Government's announcement regarding the change in speed limit down to 20 miles per hour in some locations, it was asked if the department had enough staff to deal with the change. It was stressed that when it would come into force, the timetable would be challenging and it was noted that a discussion was currently ongoing with the Welsh Local Government Association regarding the capacity needed and the need to ensuring adequate staffing. In terms of staffing within the department, it was highlighted that staff with technical expertise were needed in this department which could be challenging given the linguistic requirements.

13. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND MUNICIPAL AND GWYNEDD CONSULTANCY

The report was submitted by Cllr Berwyn Parry Jones

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, and the former portfolio holder was thanked for her work in recent years. Attention was drawn to the work of the Highways department, further highlighting that the Arfon Team had been appointed for the Clean and Tidy Communities scheme. It was explained that there had been some delay with appointing the other four teams but that they would be in place before the end of summer. In terms of the scheme the change Street Lighting to LED lights, it was noted that there were a few hundred left to do and that the scheme will have been completed before the end of autumn.

The workers were thanked for their hard work during the heatwave which we had been experiencing in recent days. It was stated that there was overspend in the department specifically in the waste service and it was explained that the department had appointed experts to look in detail at the matter and that it would be possible to report back during the autumn.

In terms of Gwynedd Consultancy department, it was stated that this department created a substantial income for the Council. It was noted that a firm work programme was in place for the year with 11 additional posts being advertised. It was stated that the department would reach its income target this year.

Observations arising from the discussion

- A question was asked about how to contact the Clean and Tidy Communities Teams. It was explained that a Project Officer would contact members in order to explained the procedure of getting a team to their area.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.25 pm

CHAIRMAN

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to a meeting of the Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting:	13 September 2022
Cabinet Member:	Elin Walker Jones, Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families
Contact Officer:	Dafydd Gibbard, Chief Executive
Title of Item:	Corporate Parent Panel Annual Report 2021-22

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1 The Cabinet is asked to accept and note the information in the report which reports on the work of the Corporate Parent Panel for the 2021-22 year.

2. THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

- 2.1. It is essential that Cabinet members are aware of the Panel's work and are able to satisfy themselves that the Panel has undertaken the work required both thoroughly and conscientiously.
- 2.2. Gwynedd Council and its partners have a clear responsibility to be a Corporate Parent for every child in Gwynedd, and specifically to ensure effective, stable, safe and suitable care for looked after children and young people, including those who are leaving care. This is a report on the work that has been done to ensure that the Council undertakes its responsibility.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on what has been achieved by the Corporate Parent Panel during the period.
- 3.2. It is believed that the report is an accurate and fair summary of the Panel's work.

4. Views of the Statutory Officers:

The Monitoring Officer:

The responsibility of acting as corporate parent is an important duty. It is key therefore that the effectiveness of it's arrangements are reviewed. The Cabinet has

a key role in maintaining an overview of the work of the Panel.

Head of Finance:

The report is factual, explaining to Cabinet the work undertaken by the Panel during 2021/22. I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the situation, and the implementation of the decision sought will not create a new spending commitment.



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CORPORATE PARENT PANEL

2021-22

1. Introduction

This report is submitted to highlight the Council's role and responsibilities to act as corporate parents for looked after children, to share information about the panel's work over the last year and to outline the panel's intentions for the future. The report contains up-to-date information about the numbers and the trends related to the field of looked after children.

Contrary to last year's report, this report will highlight the work that has been done as we move through a post-Covid recovery period.

2. What does the Panel do for me?

2.1 Gwynedd Council and its partners has a clear responsibility to be a Corporate Parent for every child in Gwynedd, and specifically to ensure effective, stable, safe and suitable care for looked after children and young people, including those who are leaving care. The Council takes this responsibility seriously, and is committed to ensuring that the children and young people in its care have the best possible opportunities in life, and that they receive appropriate care, a high-quality education, live in fixed accommodation, and receive good health care.

2.2 Children and young people come into Council care under very difficult circumstances, but the Council is as ambitious for these children as anyone would be for their own children. Any child that is looked after by the Council has the right to expect the same from his/her corporate parent as he/she would from a good parent.

2.3 This means that the Council will:

- Know its children - their needs, talents, dreams, and will promote their interests
- Be ambitious about their future and will expect the best from them and for them
- Be interested in their successes and problems and be proud of their successes and celebrate with them
- Listen to their opinion and ensure that this influences practice, and developments in services and policies
- Ensure that they are part of planning their own lives and consult with them on their choices
- Acknowledge, support and respect their identity in every way
- Promote and support their educational attainment to the best of their ability, ensuring access to a high standard of education and extensive learning opportunities
- Support resilience in their health and emotional well-being

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- Provide a safe and stable home where there is a feeling of belonging and appreciation
 - Support their journey from childhood to adulthood and promote their economic potential and prepare them to be responsible citizens who contribute to society as a whole.
- 2.4 Most importantly, as a Corporate Parent, the Council will ensure that it thinks, plans, acts and makes decisions in the best interests of the children in its care.
- 2.5 To support this role, the Council has established a Corporate Parent Panel consisting of the Lead Member for Children and Young People, the Leader of the Council, relevant Cabinet Members, a foster parent, the Young People's Champion and a member selected by Scrutiny Committees. The Panel also includes the Chief Executive, Corporate Director and Statutory Director of Social Services, Head of the Children and Supporting Families Department and Head of Education. Through the Panel, the Council, namely all the elected members, delegates its responsibilities in the field to the Lead Member for Children and Young People.
- 2.6 The Corporate Parent Panel has a specific and direct responsibility to ensure that appropriate and suitable multi-agency services are available for looked after children, and that the services offered to them are of a high quality, accessible and meet their needs, working with partners to ensure the best possible outcomes for all looked after children.
- 2.7 The Corporate Parent Panel is also responsible for setting up task and finish groups that will focus on specific fields in order to look closely at the quality of services, successes and obstacles as well as finding out about experiences directly from children, young people and carers, in order to improve the experiences of looked after children in Gwynedd. The Panel has a right to request that matters which are a cause for concern to it be scrutinised on its behalf by the Scrutiny Committee.

3. What about Covid-19?

- 3.1 With the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic back in March 2020, we had to adapt the way of working in order to continue to maintain essential services for the County's children. A number of steps were put in place to ensure support for looked after children throughout the pandemic period and this was highlighted in the 2019-21 Annual Report.
- 3.2 During 2021-22, we took time to recover after the pandemic, and although some ways of working during the pandemic have continued, with a number of meetings

still being held virtually, we commenced the work of getting back to the new 'normal'. Nevertheless, the department ensured that it worked within national and local guidelines to ensure the safety of its staff and looked after children.

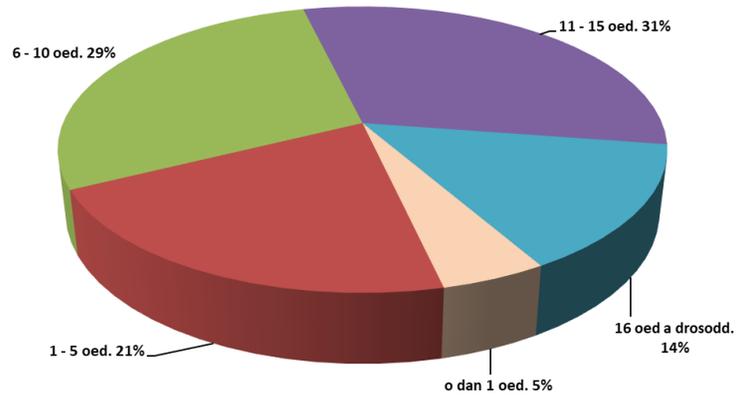
4. What is the current situation?

4.1 The following information is presented based on end of quarter four figures 2022, including comparative figures from the previous six years:

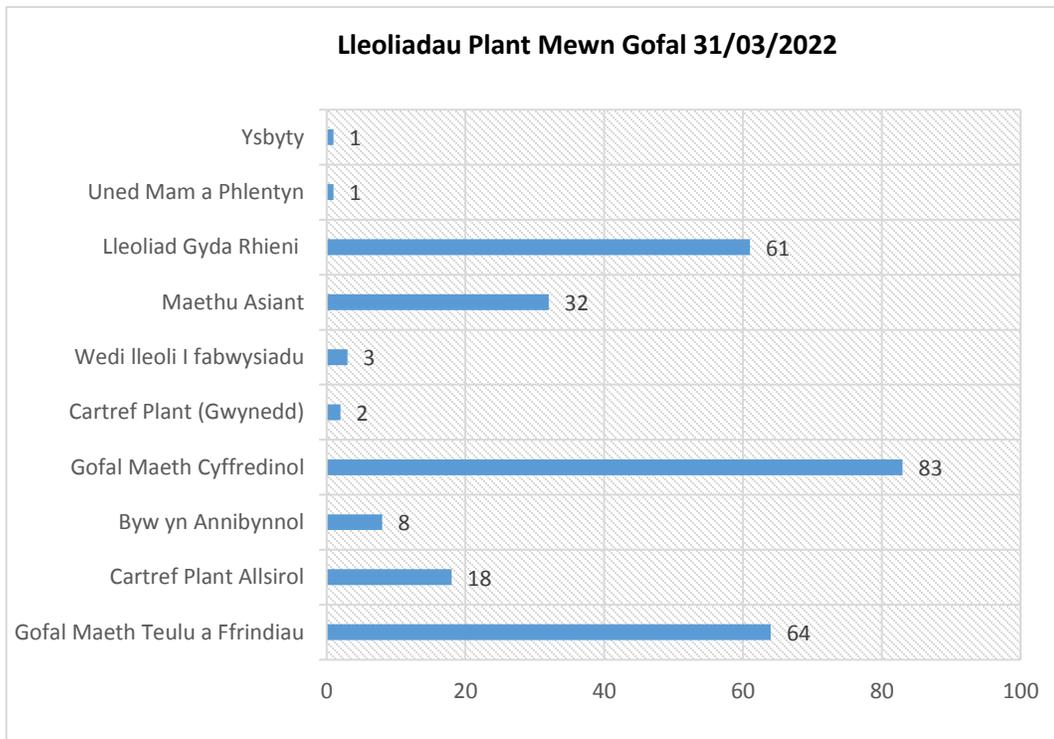
Looked after Children on 31 March	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Number of looked after children at the end of the year	273	281	291	253	227	218
Number of children coming into care during the year	46	46	82	66	49	60
Number of children leaving care during the year	54	56	44	40	40	49
Number of children adopted during the year	2	6	6	5	9	5

4.2 The data shows that there has been a reduction in the number of looked after children over the year. Whilst 46 children came into care for the first time during the year, 54 children have left care.

4.3 The chart below shows the age range of looked after children:



4.4 Of the total number of looked after children, 179 (66%) are in foster placements, 20 (7%) are in residential placements and 63 (23%) are in placements with parents. Three children were in adoptive placements at the end of the year, with eight young people living independently with support.



4.5 Geographical Locations

- 4.5.1 At the end of the year, 86 (32%) of looked after children were placed outside of Gwynedd. Of these, 36% were in Anglesey and Conwy, with 62% of children outside Gwynedd placed in north Wales. Twenty-five children are placed outside Wales, with eight of these in residential placements and the rest are either in placements with parents or relatives.
- 4.5.2 A variety of reasons lead to the demand for residential placements, and in each case the needs of these children and young people are complex and profound, e.g. mental health and self-harm issues, sexual exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour. Placing within the County is therefore not an option in such cases.
- 4.5.3 The biggest challenge we face as a Council is finding suitable residential placements for those with the most complex needs. This issue is not unique to Gwynedd and is being addressed on a national level through investigations by the Welsh Government and the Public Accounts Committee.
- 4.5.4 For some children, there is a choice for the Council to place with general foster carers within the County or with extended family. The extended family could be living outside the boundaries of the County. Therefore, the outcome for the child is to be placed out-of-county, but that the placement continues within the extended family. At the end of the year, 19 children were in this type of placement.
- 4.5.5 The rest of the out-of-county placements in the County are foster placements with Gwynedd Carers (who have normally moved to live outside Gwynedd), or placements with private foster agencies. The vast majority of the foster carers who are registered with private agencies live outside Gwynedd.

4.6 Very Young Children Coming into Care

- 4.6.1 The latest data shows a continuation in the number of children aged under five years coming into care. Up to the end of quarter 4 2022, 33% of new looked after children placements are for children under five years of age.
- 4.6.2 Over four years, children under five years old represent 47% of all new placements. This is due to a number of reasons, but specifically, the abuse and neglect of young children; domestic violence; substance and alcohol misuse; the deliberate feeding of young children with drugs, and mothers whose previous children have entered care becoming pregnant and not having made the necessary adjustments in their lives to be able to safely care for the child.

4.7 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

During November 2021, every Local Authority in England and Wales received a Home Office directive regarding the placement of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children under the National Transfer Scheme. Local Authorities in South-east England were not able to continue to cope with the numbers that were arriving, and consequently, every local authority has now received an allocation. This cohort of young people will therefore be an addition to the Council's number of looked after children.

- 4.8 Between December 2021 and March 2022, three Asylum Seekers were received. Very little background information is available in these cases, and identifying suitable placements is incredibly challenging due to their age, linguistic and cultural needs and very often due to the trauma they have experienced. Gwynedd Council's original allocation was six young people under the first phase of the scheme, therefore, we expect another three to arrive early in 2022-23.
- 4.9 The three who have been received in Gwynedd are over 16 years of age, one is placed in a foster placement in Gwynedd and two are placed outside Gwynedd. The Council retains responsibility for each of them whilst the Home Office considers their individual cases. There is a specific process to follow and they need a specialist advocate. Their Social Workers will plan and review their care and act as a mediator to facilitate their application for permanent refuge. Creating and retaining contact with the Refugee Council and others is essential as we do this.
- 4.10 Edge of Care Team
- 4.10.1 Between April 2021 and March 2022, the Edge of Care Team worked with 160 children (91 families). The team started working with 75 new cases during this period.
- 4.10.2 During the year, the team's intervention ended with 86 children (45 families). 63 of these were living at home with their parents without a care order at the start of the intervention. At the end of the intervention 53 continued to live at home (84%).
- 4.10.3 In addition, the intervention ended in 12 cases where the children were in foster care at the beginning of the work. Seven of these children had returned to live with their parents at the end of the team intervention (58%).
- 4.10.4 In addition to edge of care intervention, the service has two Social Workers who focus specifically on whether the child needs to continue to be a looked after child. If safe to do so, the social worker submits a report at court with a request to revoke the care order. During the year, 23 children left the authority's care as a result of this work. Work is under-way in another 26 cases to revoke the order at the end of the period. During 2021-22, 54 children left care, which means that the total

number of children who left care during the year is greater than the number of children who came into care. This work is therefore essential as the Council addresses the Welsh Government's objective to reduce the number of looked after children.

5. I want suitable access to the health services

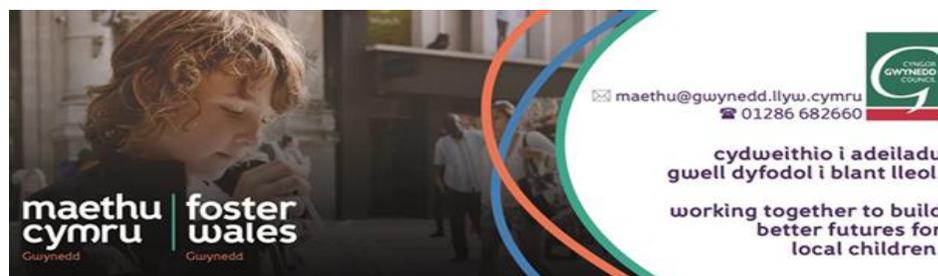
- 5.1 The continued links between health, local authority and other services have been maintained during the year. Virtual meetings via Teams has provided a robust platform for discussion and follow on meetings to be arranged quicker to involve relevant stakeholders. This has included the Safeguarding Partnership Meetings with Health and Local Authority for early identification and planning for causes of concern and any risks identified.
- 5.2 During the year, initial LAC health assessments were being completed by the Paediatricians with face to face clinic appointment for all assessments where there was no clinical risk. Adoption medicals were also being completed face to face and Paediatricians met with prospective adopters for health summaries. Review health assessments were being completed by the LAC Nurse/ School Nurse or Health visitor within timescales wherever possible. 334 health assessments were due during the year, with 57% held in the required timescales.
- 5.3 The links between CAMHS have been maintained and improved with monthly meetings to improve standards and work on the LAC/ CAMHS Flowchart to improve access to mental health services. Recommendations from this meeting were to highlight a baseline for mental health wellbeing for the children coming into care; To do this by means of a carers report to be utilised and used for reference for early intervention as required, which will be part of the next discussions with the local authority and IRO teams.
- 5.4 The ICF funded LAC Nurse post for the Edge of Care/ 16+ team has highlighted specific needs/ gaps for those leaving care and needing support, especially when transitioning into adult mental health services. This post has been effective in providing targeted support and preventative work for this group of young people.
- 5.5 During the year the health LAC team have attended Dialectical Behaviour Therapy and Solution Focussed Brief Therapy training, in relation to parenting developmentally traumatised children to support the work being done by Social Workers. Awareness sessions with EMRALLT have also been attended to raise

awareness and assist in working with children who present with sexual harmful behaviours. This has provided consistent training opportunities between nursing and local authority teams.

- 5.6 A Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board pilot involving the WCCIS online database began in January 2022. This is ongoing and should help IT links and shared digital recording as well as improving communication and working together with the local authority, which is essential for Children Looked After and their families.
- 5.7 The All Wales LAC Health Assessment Framework has also been launched. This will provide guidance to health professionals on the completion of LAC health assessments to ensure uniformity and quality.
- 5.8 There are continued difficulties with neuro developmental referrals due to a waiting list of 2 years, however the Children Looked After caseload are being prioritised.

6. I want a good place to live

- 6.1 Foster care of the highest quality is a resource that is vital in enabling the Council to ensure that its commitments to looked after children are carried out. The Council is proud of its ability to provide foster care of the highest standard and it invests heavily in recruiting, assessing and registering local foster carers for children in Gwynedd. However, there is national recognition that mainstream fostering services are continuing to report on the net loss in the total number of approved households. A key challenge for all Welsh Local Authorities Fostering Services is to improve the number of enquiries and the approval of new foster carers.
- 6.2 The work done under the National Fostering Framework is key in order to focus on ensuring a sufficient number of foster carers with sufficient support and skills to satisfy the increasing demand for placements for children and young people with increasingly complex needs. This assists Local Authorities to meet this demand.



- 6.3 During the year, a very significant milestone was seen with the launch of Foster Wales. Now, all Welsh Local Authority fostering services are a part of Foster Wales. Every local authority's service keeps its own identity and now the Gwynedd fostering service is known as the Gwynedd Foster Wales Service.
- 6.4 There are now new arrangements in place, and a National Joint Committee was established for the National Fostering Service and Foster Wales. The Council's Cabinet approved and adopted the governing arrangements in March 2022 and the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families will represent the Authority on the Joint Committee.
- 6.5 The direct provision of the service continues to be the Council's responsibility, but marketing and collaboration to attract new foster carers is the subject of collaboration on a regional and national level. During the year, a National Marketing Manager was appointed to lead on this work.
- 6.6 In addition, a Regional Marketing Officer was appointed in January 2022, who is employed by Gwynedd and responsible for fostering marketing for the six Local Authorities, including developing a recruitment and marketing strategy, implementing local and regional recruitment campaigns, developing content for the social media channels and websites and coordinating the national recruitment and marketing priorities.
- 6.7 The Regional Needs Analysis has been conducted and this will be used to steer the regional and local Recruitment and Retention Strategy for 2022-25. The work of gathering data for this task has been completed and the strategy was completed during April 2022.
- 6.8 Locally, building our internal fostering provision is essential in order to continue to improve outcomes for children. This means moving the balance of care and the resources of our Fostering teams to enable growth and being able to respond to demands. At the end of March 2022, 147 children were placed with Gwynedd Foster Carers. Of the 46 children who came into care in 2021-22, 33 of them are placed in foster care.
- 6.9 At the end of March 2022, 70 mainstream foster homes were registered with the Gwynedd Foster Wales Service. This is a reduction of one in a year. During the year, a number of foster carers retired after many years of service. Although we registered new foster carers during the year, we did not manage to increase the total.



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- 6.10 Foster carers are responsible for looking after the children in their care as though they were their own children, and for ensuring they have the best opportunities, advocate on their behalf and collaborate well with parents, social workers and partners. At the end of the year, 3% of looked after children in Gwynedd had experienced three or more moves in their placement. This means, on the basis of the 2020-21 national performance, that Gwynedd foster placements offer a very high level of stability for looked after children.
- 6.11 A high percentage of children looked after by the Council are placed with their own family members who become registered foster carers because of the children's legal status. We fully commit to taking responsibility for providing the same practical and professional support for these families as for any other foster placement, since the challenge of looking after a child from one's own family is one that is fully acknowledged.

7. I want less children in my situation

- 7.1 At the start of 2019, the First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford, announced that one of the priorities of the Welsh Government would be to reduce the number of looked after children, and local authorities were required to set a numerical target to reduce the numbers in order to measure success against this target.
- 7.2 Gwynedd Council decided that it would not set any numerical or percentage target in relation to the number of looked after children, as the local authority has a duty to ensure that every child is safeguarded from harm.
- 7.3 Gwynedd Council is monitored on a quarterly basis on the strategy to get children out of care. In fact, there has been a steady increase nationally in the numbers of children coming into care. The Council has been very aware of the increase, and also aware of the importance of implementing plans to reduce the numbers coming into care. However, the Children's Department is totally convinced that all looked after children in Gwynedd need to be in care due to the factors that have led to the

need for the Council to intervene to protect them. The statistics this year show a 2.9% reduction in the number of looked after children in Gwynedd.

8. Which projects have developed this year?

- 8.1 Work has continued to transform the former NatWest bank in Caernarfon into flats, a training flat and multi-agency space, with employment opportunities also available. Individuals for whom we have a responsibility as a corporate parent will be targeted, and this project will be an opportunity for young people to gain independent living skills from the Council and GISDA, along with other agencies.
- 8.2 Now, a tool that was created jointly with the young people for independent living, is operational. Our young people have been involved in this work, and they have been able to contribute to the development of the package by having the opportunity to provide input into every part of the development.
- 8.3 The process of leaving care and moving to live as an adult can be challenging and confusing. The 'Barod' app has been created to let young people know about the support that is available from the Post-16 Team as they leave care. There is a need to ensure the best for every child; inside and outside care.

We are aware that this is a unique and important period in their lives, and the Council is responsible to ensure that the support is available. In order to give them the best opportunity to reach their potential, laying a smooth pathway for them is essential. As the app has been created with advice from the young people, as well as those who see and experience this daily, it ensures that the necessary information is on the app.



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- 8.4 During February 2022, the Welsh Government announced that it would be launching a Basic Income Pilot Scheme for young care-leavers across Wales. This is a very significant development for those young people, which will give them a pre-tax income of £1600 per month. We are collaborating with the Government to prepare for the launch of the scheme in July 2022 and it is anticipated that 21 young people will be eligible for the pilot in Gwynedd.

9. I want a good education

- 9.1 Bold steps have been taken during the past year in order to ensure the education system's understanding and ownership of its functions as a corporate parent.
- 9.2 The link between looked after children, schools and the education department has strengthened as a result of the Looked After Children Education Coordinator being located within the department for the first time in a long while.
- 9.3 We have succeeded to convert the personal education plans of looked after children in Gwynedd schools onto an on-line system. This facilitates the process of planning for a looked after child on a school level and facilitates the access of foster parents and professional workers to the child's plan. The child can see and contribute to the plan if they wish at any time.
- 9.4 As the plans are produced digitally, we can now check the quality of the plans, and ensure that the children receive suitable targets in a timely way.
- 9.5 During the next year, we are eager to develop Social Workers' use of the on-line system and extend the use of the system to children who are placed out-of-county also.
- 9.6 During the year, a new procedure was established in order to ensure that no looked after child will be permanently excluded without intervention by the education service and children services.
- 9.7 We have succeeded in a recent application for a grant to trial the role of a Virtual Head for looked after children here in Gwynedd.
- 9.8 We are of the opinion that the additional role corresponds with what is here already and ensures a specific focus on promoting educational interests and outcomes. It is anticipated that we will appoint to the post during the summer term with the role to be operational at the start of the academic year.

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- 9.9 We anticipate that the Head will undertake aspects where the call to reach an opinion on the quality of the provision and progress of the pupil is key. The Head will work with the schools to ensure that the provision is excellent and that the learners' progression is good. This can happen in many ways but the majority of the Head's work will relate to ensuring that the schools have the best skills, resources and support for the learners, not doing the work instead of the school, as this would not be sustainable.
- 9.10 The Head will monitor individual plans and the progress of pupils and, where appropriate, will refer the schools to specialist services in order to empower them. These could be services in fields such as additional learning needs, inclusion or specific services or support from children's services and beyond. This role will tie in with the implementation of a range of services, including children services, youth justice services, to name but a few.
- 9.11 **Grants**
Bursary grants have been conveniently provided to those where the schools made a request for them; the examples of ineligible applications were rare. As usual, a range of applications were seen, including a set of drums and a drumming lesson, and revision resources.
- 9.12 The cluster grants have been divided through the regional service, with each cluster investing in training and resources to target the needs of looked after children.
- 9.13 It is anticipated that the Virtual Head will play an operational role in instructing the clusters' use of this grant from September onwards.
- 9.14 **LAC Results (KS4)**
With the examinations continuing to be teacher assessments over the year, the end of stage results were no different to the projection, for every individual, and the young people had the same opportunities to choose a post-16 learning pathway / experience, based on their results.
- 9.15 During the next year, the examinations will return to the old system and there will be an increased focus on securing support and stability for learners, leading to and during examination periods.
- 9.16 **Performance Data and the Voice of the Child**
The authority's personal education plans are being created, monitored and reviewed on a digital platform that was developed by the authority. However, the authority's

access to pupil performance data is restricted as the Welsh Government reduces the reporting requirements on schools.

- 9.17 In response to this, we have investigated different ways that key data can be gathered in order to populate all personal education plans and we will continue to develop these plans over the next year. We intend to collaborate with schools' existing systems, and not place an additional requirement on them.
- 9.18 We are aware of the need to gather the child's views about the standard of their education. We will investigate different ways of including the voice of the child and treating it as quantitative information.

10. What will the Panel do this year?

- 10.1 With the Local Government elections being held in May 2022, this is seen as an opportunity to re-establish the arrangements of the Corporate Parent Panel. It was an opportunity to look at the chairpersonship and membership of the Panel and it was resolved that the chairpersonship would fall to the hands of the Council's Chief Executive.
- 10.2 Furthermore, there has been an opportunity to re-visit the Panel's internal arrangements, and now, a member of staff has been appointed to carry out the work of coordinating the panel's work and coordinate reports for the panel.
- 10.3 During the first months of 2022/23, work will be done to reconsider the Panel's strategy. This will give the new Councillors who will be a part of the Panel an opportunity to highlight their priorities over the period to come and ensure that the child is at the centre of all of the panel's implementation.
- 10.4 As a result of the strategy, it will be possible to identify the fields where further work is required or fields that need to be strengthened. Hearing and listening to the voice of the child will remain a priority for the Corporate Parent Panel. The Corporate Parent Panel has been working to strengthen this element of its work so that it maintains close links with what matters to looked after children in Gwynedd. As a result, it will be possible to identify any barriers they come across and take action in order to remove those barriers to the best of our ability.
- 10.5 Usually, Corporate Parent training is provided to all of the Council's Elected Members on an annual basis. Training was not available over the last year. With the election being held in May, arrangements are in place to hold training sessions in November.

11. To end

Much good work has been done over the past year, and this by building on the work that has been done over recent years.

Further work will need to be done over the next year to ensure that the Panel's amended arrangements have been carried out, as well as developing the strategy early in 2022/23. In addition, there will be a need to continue to ensure that the voices of looked after children are heard and that they influence the services that are available to them.

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Date of meeting: 13 September 2021
Cabinet Member: Councillor Menna Jones
Contact Officer: Delyth G Williams, Equality Advisor
Contact Telephone Number: 01286 679708
Title of Item: 2021/22 Annual Report, Strategic Equality Plan 2020/24

Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

1 THE DECISION SOUGHT

The Cabinet is requested to note the content and approve the 2021/22 Annual Report of the 2020-24 Equality Plan.

2 THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

The intention of the Annual Report is to note the progress made with the Action Plan for the 5 Equality Objectives that we are working towards during 2020-21, as noted in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24. The Cabinet is requested to approve this progress. Reporting annually is a duty of the 2010 Equality Act as it is implemented in Wales.

3 CONTENTS

The purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan is to reduce inequality between people with protected characteristics and people without those characteristics in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The Ensuring Fairness for All Project (i.e. the Equality Plan), has been identified by the Cabinet as one of the priority projects within the Council Plan.

This is the second Annual Report for the 2020-24 Equality Scheme and it reports against the 5 objectives set out in it. These first two years have been challenging ones. We have had to change our ways of working and perhaps take on new work for a while. This has brought challenges but also opportunities. As a result our schedules have inevitably slipped somewhat. Having said that we are confident that all the work will be completed within the lifetime of the Plan.

The report also contains additional details in accordance with the guidelines of the Equality Act 2020-24 as it is implemented in Wales including a report on the equality characteristics of our workforce.

4 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

The Strategic Equality Plan's Equality Impact Assessment has been updated as a result of the new situation and the data around Covid-19. We have not seen a need to change it this year.

The Statutory Officers' observations

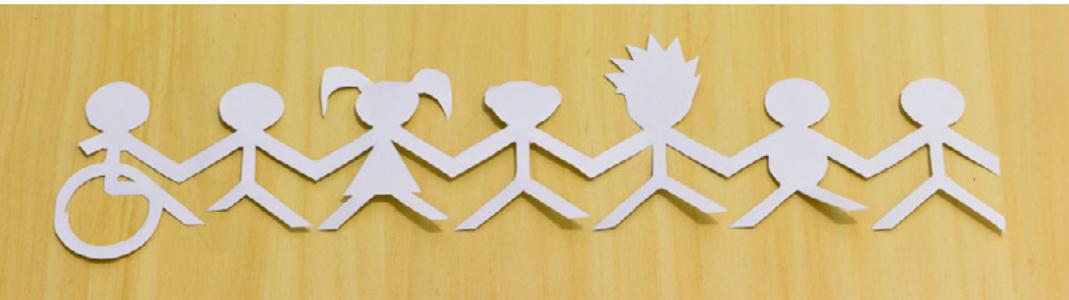
i) Chief Finance Officer

I am satisfied that approving the Annual Equality Report will not create additional spending commitments. I support the report, and I do not have further comments from the perspective of financial propriety.

ii) Propriety Officer

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective

Annual Equality Report Gwynedd Council 2021-22



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Foreword

This Annual Report is submitted after the end of my term as the Elected Member with responsibility for equality. Having said that, equality is very important to me and as the Council's Deputy Leader I will certainly continue to promote the field especially as the Ensuring Fairness for All project is one of the Council's improvement priorities.

It must be said that the two years since the 2020-24 Equality Plan was adopted by the Cabinet at the beginning of March 2020 have been difficult. The pandemic has had a significant impact on our methods of working and on our schedules. I am therefore pleased to be able to report that we have been able to progress during the year. Although we have not been able to achieve everything we had hoped, a great deal of preparatory work had been undertaken and we are on the right track to complete everything within the Plan's lifespan.



During the year, it was a pleasure to submit the new Equality and Inclusion Policy to the Cabinet, which they subsequently approved. The decision to work with Inclusive Employers to improve our employment policies is also exciting. Another important thing to note in the field of equality are the refugees who had started to arrive from Ukraine by March 2021. We very much welcome them here to Gwynedd, as we do the other refugees we support. We are trying to give them as much help as possible, while of course deploring the reason they have had to leave their country.

I am now pleased to be able to hand over the reins to my fellow councillor, Menna Jones, knowing that the field is in safe hands.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N. Jeffreys". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Nia Jeffreys,
Gwynedd Council Cabinet Member
for Corporate Support

Foreword

Thank you very much Nia, I am very pleased to take the responsibility for equality on behalf of the Cabinet. I appreciate how important it is to ensure that the Council's services are suitable for everyone.

I am also looking forward to seeing the projects in the Equality Scheme come to fruition over the next two years. Having a range of courses in the field of equality will be useful for our staff, and I'm really looking forward to seeing what improvements we can make in our employment arrangements. The developments in the areas of impact assessment and engagement with the people of Gwynedd are also very exciting.

Councillor Menna Jones,
Gwynedd Council Cabinet Member



1. Introduction

In March 2020, the Council published the 'Gwynedd Council Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24' (the Plan) in order to continue with the work of Ensuring Fairness for All. This fulfils public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Act has been designed to reduce inequalities between specific groups by asking public bodies to give due attention to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- advance 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.

The Plan looks at fairness in terms of nine protected characteristics, i.e.:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Sex
- Race (including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality)
- Disability
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief - including a lack of belief
- Marriage and civil partnership

(Equality Act 2010)

The Plan sets out and describes the work that would form the Council's priority in this field for the four years in question, and we have divided the work into five objectives, namely:

- **Objective 1:** Strengthen and deepen the capacity and commitment of Gwynedd Council Staff and Elected Members in the field of Equality, by ensuring that they receive the right training.
- **Objective 2:** Improve the information we have from and about people with protected characteristics.
- **Objective 3:** Build on the work already carried out to embed Equality Impact Assessments as a tool to ensure better decision-making
- **Objective 4:** Act to reduce the gender pay gap and identify any pay gap based on any other characteristic.
- **Objective 5:** Act to attract a range of applicants in order to increase the diversity of our workforce.

The two years since the Plan became operational have been very difficult for everyone. The crisis caused by Covid-19 has highlighted a number of inequalities and it is important that we

look at our services in the light of this to ensure that we are fair. Lockdown led us to operate differently, e.g. more use of information technology, which has caused problems in some ways but has also been an opportunity to progress methods of working. It has affected our schedules as we have had to find and get accustomed to the new ways of working and people have had different priorities.

We have also looked at the 5 objectives of the Plan, in the same way as last year, to ensure that they remain suitable as things start to improve and stabilise. Our conclusion is that they are suitable. We have not identified any need to add to the objectives at this time and our priority will be to complete the work that has been identified within the lifetime of the Plan.

This report outlines, according to objectives, what action points we have committed to in our Strategic Equality Plan, what we hoped to achieve during 2021/22 and what we were able to achieve in reality. The report also looks at the type of information the Council gathers in the field of equality and the way it is used.



Objective 1:

Strengthen and deepen the capacity and commitment of Gwynedd Council Staff and Elected Members in the field of Equality, by ensuring that they receive the right training.

Action Point 1:

We will create an equality training programme as a core field that will be varied, innovative, specific, and of the highest quality. It will be appropriately tailored for all staff members on all levels, along with Elected Members, in order to improve their understanding of their duty towards equality.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

- consider the effectiveness of our current training and discover what would help staff to understand more about the field
- work with Council Managers in order to discover which presentation methods would be most suitable for the needs of various staff, e.g. front-line staff, managers
- commission training providers who have life experience of the field to provide specialist face-to-face training to our staff as required.

What did we do?

By now, training via the Remote Learning Environment (RLE) has taken hold and we have started to use it in the field of equality. We have provided on-line training for some services and this training is now available for other services.

We have found that it is difficult to find Welsh-medium, ready-made training and we have been unable to find an e-module to use. This has forced us to consider alternative methods. Therefore, we decided to adapt the one we already have whilst waiting to see if Welsh Government has any guidance in light of the race, LGBT+ and disability action plans they are in the process of producing. This e-module is nearly ready to be published and it will be one of the core e-modules that will be mandatory for the entire workforce to complete. Our intention is to ensure that everyone receives basic information about the field.

We have volunteered to be part of the national 'digital learning' project that creates equality learning resources, in the hope that this will be a valuable addition to the 'package' of resources we have.

Our further priorities for 2022/23 will be to complete our Equality Training Framework, by creating training for Elected Members and managers on impact assessments and duties of the Equality Plan. We will also intertwine equality elements into a range of new training titles that support managers to lead teams and find better ways to promote the use of the non-mandatory training using the information we have gathered from the recent survey.

Action Point 2:

Elected Members have access to the Members' Portal, an electronic intranet which contains information about training and events relevant to them. Over the period of the Plan, we will update the Portal with training guidelines and information relevant to equality. We will also hold a promotional campaign by using the Members' e-newsletter, 'Rhaeadr', to improve understanding about the information available on the Portal.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

We will update the Members' Portal, providing information on equality including information about the Council's and the Member's duties regarding equality and the new Socio-economic Duty.

What did we do?

The Members' Portal has been revamped and it includes information on equality, the new socio-economic duty and the equality training. It will be further promoted to new Council Members from May onwards in order to explain their responsibility for equality. This action point has therefore been completed, other than the promotion work, which is ongoing.

Action Point 3:

'Ffordd Gwynedd' is the name given to the way we in Gwynedd Council will ensure that we place the people of Gwynedd at the heart of everything we do. We aim to create a situation in which individuals' experiences when they come into contact with the Council will be positive and meet their needs. In moving forward, we will continue to work on strengthening the equality element as part of the 'Ffordd Gwynedd' training. This will also be the case for the Welcome to the Council sessions for new staff members.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

The work noted above was completed in 2020/21.

Objective 2:

Improve the information we have from and about people with protected characteristics.

Action Point 1:

In order to understand any barriers that the residents of Gwynedd who have various protected characteristics may face when dealing with the Council, we will conduct a comprehensive public survey. The survey will identify those barriers and what we could do to respond. This work will include a variety of different methods in order to reach a cross-section of people, especially those who do not usually participate. We will ensure confidentiality for all participants.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

To complete the survey and move on to part 2 of the work, working with groups who haven't yet taken part in the survey.

What did we do?

Although the Covid-19 crisis meant that our way of working had to be adapted, and that the timetable has also significantly changed, we were able to complete an on-line survey by 30 April. The aim of the exercise was to find out if the people of Gwynedd faced barriers or unfairness when dealing with the Council. We have completed the analysis and started to act on the main messages internally but the findings have not yet been shared. Responses showed that a substantial majority of Council users felt that they were treated fairly when receiving services. On the other hand, respondents had provided a great many observations to help us to improve our services.

This survey, as well as the staff survey, also informed us of ways to improve our employment arrangements (see Objectives 4 and 5).

We will now proceed to complete the work required on the analysis, and the work deriving from the responses. We are now of the opinion that this work should be an integral part of the work programme moving forward.

Action Point 2:

We will work to develop more contact with groups or individuals who have protected characteristics, by continuing to work with the Equality Core Group and extending it. Contact must be made with additional groups of people with specific protected characteristics in order to continue to receive various views. We will also take further steps to ensure that our Residents' Panel includes a variety of people with protected characteristics, by targeting as required.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

No specific timetable has been set for this work so we are expected to act annually.

What did we do?

The work of communicating with organisations has continued during 2021-22. A number of groups have shown interest in joining and have been placed on the mailing list. Unfortunately, the numbers attending the meetings were disappointing. We will work in 2022-23 to improve this and to seek alternative ways of holding the meeting that will attract more attendees.

In addition, it is planned to work with the Gwynedd Self Advocacy Group of the North Wales Advocacy and Counselling Service to create an easy-to-read version of the Our Area questionnaire and approach protected characteristics groups such as GISDA LHDTTC+ Group, Gwynedd Active Dementia and North Wales Pride in Bangor to promote the questionnaire.

Action Point 3:

By working with managers and heads of departments, we will ensure that everyone who works for the Council understands the needs of people with specific protected characteristics. We will use the information gathered to improve our services and create Equality Impact Assessments. Our Access/Equality Policy will need to be reviewed, whilst also considering the operational recommendations of the Equality Core Group.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

This action point was ongoing work but we set a goal of reviewing the Access/Equality Policy by January 2022.

What did we do?

It was decided to bring the Access and Equality Policy together in one document and that Equality and Inclusion Policy was approved by the Cabinet in July 2021. It is therefore operational and provides guidance for staff members on approaches to ensure that obstacles are eliminated.

The work of promoting equality messages among staff is ongoing.

Objective 3:

Build on the work already carried out to embed Equality Impact Assessments as a tool to ensure better decision-making.

Action Point 1:

We will set up specific additional training for relevant staff and Elected Members. It will focus on the advantages of an Equality Impact Assessment and provide guidance and advice on undertaking them in order to give full consideration to any potential impacts on the residents of Gwynedd. The content of the training will be regularly reviewed in order to ensure that it is up to date.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

Set up specific training on the impact assessment of a new/adapted policy or procedure for Members.

What did we do?

The North Wales Public Sector Equality Network decided to create a regional template. The aim was to create a standard template that would be easier to use for partnership work and includes the new socio-economic duty as well as questions to comply with the Welsh Language Standards and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. We have adapted the template to be used in Gwynedd and it is being set on an electronic app to facilitate its use. It will be operational by the summer. Once this work is completed, we will be able to offer training on it.

There has been some slippage in the work's timetable because the technical expertise has been diverted to work on the Ukraine refugee project. Meanwhile we are using an interim template, which contains the necessary questions. The publication, promotion and training in regard to the new Impact Assessment template will be prioritised during 2022/23.

Action Point 2:

Over the coming years, we will strengthen arrangements by ensuring that Elected Members are increasingly confident to challenge the quality of Equality Impact Assessments as a natural part of their work in receiving reports/information as a basis for decision-making in the Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and Performance Challenge meetings. The above training will be essential to ensure that this procedure works well, and we will provide guidelines for the various meetings.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

Complete the guidelines for Members who are members of different meetings whilst the rest of the work is ongoing.

What did we do?

It has not been possible to complete this work on the equality impact assessments and, therefore (see above), so we have been unable to complete the guidance for Members. Having said this, information on equality, including impact assessments, has been uploaded

on the new members' portal and guidance on the socio-economic duty has been provided to scrutiny workshops during 2021/22.

Training will be offered for Elected Members soon after the Council elections in May.

Action Point 3:

We will continue to work with Council Departments to ensure that due regard is given to equality requirements within any process of identifying savings or cuts. We will ensure that timely and high-quality Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken and that they contribute to the process of identifying any plans in order to recognise any negative implications that decisions on budgetary cuts will have for specific minority groups in Gwynedd and mitigate them where possible.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

There is no specific timetable for this work in the Equality Scheme. We are expected to act if relevant.

What did we do?

As there was no need to identify new savings or cuts in the period in question, no action has yet been required. However, Council staff and departments have received ongoing help and support with impact assessments in other fields, mainly by receiving individual help from the Equality Advisor

Objective 4:

Act to reduce the gender pay gap and identify any pay gap based on any other characteristic.

Action Point 1:

Over the next few years, we will focus on encouraging more staff to complete the optional equality data questionnaire in order to increase the amount of data we have on our workforce. This will allow us to set a baseline, identify gaps in our workforce and undertake audits based on other protected characteristics. We will employ various methods of doing this during the period of the Plan, including an advertising campaign and raising the awareness of staff members who are new to the self-service system.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

This is continuous, long-term work, therefore no specific work had been identified for this year.

What did we do?

As noted last year, the numbers that have provided this information are low, and this situation is also true in other public sector organisations. Following action, and with the support of Heads of Departments, the numbers are slowly increasing but further work is to be done to ensure that more information is shared. We have identified the areas that need the most work and we will continue to act to improve the situation. It is only then we will have sufficient information in order to identify any problems.

During the year we looked at the performance of each Department and collaborated with Head of Department to encourage staff to fill in the questionnaire or update it. We will tailor further activities to fit the situations of individual departments / workforces.

Action Point 2:

We will continue to conduct an annual audit on the wage gap between men and women, and, by collecting the data in accordance with Action Point 1, will work to develop our ability to undertake such an audit in relation to other protected characteristics. In addition, we will undertake a pay audit every three years in order to ensure that we continue to pay equal wages for the type of work being achieved. We will also work towards putting plans in place to reduce any gaps that emerge from the audit.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

Conduct an audit on the wage difference between men and women (*gender pay gap*) and undertake a gender-based pay audit (*equal pay audit*)

What did we do?

The independent consultant has carried out substantial work on the pay audit and by March 2022 we had received a first draft of the report. The work of further analysing the data continues with the intention of receiving the final report during the summer. We will consider the content of the report after we receive it and take action in line with the findings if necessary.

Action Point 3:

Work has also been ongoing as part of the Women in Leadership Project (one of the projects contained within the [Council Plan 2018-23](#)). We have identified that the number of women in management roles in the Council is disproportionately low, given that women form 70% of the entire workforce. The project's main objective is to increase the number of women who apply for and attain leadership positions within the Council by reviewing the conditions and the working environment in order to attract more women to undertake these posts in future.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

- Review the conditions and the working environment to ensure that we take the lead in encouraging Women in Leadership and identify and seek to remove any barriers that could prevent women from reaching leadership and management posts within the Council.
- Implement a work programme that includes introducing a programme to develop potential for women, carrying out an audit of our recruitment and appointment methods for managerial posts and creating a forum for female leaders and prospective leaders within the Council.

What did we do?

- As part of our practice as an organisation to mark International Women's Day on March 8th, we launched the first series of the Women in Leadership Development Program this year with 11 women from a cross section of departments and roles within the Council receiving a place. The feedback so far states that the program has been very useful to them and that they are benefiting from the experience. Some have even been promoted to senior positions during the program period.
- As well as internal experts we have also welcomed external speakers to contribute to the Programme; Alys Carlton - who runs the Active Motivation company, Dr Hanna Hopwood, Presenter, and Marian Evans, a renowned businesswoman named as *Inspirational Woman of the Decade*.
- An audit of our recruitment and appointment methods is being led by the Human Resources Team with full consultation with the members of the Women in Leadership Group before amending individual working conditions. This procedure will continue into next year.
- The popular "Chats over a Cuppa" meetings for female Elected Members as well as staff have continued with external speakers invited to contribute as well as some of our current internal female leaders.
- A new intranet page recording and promoting the project's activity has been designed and published during the year.
- An event was held for the men of the organisation on the 28th of June

Objective 5:

Act to attract a range of applicants for posts in order to increase the diversity of our workforce

Action Point 1:

We will use the information that has been gathered from the equality questionnaire (see Objective 4, Action Point 1) and will conduct research and engage with the public and our staff in order to discover any factors that prevent specific cohorts of people with protected characteristics from applying for jobs. We will also work to discover ways of encouraging them to apply, e.g. by advertising jobs on a wider level than the Council's website alone, in order to attract a broader range of applications.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

This work is continuous but by 2021/22 we aimed to complete the public survey to identify the barriers facing the people of Gwynedd who have different characteristics (in accordance with Objective 2, Action Point 1).

What did we do?

The consultation with the workforce and the public was completed during the year. We have not yet had the opportunity to fully act on the findings. This will be done as we work with Inclusive Employers (see point 3 below) to improve our policies and ways of working in order to give the necessary attention to equality characteristics.

In order to gather more information, we have decided to question those leaving Council employment whether they have experienced any obstacles. This system gives us the opportunity to gather the information continuously and it will lead to better data regarding trends. Earlier in the year, a pilot was undertaken in the Corporate Support Department. It is early days for that work, but the hope is that it will help us better understand if there are obstacles that people face when working for the Council. We will move on to establish similar arrangements more widely across the Council during 2022/23.

Action Point 2:

Collaborate with other public bodies within our region such as North Wales Police or Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board in order to address any barriers identified. This could also provide access to a wider range of people, bearing in mind that the equality profiles of all workforces are unlikely to be the same.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

This work is continuous therefore no specific work had been identified for this year.

What did we do?

The problems caused by Covid-19, along with staffing problems, have continued to delay this work. However, the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network has decided to make work on diversity within employment a priority in moving forward and has re-established a sub-group. The sub-group will also consider whether there is a need to adapt the way this work will now be undertaken. The area of workforce planning is an area that receives wider attention within the Council and improving recruitment will develop to be an important part of the project.

Action Point 3:

Prioritise working towards reaching Level 2 of the 'Disability Confident' scheme in order to be a 'Confident Employer' and look into becoming a Stonewall Champion.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

No specific work had been identified for this year.

What did we do?

The work of attaining Level 2 is progressing. We have already identified what needs to be achieved in order to reach Level 2 of the scheme, with the stages encompassing the following themes:

- Seeking to influence other organisations to be confident in terms of disability
- Ensure that staff have access to dedicated training in the field
- Continue to take action to eliminate obstacles that may be preventing development in jobs for disabled staff
- Further develop the opportunities available for disabled staff to be able to provide feedback, by encouraging conversations between managers and staff but also by developing specific networks.
- Further develop how we recruit and appoint disabled staff

We continue to hold Level 1 accreditation of the Disability Confident Scheme and are fully committed to reaching Level 2 as soon as practicable.

When researching the possibility of being a Stonewall Champion, it was decided that a slightly different and broader route should be followed in order to try to realise this objective. Our intention is to apply for Inclusive Employers accreditation, which will enable us to receive feedback on our work as an employer in the equality field, and ultimately to help us improve in the field. By following this route we will receive expert advice and feedback which will feed into a work plan for us as an employer. The process will start in late summer 2022.

Information

In accordance with the guidelines of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Gwynedd Council is required to report annually on the information we gather in the field of equality.

Staff Equality Details Monitoring

Because filling the form is optional (in accordance with the guidelines), not enough staff members have completed it. We have recognised this and are working to encourage more workers to complete it (Objective 4, Action Point 1). When we have sufficient information, we will be able to identify pay gaps, on a wider level than merely gender-based (Objective 4, Action Point 2) and see if action is needed to improve the diversity of our workforce (Objective 5). 48% of the workforce had completed the questionnaire compared to 41.8% last year.

Complaints and concerns

The Equality Adviser advises on any complaint made on the grounds of a protected characteristic or equality duty. We also look for patterns annually which may enable us to identify and learn lessons.

During 2021/22 we received 5 formal complaints about the Council's services and 2 about Byw'n lach. 4 were regarding disability, 2 regarding race (ie nationality) and one regarding gender. The number of complaints was insufficient to recognize any pattern and every complainant has received a response. In addition, a number of comments have been received, though questionnaires and independently, about the decision to raise a premium on holiday homes which also claim racism, on the basis of nationality, but they have not been noted in the numbers as they are talking about a decision that has been made by the Cabinet and are therefore not valid to be counted here. We will look at this further to establish if action is needed to better explain the Council's position.

Engagement

Although the Council often engages with the public on all sorts of topics, we have realised that we do not have enough specific information about the precise barriers facing the people of Gwynedd when engaging with the Council. Objective 2 addresses this).

We also collaborate with the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network, which is the group of equality officers of the region's public organisations, to engage regionally every 2 years normally but that has not happened during the year in question.

We also of course have access to information the government has collected e.g. for its Action Plans (or proposed Action Plans) in areas of race, LGBTQ+ and disability and other organisations including the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Quantitative Data

The North Wales Public Sector Equality Network, in conjunction with the Public Service Boards, created a regional data document in 2019/20 for the Equality Plan 2020-24. It was on the same lines as Welsh Government's Is Wales Fairer?. It shows that there is a lack of data available in some core fields on a county or regional level. It is likely that this partly derives from the low numbers. However, it contains useful information showing how the region or county compares with Wales as a whole in areas such as education, housing and socio-economic disadvantage. This lack of information at county level is something the Network will be looking into when moving forward, although there are no specific actions as yet.

Again, in addition, we have access to the information the Government has collected for various purposes, including the Action Plans and of course the information that will come from the 2021 Census will be very useful.

Using the information to meet the 3 aims of the general duty

The specific duties placed on public bodies by the Welsh Government say that we must explain how the information is used to meet the 3 aims of the general duty which are:

- abolish discrimination, harassment and unlawful persecution and other conduct 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.

The ways in which Gwynedd Council uses the above information to meet the above 3 aims include:

- **Improving the diversity of our workforce** - The information we collect from our staff questionnaire, together with information about the county in general, will be used for this purpose.
- **Staffing policies in specific areas** - The Council has a number of employment policies to prohibit harassment and victimization in the workplace and those are based on evidence e.g. whistleblowing policy and dignity at work policy, together with those to prevent discrimination in the workplace e.g. menopause policy and transgender policy.
- **Specific procedures** - We also of course have procedures to ensure respect and dignity towards the users of our services. The Equality and Inclusion Policy (see Objective 2) also outlines what needs to be done to ensure fairness for all and will be revised as necessary due to the evidence collected.
- **Impact assessment** - We are in the process of creating a new method of impact assessment as part of Objective 3. That of course includes consideration of the 3 goals and any assessment will have to be based on evidence. We will collect as much information as possible in one place as a resource for completing an assessment.

- **Day to day work** – Because each of us has at least 5 protected characteristics there is no part of the Council's work that does not contribute towards wellbeing on the basis of equality in some way. Services collect information in their own areas, and use the information above, in order to identify the best way to ensure equal opportunities for specific groups. Examples of this work can be found in our Press Releases which are available [here](#).
- **Training** – We will use the information to identify specific areas that need to be addressed. It is important that staff members are aware of the need to consider equality in their day to day work so the equality e-module, which is focused on the 3 goals, is mandatory training.



Employment Information 2021-22

The Council has a duty, according to the Equality Act 2010, to provide employment information annually. This is the information for 2021-22.

I. Details of the Workforce in general

48.3% of the Council's staff have completed an optional equality questionnaire, and the figures below are based on these, unless noted otherwise. The information about the equality characteristics are as follows:

Gender :

Pa un o'r rhain sy'n eich disgrifio orau?	% o'r Sampl	% o'r Gweithlu
Female	70.0	33.8
Male	29.0	14.0
Other / I think of myself in another way	0.2	0.1
I prefer not to say	0.7	0.4
Total	100.0	48.3

Nationality or National Identity :

Which of the following describes you best?	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
Scottish	0.1	0.1
Welsh	89.0	43.0
Northern Irish	0.1	0.1
British	6.0	2.8
English	2.9	1.4
Other	1.1	0.5
I prefer not to say	0.8	0.4
Total	100.0	48.3

Race :

Which of the following describes you best?	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
White	98.2	47.4
Black - Caribbean	-	-
Black - African	<0.1	<0.1
Black - Other	-	-
Gypsies or Irish Travellers	-	-
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	<0.1	<0.1
Mixed - White and Black African	-	-
Mixed - White and Asian	0.1	<0.1
Mixed - Other	<0.1	<0.1
Asian - Indian	-	-
Asian - Pakistani	<0.1	<0.1
Asian - Bangladeshi	0.1	<0.1
Asian - Chinese	0.1	<0.1
Asian - Other	0.1	0.1
Other	0.4	0.2
I prefer not to say	1.0	0.5
Total	100.0	48.3

Sexual Orientation :

Which of the following describes you best?	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
Bisexual	0.4	0.2

Gay Man	0.5	0.2
Gay Woman / Lesbian	0.4	0.2
Heterosexual or 'Straight'	95.4	46.1
Other	0.4	0.2
I prefer not to say	2.9	1.4
Total	100.0	48.3

Religion :

Which of the following describes you best?	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
Atheist	2.1	1.0
Buddhist	0.2	0.1
Christian	55.1	26.6
No Religion	34.8	16.8
Muslim	0.1	0.1
Jewish	<0.1	<0.1
Hindu	-	-
Other	2.3	1.1
I prefer not to say	5.4	2.6
Total	100.0	48.3

Marital Status :

Are you married, or in a civil partnership?	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
No	40.6	19.6

Yes	55.9	27.0
I prefer not to say	3.5	1.7
Total	100.0	48.3

Disability :

Do you consider yourself as a disabled person?	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
No	95.0	45.9
Yes	2.2	1.0
Prefer not to say	2.8	1.4
Total	100.0	48.3

Gender Identity :

Has your sexual identification changed from when you were born?	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
No	97.1	46.9
Yes	1.3	0.6
I prefer not to say	1.6	0.8
Total	100.0	48.3

Age :

	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
16-19	0.3	0.1
20-24	4.3	2.1
25-29	8.9	4.3

30-34	10.1	4.9
35-39	11.2	5.4
40-44	13.5	6.5
45-49	13.7	6.6
50-54	15.0	7.2
55-59	13.0	6.3
60-64	7.3	3.5
65-69	1.5	0.7
70+	0.1	0.1
I prefer not to say	1.1	0.6
Total	100.0	48.3

2. Nature of the Posts

There is only a need to note a **gender** equality characteristic here.

a) Number employed according to posts :

Analysis not available

b) Numbers employed according to salary scale:

	% Female	% Male	% Other / I think of myself in another way	% I prefer not to say	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
Basic Scale (BS)	36.3	9.4	<0.1	0.3	46.0	22.2
Officers (O)	14.5	9.6	<0.1	0.2	24.4	11.8
Senior Officers (SO)	9.7	6.8	0.1	0.2	16.9	8.1

Senior Managers (SM)	0.4	0.7	0.1	-	1.1	0.5
Chief Officers	0.2	0.2	-	-	0.4	0.2
Teachers (Including unqualified and supply)	6.5	1.3	-	-	7.8	3.8
Headteachers / Deputy Headteachers	1.1	0.6	-	<0.1	1.6	0.8
Soulbury	1.3	0.5	-	-	1.8	0.9
Total	70.0	29.1	0.2	0.7	100.0	48.3

c) Number employed according to salary range:

Based on the salary of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) persons, and not necessarily the actual salary they receive.

	% Female	% Male	% Other / I think of myself in another way	% I prefer not to say	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
£10,000 - £19,999	35.5	9.0	<0.1	0.3	44.9	21.7
£20,000 - £29,999	13.4	7.4	-	0.1	20.9	10.1
£30,000 - £39,999	16.9	8.9	0.1	0.2	26.1	12.6
£40,000 - £49,999	2.0	2.3	<0.1	0.1	4.5	2.1
£50,000 - £59,999	1.7	0.8	<0.1	<0.1	2.6	1.3
£60,000 - £69,999	0.3	0.4	-	-	0.7	0.3
£70,000 - £79,999	0.1	0.2	-	-	0.2	0.1

£80,000+	0.1	0.1	-	-	0.1	0.1
Total	70.0	29.1	0.2	0.7	100.0	48.3

ch) Number employed according to contract type:

	% Female	% Male	% Other / I think of myself in another way	% I prefer not to say	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
Fixed Term	2.0	1.2	-	-	3.2	1.5
Casual	2.3	0.6	-	-	2.9	1.4
Permanent	65.7	27.3	0.2	0.7	93.9	45.4
Total	70.0	29.1	0.2	0.7	100.0	48.3

d) Number employed according to work patterns

	% Female	% Male	% Other / I think of myself in another way	% I prefer not to say	% of the Sample	% of the Workforce
Full Time	37.4	25.3	0.2	0.5	63.4	30.6
Part Time	32.6	3.8	<0.1	0.2	36.6	17.7
Total	70.0	29.1	0.2	0.7	100.0	48.3

3. People who have applied for jobs with the authority during the past year

Note: these are applicants who have applied for a job on-line only - it does not include those who have made a paper application It includes people who are already employed with the Authority as well as external applicants. A person may have applied for more than one post and may therefore appear twice in the data. For 2021/22 only

applications up to 7/2/22 are being reported on due to a change in the process of submitting applications for jobs.

Gender	Number
Female	2,262
Male	1,312
Other / I think of myself in another way	3
I prefer not to say	26
Total	3,603

Nationality or National Identity	Number
Scottish	1
Welsh	3,162
Northern Irish	1
British	234
English	120
Other	59
I prefer not to say	26
Total	3,603

Race	Number
White	3,474
Black - Caribbean	0
Black - African	13
Black - Other	0
Gypsies or Irish Travellers	0

Asian - Indian	20
Asian - Pakistani	3
Asian - Bangladeshi	2
Asian - Chinese	1
Asian - Other	5
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	5
Mixed - White and Black African	17
Mixed - White and Asian	13
Mixed - Other	4
Other	5
I prefer not to say	41
Total	3,603

Sexual Orientation	Number
Bisexual	43
Gay Man	49
Gay Woman / Lesbian	27
Heterosexual or 'Straight'	3,338
Other	14
I prefer not to say	132
Total	3,603

Religion	Number
Atheist	84

Buddhist	6
Christian	1,525
No Religion	1,643
Hindu	6
Jewish	9
Muslim	13
Other	65
I prefer not to say	252
Total	3,603

Marital Status : Are you married, or in a civil partnership?	Number
No	2,510
Yes	996
I prefer not to say	97
Total	3,603

Disability : Do you consider yourself as a disabled person?	Number
No	3,407
Yes	102
I prefer not to say	94
Total	3,603

Has your sexual identification changed from when you were born?	Number
No	3,507

Yes	61
I prefer not to say	35
Total	3,603

Age	Number
16-19	128
20-24	797
25-29	659
30-34	508
35-39	387
40-44	337
45-49	228
50-54	256
55-59	172
60-64	47
65-69	8
70-74	0
75+	0
I prefer not to say	79
Total	3,603

4. Council employees who have applied for a different post within the authority

Part of the above figures.

5. Pobl employees who have made an application for training and the number who were successful

Of the 3,184 staff members who made a application for training, all applications were successful.

6. Council employees who have completed training successfully

Bu i 3,184 aelod o staff gwblhau hyfforddiant yn ystod y flwyddyn, boed yn hyfforddiant traddodiadol neu yn fodiwl e-ddysgu. O'r rhain 1,759 oedd wedi cwblhau'r holiadur cydraddoldeb.

Gender	Number
Female	1,265
Male	475
Other / I think of myself in another way	5
I prefer not to say	14
Total	1,759

Nationality or National Identity	Number
Scottish	2
Welsh	1,544
Northern Irish	2
British	108
English	65
Other	20
I prefer not to say	18
Total	1,759
Race	Number
Asian - Pakistani	1

Asian - Chinese	2
Asian - Indian	-
Asian - Bangladeshi	1
Asian - Other	1
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	-
Mixed - White and Black African	-
Mixed - White and Asian	2
Mixed - Other	1
White	1,723
Black - Caribbean	-
Black - African	1
Black - Other	-
Gypsies or Irish Travellers	-
Other	8
I prefer not to say	19
Total	1,759

Cyfeiriadedd Rhywiol	Number
Sexual Orientation	8
Bisexual	9
Gay Man	9
Gay Woman / Lesbian	1,668
Other	11
I prefer not to say	54
Total	1,759

Religion	Number
Atheist	39
Buddhist	2
Christian	933
No Religion	645
Muslim	1
Jewish	1
Hindu	-
Other	48
I prefer not to say	90
Total	1,759

Marital Status : Are you married, or in a civil partnership?	Number
No	714
Yes	986
I prefer not to say	59
Total	1,759

Disability : Do you consider yourself as a disabled person	Number
No	1,665
Yes	43
I prefer not to say	51
Total	1,759

Has your sexual identification changed from when you were born?	Number
No	1,706
Yes	25
I prefer not to say	28
Total	1,759

Age	Number
16-19	6
20-24	89
25-29	162
30-34	175
35-39	195
40-44	248
45-49	243
50-54	252
55-59	225
60-64	128
65-69	15
70+	2
I prefer not to say	19
Total	1,759

7. Staff members who have been part of the complaints procedure, either as a complainant or as the person the complaint was made against

6 individuals have been part of the complaints procedure. Of these, only 5 had completed the equality questionnaire. It is not possible to analyse further due to the risk of identifying individuals.

8. Staff members who have been through the disciplinary procedure

25 cases of disciplinary have occurred during the year. Of these, only 7 had completed the equality questionnaire. It is not possible to analyse further due to the risk of identifying individuals.

9. Staff members who have left the Council's employment

612 individuals left the Council's employment during 2021/22. Of these, 208 completed the equality questionnaire. .

Gender	Number
Female	148
Male	58
Other / I think of myself in another way	-
I prefer not to say	2
Total	208

Nationality or National Identity	Number
Scottish	1
Welsh	183
Northern Irish	-
British	16
English	4
Other	1
I prefer not to say	3
Total	208

Race	Number
Asian - Pakistani	-
Asian - Indian	-
Asian - Bangladeshi	-
Asian - Chinese	-
Asian - Other	-
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	-
Mixed - White and Black African	-
Mixed - White and Asian	-
Mixed - Other	-
White	205
Black - Caribbean	-
Black - African	-
Black - Other	-
Gypsies or Irish Travellers	-
Other	-
I prefer not to say	3
Total	208

Sexual Orientation	Number
Bisexual	-
Gay Man	3
Gay Woman / Lesbian	-
Heterosexual or 'Straight'	196
Other	1

I prefer not to say	8
Total	208

Religion	Number
Atheist	2
Buddhist	-
Christian	117
No Religion	69
Muslim	-
Jewish	-
Hindu	-
Other	6
I prefer not to say	14
Total	208

Marital Status : Are you married, or in a civil partnership?	Number
No	101
Yes	100
I prefer not to say	7
Total	208

Disability : Do you consider yourself as a disabled person	Number
No	195
Yes	6

I prefer not to say	7
Total	208

Has your sexual identification changed from when you were born?	Number
No	198
Yes	5
I prefer not to say	5
Total	208

Age	Number
16-19	3
20-24	21
25-29	24
30-34	21
35-39	18
40-44	15
45-49	13
50-54	19
55-59	24
60-64	34
65-69	13
70+	-
I prefer not to say	3
Total	208

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report for a meeting of the Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting:	13 September 2022
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Menna Jones
Contact Officer:	Gwenllian Mair Williams, Language Advisor
Contact Number:	32469
Subject:	Amending the Council's Welsh Language Policy

THE DECISION SOUGHT

To support the amendments to the Language Policy and recommend to the Full Council that they adopt the revised Policy

REASONS FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

There have been significant changes in the way the Council operates and provides services to the public since the current Policy was drawn up in 2016. It is therefore vital to ensure that the Council's Welsh Language Policy is updated to reflect those changes in modes of operation and the Council's current ambitions regarding promotion of the Welsh language in its services.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Council's statutory commitment to provide Welsh language services is defined under the *Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011* and the Language Standards imposed on the Council by the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- 1.2. The current Policy was written and approved in 2016 in response to the setting of the Welsh Language Standards. It was a means of answering the requirements within the Standards to "*develop a policy on using Welsh internally for the purpose of promoting and facilitating the use of the language*" (Standard 98) and also to have a document that explains how the Council intends to comply with the various classifications of Standards (Standard 171 and others).
- 1.3. At the same time, the Council wanted to ensure that the implementation of the Standards did not weaken the commitments set out in previous Language policies and plans, and specifically the commitment to maintaining its internal administration through the medium of Welsh, to be promoting the Welsh language, and to be making the proactive Welsh language offer through all of its services.

- 1.4. The Policy was therefore drawn up with the intention of explaining how the Council's services and staff will operate in accordance with the Standards when providing services to the public, and also to reflect the Council's principles and ambition for the promotion of the Welsh language, and the intention to act in favour of the Welsh language.

2. THE REASONING AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

2.1 During 2020, we started looking at possible revisions to the language policy. This step was taken because of the feeling that there had been major changes in the way the Council operated and provided services to the public since the current Policy was drawn up in 2016.

2.2 There was a feeling that some parts of the Policy did not provide sufficiently clear and firm guidance to staff, and that it did not encompass all the situations that services deal with from day to day. For example, there were no specific clauses dealing with the way in which the Welsh language is used in the Council's IT systems. The changes made to the recruitment procedure also needed to be reflected in the policy.

2.3 It was decided to take advantage of this opportunity to carry out a thorough review of the Policy. The revised Policy can be seen in full in **Attachment A**, and the changes that are being proposed here vary from:

- minor administrative changes
- creating new clauses
- providing guidance on areas that are not necessarily included as part of the Standards, to
- inserting clauses that clearly set out key principles so as to ensure that the Council takes every opportunity to promote the Welsh language.

3. New clauses or sections

3.1 Some clauses have been added anew to the policy and there are some sections where more significant changes have been made to the previous policy's content. We therefore note below the main changes, for your information:

- **General Objectives and Principles** - The general principles at the beginning of the policy have been adapted and strengthened, and new clauses included, including one about using the Council's Welsh name only, and one highlighting the Council's responsibility to assess the impact of decisions. The format of the policy has been adapted to include General Principles at the beginning of each section too. These give a short and concise explanation of the general objective for that area of operation, and these principles can be used as a brief and quick guide to help staff understand what needs to be done to implement the policy and comply with the Standards in their work. These objectives and principles convey the Council's commitment to the Standards and also to promoting the Welsh language beyond simply offering a bilingual service.
- **General Objectives – The Council's Name:** A commitment has been included in the general objectives, and clauses have been added to the policy, that reflect the desire to use the

Council's Welsh name (Cyngor Gwynedd) when referring to itself in writing and as part of the corporate image. This includes changing from Cyngor Gwynedd Council to Cyngor Gwynedd on electronic logos, letterheads and references to the Council in public documents, meeting agendas and websites and apps. It will also include use of the Council's name in publicly used logos, such as on site signage or Council vehicles and these changes will be undertaken when renewing these to avoid additional costs.

This change has been included to reflect the work and guidance given by the Native Place Names Project.

Statutorily, under the Local Government Act 1972 the Council has a Welsh and English name, i.e. the name of the County, Gwynedd and either Cyngor Gwynedd or Gwynedd Council. What is recommended in the Policy does not change this position. What is in the Policy is an intention to use the Welsh form only when communicating and referring to the Council. We have received legal guidance that we can act in this manner by drawing specific attention to the requirements of the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 and the Equality Act 2010. These aspects are given specific attention in the report and in the attached Impact Assessment. Under the provisions of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, Section 25, the Council now has a general competency power that gives the Council broader operational flexibility to make decisions. The ability to use this power is subject to any statutory restriction that already exists. However, what is recommended does not fall within this category. What is recommended in the report regarding the use of the Welsh form only is a Policy position that the Council can take within the general competency power. Evidently, in implementing the Policy it will be necessary to keep an overview of the circumstances where specific requirements mean that there will be a need to use an alternative form, however, the Policy provides sufficient flexibility to address this.

- **Section 5 - Digital Services - website, apps and self-service** - This section has been changed significantly in order to provide staff with better guidance on the use of the Welsh language in the different ways technology is utilised in the Council's work. The Standards, and consequently the previous Policy, didn't give much guidance on the use of the Welsh language in technology, and as the Council has been developing more online services and relied more on IT systems, the policy needed to be adapted to reflect this.
- **Section 6 - Signage** - A number of new clauses have been added to the policy to reflect the objectives of the Welsh Place Names priority project and the Council's commitment to protect Welsh place names. Historically, the Council had a clause within its language plan committing to using Welsh place names, but that had disappeared from the last Welsh Language Policy, and there was a desire to see a similar clause in the Policy again. These clauses also reflect the guidance that has been given to the Names Project in the context of using the Council's Welsh name and using the Welsh names of streets and places within the county.
- **Section 14 - advertising jobs and the recruitment process** - Since the publication of the Welsh Language Policy in 2016, considerable work has been carried out as a result of the Language Designations project to develop Welsh language skills assessment procedures across the Council. It was necessary to amend this section in order to reflect the changes that have been implemented within the recruitment process as a result of that project

These amendments have therefore been drawn up based on discussions with officers from the organisation's Learning and Organisational Development service, Human Resources and

the Support service as part of the Language Designations Project Board, and are consistent with the adaptations that have also been made to the Council's recruitment policy.

- **Section 15 - Accountability** - This section has been added in order to explain clearly who is accountable to the policy and what are the responsibilities of the Elected Members and members of the Language Committee.

4. Engagement and Consultation

- 4.1. We have consulted widely and had many discussions on the changes to this Policy. A number of workshops and conversations were held with officers to discuss specific parts of the policy and changes that were being considered, such as the section on internal administration, in order to ensure that any adaptations were practical and did not put officers in a difficult position in terms of compliance. There were also specific conversations with the Council's human resources officers, to ensure consistency between the recruitment and appointment clauses that would be included in the Language Policy and the internal recruitment policy, which was reviewed during the past year.
- 4.2. We have presented items on the Policy review to the Language Committee on two occasions. Once in January 2021, when an informal workshop was held with members, in order to gather opinions about some of the principles being considered and to approve the recruitment and appointment clauses, and again at their meeting in July 2022 in order to present the draft of the policy.
- 4.3. We have also received comments following consultation with the Council's Departments and the Council's Equality group, and have considered changes as a result of complaints and the Welsh Language Commissioner's investigations. A summary of the consultation that has been carried out, the comments or suggestions that have been put forward in the various forums, and any changes that we have incorporated into the final policy as a result of those comments, can be found as an appendix to this report (Attachment B). The risks that were identified through these discussions have been reflected in the impact assessment, and any equality implications considered carefully.

5. Impact Assessments

5.1 Statutory Duties

5.1.1 Equality Act 2010

In accordance with the legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, when making decision, the Council must give due attention to the need (1) to eliminate unlawful discrimination (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) encourage good relations based on the protected characteristics. These matters have been considered while developing the impact assessment, as noted above.

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

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 involves improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The act places a well-being duty on public bodies which is aimed at delivering the seven well-being goals, namely a prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal Wales with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language which is globally responsible. Given the context, the recommendations are in accordance with these duties.

5.1.3 Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011

The Welsh Language Standards set on the Council under the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 places a duty on the Council to operate in a manner that complies with the standards. This includes the duty to have a policy which explains how the Council will use the Welsh language internally and a duty to consider the impact of its decisions on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English. The Policy, and the impact assessment provided as an attachment to this report, ensures we comply with the requirements set in the standards.

5.2 Main findings of the Impact Assessment

- 5.2.1 As the Policy has been written to answer the statutory obligation to comply with the Welsh language standards, and that it is intended to ensure that the Council protects the rights of the residents to use the Welsh language, and to ensure Welsh language services are available to all, the effects identified were on the whole positive. The latest Impact Assessment can be seen in full in **Attachment C**.
- 5.2.2 Some issues were raised during consultation regarding race, and the fact that some people are of the impression that the policy could discriminate against people of differing races and from ethnic minorities – that is people who do not speak Welsh/ who are not of Welsh nationality or people who have moved into the county and have not gone through the education system, and therefore had a chance to learn Welsh. This is mainly in relation to the recruitment clauses and the perception that “essential” skills is the same as fluent, higher level skills. Despite this, it was felt that the overall effect was positive as the policy also ensures the Council complies with the duty to protect people’s right to Welsh language services, and that the recruitment clauses are a way of ensuring that the right skills are available to provide services proactively and with consistency.
- 5.2.3 Other issues were raised regarding accessibility of information, the effects of producing bilingual materials on certain disability groups, and the danger that current trends could exclude some members of the public from using services as a result of a lack of access to technology (potential socio-economic disadvantage). However, as these matters are more to do with the general communication methods of the Council, rather than specifically relating to the Welsh Language Policy, it was judged that there was no effect that would warrant a change to the policy, but that it would be a matter that would need some attention elsewhere.
- 5.2.4 The conclusion was that the implementation of the changes to the Policy would have a positive effect as these changes represented a strengthening of the Councils commitment to the Welsh

Language Standards as well as the Council's wish to be promoting the Welsh language and to be offering various opportunities for the residents to use the Welsh language. The assessment notes that the Council has a Welsh language strategy, which outlines its aims to promote the use of the language across the county, and that the revised policy contributes to the aims of Priority area 3- the Language of Work and Services. The Council has also committed through The Council Plan to the well-being aim of operating in a manner that ensures the resident of the county can live in a natural Welsh society.

6 Cost and Implementation implications

- 6.1 As a number of changes have been made to the policy, it will be essential that the Language Advisors raise staff awareness of those changes, and put measures in place to ensure that everyone is aware of the requirements. A communication programme will be developed in order to share regular and timely messages with staff.
- 6.2 As a result of complaints, etc., we are aware that there are some areas where an awareness of the exact requirements of the Standards is low, and particular attention will need to be paid to those areas.
- 6.3 There are also some implementation implications for those sections of the policy that have been identified in section 3 above as those where the greatest changes have been made to the Policy. These include:
- 6.4 **Section 5 - Digital Services - website, apps and self-service:** A specific piece of work needs to be done to review the council's IT systems, to ensure that every system we have meets the requirements of the Standards and the Policy and operates in a way that gives priority to the Welsh language and uses Welsh names and addresses. This will be a long-term programme, with changes being made to systems as they are renewed in some cases, if changes cannot be made immediately. This avoids having to incur additional expenditure when implementing the policy after it has been adopted.
- 6.5 **Section 6 - Signage:** The commitment set out in the policy to use Welsh place names wherever possible means that some actions will need to be taken in order to witness a change as soon as possible. Staff will be instructed to use Welsh place names, including street names and names of villages, in any correspondence, written materials and on signs.
- 6.6 **General Objectives – the Council's Name:** The changes that will be needed to use the Welsh name of the Council (Cyngor Gwynedd) will be made as part of the work programme of the Place Names Project, and in a way that entails the minimum costs possible to the Council. Instructions will be shared with staff as part of the communication programme of the Policy, in order to take cost-free initial steps, such as changing electronic logos, letterheads and references to the Council in documents. Bigger changes, such as changing logos on the Council's signs or vehicles, will be carried out during renewal so as to avoid additional costs.
- 6.7 There are some circumstances where legal advice will be required before implementing the change, for example when using the Council's Welsh name in legal documents, statutory notices, contracts and on penalty notices, to ensure there is no risk to the Council.

- 6.8 The Place Names Project and its project board will be responsible for monitoring the change and for considering any practicality and cost issues, i.e. if costs become apparent in the implementation of certain elements, it will be necessary to obtain the agreement of the Cabinet before proceeding.
- 6.9 **Section 14 - Job Advertisement and the Recruitment Process:** A number of changes in this field have already been made as part of the Language Designations Project, but responsibility will remain to monitor, and to ensure that the clauses of the language and recruitment policy are followed. It will also be necessary to implement steps to develop the support given to employees and managers to develop skills and ensure that services can continue to operate and be administrated internally through the medium of Welsh.
- 6.10 **Section 15 - Accountability:** It will be necessary to check the Elected Members' Code of Conduct to ensure that the expectations set out in the Policy to respect the Council's position on the Welsh language are clearly stated in it. It will also be necessary to raise members' awareness of these changes in the Policy.
- 6.11 We do not consider therefore that any additional cost is attached to the changes that will be brought about by the implementation of the Policy, as changes will be implemented as part of the Council's day-to-day work, and in the case of signs, gradually and as part of the Council's normal renewal arrangements.

7 NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 7.1 If the Cabinet agrees on the Policy in its current form, it will be presented to the Full Council for approval.
- 7.2 The Language Advisors will draw up and implement a communication programme to ensure that Council staff are aware of the changes that have been made.
- 7.3 A number of guidelines will be shared on the Council's intranet in order to facilitate compliance and provide further guidance to staff on specific areas, including an impact assessment guide and templates and standard phrasing to be used as statements in documents and correspondence.

8 VIEWS OF STATUTORY OFFICERS:

i. The Monitoring Officer:

I have had an opportunity of advising specifically on aspects of this matter. I am satisfied that the proposed amendments to the Policy are appropriate from a legal perspective.

ii. Head of Finance:

While there may be marginal financial implication of implementing the changes to the Language Policy across all Council services, I am convinced that the Council's departments can cope with the requirements within their current resources.

The report provides assurances that larger changes, such as changing logos on Council signs or vehicles, will be made during refurbishment to avoid additional costs, and further states that if costs manifest themselves in the implementation of certain elements, Cabinet agreement will need to be obtained before moving forward. I therefore have no objection to including the revised Language Policy from a financial perspective.

Attachments included with this report:

Attachment A: Revised Welsh Language Policy 2022

Attachment B: Record of Engagement on the Policy

Attachment C: Welsh Language Policy Impact Assessment – August 2022



CYNGOR GWYNEDD'S WELSH LANGUAGE POLICY 2022

1. FOREWORD

This Language Policy is published in accordance with Gwynedd Council's priorities and the requirements imposed on the Council under the Language Standards, Section 4 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

The purpose of the policy is to note how the Council and its employees will plan and prepare to ensure that every service responds to the need of the local population from a language perspective. It will also ensure the Council's compliance with the Language Standards.

Helping people to live their lives through the medium of Welsh has been identified as one of Gwynedd Council's improvement priorities in the Council's Plan. That priority supports the Well-being Plan's aim to "live in a naturally Welsh society".

The Council is also committed through its promotion strategy - Gwynedd's Welsh Language Promotion Plan - to take proactive steps to promote the language and increase opportunities for the people of Gwynedd to use the Welsh language in all aspects of their lives.

2. THE POLICY'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES

By operating in accordance with this policy, therefore, the Council will seek to ensure that:

- The Council's entire workforce operates in accordance with the basic principle set out in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, that the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language.
- The Council's corporate identity reflects its commitment and the priority given to the Welsh language. This will include referring to itself and Cyngor Gwynedd wherever possible.

- Staff will take advantage of every opportunity to encourage and promote the use of Welsh among service users.
- The Welsh and English languages will be treated equally when providing services, ensuring that all residents of the county can use the Council's services through the medium of Welsh and English according to personal choice, and that decisive action is taken to ensure that the chosen language is noted and respected at all times.
- That services or activities that provide additional opportunities for people to use the Welsh language within their communities will be promoted appropriately and effectively.
- A responsibility is placed on **all** Council Officers and Members to promote the Welsh language in all aspects of their work.
- All external bodies are encouraged to communicate with the Council solely through the medium of Welsh or bilingually.
- Any external bodies or businesses that provide services on behalf of the Council are expected to do so in accordance with the Standards imposed on the Council itself. Clear expectations will be set out in service agreements and appropriate monitoring arrangements will be put in place and followed.
- That Council staff will ensure that they follow thorough impact assessment processes, that will assess the possible effects of the Council's policies, and strategic decision and plans, on the Welsh language and its users – including the impact on people's ability to use the Welsh language within the communities of Gwynedd, and on opportunities to see and hear the language in the public sphere. It is expected that everyone will use the integrated impact assessment framework developed for assessing impact on equality, language and socio-economic disadvantage in order to ensure that all of the Council's plans contribute to the aims noted in the council's Welsh language strategy – Welsh Language Plan for Gwynedd – and the long term ambition to see the number of Welsh speakers in the county increase.

3. THE POLICY - IMPLEMENTING THE WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS IN THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL

SECTION 1. WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

(Service Delivery Standards 1, 4, 5, 6, 7)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

We will respect the freedom of the individual/public to communicate with the Council in Welsh or English.

We will make every effort to record language choice, and to communicate in accordance with that choice.

We will encourage other individuals and organisations to use the Welsh language when communicating with us.

- 1.1 Council staff should reply to all letters in the same language as originally written, and in accordance with the corporate letter-answering targets of acknowledging the correspondence within 7 working days and replying in full within 15 working days.
- 1.2 If there is a need to correspond (by e-mail or letter) after speaking to someone face to face or over the phone, any written correspondence should adhere to the language of choice in the original conversation, or the language chosen by the user if they have specifically expressed that they would like written information in a language other than their chosen spoken language.
- 1.3 All mass correspondence should be sent bilingually. This includes any letter that is sent to more than one person using the same template (they do not have to be sent at the same time) - such as replies to requests on the self-service system.
- 1.4 If letters are sent from a computer/self-service system where language choice is indicated and the information is personalised in some way, for example by using a case reference, these do not have to be sent bilingually and can be sent in the individual's language of choice.
- 1.5 When a member of staff commences correspondence with any individual, society or company in the form of a letter or e-mail, this correspondence should be written bilingually. An officer may write in Welsh only if he/she is certain that the recipient understands Welsh and wishes to receive correspondence in Welsh.
- 1.6 It should be ensured that all correspondence sent, either electronically or manually by staff, uses the Welsh versions of addresses, including Welsh street names and the Welsh versions of place names recorded on the council's place names registry where

bilingual/two versions exists. The

- 1.7 Council staff should always write to public bodies and devolved bodies in Wales **in Welsh only**.
- 1.8 If another body that is also subject to the Language Standards (in particular other local authorities and the Welsh Government) sends correspondence in English only, Council staff should request a Welsh copy of the correspondence before responding to the body in Welsh. If no Welsh correspondence is received upon request, the correspondence should be replied to in Welsh and the Language and Scrutiny Unit notified.
- 1.9 Council staff should include a statement on any correspondence noting that the public are welcome to communicate with them in Welsh and that communication in Welsh will not lead to any delay.
- 1.10 The accuracy of any correspondence being sent must be ensured. All of the Council's staff are encouraged to use the Welsh Windows interface and CySill and to use clear and simple language.
- 1.11 Guidance notes and templates will be provided to staff on the council intranet, and language improvement training (gloywi laith) will be offered and made available to all staff to ensure they can comply with the requirements of clauses above.

SECTION 2. TELEPHONE SERVICES

(Service Delivery Standards 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Council will ensure that any enquiry can be dealt with fully in Welsh when the public contact by phone.

- 2.1 The Council will ensure that any member of the public can receive a service through the medium of Welsh or English when contacting over the phone.
- 2.2 Every member of frontline staff and every automated electronic answering system - in the Council's headquarters, regional offices and other public spaces - will answer telephone calls bilingually (in Welsh first and then in English) and in a welcoming manner.
- 2.3 The Council will endeavour to ensure that all members of staff who receive telephone calls from the public will be able to greet the calls in Welsh.

- 2.4 If a member of the public calling wishes to have the matter dealt with in Welsh, but the officer who answers the call is unable to speak Welsh fluently enough to deal with the matter **in full**, the officer should explain this after greeting the caller, and offer to transfer the call to another member of staff who will be able to deal with the matter in full in the caller's chosen language. In cases where the officer who answers the call is a Welsh-learner, the officer is encouraged to use his/her Welsh to the best of his/her ability.
- 2.5 Messages on all the Council's answering machines will be bilingual, with the Welsh message heard first.
- 2.6 When a member of staff telephones a member of the public for the first time, the staff member will make sure that he/she is aware of the individual's language choice, making a note of this if necessary to ensure that any future telephone calls from the service will also be made in Welsh.

SECTION 3. MEETINGS - INCLUDING THE PUBLIC AND EXTERNAL STAFF

(Standards 23, 25, 27, 27A, 27CH, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Welsh is the Council's principal language of operation. All meetings arranged by Council staff will be conducted through the medium of Welsh.

Those attending Council meetings are encouraged to contribute in Welsh, but we will also respect and facilitate language choice.

The Council will arrange simultaneous translation where necessary to ensure that non-Welsh-speaking attendees are able to follow the meeting and participate fully.

In accordance with the Council's aim, it will try and ensure that bilingual staff are always available so as to conduct meetings according to the member of the public's language choice. As the vast majority of the Council's staff are bilingual, we should not find ourselves in a situation where the language of a meeting with a member of the public has to be changed to English.

- 3.1 Officers should ensure that anyone who is invited to an **internal** Council meeting is aware that the Council's meetings are held through the medium of Welsh. They should be given an opportunity to specify whether they wish to contribute through the medium of Welsh or English and the Council's officers will have a duty to ensure that a translation service is available if needed, to ensure that the meeting is held through the medium of Welsh.
- 3.2 If a member of the public attends a meeting relating to **well-being** (i.e. any personal matters), and wishes to discuss those matters through the medium of Welsh, the meeting **must** be conducted according to the individual's language of choice.
- 3.3 Council officers must ensure that any staff (from the Council itself or any other body/agency) in attendance at well-being meetings are able to speak Welsh, and if not, that arrangements are in place to ensure that this has no bearing on the ability to conduct that meeting in Welsh if this is the individual's wish. The language of the meeting **MUST NOT** be changed for the benefit of the officers.
- 3.4 The Welsh language will be the main language of any **public** meetings held by the Council. When a public meeting, hearing or inquiry is organised by the Council, officers should conduct and lead the meeting through the medium of Welsh.
- 3.5 The public have the right to speak Welsh or English, as they choose, in any public meeting arranged by the Council, and a simultaneous translation service will be arranged to ensure that those who do not understand and speak Welsh are able to

understand and contribute effectively to the meeting.

- 3.6 Chairs or leading officers of any public meetings will be expected to draw attention to the simultaneous translation provision at the beginning of the meeting, and encourage attendees to use this equipment to promote language choice.
- 3.7 All documents relating to a public meeting are expected to be produced and published bilingually. It will also be necessary to ensure that all agendas, invitations or advertisements for the meeting include a statement noting that the public meeting will be conducted through the medium of Welsh and that a translation service will be available to those who wish to contribute and follow the meeting through the medium of English.
- 3.8 Council officers will be expected to contribute through the medium of Welsh at public meetings, committees or conferences arranged by other authorities or public organisations, and they are encouraged to ensure that the organisers offer a simultaneous translation provision to enable them to contribute if required.
- 3.9 Any activities or training undertaken by the Council for the public will be offered in Welsh only or bilingually with a simultaneous translation service. (Standard 84)

SECTION 4 - PUBLICATIONS AND WRITTEN MATERIAL

(Service Delivery Standards 38, 40, 48, 49, 50, 50A, 50B, 51, 52, 55, 56)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Welsh is the Council's principal language of operation, which means that Welsh is given priority when writing internal reports and documents.

All the Council's public documents - including reports, plans, posters, forms and explanatory material, press releases, public notices and consultation documents - will be available in Welsh and English.

Any official documents published on the Council's website will be available in both languages, with the ability to switch easily from one version to another.

The Council will not publish/distribute English-only documents, on paper or on the Council's website, unless a Welsh version is also available at the same time.

Every effort will be made to produce short documents bilingually, to ensure that the public see the Welsh language at every opportunity.

The Council shall refer to itself using its Welsh name, Cyngor Gwynedd, wherever possible in written materials and use the Welsh versions of place names and features (where English and Welsh names exist) in all its publications and public written materials.

- 4.1 Officers will ensure that any written material which is intended for the public, is available in Welsh and English. This includes printed written material and material that is shared electronically.
- 4.2 Officers will ensure that any documents published/released in English contains a statement that states clearly that a Welsh version of the document is also available.
- 4.3 Any leaflets sent out to residents will be bilingual and placed in envelopes in a way that ensures that the Welsh language is seen first on opening.
- 4.4 If Officers share written material from other organisations (either in the form of documents, or by reference to other sources such as websites) the Officers will be expected to make every effort to ensure that the material is available in Welsh as well as in English. If documents are shared as part of consultation work, and the external organisation is unable to provide bilingual copies, arrangements must be made for them to be translated in-house before the documents are made public.
- 4.5 Officers should ensure that any written material is in a standard format and style, in Welsh and English, and that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably in terms of format, size, quality and clarity. This includes ensuring that any material is comprehensible and clear to the public, and follows the principles of Cymraeg Clir/ Plain English.
- 4.6 Priority should be given to the Welsh language in any public written material. This means that the Welsh text will be placed either above or to the left of the English text.
- 4.7 Any leaflets, pamphlets and documents that are publicly distributed should be designed as printed versions in such a way as to ensure that the two languages appear together. This can be bilingual text on the same page or a document with both languages printed back to back.
- 4.8 Should the Council, for any reason (e.g. document size, website publication) have to publish Welsh and English versions separately, they will be published at the same time, and the English version will state clearly that a Welsh version is available to encourage residents to access the Welsh version.
- 4.9 It should be ensured that any documents that are **printed** as separate Welsh and English paper versions are available together and that the Welsh version is offered first to the public.
- 4.10 Any signs erected in any public space under the Council's responsibility will be bilingual, with Welsh appearing first, and English following underneath.
- 4.11 We will also seek to ensure that any notices or posters by other organisations and

companies displayed on Council premises are also in Welsh or are bilingual. English only posters shall not be displayed in Council buildings.

- 4.12 Every statement by the Council to the press or media will be bilingual.
- 4.13 Responses to enquiries from the press or media will be sent in Welsh or English, depending on the language of the reporter concerned.
- 4.14 All material used to raise awareness, market, promote and attract investment to the area will note and acknowledge the importance of the Welsh language.
- 4.15 Any marketing campaigns carried out by or on behalf of the Council will be fully bilingual, including exhibitions, information stalls and conferences. This means that any advertising, publishing or research work will be fully bilingual.
- 4.16 The following exceptions to the above clauses are allowed:
- a) A document that relates specifically to activities, the main purpose of which is to encourage and promote the Welsh language, and/or which relate to an event that supports the language and culture of the area. This may include events such as Urdd and National Eisteddfod activities or activities by partners in promoting the Welsh language.
 - b) Announcements or advertisements for radio or television programmes on Welsh language stations or channels.
 - c) Advertisements in the Welsh language press which will appear in Welsh only.
- 4.17 Any documents or announcements intended for an audience outside Wales, or advertisements for radio stations and television channels outside Wales, are expected to include some Welsh. As an attempt to promote the language as an integral part of the county's identity and culture, materials may not be published solely in English.
- 4.18 Advertisements and publicity on behalf of a third party which appear on Council property, land or buildings, are expected to follow the above guidelines. Where there is an agreement between the Council and another party for the use of Council property, land or buildings, a condition to this effect will be included in the agreement, including associated publicity (e.g. posters, advertisements).

SECTION 5 - DIGITAL SERVICES - WEBSITE, APPS AND SELF-SERVICE

(Service Delivery Standards 56, 57, 58, 59, 60)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Council will seek to ensure that all apps and electronic systems it uses to provide services to the public are fully bilingual.

The Council will consider developing apps and systems of its own where possible, to ensure that they work completely bilingually, and that the Welsh language is given prominence.

Any written material published electronically will follow the guidelines noted for written material above.

Switching between the Welsh and English versions of the website pages will be easy, and statements will clearly indicate that a Welsh version is available if Welsh and English documents are published separately without the capacity to toggle.

- 5.1 Any websites developed by the Council will give priority to the Welsh language, will navigate the user to the Welsh page as the default where possible, and will allow easy switching between the equivalent pages in Welsh and English.
- 5.2 Any social media accounts (such as Facebook and Twitter) will follow the guidelines available from the Communications Unit and present information bilingually, with Welsh appearing first every time.
- 5.3 Any response to messages or comments received on social media will be written in the same language, so all Welsh language comments will be replied to in Welsh.
- 5.4 Any forms or questionnaires offered by the Council through a self-service method will be in Welsh and English, with the individuals selecting their language of choice when registering for the service.
- 5.5 Any letters or responses to requests through the online self-service system will be sent in the language chosen by the user.
- 5.6 Any self-service machines used in service settings will operate fully bilingually, and if possible will offer Welsh as the first/default language.
- 5.7 When commissioning or purchasing new IT systems for use as part of providing a service to the public, the Council will seek to ensure equality of access for all, and will ensure that no additional steps are required to use the Welsh version, which would

mean that we treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language.

- 5.8 Should any Department or service within the Council commission/purchase new systems themselves for use as part of providing a service to the public, they will be expected to consult with the IT service, the Website team and the Language and Scrutiny Unit to ensure that the systems comply with the above requirements and are adequately tested prior to use.

SECTION 6 - SIGNAGE

(Service Delivery Standards 61, 62, 63, 141, 142, 143)

- 6.1 All signs erected by the Council in a public place will be bilingual, with Welsh first. This includes signs placed in Council buildings and service settings and also public street/road signs.
- 6.2 Officers will be responsible for ensuring that the language and meaning are clear on any signs, posters, information notices.
- 6.3 The Council will ensure that any third party providers or contractors also use bilingual signs which follow the same principle of Welsh language prominence and accuracy.
- 6.4 The Council will be committed to raising the visual profile of the Welsh language and promote the public use of Welsh place name by using, wherever possible, only the Welsh names on signs placed on its locations and buildings in the county. The Council will consider appropriate changes to signs as they are renewed to use the Welsh names only. This includes the use of Cyngor Gwynedd only on new signs placed that use the Council logo, and the use of the Welsh place names only on new streets and road signs (if Welsh and English versions both existed previously.)

SECTION 7 - RECEPTION AREAS

(Service Delivery Standards 64, 67, 68, 69)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The principle of the proactive offer will be followed and all frontline staff in Council reception areas will start the conversation in Welsh.

- 7.1 The public will be able to receive a fully bilingual service in each of the Council's public reception areas. This means that all customer advisers and receptionists in library and school reception areas, etc. will be able to communicate bilingually.
- 7.2 Signs will be displayed in Council reception areas and any public service points to clearly indicate that a Welsh language service can be provided to encourage the public to use Welsh and to ensure that language choice is noted and respected.

- 7.3 Reception and public service point staff will be encouraged, where appropriate, to wear 'Cymraeg'/'Iaith Gwaith' badges or lanyards that will enable the public to identify the Welsh speakers or learners who can provide a Welsh-medium service for them.

SECTION 8 - GRANTS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

(Service Delivery Standards 71, 72, 72A, 73, 75)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Council has a sub-policy to this Language Policy which sets out the expectations regarding the awarding of grants, and which meets the requirements of Standard 94. Staff will be expected to follow this sub-policy when considering any arrangements where grants or financial assistance are shared with the public.

- 8.1 Any funding or grant from the Council is used as a public tool for promoting the use of the Welsh language locally. This could be by increasing the day-to-day spoken use of the Welsh language or by visually promoting the Welsh language.
- 8.2 Conditions for language use will be set within any grant agreements, depending on the nature of the grant and the activity being funded.
- 8.3 The Council will expect institutions, organisations, bodies and individuals providing services to the business community locally to do so bilingually, and in accordance with the requirements of this Policy and the Welsh Language Standards.
- 8.4 The Council will expect businesses that receive grants or financial assistance to make every effort to promote the Welsh language, to use it visually in the business, and to offer employment opportunities where Welsh language skills are recognised.
- 8.6 All correspondence relating to the allocation of grants or service tenders will be in Welsh and English.
- 8.7 All the processes involved in awarding grants and financial assistance will be conducted bilingually, and it will be possible for anyone to have a meeting or interview in the context of grants or financial assistance through the medium of Welsh. It will be the responsibility of Council officers to ensure that simultaneous translation is provided if needed.

SECTION 9 - PROCUREMENT AND TENDERING PROCESSES (JOINT PROVISION, COMMISSIONING AND OUTSOURCING OF SERVICES)

(Service Delivery Standards 76, 77, 77A, 78, 80)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Arrangements for joint-provision and joint-funding of services, as well as outsourcing of services, are increasingly used by the Council and are essential for the future. In developing structures and agreements with others, the Council will protect and secure the needs of the County's residents in terms of receiving bilingual services.

We will take advantage of every opportunity to raise awareness of the profile and importance of the Welsh language within the County among our joint-providers and to collaborate towards improved bilingual provision across all services.

Ensuring the rights of individuals to Welsh language services will form a core part of any work to outsource or set up an agreement for services.

We will follow the Welsh Language Commissioner's guidance on out-sourcing and contracting work=[c-gosod-contractau-gwasanaethau-cyhoeddus.pdf \(comisiynyddygybraeg.cymru\)](https://www.welshlanguage.gov.uk/gosod-contractau-gwasanaethau-cyhoeddus.pdf)

- 9.1 Any provision contracts will refer to this policy and contain clauses that will clearly set out the requirements and expectations on external providers to ensure compliance with the requirements of this Policy.
- 9.2 When drafting and reviewing joint-provision and joint-funding contracts, the Council will ensure compliance with this policy, to ensure that the arrangements do not lead to any deterioration in Welsh language provision for the public. We will monitor the contracts to ensure compliance.
- 9.3 If a service is outsourced, or a contract/tender is awarded to provide a service in a Council-owned building, they will be expected to operate to the same standards as set out in this Policy and every effort will be made to ensure that the business or service is conducted bilingually. If appropriate, the Council will ask the provider to draw up an independent language policy that reflects the exact nature of the work and service offered.
- 9.4 The Council works in partnership with a number of public bodies, voluntary sector organisations and other agencies. In any situation of collaboration, the Council will ensure that all organisations operate in accordance with the guidance of the Welsh Language Commissioner (Public Service Contracts Contracting Out Guide), and that planning should be undertaken to ensure compliance with the highest relevant Standards in any situation joint-provision. It should therefore be ensured that any situation of joint-provision or outsourcing the delivery of services does not

contravene the requirements of Gwynedd Council's Welsh Language Standards, and puts the Council at risk of failing to comply.

The Council will also take the following steps:

- i. When the Council leads a partnership, strategically and operationally, it will ensure that the public provision is in accordance with the Language Policy and Welsh Language Standards.
 - ii. When the Council joins a partnership, which is led by another organisation, the Council's input to the partnership will conform to the Language Policy and the Council will encourage the other parties to operate to the same standards.
 - iii. When the Council operates as part of consortia, it will encourage the consortia to adopt a language policy. When working in the public domain in the name of the consortia, the Council will operate in accordance with its Language Policy.
 - iv. When the Council joins or forms a partnership, it will ask prospective partners about their Language Policies, or how they operate bilingually. As a part of each partnership, the Council will offer advice to the other parties involved in the partnership.
- 9.5 The Council will be able to support the above, e.g. by offering advice on bilingualism and hiring translation equipment.

SECTION 10 - POLICY MAKING

(Policy Making Standards 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Council sees a close relationship between Welsh language standards and equality issues. An impact assessment is expected of any new policy or procedure, or a change to a policy or procedure, covering equality, human rights and socio-economic issues as well as the Welsh language. This avoids duplication and ensures that we comply with all the duties in these fields.

The Council shall ensure that the public's opinion is sought during any consultations on the possible effects that any plans or decision could have on the use of the Welsh language in the community and on the rights of Welsh speakers,

The aim is to follow the advice set out by the Commissioner in the document:

[Policy Making Standards: Creating opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language \(comisiynyddygyymraeg.cymru\)](#)

- 10.1 There will be a duty on the Council to ensure that full consideration is given to the possible linguistic effects of any policy decisions, and to do so while forming new

policies, or while reviewing or adapting current policies.

- 10.2 There will be a responsibility on the Councils services to ensure that any plans, schemes or new policies are in line with the Councils wider commitments to promote and facilitate the Welsh language, and the long term aim to see the number of Welsh speakers increasing, and that every opportunity is taken to increase the opportunities for people to use the language within the county's communities.
- 10.3 The Council will ensure that it complies with the requirements of the Welsh language standards in relation to the assessing the impact of policy decisions on the Welsh language and opportunities to use the language within the community. This duty will be fulfilled as part of wider impact assessment duties, specifically the duty to assess the impact of policies and plans on well-being as part of the Future Generations Well-being Act, and the local Well-being Plan, and will be done so using the integrated impact assessment framework developed by the Council to incorporate the duties for language, equality, and socio-economic disadvantage, and will be presented to elected members as part of presenting items to the Council Cabinet.
- 10.4 Further guidance can be sought from the Language Advisors about the exact circumstances where a linguistic assessment should be conducted, and specifically so any circumstances where a plan or decision does not have to go to the Cabinet, and so does not need the integrated impact assessment, but that the decision or plan falls within the Welsh Language Commissioner's definition of policy decisions (see the Commissioner's Code of Practice) and so would need a stand alone language impact assessment.
- 10.5 It is expected that Council officers will conduct timely and thorough assessments of any new policy or strategic plan, while planning and developing the said policy or strategic plan, in order to consider what effect, if at all, the plans will have on the prosperity of the Welsh language in the county, including any effects on:
- opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - the number of percentage of Welsh speakers in a community,
 - the Welsh language community services or resources available to people in those communities,
 - the aims of the Welsh Language Promotion Plan for Gwynedd and the long term aim to see and increase in the number of Welsh speakers.

Consulting on decisions:

- 10.6 Services will ensure that any research or public consultation conducted in relation to forming a new policy or strategic plan gives due consideration to the possible linguistic effects of any decisions, and that the research or consultation contributes to the impact assessment process.
- 10.7 Officers will need to ensure that specific questions are included in any public consultation regarding new policies or plans in order to gain the opinion of the public and to consider any possible or likely effects the change could have on the language

and it's use within the community. Examples of questions to be used will be available on the Council intranet, or by contacting the Language Consultants.

Changing or adapting policies or plans:

10.8 Officers are expected to consider any changes or adaptations that can be made to the policy or plan if any possible negative effects are identified, or if opportunities are identified while assessing the impact or during consultation to make changes that would ensure the policy or plan has a positive effect on the Welsh language and its speakers.

Monitoring impacts:

10.9 Where appropriate, the Council will establish monitoring arrangements for strategic plans, so that the impact can be measured, and evidence gathered on the link between the plans and the Council's language promotion objectives.

SECTION 11 - THE COUNCIL'S INTERNAL OPERATIONS

(Operational Standards 98, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 112A, 113, 115, 116, 116A, 117, 119, 120, 121, 124, 126, 128, 129, 141, 142, 143, 144)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Council operates internally mainly through the medium of Welsh. This means that meetings, and internal communications, are in Welsh. The Welsh language will always be given priority in any oral statements, information bulletins, and on posters and signs.

All in-house services for staff, including work policies and the staff intranet and self-service, are provided in Welsh.

All staff will be expected to use Welsh versions of computer software.

All staff will be expected to use an e-mail signature that states that they are Welsh speakers or learners.

Any relevant policies relating to staff rights, disciplinary and grievances processes, will highlight the rights of individuals under the requirements of the Standards. The Council will respect the right of members of staff to exercise their choice of language, and will provide personal information in the language of their choice.

11.1 It is expected that internal Council meetings - including team meetings and meetings

between officers to discuss collaboration - are conducted in Welsh.

- 11.2 It is expected that most internal communications are in Welsh, and that reports, work programmes, etc. are produced in Welsh first.
- 11.3 If documents need to be shared with colleagues (internal or external) who cannot speak Welsh, a translation service is available.
- 11.4 The Council's intranet will be in Welsh only, and staff e-mail information bulletins will be in Welsh. English versions of the information bulletins will be provided as an attachment to the e-mail.
- 11.5 Information on the intranet will be mainly in Welsh, with information shared in English as required.
- 11.6 Any information relating to employment matters on staff self-service, and any policies or guidelines on key matters such as Health and Safety, will be available through the medium of Welsh and English.
- 11.7 Any member of staff can submit complaints through the medium of Welsh or English, and any case should be dealt with in the staff member's chosen language.
- 11.8 Every member of staff will be entitled to deal with any disciplinary matters or any other matters relating to working conditions or performance through their chosen language, in Welsh or in English.
- 11.9 **ALL** training offered by the Council will be provided in Welsh. Every step will be taken to help staff participate in training through the medium of Welsh, and training through the medium of English will not be offered for core subjects unless absolutely necessary.
- 11.10 Consideration should be given to the use of simultaneous translation in training sessions, where practicable, to enable staff who lack confidence in Welsh to participate effectively, in order to ensure that Welsh is maintained as the main internal administrative language, and to provide informal, supportive opportunities for staff to practise their Welsh language skills.

Supporting staff

- 11.11 In order to enable the Council to operate in accordance with this policy, the Council's staff will be required to be able to communicate effectively in Welsh and English, up to the appropriate standard and in order to be able to deliver their duties in full.
- 11.12 The Council wishes to work with its staff to reach that situation and every support and encouragement will be given to employees to increase their confidence and ability in Welsh. At the same time, the Council expects its staff to be committed and to co-operate to achieve that aim.

- 11.13 Staff are encouraged to develop their language skills and they will be released, if necessary, to learn or refresh their skills. The Council will provide for training staff on many levels and will prepare funding for that.
- 11.14 Line Managers will be responsible for encouraging staff to attend training and assess the need for refresher training or skills improvement within their teams.
- 11.15 Language Awareness training will also be offered to the entire workforce, which will raise awareness about the importance of the Welsh language and its history.
- 11.16 There will also be an opportunity for elected members wishing to improve their linguistic skills to join the Council's language training.
- 11.17 The Dafydd Orwig Memorial Prize is awarded annually to learners in order to acknowledge the efforts of staff who have made particular progress over the past twelve months. The prize also acknowledges the work and contribution of language Mentors.

SECTION 12 - JOB ADVERTISEMENT AND THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

(Operational Standards 136, 136A, 137, 137A, 137B, 140)

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Welsh language is regarded as an essential skill for every post within the Council.

The linguistic requirements of each post must be assessed against the language framework.

Job interviews will be conducted in Welsh.

An assessment of the language skills of all staff must be undertaken, either on appointment, or as part of induction arrangements.

General/Determining Language Requirements

- 12.1 The Council has an internal Recruitment Policy, which provides further guidance to managers on the process to be followed when appointing, and the language requirements to consider at various stages. It will also be possible to get advice from the Human Resources team or the Language Advisors about how to consider the Welsh language needs if any different methods are used other than the usual recruitment procedures.
- 12.2 The Welsh language should be noted as a key skill **essential** for all posts, with the exact level of language skills required to deliver the post's requirements - listening and speaking, reading and comprehension, and writing - clearly noted in the Person Specification when advertising.

- 12.3 The Manager will determine the exact level of communication ability and skills that will be required to deliver **all** the post's requirements by using the Council's Language Framework.
- 12.4 When a post becomes vacant, managers must ensure that the language requirements are up to date and are suitable for the requirements of the post.
- 12.5 For posts where the language requirements are a core part of delivering the post's duties (e.g. in frontline posts where there is a need to deal with the public), individuals must reach the required level from the starting date of their employment.
- 12.6 In other circumstances (e.g. if we have failed to appoint someone with all the required skills at the first attempt) it may be appropriate to appoint individuals who possess other relevant skills and who demonstrate a commitment to developing the language skills over time. In such cases, the Organisational Learning and Development service will be able to provide bespoke support and training, and a suitable development programme will be drawn up in agreement between the Council as the employer, the manager, and post-holder in order to bridge the gap between the skills of the individual and the skills required for the job.
- 12.7 It is the appointing manager's responsibility to ensure that the individual is referred to the Organisational Learning and Development Service as appropriate, that they attend any identified training, and develop their skills.

Advertising

- 12.8 Every staff recruitment advertisement published by the Council will be bilingual, with the exception of teaching posts which are advertised in Welsh only.
- 12.9 All job advertisements will include a sentence which highlights the Council's Welsh-medium internal administration and the need for appropriate language skills among employees.
- "Gwynedd Council operates internally through the medium of Welsh, and offers all its services bilingually. The applicant will be required to reach the linguistic level noted in the Person Specification."*
- 12.10 All candidates are encouraged to submit application forms in Welsh, or bilingually, as a way of demonstrating an understanding of the Welsh language within the Council.
- 12.11 If it is not possible to appoint someone with the necessary linguistic skills after advertising once, consideration can be given to receiving applications from applicants who do not meet the language requirements immediately, but who are willing to commit to learn.

THE LANGUAGE DESIGNATION OF THE POST ITSELF WILL NOT BE CHANGED WHEN RE-ADVERTISING.

- 12.12 In such circumstances, the wording that appears in the advertisement will be changed to the following:

Rydym yn awyddus i ystyried ceisiadau gan unigolion sydd, o bosib, yn is na lefel iaith y swydd ar hyn o bryd, ond bydd gofyn i'r ymgeisydd llwyddiannus ymrwymo i ddysgu neu ddatblygu i lefel iaith y swydd o fewn amserlen resymol. Bydd y Cyngor yn rhoi cefnogaeth i gyflawni hynny.

English:

We are eager to consider applications from individuals who, possibly, do not currently reach the language level of the post, but the successful applicant would be required to commit to either learn, or develop language skills to the required level within a reasonable timescale. The Council will provide support to achieve this.

- 12.3 If a job is advertised using a different method or procedure to the usual, and without using the job description and person specification templates – for example if creating a recruitment package or advertising a secondment internally – it should be ensured that information regarding the essential linguistic skills are still included and can be seen clearly within the package. Further guidance can be had from the Human Resources team or the Language Advisors.

Appointing/Interviews

- 12.13 Each interview will be held in Welsh. The documentation inviting individuals to an interview will note clearly that the interviews will be conducted in Welsh, and that the relevant officer must be contacted in the event of the need to make alternative arrangements.
- 12.14 If a member of the interview panel is a non-Welsh speaker (e.g. if an external representative is required for any reason) this will not affect the individual's right to a Welsh language interview and the Council will take the responsibility for any translation requirements.

SECTION 13 - OTHER MATTERS - ACCOUNTABILITY

Staff

- 13.1 It is expected for every member of staff employed by the Council to comply with this policy. At the same time, it is recognised that some staff and departments are not subject to the Welsh Language Standards for various reasons. This includes:
- staff of GwE and the Trunk Road Agency, and the Ambition Board, which operate at arm's length and under joint-committee status;
 - school teaching staff, who are directly employed by the schools and governing bodies. A standard language policy template has been developed to be used by

schools, with governing bodies responsible for approving and monitoring its implementation.

- election staff, who come under the responsibility of the Returning Officer, a role which is independent of the Council.

13.2 The Education Department and Language and Scrutiny Unit have prepared a template language policy for use by schools, which reflects the general principles and commitments in this policy to operate in a way that ensures that the public's right to Welsh language services is always respected. That policy has been shared with all governing bodies of primary and secondary schools in the county, with the hope that it will be adopted and implemented.

Volunteers

13.3 If volunteers are used to provide services or activities on behalf of the Council, it should be ensured that they are also aware of the need to provide bilingually and recruit those who are able to communicate in Welsh and English where possible. If volunteers who are not Welsh speakers are recruited, the Council officer or manager should ensure that this does not disrupt the service's ability to offer the activity bilingually.

13.4 If volunteers are recruited for the long-term (more than a single activity), it should be ensured that an element of Welsh language awareness or confidence boosting is included in any training for the role.

Elected Members

13.5 Elected members are part of the internal procedures of the Council, but they are not subject to the Standards in the same way as the Council's paid employees are.

13.6 They are, nevertheless, expected to adhere to and respect the principles of the Council with regard to the Welsh language and to be aware of the requirements on the Council's services and staff.

13.7 All members are offered face-to-face and online language awareness training to develop their understanding of the Council's obligations under the Welsh Language Measure and other relevant frameworks and legislation such as the Well-being Act, the Equality Act and the More than Just Words framework.

13.8 Elected Members who sit on the Council's Language Committee will have a role to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Standards and Policy. The Language and Scrutiny Unit and Council Departments will submit regular reports to provide them with updates on relevant issues.

SECTION 14 - MONITORING AND REPORTING

(Record Keeping Standards 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153)

Monitoring

- 14.1 The Council will report annually on its compliance with the Language Standards to the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- 14.2 An internal self-assessment process will be implemented, with departments monitoring compliance and reporting any problems or barriers to the Language and Scrutiny Unit.
- 14.3 Actions and a developmental work programme will be drawn up on the basis of any identified gaps in order to work consistently towards performance improvement.

Language Complaints

- 14.4 The Council welcomes any complaint against the administering of our Language Policy as evidence of our performance and as an opportunity for improvement.
- 14.5 We will deal with each language complaint according to the Council's corporate standards. The Language and Scrutiny Unit is responsible for monitoring language complaints and they are regularly reported to the Language Committee. The Unit will follow the procedure of reporting formally on any complaints made that have been dealt with in full, and informally on complaints that are still to be resolved. A further explanation of the process we will follow, and the role of the Commissioner, has been published on the Council's website. [Welsh Language Standards and Policy \(llyw.cymru\)](#)
- 14.6 Any complaints relating to this Language Policy or the Council's compliance with the Welsh Language Standards (2015) will be reported to the Language Commissioner annually.

Review

- 14.7 This policy will be reviewed regularly, and adapted as required.

Appendix: Record of engagement and consultation

The following table is a summary of the points and questions raised in the various forums, as well as indicating the language advisors' response to the comments and the proposed changes to the Policy as a result of the comments.

We have also noted that if there are issues we will act on them in other ways, or raise them with colleagues, rather than changing the policy itself.

Language Committee, January 2021 (Presented recruitment clauses specifically and discussed some possible changes).	
Matters raised	The Language Unit's response and changes that have been made
<p>I. The importance of noting in meetings that the translation service is for non-Welsh attendees and not for Welsh speakers was reiterated.</p> <p>II. A clause is needed about awareness of place names.</p> <p>III. A reference to Welsh-only advertisements within the Council's buildings.</p> <p>IV. Influence the policies of bodies that are part of the Council's procurement.</p> <p>V. Request an opinion about the principle of producing bilingual documents so that people see the Welsh language at every possible opportunity. The committee agreed on this principle.</p>	<p>I. Relevant clauses have been adapted in the policy to highlight this principle. (General Principles Section 3)</p> <p>II. Place names - clauses have been added - based on the old clauses of the previous Language Plan and also on the work priorities of the Place Names Project.</p> <p>III. A clause is already included in the policy about the language of signs and posters.</p> <p>IV. Joint provision and outsourcing clauses – Section 9 (9.1) – note that if a service is outsourced, there is an expectation that the same standards and language policies will be followed.</p> <p>V. Having considered this principle further it would be difficult to implement, as so many of the Council's documents are published digitally with a separate Welsh and English version (and the ability to move/toggle from one language to another) but we have included a new clause in the policy which sets out the principle and ambition in the general principles for section 4:</p>

<p>VI. An opinion was sought about the use of language in training and the practice of conducting training in Welsh and English separately. It was agreed that an attempt should be made to provide translation instead of offering sessions in English, in an attempt to reduce the number of Welsh speakers who choose an English session because of convenience of timing rather than because of language choice.</p>	<p><i>Every effort will be made to produce short documents bilingually, to ensure that the public see the Welsh language at every opportunity.</i></p> <p>VI. Clauses 11.9 and 11.10 have been adapted:</p> <p><i>11.9 ALL the training offered by the Council will be provided in Welsh.</i></p> <p><i>Every step will be taken to help staff participate in training through the medium of Welsh, and training through the medium of English will not be offered for core subjects unless absolutely necessary.</i></p> <p><i>11.10 Consideration should be given to the use of simultaneous translation in training sessions, where practicable, to enable staff who lack confidence in Welsh to participate effectively, in order to ensure that Welsh is maintained as the main internal administrative language, and to provide informal, supportive opportunities for staff to practise their Welsh language skills.</i></p>
<p>Equality Core Group (Presented the current Policy (2016) and asked for any comments)</p>	
<p>Matters raised</p>	<p>The Language Unit's response and changes that have been made</p>
<p>General comments about language register and text layout.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Font size can make it difficult for the visually impaired. Setting text bilingually sometimes means having to use a smaller font, with no room to enlarge it. ○ The Easy read option is not often available – ○ The choice is formal English or Welsh - nothing in-between. ○ Learners like to have Welsh and English together rather than having to switch from one language to the other. 	<p>Consider placing more emphasis on using Cymraeg Clir - to try and ensure that we produce materials that are easy to read, and help those who lack confidence in their ability to understand Welsh.</p> <p>Discuss with colleagues whether there are opportunities for us to create more materials bilingually, rather than having Welsh and English separately.</p>

Staff discussion sessions	
Several discussions were held with colleagues who had an interest in or knowledge of specific fields.	
Matters raised	The Language Unit's response and the changes that have been made
<p>Internal administration: A need to give priority to the Welsh language in terms of internal communication while also respecting people's choices, especially when receiving personal information.</p> <p>A need to distinguish between the different ways in which information is presented, e.g. personal information that is provided to staff members on the self-service system and general information on the intranet.</p>	<p>A clause has been inserted in General Principles Section 11: The Council's Internal Operations to reflect this principle:</p> <p><i>Any relevant policies relating to staff rights, disciplinary and grievance processes, will highlight the rights of individuals under the requirements of the Standards. The Council will respect the right of members of staff to exercise their choice of language, and will provide personal information in the language of their choice.</i></p> <p>The different ways of providing information and use of the Welsh language in different internal contexts have been highlighted in Section 11.</p>
<p>Recruiting and appointing: A need to reflect the changes to the recruitment procedure due to the implementation of the Designations Project.</p> <p>A need to highlight the requirements of the Standards in relation to advertising jobs and recording language skills.</p>	<p>Recruitment and appointment clauses (Section 12) were written in consultation with the Project Board and Learning and Development officers. The Language Unit has advised and collaborated with the Human Resources service to ensure consistency with the relevant recruitment policies. The wording has been changed to highlight the need in the Standard to use the word ESSENTIAL.</p>
Heads of services	
Shared the consultation copy with heads for comments during May 2022	
Matters raised	The Language Unit's response and the changes that have been made
<p>Changes to be proposed or questions raised:</p> <p>It was noted that it was necessary to look at the Policy Making clauses in order to ensure that the guidance was clear to staff. A feeling that the expectation to ask a specific question when consulting on policy decisions was insufficiently clear. Several</p>	<p>Accept this comment and have adapted this section of the policy - adding the "Impact Assessment" and "Consultation and associated research work" sub-headings and new clauses that make the requirement for consultation questions clear. Also added an extract from the Code of Practice to show the definition of a policy decision.</p>

<p>references to the need to assess the impact on the Welsh language and mitigation measures, but not the question.</p>	
<p>Language Committee 20 June 2022 Presented the consultation copy in order to obtain comments and approval to proceed to present to the Cabinet.</p>	
<p>Matters raised</p>	<p>The Language Unit's response and the changes that have been made</p>
<p>It was asked whether it would be possible to add a more quantifiable element to the policy-making clauses that refer to impact assessment. There was a desire to see a clause referring to an impact that would cause a significant reduction in the percentage of Welsh speakers in the communities. Refer to Welsh speakers rather than treating the Welsh language as an independent matter.</p>	<p>These clauses have been drawn up specifically to reflect the exact requirements of the Standards, however, the consultant has adapted the wording of the clauses in question to address the matter raised. We have added to the clauses to refer specifically to people, and to having a positive impact on people's opportunities to use the Welsh language (which is the wording of the requirement in the Standard).</p> <p>We are concerned about committing in a policy clause to measure the impact of plans directly on the number and percentage of speakers, as it is not easy to make a direct link between the Council's policies, projects and strategic plans and a change in the number and percentage of speakers, therefore it will not be easy to prove the impact. This element's reliance on the census data also makes the situation vulnerable in the future.</p> <p>However, we recognise that trying to measure change in the percentage of Welsh speakers is an important part of measuring and assessing impact, and will ensure this gets proper attention in any guidance for staff relating to impact assessment, as well as in our monitoring work of impact assessments.</p> <p>The consultant will keep this comment in mind when developing their work of creating linguistic measures for projects and plans.</p>
<p>The need to continue to include a clause (12.3) which states that one question will be asked in English in interviews was queried.</p>	<p>As this is a policy specifically about the use of the Welsh language, we accept this comment and agree to remove this from the Language Policy.</p>

	This clause has also been adopted in the internal recruitment policy, which provides guidance to managers on the procedure for conducting interviews, and we will draw the attention of relevant officers to this comment for further discussion.
Questions were asked about the need to ensure Welsh language skills for subcontractors who work with the Council on various projects.	<p>Expectations on contractors are addressed in clause 9.1 <i>Any provider agreements will refer to this policy and contain clauses that will clearly set out the requirements and expectations on external providers to ensure compliance with the requirements of this Policy.</i></p> <p>We believe that this clause, as well as the guidance given to procurement officers within the Council, is sufficient. Standard clauses drawn up for use by procurement officers - no need to refer to this in the policy as it is an operational element rather than a principle.</p>
It was pointed out that elected members are bound by the Code of Conduct and therefore there is a need to consider whether the language policy recognises this.	Agree to look at the content of the Code of Conduct to ensure that the expectation is clear and consistent.
It was asked if there were any implications for members of staff who need to receive training to achieve the language designation of their job but have been unable to attend those training sessions.	It was confirmed that there are no implications if staff miss Welsh language training to achieve their language designation. This matter was discussed in the Language Committee a few years ago, when establishing the Language Designations project, and it was agreed with the guidance from the human resources service at the time that it was not practical to commit a member of staff to a specific time period.
Leadership Team April 5th 2022	
The Place Names Project has presented reports to discuss the specific principles of place names.	
Matters raised	The Language Unit's response and changes that have been made
The officers of the Place Names Project approached the Leadership Team to specifically ask for their political guidance on using Welsh names, and the wish to use the name Cyngor Gwynedd only (and	Clauses have been included in the policy to reflect the commitment of the place names project to protect and use Welsh names (General principle 2, Clause 1.6, General principle Section 4, Clause 6.4) and the work of implementing these clauses will become part of the work programme of the

not Gwynedd Council) and to use Welsh street and place names to the best of our ability.

Guidance was received from the Leadership Team that they agreed with the principle of using Welsh names, and using the Council's Welsh name wherever possible.

The Leadership Team supported the principle that some issues could be acted upon immediately, but recognised that it would also take some years to implement all the changes.

Guidance was given that signs (including the Council's logo) would be changed when the need arose, so that it would not involve an additional cost at this time.

Place Names Project, which due to its status as a Council priority project, will be monitored when reporting on progress through performance challenge arrangements.

The Council's corporate image and identity reflects its commitment and the priority given to the Welsh language. This will include using the name Cyngor Gwynedd when referring to itself wherever possible.

1.6 *It should be ensured that any correspondence sent, electronically or individually by staff, uses Welsh addresses, including Welsh street names and the forms of place names on the Council's Register of Place Names.*

General Principles Section 4

The Council will refer to itself by its Welsh name, Cyngor Gwynedd, and adopt Welsh names for locations and features in all its publications and public written materials.

6.4 *The Council will undertake to promote the use of Welsh names for locations by using only the Welsh names on signs within the county wherever this is practicable. This includes using only Welsh names on new street and road signs, and considering changes to signs as they are renewed to use only Welsh names.*

Assessing the Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh language and Socio-Economic Disadvantage

Please see the sheet *How to Make an Equality Impact Assessment* for assistance to complete this form. You are also welcome to contact Delyth Williams, Policy and Equality Officer on ext. 32708, or DelythGadlysWilliams@gwynedd.llyw.cymru, for further assistance.

The Council is required (under the Equality Act 2010) to consider the impact that any change in any policy or procedure (or the creation of a new policy or procedure) will have on people with protected equality characteristics. The Council also has additional general duties to ensure fairness and to foster good relations. Therefore, a timely assessment should be made before any decision is taken on any relevant change (i.e. that affects people with protected equality characteristics).

The Council is also required, under the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011), 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 made of the Welsh language.

From 1 April 2021, the Council has a duty to give due attention to addressing socio-economic disadvantage in strategic decisions.

1) Details

1.1 What is the name of the policy / service in question?

Gwynedd Council Language Policy

1.2 What is the purpose of the policy / service that is being created or amended? What changes are being considered?

To amend the Council's Welsh Language Policy to reflect changes in approaches and to strengthen the Council's commitment to promote the use of the Welsh Language.

The purpose of the Welsh Language Policy is to ensure that the Council operates in a way that gives priority to the Welsh language when providing services. It satisfies the statutory requirement under the Welsh Language (Wales) Bill 2011 to ensure people's right to use Welsh language when engaging with the Council, and contributes to the well-being objective to ensure residents can "live in a natural Welsh society", and the Council's improvement objective to "help people live their lives through the medium of Welsh".

There has been no change in the legislation and statutory requirement in relation to offering Welsh language services, but the Policy needed to be modified to provide clearer guidance on what the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards mean in practice and in the context of officers' day-to-day work, and also to provide guidance on areas where there are no relevant Standards.

The amendments to the Policy therefore strengthen the Council's position that it goes beyond the requirements of the Standards and acts in a way that always puts the Welsh language first.

Changes have also been made to reflect the work of the Council's priority projects that relate to the Welsh language (language specification project, Welsh place Names project) and the ambition of the Council to find ways of going beyond the requirements of the language standards, and to raise the profile of the language in the county, visually and verbally. This includes the decision to use the Welsh name of the Council (Cyngor Gwynedd) only wherever it is possible from now on.

1.3 Who is responsible for this assessment?

Gwenllian Williams, Language Advisor, Language and Scrutiny Unit, Gwynedd Council

1.4 When did you commence the assessment? Which version is this?

Version 1 – 14.09.21
Version 2 - update after consultation - July 2022
Version 3 - update after Equality Advisor's input - August 2022

2) Implementation

2.1 Who are the stakeholders or partners with whom we will have to work to carry out this assessment?

Officers and Heads of Departments, Gwynedd Council
Residents
Language Committee

2.2 What steps have you taken to engage with people with protected characteristics, regarding the Welsh language or with communities (either due to location or due to need), who are living with a socio-economic disadvantage?

There has been no public consultation on the policy as the changes do not affect the services offered to the public. The statutory requirement remains the same, but changes are needed to provide clarity to staff and reflect current Council procedures.

It was, nevertheless, believed to be important to include the views of people with different characteristics and engagement has been held with the Equality Core Group on the current policy and its potential impact on certain groups.

2.3 What was the outcome of the engagement?

Appendix - consultation summary

2.4 On the basis of what other evidence are you acting?

Complaints received by the Language and Scrutiny Unit, and the subjects of investigations by the Welsh Language Commissioner have highlighted some weaknesses in policy guidance and staff awareness of the exact requirement of the Standards.

Some clauses also needed to be added and modified as part of actions imposed as a result of investigations by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

There was therefore a clear need to review the policy to ensure it provided staff with the best possible guidance, and reduced the number of complaints received.

The internal discussions that took place with the following also add to the evidence base, as they have helped us identify the weaknesses and have a discussion about the gaps in policy or barriers to implementation.

- Officer groups on specific topics/parts of the policy
- Language Designations Project Board
- Heads of Council departments
- Language committee
- Cabinet Member

2.5 Are there any gaps in the evidence that need to be gathered?

We do not believe there are gaps in evidence currently, but we will monitor the implementation of the policy and keep track of any non-compliance that manifest themselves through enquiries or complaints. The Language and Scrutiny Unit has just established a new self-assessment regime, with each department within the Council completing an annual questionnaire detailing how they manage to comply with the requirements of the Language Standards and Policy. This will be a way for us to identify any weaknesses and act on them immediately. It will also enable us to identify if any further clarifications or modifications needed to the Policy.

..

3) Identifying the Impact

3.1 The Council must duly address the impact that any changes will have on people with the following equality characteristics. What impact will the new policy/service or the proposed changes in the policy or service have on people with these characteristics? There is also a need to consider the impact on the socio-economic disadvantage and on the Welsh language.

Characteristics	What type of impact? *	In what way? What is the evidence?
Race (including nationality)	Positive / negative / none	<p>Information gathered from surveys / public consultations by the Council – and in particular feedback recently received from fellow officers as a result of a public consultation by the Equality Unit looking at barriers facing the public in their engagement with the Council, and engagement by the Website Team on public use of the website – shows that some negative aspects exist about the Council's language policy and the assumption of it discriminating against people of a different race or from ethnic minorities (i.e. people who are not native residents).</p> <p>There have also been a number of complaints received in recent years which suggest that some may feel that the Language Policy is racist and discriminatory. These complaints have mainly been concerned with the recruitment element and the belief that the Language Policy denies job opportunities to non-Welsh-speakers. Although language is not a protected equality feature, this is often directly linked to the race aspect.</p> <p>It can therefore be considered that there is some potential negative impact as misunderstandings about the recruitment policy create an impression of discrimination against non-Welsh people or who do not have Welsh nationality or people who have moved to the area and who have not been through the county's education system.</p> <p>At the same time, the reference to language requirements within the recruitment section of the policy risks having a negative impact on a cohort of Welsh-speakers as people feel excluded from opportunities because their Welsh is not good enough. This stems from an assumption that "essential" skills mean fluent, higher-level skills.</p> <p>There may be an element of truth to this as some jobs exist where it would not be possible to recruit someone without the appropriate Welsh language skills without that affecting the service provided.</p> <p>A positive impact on the other hand comes from the fact that the policy satisfies a statutory requirement to protect the right of individuals to Welsh language services and that the recruitment clauses provide a means of ensuring that the appropriate skills are available to deliver Welsh language services proactively and seamlessly. Although the policy specifically relates to the Welsh language and states that the Council prioritises the Welsh language, there is no intention not to communicate and also offer services in English, and therefore there is no negative impact on</p>

		<p>people's ability to access services.</p> <p>The recruitment clauses of the policy ensure that a sufficient number of the workforce are able to access Welsh to meet the linguistic (Welsh) needs of the population, and to provide opportunities for workers to develop their skills.</p> <p>In terms of discrimination against ethnic minority residents, who may speak languages other than Welsh and English, the policy can be seen as having a negative impact as it does not give residents the same rights to services in other languages. As this is a Welsh language policy, designed to outline statutory responsibilities under the Welsh Language Bill to provide Welsh-medium services, and to outline how Welsh (and English) is used in the Council's proceedings, it is not intended to deal with/address the needs of the population in relation to other languages.</p> <p>The Council nevertheless addresses the requirements of other languages through its Equality responsibilities, and is committed to offering provision where needed, for example translation needs at well-being meetings.</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Positive / negative / none</p>	<p>As the Policy relates specifically to a statutory responsibility to produce bilingual materials, and with the medium of language of communication rather than more general modes of communication, no negative impact was identified during the engagement. However, some issues were raised during consultation with the Equality Core Group that should be considered when implementing the policy of producing bilingual materials and accessibility of services in general.</p> <p>It was noted that the practice of producing bilingual materials could have a negative impact on people who are visually impaired, as the need to use fine print or having to squeeze large amounts of content onto one page may affect their ability to read public materials.</p> <p>The emphasis on producing written information materials could have a negative impact on people with hearing impairments. The need to use headphones in order to hear translation in meetings could also create problems (this wouldn't be as much of a problem with online meetings).</p> <p>There is also a potential negative impact for people with intellectual difficulties, if the Council does not follow the policy guidance to produce materials that follow Cymraeg Clir/Plain English principles. The view was expressed that the Council was using too formal, jargonistic language, and that there was a need to work on producing more straightforward and clear materials.</p> <p>As previously set out, the policy satisfies a statutory requirement to produce Welsh language materials and provide Welsh language services rather than means of communication, so changes are not considered necessary as a result of these comments, but as the Council has a wider duty to take reasonable steps to mitigate any barriers to residents in accessing services or information we will consider appropriate</p>

		<p>mitigation for these barriers.</p> <p>There is also a positive impact on any groups of people with disabilities, as the Policy follows the principle of a proactive offer set out in the Welsh Government's More than Just Words Framework. The Council recognises the fact that offering services in the first language of individuals can be key in the event of illness or disability, that individuals are better able to express themselves in their own language, and is therefore a key part of offering quality care and service. Offering Welsh language services and ensuring staff who can speak Welsh are available to speak to the public (proactively and without having to ask for it) is a key principle in the policy and ensures that the Council operates in a way that has a positive impact on people with disabilities who are also Welsh-speakers.</p>
Gender	Positive / negative / none none	No impact identified at this time
Age	Positive / negative / none	<p>A positive impact in securing services that satisfy the public's requirement and need and ensuring quality services for vulnerable age groups.</p> <p>The census statistics show that a higher percentage of older people are Welsh-speakers and therefore the need to offer Welsh language services to this cohort of the population is greater.</p> <p>As set out above, the Policy follows the principle of a proactive offer set out in the Welsh Government's More than Just Words Framework. Implementing the policy ensures a sufficient number of Welsh-speaking staff will be able to make the proactive offer and removes barriers for older people by ensuring they do not have to ask or wait for a service through the medium of Welsh.</p>
Sexual orientation	Positive / negative / none	No additional impact identified at this time
Religion or belief (or lack of belief)	Positive / negative / none	No additional impact identified at this time
Gender reassignment	Positive / negative / none none	No additional impact identified at this time
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive / negative / none none	No additional impact identified at this time
Marriage and civil partnership	Positive / negative / none none	No additional impact identified at this time
The Welsh language	Positive / negative /	Overall a positive impact because the policy reflects the Council's statutory commitments to implement the Welsh Language

	none	<p>Standards and also the Council's desire to be promoting the language and providing diverse opportunities for residents to use Welsh. The Council has a language strategy which outlines its objectives to promote the use of Welsh across the county, and this Policy contributes to the objectives of the Priority 3 field- Language of Work and Service. The Council is also committed to the well-being aim of operating in a way that ensures residents can live in a natural Welsh-speaking society through the Council Plan.</p> <p>There are some potential negative impacts for some aspects, detailed below.</p> <p>General: An opportunity to reinforce the Council's commitment to the Welsh language and to take positive steps to ensure residents' right to use the Welsh language through the Council's services. The amendments that have been made to the policy since the previous policy ensure that there is clear guidance to staff on how services should be offered in Welsh and comply with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards. It also ensures that the Council continues to go above and beyond the requirements of the Standards and prioritises the Welsh language in its operations.</p> <p>The changes being introduced are an attempt to have a more positive impact on the Welsh language and residents' rights to use it. This includes:</p> <p>Language skills - language designations: Complaints have been received in the past about the Council's recruitment policy, and the fact that the policy may discriminate against the non-Welsh-speakers. We are also aware that many people feel excluded from opportunities due to the requirement for essential language skills and the feeling that their Welsh is not good enough to meet the requirements. The Language Designations priority project has been implemented to try to meet these challenges and to look at how we assess the language requirements of jobs and how we recruit people to the jobs. Major changes have been made to the recruitment process as a result of the project, and a new skills assessment regime has been put in place. The new clauses in the policy therefore reflect those changes. While it was originally intended to move away from identifying essential language requirements, and detailing the exact skills needed to try to open the door to different job candidates, and to provide opportunities for people to learn and immerse themselves in a Welsh-medium workforce, some of the Requirements of the Standards mean that the Policy still risks being seen as discriminatory. Although the Designations project has decided not to use the word "essential" in job adverts, for example, in an attempt to minimise the negative impact and the possibility of it looking like the Council is discriminating, the requirements of the Standards and actions in the wake of an investigation by the Commissioner have meant that we are forced to use the word essential.</p> <p>Technology:</p>
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		<p>New clauses have been created to reflect the Council's increasing use of technology and online self-service. This is an area where the Council may not realise its ambition as it is not always possible to have apps and systems that work entirely in Welsh and are available to all (some apps do not work bilingually on all android phones) but steps are also being taken to develop a number of systems in-house to ensure that the Council can offer bilingual provision to the public.</p> <p>Place names and the Council's name: New clauses have been added to the Policy to reflect the Council's commitment to protecting Welsh place names within the county, and also to raise the visual profile of the language by prioritising the use of Welsh only in the Council's public image and in the use of place names. An individual impact assessment has been undertaken for the Place Names Project and the potential impacts on the Welsh language have been considered when discussing the Council's Welsh names and the county's street and place names.</p> <p>These are based on clauses that historically existed in the Language Plan, and reflect current practice or a principle recognised by the Council rather than being a change per se.</p>
Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Positive / negative / none	<p>A number of points were raised in the Equality Core Group about accessibility of services and information more generally, but they are also relevant to the Policy and are issues that will require further consideration in implementation. It was noted that there is a potential impact for some groups in terms of access to services as more services go online. There is a risk that this approach is going to effectively shut some members of society out of using services due to a lack of access to technology. This has also been noted in recent responses to consultation work by the Equality Unit on barriers to people accessing Council services.</p>

* To be deleted as required

3.2 The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to contribute positively to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in its activities in the fields of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, gender reassignment, disability and pregnancy and maternity. The Council must duly address the way any change impacts on these duties.

General Duties of the Equality Act	Does it have an impact?*	In what way? What is the evidence?
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Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Yes / no / possible	There is no unlawful discrimination because there is a statutory requirement imposed on the Council through the Welsh Language (Wales) Bill 2011 to provide services through the medium of Welsh, and that the Council implements the Language Policy to ensure equal access to the Welsh medium services, i.e. that there are consistent and seamless bilingual services across the county and that people do not have to take extra steps to access the Welsh-medium service.
Promote equal opportunities	Yes / No / possible	We recognise that some feel unable to apply for jobs because of the language requirements and that creates a risk in offering equal opportunities.
Foster good relations	Yes / No / possible	Recognise that it is possible to anger people as they misunderstand the intention of the Policy and that this could affect a good relationship. It will be necessary to think about how we communicate the intentions and objectives of the policy publicly in order to develop understanding and build positive attitudes and relationships with those cohorts of the community who feel they are currently disadvantaged by the policy.

* To be deleted as required

3.3 How does your proposal ensure that you work in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011), to ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English, and that every opportunity to promote the Welsh language is taken (beyond providing bilingual services) and increase opportunities to use and learn the language in the community?

The Policy is written to reflect the statutory requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and the Council's commitment through the Promotion Scheme and the Council Plan to promote the Welsh language more widely.

3.4 What other measures or changes could you include to strengthen or change the policy/practice so as to have a positive impact on people's opportunities to use the Welsh language, and to reduce or prevent any detrimental impacts that the policy/practice could have on the Welsh language?

None at present. As it is amendments to strengthen the policy, we believe that we have made all the changes possible at this time to have the most positive impact possible on the Welsh language. If other opportunities arise, we will consider them at that time.

3.5 How does the proposal show that you have given due regard to the need to address inequality due to socio-economic disadvantage? (Please note that this relates to closing the inequality gap, rather than improving outcomes for everyone only.)

We have already set out that there is a potential impact for some groups in terms of access to services as more services go online and due to a lack of access to technology. We will ensure that the information is also available through traditional ways. We will create a communication plan to keep everyone aware of the change.

3.6 What measures or other changes can you include to strengthen or change the policy/practice to show that you have given due regard to the need to reduce disproportionate outcomes as a result of socio-economic disadvantage, in accordance with the Socio-Economic Act?

No changes have been made to the policy itself, but a communications programme will be developed to share messages about the policy among staff and the public. Increasing understanding about the intention and objectives of the policy will hopefully improve the perception of disadvantage.

4) Analysing the results

4.1 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, positive impact on any of the above? What is the reason for this?

Positive impact on the Welsh language.

4.2 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, negative impact on any of the above? What is the reason for this?

No.
The Policy reflects statutory requirement and the need to satisfy the linguistic needs of the public across the county.

4.3 What should be done?

Select one of the following:

Continue with the policy/service as it is robust	x
Revise the policy to remove any barriers	
Suspend and abolish the policy as the harmful impacts are too great	
Continue with the policy as any harmful impact can be justified	
No further steps at present, it is premature to decide, or there is insufficient evidence	

4.4 If you continue with the plan, what steps will you take to reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?

Further conversations will need to be held with the Equality Advisor and the Communications Unit to ensure that the accessibility issues raised during consultation are addressed.

We will also consider ways of developing public understanding of the policy as part of the communications programme, addressing why it is important that the Council places particular priority and emphasis on the use of Welsh within its services.

There are a number of other schemes being implemented by the Council which act as mitigation for some of the potential negative impacts, and particularly the impacts identified under the race heading. Various opportunities are offered by the Council to learn Welsh and develop language skills, which gives people opportunities to apply for jobs when they do not satisfy the language designation. The Organisational Learning and Development service will refer staff to external provisions or arrange bespoke training to support skills development. A buddy scheme has also been set up which provides informal opportunities for Welsh language learners to use the language and gain confidence to use Welsh in the workplace.

The Council's Equality Plan states that it will work to "promote equal opportunities among our workforce."

4.5 If you are not taking any further action to remove or reduce the negative impacts, please explain why here.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Bill 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards place a statutory duty on the Council to act bilingually, to ensure people's rights to use Welsh, and to ensure that Welsh is not treated less favourably than English.

5) Monitoring

5.1 What steps will you take to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the policy or service (action plan)?

We will revisit the impact assessment if any necessary changes to the Policy manifest themselves as a result of complaints or investigations by the Welsh Language Commissioner.
A departmental self-assessment regime has also been put in place to ensure that we collect regular information on the ability of departments and services to comply with the Language Standards and the Council's Language Policy.

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13 September 2022
Cabinet Member: Councillor Menna Jones
Contact Officer: Geraint Owen
Contact Number: 01286 679335
Title of Item: Annual Report - Employment

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

Approval of the annual report for 2021/22

2. THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

To reflect and agree on the corporate strategy in this crucial area for the future.

3. INTRODUCTION

The intention of this report is to present an annual update of the workforce details and their employment together with outlining our objectives for developing our workers and setting the direction for the future.

The Local Consultative Joint Committee (the joint forum between the recognised union representatives and Elected Members) receives an annual report on activity in the human resources field also but with more emphasis on the operational relationship between the employer and the workforce representatives.

a) THE COUNCIL'S WORKFORCE

The numbers employed on a full time and part time basis within the Council for the last three years are noted in the table below. Note that these numbers include staff who work in our schools but not those staff employed on a casual basis or during holiday / sickness periods of the permanent workforce.

	31/3/20	31/3/21	31/3/22
Full time	2,923	3,073	3,258
Part time	2,781	2,776	2,650
Total	5,704	5,849	5,908

Whilst the trend over the years has seen a reduction in the number of staff members, the details for 2021/22 are in general consistent with the data for last year; there was an increase of 185 in the number of individuals employed on full time contracts with a reduction in the number employed on temporary arrangements. This led to a net increase of 59 in the number of staff working for the Council during the 12 month period. In general, this increase can be attributed again to the need for us as an employer to recruit additional staff to certain areas in response to the pandemic.

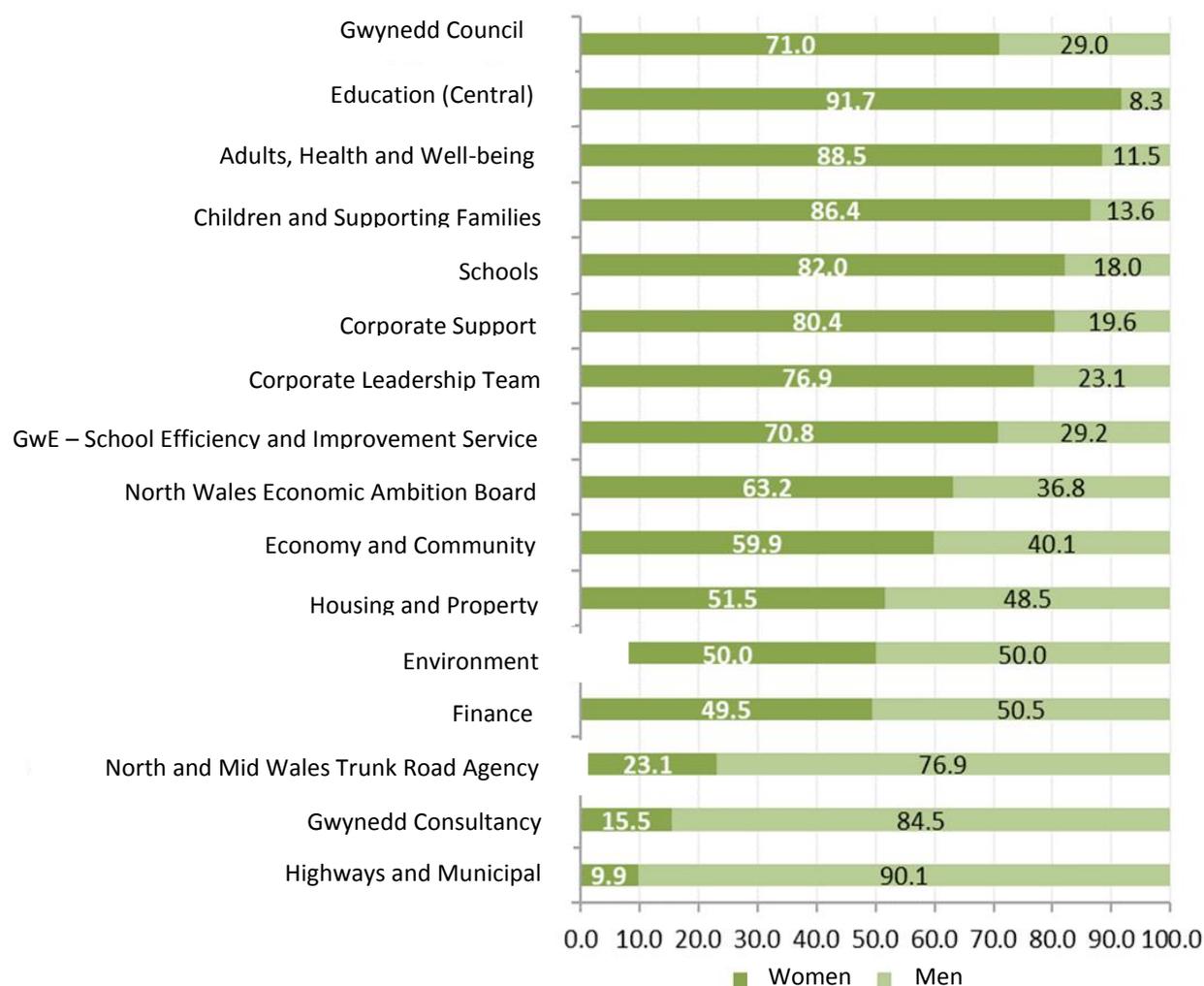
b) **WORKFORCE SPLIT BY GENDER**

A further analysis is seen here of the number of men and women employed on a full time and part time basis over the same period. The primary message is the fact that there is substantially a higher percentage of women working for the Council, whilst a substantially greater number of those women are employed on a part time basis in comparison to men.

		31/3/20	31/3/21	31/3/22
Full time	Men	1,329	1,336	1,434
	Women	1,594	1,737	1,824
Part time	Men	313	314	280
	Women	2,468	2,462	2,370
Total	Men	1,642	1,650	1,714
	Women	4,062	4,199	4,194
Total %	Men	28.8%	28.2%	29%
	Women	71.2%	71.8%	71%

The following is a further analysis on the basis of the split within the Council's major departments.

Distribution of female / male Gwynedd Council staff per Department, 31 March 2022



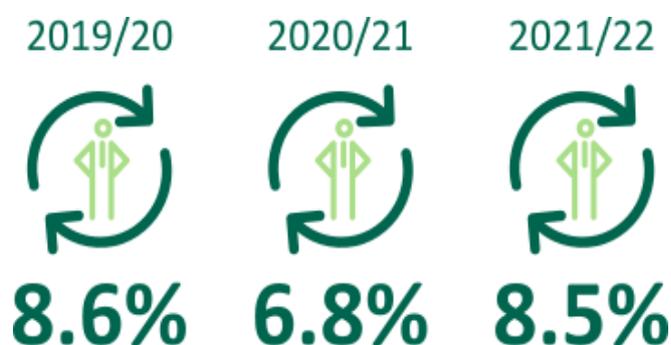
c) AGE PROFILE OF COUNCIL STAFF

Last year, it was reported that the age profile for the workforce as a whole was increasing. This year, it seems that the situation has somewhat stabilised but the core message remains the same. 65% of the workforce is over 40 years of age, with 39.6% of staff over the age of 50. This is important because the ageing age profile means that there is an increased risk for the Council to lose skills and experience in a relatively short period of time. In response, a significant investment has been made in attracting apprentices and professional trainees, in addition to developing those our current workforce. The task of preparing for a time when the older group of staff leaves the Council is a long term piece of work and therefore an important part of workforce planning. Further reference will be made to this work later in the report.

A detailed analysis of the age profile on a departmental basis can be seen in Attachment 1.

d) **STAFF TURNOVER**

In 2019/20 a small increase was seen in the number of staff who left the Council's employment, whilst there was a substantial decrease in the percentage for 2020/21. For 2021/22, the percentage of staff leaving returned to pre-pandemic levels (8.5%). This percentage is low in comparison to rates within other sectors of the economy, but this is consistent with the message that is in the data on the age profile for our staff, as reported earlier; on average across the organisation it seems that the percentage of staff leaving our employment is not high, and this adds to the risk that we could lose an abundance of skills and experience at a certain point in the future.



There is however a variation in the turnover rate on a departmental level. The highest level was within the Leadership Team and Legal Service (31.4%), the Economy and Community Department (22.1%), Corporate Support (11.8%), and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department (11.5%). The lowest levels of turnover were within Finance (5.4%) and Housing and Property (6.6%).

Measuring staff turnover, and understanding in detail the reasons behind the situation, is a complex issue and numerous reasons could be behind the rates within individual teams and departments. So as to better understand why staff are leaving the Council's employment, we are currently working on introducing formal arrangements for undertaking exit interviews for staff, which will over time contribute to our understanding of the high level data that we are currently recording.

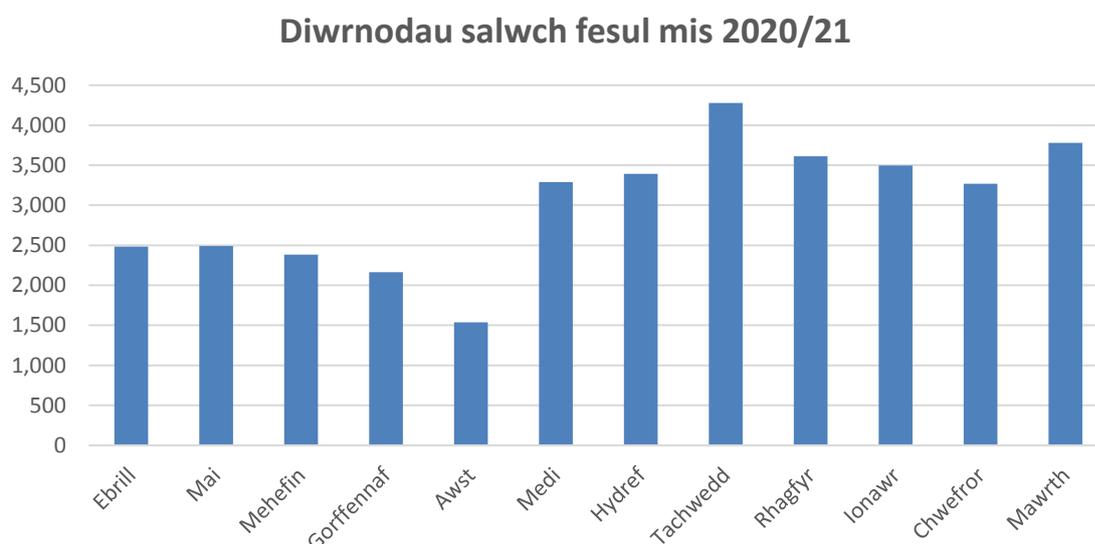
e) **SICKNESS ABSENCES**

The number of days lost due to sickness across the Council increased to 10.07 days per head during 2021/22, and increase from 6.35 days per head during the previous year. We

are therefore now returning to the trend as was seen before the pandemic, with that trend on the whole consistent with what is taking place across local government in Wales. The figure of 10/07 however is higher than any figure seen within this Council for a number of years and therefore it is important for us to understand what is behind the levels, so as to plan any actions or interventions to try and ensure that the rate is decreasing over time.

Sickness absence has an effect on a number of elements of the Council’s work, including our ability to provide services, our duty of care towards our staff, and of course the costs incurred as a result. It’s therefore an important topic and officers from the human resources, health and safety and research and information services are investing an increased amount of time in analysing the high level data that is available so as to support departments to respond to the situation.

The following table shows the levels of sickness absences, month on month, during the past year.



The following table shows the average number of days lost per head to sickness absence, within the Council’s departments over the 12 months in question.

Average days lost per individual	Cyfanswm
Education – Central	8.18
Education – Schools	9.45
Environment	9.62
Corporate Support	6.94
Finance	4.67

Economy and Community	6.27
Adults, Health and Well-being	15.38
Children and Supporting Families	7.49
Highways and Municipal	13.73
Housing and Property	10.01
Gwynedd Consultancy	6.20
Other	3.59
Total for the Council	10.07

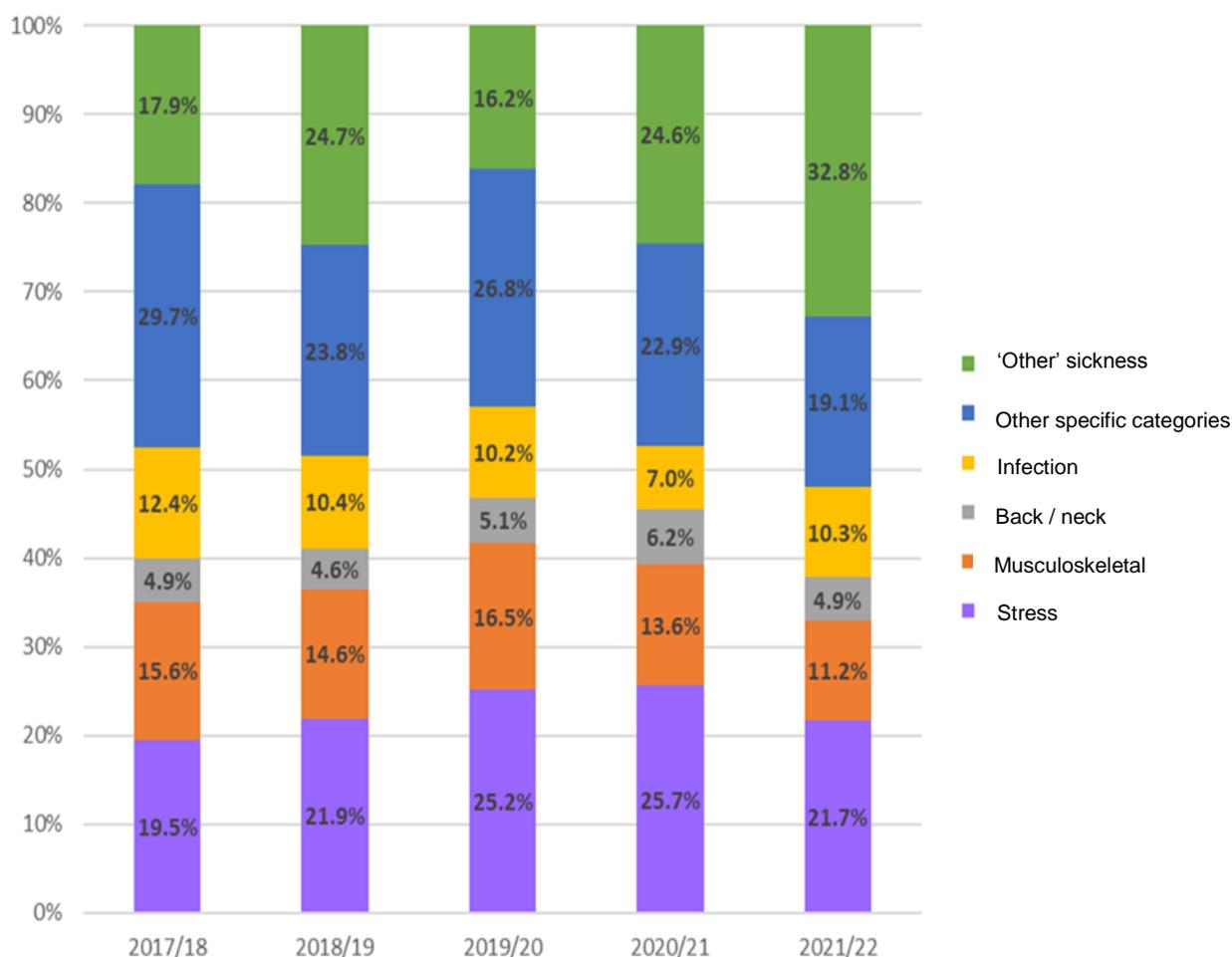
As for 2020/21, the sickness absence levels were at their highest within front line services, and in considering the effects of the pandemic this is completely understandable.

It's important to note that 43% of staff did not report that they had been absent due to sickness at all during 2021/22.

There was a reference earlier to work from human resources, health and safety and research and information officers in relation to this agenda. To provide some flavour of the work, substantial steps have been taken recently to develop the data that is available for analysis; we are re-launching our strategy on staff well-being and a new sickness absence policy has been adopted. In addition, officers are working closely with service managers to support individual staff members who are suffering from ill health.

The following table analyses the category of illness that has been recorded over the past five years. This information is used to steer the discussion when reviewing the health and well-being programme on an annual basis.

Analysis of sickness absence per category, 2017/18 – 2021/22



The substantial increase in the absences recorded as 'Other Sickness' is a matter to note. This category should only be used in unique circumstances, and the fact that nearly 33% of cases have been recorded as such in 2021/22 means that we basically do not know the reason behind the absences in the category. We can speculate that Covid has some contribution to this figure, in that the sickness has been more prevalent over the 12 months in question and managers may be unsure as to how it should be recorded, but further steps are being taken to resolve the situation and remind managers to try and avoid using this category. This is an important request as recording an absence as 'other sickness' means that we cannot be sure what support is needed for individual staff members.

There was a reduction in the rate of sickness recorded as stress over the last year. This is good news of course, but the rate remained high in general, and it must also be possible that some of this sickness could have been recorded as 'other sickness'. We are relaunching our strategy on staff well-being whilst also constantly reviewing how we can add to the provision. We will also continue to provide practical support to managers in

working with staff members who are ill, as this is also a key aspect of reducing sickness absence.

f) **ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Service is now looking forward to offering a full Learning and Development Programme, which provides a balance between 'distance' and 'face to face' provision, which in turn provides a greater variety of learning approaches. This follows a challenging period in terms of providing learning and development programmes during the pandemic, when the emphasis was solely on 'distance' learning, with only some essential titles being provided on a face to face basis, such as First Aid. The period was transformational with positive and exciting elements, and the opportunity to develop and trial new approaches and technologies. We are offering an increasing number of titles through *Teams*, and are honing our approach through trialling different ideas and interactive elements such as discussion groups.

Creating 'distance' ('virtual') and 'face to face' ('traditional') versions for a learning title means re-designing the sessions and amending the presenting approach, with 'distance' learning tending to be shorter, for smaller groups. We are developing an online site with resources to enable staff and member to learn from distance.

We believe that the developments offer advantages in terms of learning (including advantages from the perspective of access, better use of time and environmental e.g. reduction in travelling).

Whilst the number of staff (and Members) taking advantage of the opportunity to take up a learning opportunity did reduce during the pandemic, they have now increased slowly in tandem with the development of the learning programme. Excellent feedback was received on a number of titles; this is evidence that the learning approach works well with flexible working patterns, with a number of new individuals taking advantage of what is on offer. We believe that this is because its possible for those individuals to gain access virtually to the learning title.

Whilst learning and development in traditional fields of work is essential e.g. Health and Safety, Financial Management etc and will continue as such, our main programmes now concentrate on developing the working culture, and supporting staff and leaders to adjust to different working patterns. This includes sessions such as Ffordd Gwynedd, and titles such as Leading Change, Dealing with Change, Leading a Team that works flexibly, Customer Care (this title is co-presented with the Ombudsman). We will also continue to undertake

workshops on developing a team, with sessions on topics such as Communication (based on DiSC personality profiles).

The use of technology for learning is constant, and whilst more staff complete e-learning modules, it can be difficult for some groups of staff to gain easy access to titles, and as a result we provide a variety of delivering methods, including 'face to face' sessions.

The Service has developed an excellent relationship with local providers e.g. Coleg Llandrillo Menai, and we are working closely on some programmes such as ILM Leadership and Management. The Service is responsible for dealing with complaints from residents also, and in doing so provides an emphasis on improving the services that is provided. Positive feedback was received by the Ombudsman's Office for our arrangements here in Gwynedd, and as referenced above we are working closely on developing and presenting a learning title.

Talent Plans are a priority for the Council, as a means of responding to the challenges that face the Council in terms of service continuity in the future. In May 2021 the Cabinet approved an investment of £1.1 million, a combination of £600,000 for an Apprenticeship Scheme over 3 years, and £500,000 on a Future Leaders and Specialists Scheme.

The Talent team within the Service lead on a number of schemes that contribute substantially to recruiting, developing and retaining staff. We foresee that we will recruit ~ 20 apprentices and ~ 7 Professional Trainees on an annual basis, which means that ~ 60 individuals will be on our Talent schemes by September 2024.

Apprenticeship Scheme: The scheme is considered to be pioneering within local government in Wales.

- An initial investment of £300,000 was issued in 2019 with a further £600,000 approved by the Cabinet to extend the scheme in 2021.
- The scheme has provided an opportunity to 40 apprentices since its commencement
 - 12 apprentices currently on the scheme
 - 20 apprentices have completed an apprenticeship with 70% of them appointed to a role within the Council
 - 8 new apprentices have started with us in August
- 9 of the apprentices are at graduate level
- 40 are in priority areas where there are recruitment problems, including care for adults and children, IT and engineering.

Scheme for Tomorrow's Leaders and Specialists (graduate trainee scheme):

- The Council has invested an additional £500,000 in this scheme in 2021
- Since 2017, the Council has appointed 26 trainees, with 10 currently taking part in the scheme.
- 12 have been appointed to roles within the Council.
- 4 new trainees are to be appointed in September 2022.
- A number of priority areas have been addressed through the scheme
- The quality of participants remains high.

Developing Potential Scheme: In addition to recruiting new talent, developing our current staff remains an important aspect of identifying and developing talent within the organisation.

- A number of officers have taken part in the scheme, leading to promotion and undertaking key responsibilities as a result.
- In addition, a specific developing potential scheme has been presented over the past 12 months on promoting women in leadership.

Innovative work was undertaken in developing 'distance' recruitment processes, including virtual assessment centres.

Promoting the use of the Welsh language is a priority for the Council, with the aim of ensuring clear language requirements for all of the Council's roles, and in turn identifying development needs for staff. The Council has been pioneering in terms of providing services through the medium of the Welsh language. It's continuous work to ensure that the language skills of our staff are developed and maintained.

90% of staff members within 6 of our departments have received a language assessment, and we have been working closely with those departments whom have found this more of a challenge. In looking to the future, we will proceed with gathering self-assessments and information from managers, but with the increased emphasis now on developing language skills.

The Service is also leading on the Women in Leadership project, supporting and encouraging women in leadership roles. A successful event was held in June to raise awareness amongst men.

The Learning and Organisational Development Team also lead on a number of Benefit / rewards schemes such as:

- Promoting Local Businesses: About 240 businesses have joined the scheme
- Vectis Scheme (Discount cards) – 2300 individuals have registered
- Cycle to work scheme – 11 had bought new bikes through the scheme by April 2022 (75 in 2021/22 and 125 in 2020/21), with an increased interest in electric bikes
- Green Cars scheme – to encourage the use of electric cars
- AVC Salary Sacrifice Scheme: approved by the HMRC

g) **PAY STRUCTURE**

The Pay Policy for 2021/22 was approved by the Council at its meeting on 5 March 2021. During subsequent months, the National Joint-Committee for Local Government Workers reached an agreement on pay increases for the year up to 31 March this year. This meant awarding 1.75% on staff salaries for the year, and setting the lowest pay point at £9.59 per hour. At the time, this was above the Living Wage rate (determined by the Living Wage Foundation).

Ensuring equal pay has been one of the Council's cornerstones as an employer for years, and in order to verify that the arrangements continue to be robust, we routinely carry out an audit of our systems every three years. The latest audit by an independent consultant is drawing to a close and we hope to be in a position to report on the outcomes later this year.

h) **WORKFORCE PLANNING**

The Council's ability to plan its staffing requirements in the medium and long term is one of this Council's priorities. Gwynedd Council is not unique in that respect as workforce planning is now receiving attention employers across the country. Reference was made to some of the high level statistics that is an indicator for this work. The statistics is an effective means of beginning the process of assessing workforce needs in the long term, possibly a number of years in advance. The core purpose of the workforce planning project is to eventually develop how we plan staffing requirements in the long term, ensuring that we are proactive in planning rather than reacting when we have staffing problems. At the same time a number of areas of Council services are currently suffering from recruitment problems, and further work is being undertaken to analyse those problems as a means of taking action to mitigate the situation through amending how we recruit.

The pandemic has changed the labour market, and it is now a market that is in favour of candidates for jobs rather than employers. This means that there is competition for staff, and the introduction of virtual working / working has increased the importance of flexible working, which in turn means that prospective candidates have a greater variety of

employers that they can choose from. It's true that this could be a threat to us, but there is also an opportunity here for us to show the Council's strengths as an employer. Workforce planning will therefore be a key area for us in the medium and long term.

i) **LOCAL CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

A review of a number of staffing policies and terms and conditions were completed over the past 12 months, including flexible working, recruitment, and addressing staff concerns, with the emphasis being on ensuring that the policies reflect the Council's working culture. The work as a stand alone project is drawing to a close, and will in effect again form a part of the day to day work of the HR team. In developing the work there was a greater degree of emphasis on consulting with key groups of interest whilst working on a policy, and this approach will be develop further as the HR team develops an annual review programme.

j) **WORKING FROM HOME**

The work of establishing flexible working arrangements following the pandemic is ongoing. Hybrid working arrangements are currently being trialled, and it is expected that we will be reviewing the situation over the winter period so as to examine whether our arrangements have been a success or not. The emphasis is of course on ensuring that hybrid arrangements support service requirements and this will be a crucial aspect of ensuring that our arrangements are a success. Following from this review, the focus will be on whether offices can be amended to ensure the best use is being made of the facilities available.

k) **RECRUITING AND APPOINTING**

See below statistical details regarding the number of jobs advertised by the Council over the last four years together with the number of applications received and also the number of vacancies which needed to be re-advertised. Analysing these details again contributes to our ability to identify fields in which the Council needs to focus its attention in relation to developing expertise and planning the workforce for the future.

Year	Number of jobs advertised	Number of applications	Number of jobs re-advertised	Number of applications for the second advert
2017 / 2018	472	2312	47	179
2018 / 2019	555	3281	57	240
2019 / 2020	586	2726	101	249
2020 / 2021	486	2112	77	227
2021 / 2022	515	2394	114	369

Our recruitment arrangements were adjusted in response to the pandemic and we will now need to change our approach further, including tailoring our approaches for specific roles, and a further development in how we use social media. We are already strengthening our contacts with educational establishments so as to improve how we are attracting younger staff to the workforce.

CONCLUSIONS

The information in this report, with careful analysis, assists managers and those officers who advise them, to plan services and promptly identify those matters requiring further research and action. This is increasingly important within a work culture that needs to base decisions on robust evidence.

The information also provides insight into the steps being taken to address some priority areas, and to prepare for the next steps to ensure that we use our workforce's abilities and knowledge to the maximum.

There are important messages here, which are integral to ensure the continuity of our services in the future. It is essential that we strive to act to address those matters, in order to sustain services and continually improve our ability to deliver on behalf of our communities.

The main messages encompass the following:

- Planning the workforce for the future, including recruitment, appointment and creating a career pathway - this now needs to be done in a new context, which is a substantially changed employment market as a result of the pandemic.

- Continue to promote staff's general mental well-being and health, in order to look after our staff.
- Continue to create fit-for-purpose working arrangements for the 'new normal', and build on the advantages emerging from that, but ensuring that services for the County's residents is the priority.
- Continue to develop our work culture and behaviours expected of Council staff, including reviewing and developing local conditions of employment - developing the work culture to correspond with Ffordd Gwynedd principles is core to our development as an organisation.

VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

The report provides an important overview of the staffing and employment situation in the Council. I have no further observations to add in relation to propriety.

Head of Finance Department:

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of Gwynedd Council's employment situation in 2021/22. The Employment Annual Report contains useful and important information that will assist the Council in planning for future challenges, but adopting the decision sought would not create an additional spending commitment.

Appendix 1 – Age Profile within Individual Departments

		Departments															
		Education (Central)	Environment	Corporate Support	Finance	Economy and Community	Adults, Health and Well-being	Children and Supporting Families	Highways and Municipal	Housing and Property	Leadership Team	Gwynedd Consultancy	Schools	GWE	NIMWTRA	North Wales Economic Ambition Board	Total
Age bands	Up to 19	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.8%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.6%
	20-24	1.5%	2.5%	6.5%	8.7%	3.3%	4.1%	5.2%	5.1%	6.3%	0.0%	8.2%	6.5%	0.0%	1.4%	10.5%	5.1%
	25-29	4.6%	7.4%	8.3%	14.1%	6.5%	6.7%	12.5%	3.7%	8.2%	7.7%	10.0%	11.1%	1.4%	5.7%	5.3%	8.6%
	30-34	6.7%	4.9%	9.5%	11.2%	9.2%	8.2%	18.3%	8.2%	4.8%	11.5%	5.5%	11.2%	2.8%	12.4%	5.3%	9.7%
	35-39	6.8%	11.7%	13.0%	10.7%	9.2%	8.4%	14.3%	8.1%	10.6%	11.5%	18.2%	12.3%	5.6%	18.7%	21.1%	10.9%
	40-44	10.5%	12.9%	11.8%	11.7%	9.8%	10.2%	17.1%	9.0%	9.7%	7.7%	15.5%	13.4%	15.3%	13.9%	15.8%	12.2%
	45-49	12.9%	12.9%	15.4%	10.2%	15.0%	13.1%	9.8%	12.1%	10.1%	7.7%	11.8%	14.3%	18.1%	12.0%	21.1%	13.2%
	50-54	18.8%	22.1%	14.8%	17.0%	9.8%	14.1%	13.1%	15.2%	17.4%	7.7%	10.9%	13.9%	25.0%	13.9%	15.8%	14.9%
	55-59	17.6%	16.0%	12.4%	11.2%	10.5%	17.6%	5.8%	18.1%	15.9%	26.9%	7.3%	9.7%	20.8%	12.0%	5.3%	12.9%
	60-64	15.5%	6.7%	7.1%	4.9%	18.3%	12.4%	3.7%	14.1%	11.6%	11.5%	10.0%	4.9%	8.3%	7.2%	0.0%	8.7%
	65-69	4.3%	3.1%	1.2%	0.0%	7.2%	3.8%	0.0%	4.2%	4.3%	7.7%	0.9%	1.6%	2.8%	0.5%	0.0%	2.5%
	70 ac uwch	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	1.2%	0.0%	1.1%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to the Cabinet

Meeting Date:	13 September 2022
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Menna Jones
Contact Officer:	Geraint Owen
Contact Number:	01286 679335
Item Title:	Annual Report – Health, Safety and Wellbeing

1 DECISION SOUGHT

Approval of the annual report for 2021/22

2 REASON WHY DECISION IS NEEDED

Presenting this report to the Cabinet annually is part of the health and safety management arrangements within the Council. It is essential that Cabinet members have a full overview of the Council's position in this important area.

3 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to outline the main issues that arose in relation to Health, Safety and Wellbeing during the year.

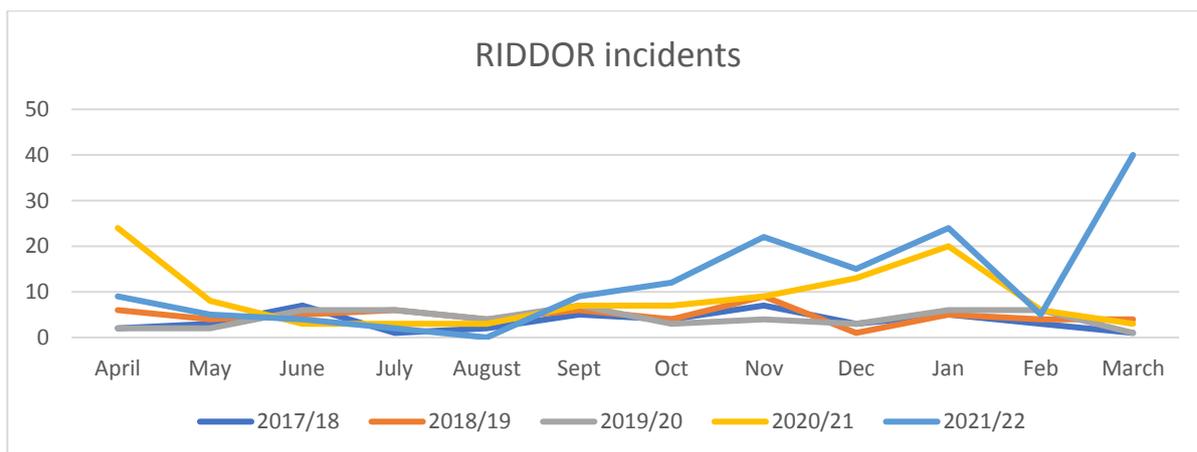
For the second year in a row, COVID, and the strict Government guidelines have dominated the health and safety agenda for each Department again this year, and had to be a priority for the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service corporately. We saw another year where there was a legal requirement for staff who could work from home to do so, and a host of restrictions and requirements on other Council sectors, such as Education and Care. High rates of COVID were seen in the County over the Winter (the highest in Wales at one point) and that at a time when schools had reopened. 2021/22 was therefore another challenging year in terms of keeping staff and the people of Gwynedd safe.

Accident figures

The table below provides an overview of RIDDOR reportable incident and accident figures for the last 5 years. These are the most serious incidents that have occurred internally involving Council staff, or where members of the public have been injured on the Council's premises, which required reporting to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Last year, the RIDDOR regulations were amended to make it a requirement to report cases of staff contracting COVID at work (or where

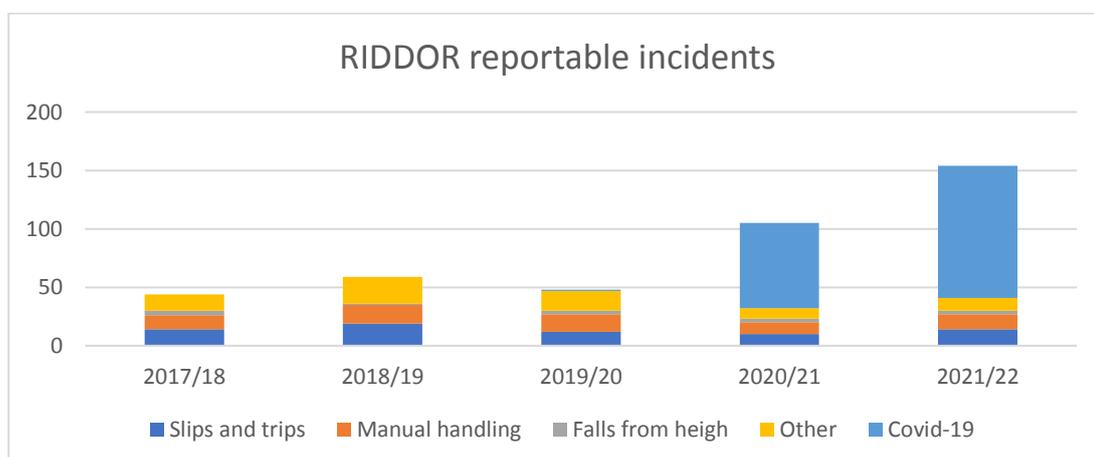
there were reasonable grounds to believe this to be the case), and that is the reason for the significant increase in figures over the last two years.

113 cases of staff members having contracted COVID at work were reported during 21/22 compared to 73 the previous year. Of course, it's not possible to confirm that definitively, but rather, the requirement is to report when there is a reasonable basis to conclude that they could have caught the virus at work e.g. either through a member of positive staff giving care to a positive patient or working with a positive colleague, or COVID positive children in a class where a teacher then develops the infection. The different waves of COVID hitting the County can be clearly seen in the table below in the blue and yellow lines.



If the COVID figures are put aside, there was an increase in the number of incidents otherwise reported under RIDDOR for last year compared to the previous year. Considering that the majority of Services had recovered this year (whereas a number of them had closed the previous year), no conclusions can be drawn from this. There is also no trend to report on to explain the reason for the increase except to note that the pattern that's existed corporately, and nationally for many years continues, namely that manual handling, and slips and trips are the two main causes for accidents. The incidents categorised as 'other' vary from physical attacks against staff, to health conditions that have been caused by the work, to vehicle accidents.

The chart below outlines the numbers of RIDDOR cases that have been reported to HSE over the last 5 years.



It should be noted that intensive work continues on manual handling matters, specifically so where absence rates are higher due to moving and handling injuries such as the Waste Service. Internal e-learning modules have been developed and the hope is to be able to share these with staff from all Departments to support and reinforce the work of the manual Handling Trainer for whom there is a very high demand for her time, and who has to prioritise her work.

Enforcement and compliance

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has carried out several inspections of Council buildings and sites this year checking for compliance with the COVID rules. This has included a check on a number of schools as well as the main offices. On all occasions, the Inspectors were satisfied with the arrangements in place.

There was one other inspection by HSE during the year, and that was a visit to Ysgol Friars. This was part of a national program by HSE to inspect secondary schools for compliance on the management of radioactive materials in science laboratories. There were no enforcement actions resulting from the visit.

In August 2021, the Council underwent a risk compliance audit undertaken by Zurich as its insurer for Public and Employer Liability. Generally, the auditor was satisfied and the following report was encouraging with no urgent or mandatory matters to address. Instead, two advisory points were noted, and one of those had already been identified around strategic planning for health and safety. A project to address this is ongoing and included in the Corporate Plan for this year. The second advisory note was relating to pre-employment checks for all new appointees to jobs within the Council.

Work programme

COVID has had a significant impact on the Health, Safety and Well-being Service's work program for the second year in a row as Government guidelines changed constantly during the year, and new arrangements needing to be established almost overnight to respond to those changes. It was necessary to establish our own work arrangements in some circumstances, and schools were one example of that where the County, through the work of the COVID Surveillance Group, established trigger points whereby classes moved to a system of virtual learning if a certain number of positive cases was reached within any one classroom. This was an arrangement that attracted the interest of other Authorities and was in place until rates fell in the Spring of 2022.

Due to the work outlined above, only a small number of proactive inspections were conducted, those being in the Highways and Municipal Department in order to maintain their BSI (British Standards Institution) accreditation. A limited number of Health and Safety courses have been held virtually - mainly Managing Sites Safely. In establishing a new normal, a lot of work has also been involved in the resulting health and safety elements, such as workplace assessments for staff who work from home full time, or for part of their working week, and to this extent, additional resource has been drafted into the central team for a period of one year,

not only to help with this work, but also to help restore and catch up with a significant bulk of work on all the other work streams and training that was in place pre COVID covering a host of other risks that really need addressing by now.

As mentioned above, a project was agreed to be included in the Corporate Plan for the year to fully review the health and safety arrangements and management within the Council. Although the brief for the project was agreed during the year, the bulk of the work has been rolled forward to 22/23 for the reasons outlined above.

The fortnightly meetings established in the first year of the Pandemic between the employer and the Trade Unions continued this year, and now there is open discussion about a range of health and safety issues. This has been one very positive development since COVID and discussions have been constructive and fruitful.

IOS 45001 accreditation by BSi

During the year, two Departments of the Council, namely YGC and the Highways and Municipal Department have been successful in obtaining accreditation to a new standard on health and safety, namely the ISO 45001 standard. Both Departments held the previous 18001 accreditation, but the new standard is an international one (ISO stands for International Standards Organisation), and is more robust.

Occupational Health

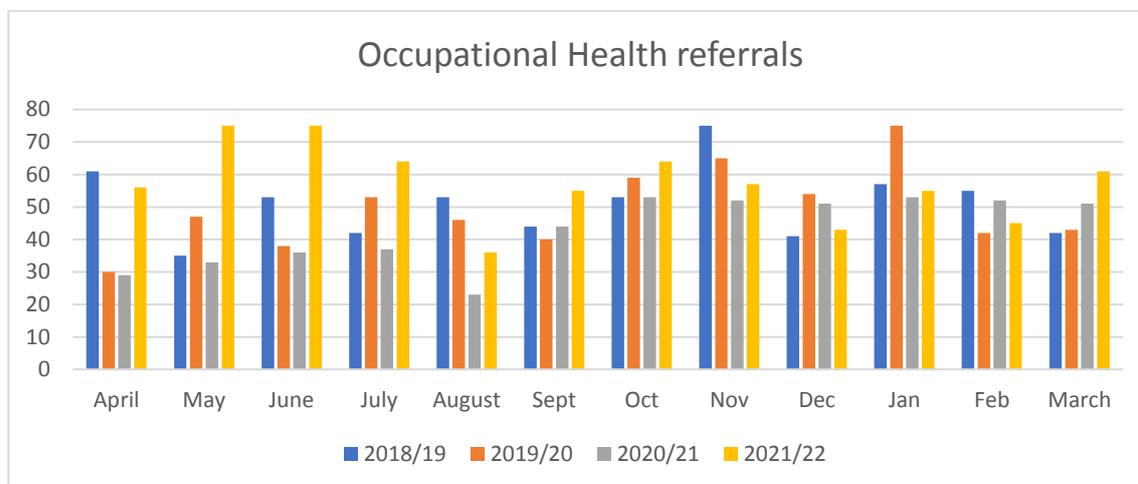
The Occupational Health team has been central to supporting the County's vulnerable workforce throughout the pandemic. This is through having seen all of them (over 600 patients) to discuss their medical conditions and make recommendations on how best to protect them at work. This was particularly challenging for a period this year in school staff where there were high rates of infection. The Unit has kept in constant contact with some of those staff in order to offer support and help maintain their mental health.

By now, the Unit has fully restored its full work programme and restarted the Health Surveillance program after HSE put a stop to the program nationally during the COVID pandemic. These are the tests that are a legal requirement for staff to undertake if they are exposed to health risks at work e.g. hearing / breath or vibration tests. Here again, there is considerable catch-up work to be done and conversations are taking place with front-line Departments about how best to facilitate that. As an example, there is a commitment to invest in an audiometry booth for the Dwyfor area so that hearing tests can be carried out there. This is in addition to booths in Dolgellau and Caernarfon that are already in place. The hope is that the tests can be undertaken out in the regions without the need for staff to attend the Caernarfon office to conduct them.

The well-being support for staff has continued over the period and the past year has seen some of the highest levels of referrals to the Physiotherapy Service and the Medra Counselling Service since they were established, but figures have now levelled off. Work is now underway to re-commence more proactive work in the

mental health field in particular, and a communication plan is now in place for communicating the staff well-being program in order to try to ensure that all of the Council's staff are aware of the support available. The team is also part of a wider team looking to tackle sickness absence within the Council by use of various interventions.

The table below contains the references to the Unit over the last four years and there were almost a 100 more referrals this past year than previous years due to high number of referrals for the first half of the year. Stress continues to be the main reason for referrals, and stress due to the pandemic is specifically responsible for the increase and the start of the year. Referrals for Musculoskeletal problems are also one of the main causes of referral. Many referrals have been due to the after-effect of COVID, whether it's long covid or mental health problems linked to the pandemic, and some of those are severe.



4. VIEWS OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

The report explains the role of the Cabinet within our health and safety arrangements. It is appropriate that it receive this information which gives assurance in relation to our arrangements in this important area.

Head of Finance:

The report conveys information to the Cabinet and the decision sought does not create a spending commitment. No comments from the perspective of financial propriety.”



CYDWEITHREDFA GWELLA GWASANAETHAU
GOFAL A LLESANT **GOGLEDD CYMRU**
NORTH WALES SOCIAL CARE AND WELL-BEING
SERVICES IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

Report to:	Cabinet
Date	13 September 2022
Local Lead	Councillor Dilwyn Morgan
Local Contact Officer	Alun Gwilym Williams, Senior Business Manager
Regional Lead / SRO:	Alwyn Jones and Jane Trowman (Joint Chairs of the Regional Commissioning Board)
Regional Contact Officer:	Sarah Bartlett / Catrin Perry
Subject:	North Wales Market Stability Report - Draft Report 2022



1 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the North Wales Market Stability Report 2022 [MSR] (Appendix 1) which has been produced as a requirement of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- 1.2 Members will recall the population needs assessment submitted to the full Council on 3 March 2022 which looked at the demand for services across north Wales. This report follows on from that and is an assessment of the supply side, i.e. can the current market meet the demand identified in that assessment.
- 1.3 A single regional MSR report must be produced for the North Wales Region and be approved by Full Council for each of the local authority areas (Gwynedd, Ynys Mon, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham) and the Board of the Local Health Board.
- 1.4 The assessment of the care market was expected to be produced and published by June 2022. A draft of this report has been shared with Welsh

Government. However, it has been made very clear to Welsh Government that this is an early draft that has not been approved yet by the full Councils of each Local Authority and the Health Board. This approval process is taking place July – October 2022 with the Final version of the MSR going to the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) at their November 2022 meeting before being submitted to Welsh Government.

The final MSR report must be published on all local authority websites, the health board website and the regional partnership website in both English and Welsh. A copy of the report will be submitted to Welsh Ministers. The Full Regional MSR is a lengthy document and summary reports and an executive summary and accessible formats will also be made available in order to make the content and key messages more accessible and digestible.

2 What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To seek full Council for the approval of the North Wales Market Stability Report by the Cabinet and Council. The draft report was submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee on 7 July 2022 and was approved for submission to the Cabinet and Council.

3 Recommendation

- 3.1 That the Cabinet approves the North Wales Market Stability Report 2022 for submission to the full Council for approval.

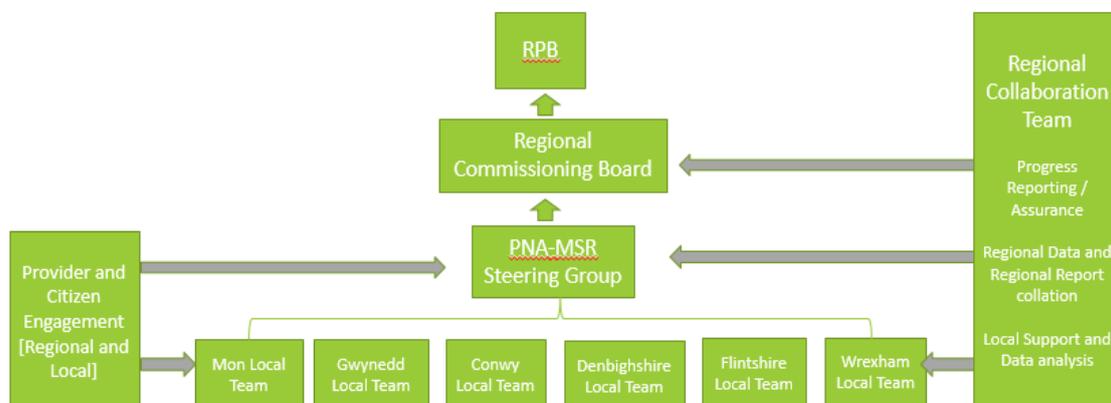
4 Report details

- 4.1 The Welsh Government has introduced the Code of Practice for the preparation of Market Stability Reports to support this requirement stated in the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014).
- 4.2 The MSR Code of Practice requires that local authorities and local health boards work in partnership to prepare and publish market stability report based on data for each local authority area as well as an aggregated version on an RPB footprint. The Code of Practice states that:
“The duty to prepare and publish a market stability report, as set out in the 2014 Act, sits with each local authority, but the Regulations require them to carry out this function on a regional footprint and in partnership with the Local Health Board, so that one market stability report will be prepared for each of the seven RPB areas across Wales” [CoP Section 3.11]
- 4.3 However, local authorities must ensure that the market stability report also contains an assessment of the market for care and support within each local authority area as well as across the RPB area as a whole [CoP Section 3.13].
- 4.4 In this way, the report will inform both **regional and local decision-making** around commissioning care and support (especially, but not exclusively, regulated services), feeding into the strategic area plan for the RPB area and helping shape local and regional commissioning strategies [CoP Section 3.14].

- 4.5 In preparing their market stability reports, local authorities must carry out, in partnership with the Local Health Board and other RPB partners, an assessment of both:
- a) *the **sufficiency of care and support** in meeting the needs and demand for social care as set out in the population needs assessment, and*
 - b) *the **stability of the market** for regulated services providing care and support [CoP section 4.2].*
- 4.6 The market stability assessment focuses on regulated services. These are:
- care home services (adult and children's)
 - secure accommodation services (for children)
 - residential family centre services
 - adoption services
 - fostering services
 - adult placement ('shared lives') services
 - advocacy services
 - domiciliary support services
- 4.7 The MSR Code of Practice also states that whilst Preventative services are not regulated services it requires local authorities and Local Health Boards to set out the range and level of preventative services that will be required to meet those needs identified in the Population Needs Assessment and assess how the availability of preventative services can also have a major impact upon the need for regulated services. Therefore, Preventative services must be considered as part of the MSR.
- 4.8 The Code of Practice also notes other themes that must be considered in the MSR including:
- a) Social Value
 - b) The Welsh Language
 - c) Workforce
 - d) Direct Payments and self-funded provision
- 4.9 Whilst the MSR is a statutory requirement, this is not the main reason for undertaking the work. The MSR is a vital document that provides an evidence base to support organisations and services across the region, specifically it is to be used for strategic planning cycles underpinning the integration of services and support partnership arrangements.

4.10 Significant officer time has been involved in the production of local working papers, data analysis and research to inform the regional report. These working papers, although not published as part of the regional report, are valuable local planning documents. The approach we have taken to this work is detailed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – North Wales Approach to the development of the PNA&MSR



4.11 Both the PNA and MSR documents will be used to plan local and regional delivery plan and service development plans going forward. The key local messages are in Section 5 of this paper.

4.12 It is also vital that both documents are kept up to date and are used as live document for on-going planning. Therefore, the PNA-MSR Steering Group [see Figure 1] will continue to meet to undertake this updating and ongoing review of both documents and to work with the local teams on the development of the regional and local implementation/delivery plans.

4.13 The requirement to produce an accessible, regional report in a short timescale has limited what can be included. The work has been carried out during a very challenging time due to the pressures and capacity across the partner organisations. It has involved a significant effort by officers to ensure that a meaningful document was produced.

4.14 It should also be noted that very little national data on the care market was available and thus we have relied heavily on local and regional commissioning information.

4.15 The final MSR document is therefore not perfect and we recommend updating as new national data becomes available and more work is carried out locally e.g. the impact of Covid, financial challenges and the impact of re-balancing social care on the on the care market. We will develop an on-going process to improve and update the MSR so that it remains meaningful and current. This will also help make it a more manageable process.

4.16 The MSR is a co-produced document and engagement led. Local and regional lead officers undertook data analysis, background literature reviews, service reviews and additional focussed local engagement work. The key issues and themes identified are based on consultation and feedback from staff, partner

organisations, Public Health Wales and local Health Board colleagues, service users and the general public to identify strategic needs for care and support. This included information from existing commissioning strategies and needs assessments.

4.17 As such our co-production approach to the work means that we have a meaningful and informed MSR document that involved a wide variety of people, as opposed to a document created in isolation via a desk-top exercise, which has been the approach employed by some other regions of Wales.

5. Key Local Messages

5.1 Residential and nursing

- The demand for nursing and residential care home placements is likely to increase
- We are continuing to develop dementia units in the Council's residential care homes
- There is a need for specialist dementia care; there is no nursing/dementia provision in Meirionnydd nor Llŷn
- There is a lack of specialist residential and nursing placements for older people with a learning disability who also have physical health and dementia needs
- There is a need for sustainable and sufficient care home fees
- There is a lack of community support workers in the learning disability field
- There is no specialist mental health provision including for autism and severe mental illness
- There is a gap in residential and nursing care for young people with physical and sensory needs

5.2 Living with support

- The demand for extra care housing is greater than the provision, and there are plans underway to develop more
- The relationship with supported living providers is a good one, and also between providers, with providers working together to complete their rotas

5.3 Domiciliary care

- It is forecast that 1050 in Gwynedd will find it difficult to deal with independent living tasks by 2040, an increase of 20%
- There is not enough domiciliary care to meet need, particularly in the Eifionydd and Pwllheli areas
- We are developing a new domiciliary care model in Gwynedd which will focus on what is important for the individual and will tailor the care around that

5.4 Services for children and families

- There is a lack of provision in Wales and also in England, with providers therefore acting selectively and avoiding accepting placements of children with intensive needs
- The lack of capacity pushes fees higher
- More providers are needed who can deliver their services in Welsh
- 10/16 (63%) of Gwynedd children's residential placements have been made outside north Wales
- The increase in Gwynedd housing stock prices makes a business case in Gwynedd less attractive
- There is a lack of specialist provision for children and young people with complex behavioural and emotional needs

5.5 Fostering

- Children in Gwynedd have been increasingly placed into foster placements within Gwynedd
- Around 20 new foster placements are needed each year to improve provision
- Lack of funding often results in using out of county providers which in turn means higher costs

5.6 Carers

- Some carers who need support find it difficult to find alternative care and go for long periods without a break
- A wide range of support for unpaid carers is funded through long term grants which can lead to destabilising some services

5.7 Workforce

- 57% of the care workforce are fluent Welsh speakers
- Staff recruitment is a problem across the sector

5.8 It should be noted that the local data we have used for the MSR is continuously changing and that we take this into consideration when planning our services.

5.9 As detailed above the local working papers and the full MSR document will be used locally to inform future service planning, particularly in post pandemic recovery. It will be a key document to consider in the development of the Market Stability Report as well as informing the local Wellbeing Plan and also will feed in to other documents, including the Community Strategy, Tackling Poverty plans and Housing/Supporting People plans.

6 What consultations have been carried out?

6.1 As detailed in Figure 1, The North Wales Social Care and Wellbeing Services Improvement Collaborative set up a regional steering group to lead the work for the technical, engagement, data and other theme-based groups to lead on specific tasks. Membership of the groups is from each North Wales local authority, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), Public Health Wales and other parties with an interest in the needs assessment such as officers for the PSBs.

6.2 Engagement for the MSR included: a questionnaire for organisations that asks for their views and evidence; engagement with different sector providers e.g. third sector and also local workshops with providers. This has provided rich qualitative data to inform the MSR. Further findings are available on the [regional collaboration engagement database](#), which is an ongoing project to improve the coordination of engagement activities across the region and enable better use of the findings.

7 How does the decision contribute to the corporate priorities?

7.1 The MSR assessment of the sufficiency and stability of the market for regulated care and support services adds to the assessment of care and support needs of the population contained in the PNA. Both the PNA and MSR documents contribute to regional and local level strategic planning cycles, consequently this will support the local authorities' corporate priorities that are linked to the health and social care needs of its resident population.

7.2 A Well-being Assessment must be produced as a requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by each Public Service Board. The population assessment considered the care and support needs of the population while the Well-being Assessment covers prosperity, health, resilience, equality, vibrant culture, global responsibility and cohesive communities. There is overlap between the two so the project team for the MSR are liaising with officers for the PSBs about the progress of the needs assessment and Well-being assessments and sharing information where necessary.

7.3 As well as informing our local plans, the next phase of the project will also involve using the population assessment and the market stability report to develop an area plan for the region. Future work on the area plan may involve further research and consultation to explore priority areas in more depth before agreeing which areas to prioritise for regional work. The area plan is to be developed and published in 2023.

8 Resource implications

8.1 The North Wales Social Care and Wellbeing Services Improvement Collaborative has utilised existing staff to support the development of the MSR. Associated costs, such as translation and for specialist engagement was also funded by the partnership.

8.2 There has been a cost to the local authorities, BCUHB and Public Health Wales in staff time and resource to support the project. This includes staff to carry out engagement work with the public, service users, staff and elected members and staff to support the analysis and writing of the report. The majority of this work took place between December 2021 to June 2022 for the MSR.

8.3 Going forward the MSR will identify regional and local priorities, it may be the case that these priorities require some level of investment at either regional or local level.

9 Risks and Impact Assessment

- 9.1 It has not been possible to gain approval from all six councils and the Board of BCUHB by the original date given in the MSR code of practice of June 2022 due to time needed to capture data and undertake the market analysis as well as the timetable of governance meetings of each local authority and health board. To mitigate this, we have liaised closely with Welsh Government regarding our revised timescales and have also sent them an early draft of the document for information.
- 9.2 The EQIA is given in Appendix 2.

Background papers	Location	Website info.
Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: Code of Practice		http://www.ccwales.org.uk/codes-of-practice-and-statutory-guidance/

Views of the statutory officers

Monitoring officer

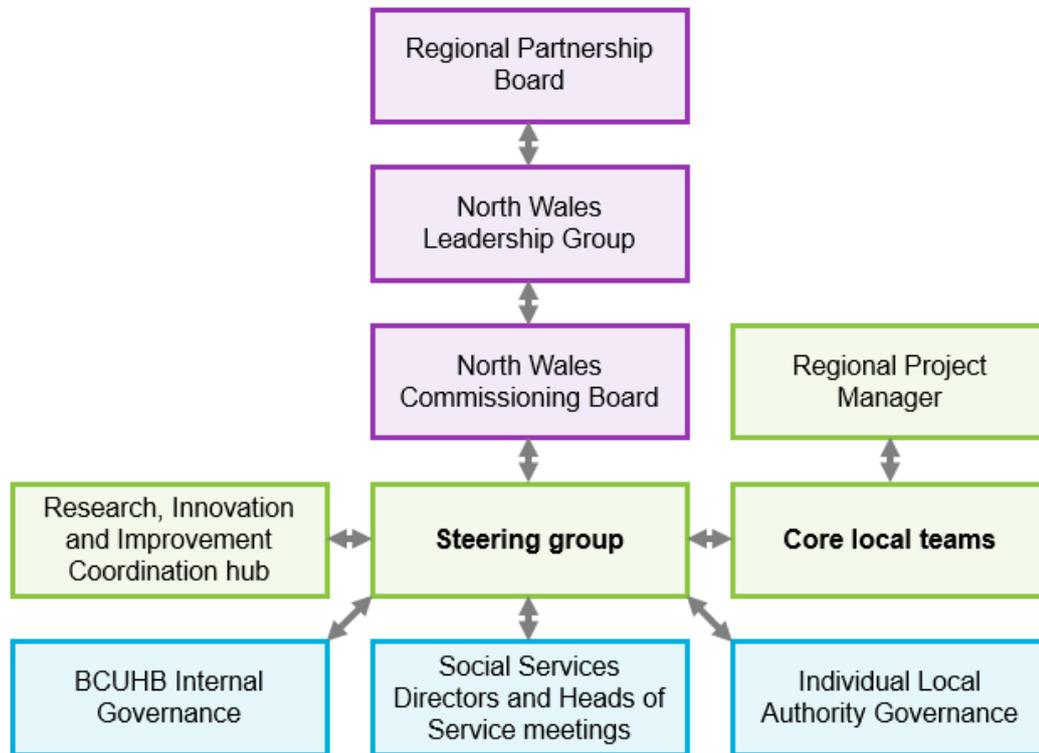
The Market Stability Report is prepared in accordance with a statutory requirement in Part 8 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. It is also a requirement that the report is prepared on a regional basis. In accordance with the statutory guidance on report preparation the Cabinet needs to submit the report to Full Council for approval.

Statutory Finance Officer

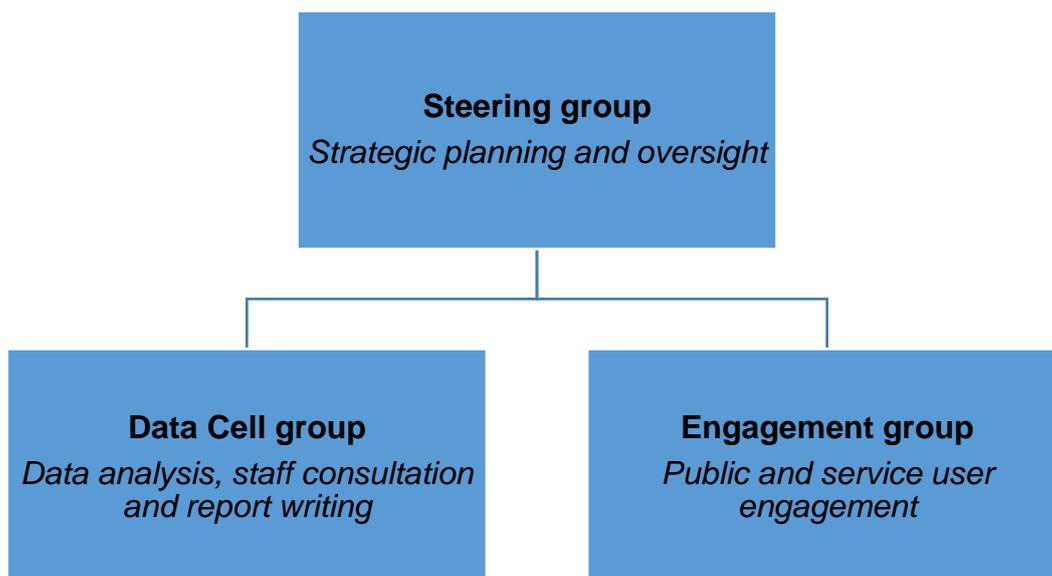
It is clear that the development of the Stability Report has involved significant investment in officer time and other associated financial costs. Having said that, the timely, relevant and reliable collection of data and information is key to service development and future planning.

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the situation Gwynedd Council faces in developing the services described, and the ongoing effort to identify, record and monitor these risks is an important part of the Council's governance arrangements.

Appendix 3: North Wales MSR Governance structure



Project Management structure





CYDWEITHREDFA GWELLA GWASANAETHAU
GOFAL A LLESIANT **GOGLEDD CYMRU**
NORTH WALES SOCIAL CARE AND WELL-BEING
SERVICES IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

North Wales

Market Stability Report

Draft 0.4 (June 2022)



Contact us

North Wales Social Care and Well-being Improvement Collaborative

County Hall, Wynnstay Road, Ruthin, LL15 1YN

Email: northwalescollaborative@denbighshire.gov.uk

Phone: 01824 712432

Website: www.northwalescollaborative.wales

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced a new duty on local authorities and health boards to develop a joint assessment of the sufficiency and sustainability of the social care market. The Market Stability Report has been produced by the North Wales Regional Partnership Board in line with the Code of Practice (Welsh Government, 2021a). This is the first Market Stability Report produced and takes into account the findings from the North Wales Population Needs Assessment 2022.

1.2 Purpose of the market stability report

The report helps us to understand the social care market in North Wales, so that we can effectively commission and support providers of health and social care services to meet the needs of the population effectively.

The market stability report will assess:

- The sufficiency of care and support in meeting the needs and demand for social care, as set out in the population needs assessment
- stability of the market for regulated services

Regulated services are those listed in The Partnership Arrangements (Amendment) and Regulated Services (Market Stability Reports) (Wales) Regulations 2021.

Currently these are:

- a care home service (adult and children's)
- a secure accommodation service (for children)
- a residential family centre service
- an adoption service
- a fostering service
- an adult placement
- a domiciliary care service
- an advocacy service

The assessment is the basis on which the Regional Partnership Board should make decisions for future planning and commissioning of care and support services. This will include local area plans, strategic commissioning strategy and market position statements.

This assessment has been undertaken as a joint exercise by the six North Wales local councils, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and Public Health Wales. The six local councils are Wrexham County Borough Council, Flintshire County Council, Denbighshire County Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Gwynedd Council and Isle of Anglesey County Council.

The market stability report aims to improve our understanding of the social care market in North Wales, and how this will evolve and change over the coming years. The findings within this assessment will assist all public service providers within the region in providing better and sufficient services for our citizens who are in need of care and support.

1.3 Research methods

The research methods include:

- Analysis of local and national data sets to identify trends.
- Evidence from the local authorities and health board.
- Evidence from local, regional and national research.
- Priorities from local, regional and national policies / strategies / plans.
- Responses to the regional survey and other consultation exercises from citizens, organisations, staff and providers.

1.4 Consultation and engagement

The Code of Practice (Welsh Government, 2021a) states that local authorities must take reasonable steps to engage with citizens. As a precursor to the market stability report, the population needs assessment had undertaken a large scale regional consultation and engagement exercise based on the national principles for public engagement in Wales and principles of coproduction. This exercise gave an insight of the direct impact of stability and sustainability of the social care market on people with care and support needs, their carers and families. Further details can be found in the population needs assessment.

Registered providers of social care services were engaged via a regional provider’s survey. An invitation to complete the survey was sent via commissioners to all registered providers across the region.63 responses were received.

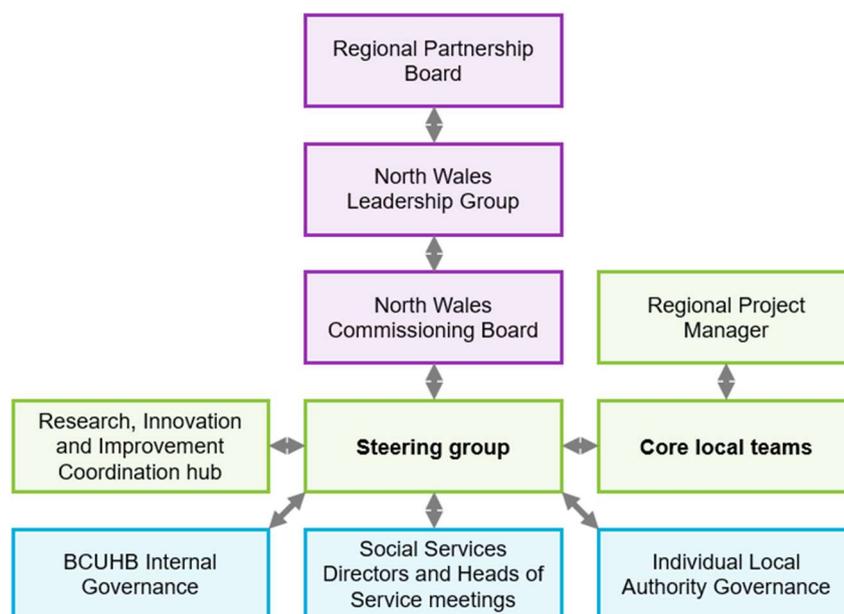
Additionally, local teams have also undertaken their own engagement where this was not being covered at a regional level. Draft chapters were also shared with partners for feedback and comments.

1.5 Project governance

The Regional Partnership Board tasked the North Wales Commissioning Board with oversight of the project. They established a regional steering group to coordinate the development of the Market Stability Report, which included representation from the six local authorities, the health board and Public Health Wales. The project management arrangements ensured that there was consistency for all partners in producing a regional report. Regular project reports were produced and shared with the regional boards as necessary.

This report has been approved by the six local authorities, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and the Regional Partnership Board.

Diagram 1: Project governance arrangements



1.6 Limitations, lessons learnt and opportunities

Preparing a single accessible population needs assessment and market stability report across six local authorities and one health board area within the timescales has been a challenging process. Particularly with the additional pressures of Covid-19. Thanks to the efforts of the project team, the project steering group comprising of local leads, the data-sub group, the engagement group, partner organisation teams, people who use services and providers co-produced this report.

One of the main challenges has been access to good quality data about the population and the social care market. The 2021 census data will not be published in time to include in the assessment and many indicators were unavailable due to changes in the way data is collected since the last assessment and because some data collection paused due to Covid-19.

It is recommended that the joint population needs assessment and market stability report steering group continues regularly scheduled meetings to oversee the updates and to make further recommendations about how to improve the quality, availability and coordination of data to inform future needs assessments.

2. Summary of regional priorities

Domiciliary care (care in people's own homes) is a priority market identified by commissioners, with current private sector providers unable to fulfil the demand for a significant amount of time now, due to staffing challenges. As such, growth and development of services including general and specialist domiciliary care have been identified as opportunities for the future.

Commissioners are keen to work with providers to increase care capacity to meet population needs. The key themes and priorities for providers and commissioners across social care and health are:

- Recruitment of staff. The employment market is highly competitive and competitive pay rates and employment benefits need to be offered in order to attract people.
- Integrated Domiciliary Care recruitment project between local authorities and the health board and development of integrated cross-organisational roles and career pathways.
- Terms and conditions. These need to reflect and be worthy of the social care role, and its importance in the health and care system as well as reflecting that these are skilled roles in the main.
- Retention of staff is poor due to poor terms and conditions in the social care sector. The cost of fuel and the cost of living crisis is now beginning to be felt in the sector where providers are seeing more staff experiencing in-work poverty. Staff are also leaving the sector due to challenging working conditions and lack of respect for the work they do and the levels of responsibility involved. Staff feel undervalued and overworked.
- Staff who are new to the sector are not staying in the sector long term as they feel overwhelmed by the intensity of the roles particularly those supporting people with complex needs and challenging behaviours. Providers and commissioners need to better support for staff to meet the challenges of working in social care.
- Service transformation programmes are a priority and they should accelerate the focus on enabling flexibility in using commissioned care hours, where providers can be trusted to flex the package of care hours in partnership with the individual who is being cared for. While appreciating budget restraints for all, the flexibility

would improve quality and bring costs savings in terms of reduction in administration costs.

- Development of true partnership working between commissioners and providers was identified as a key focus.
- Providers recognise the benefit of the additional Covid payments and the on-going suitability of the sector is recognised as a key priority due to the important work that home care providers do in keeping people well in their own homes, in enabling hospital discharge and preventing unplanned visits to hospital.
- Develop partnerships with care home providers to provide low level residential care / respite services to ease the pressure on home care domiciliary care provisions.
- Develop opportunities in micro commissioning and direct payments as an alternative to the traditional home care model.
- Increase support for unpaid carers to reduce the pressures on the home care service and look at carer led solutions, such as. increased carer breaks (respite)
- Increase the availability of specialist placements in care homes for older people, adults with mental health needs, learning disability and people with dementia.
- Increase the availability of emergency and longer term accommodation for children and young people with complex needs including mental health, learning disability and emotional behavioural needs.

Summary of local themes

Anglesey

- We are committed to service transformation and modernisation is an area of focus with further ambitions to develop accommodation options, building on the work of the transformation programme.
- We have an aging care workforce on the Island and therefore need to attract and retain new social care staff.
- We want to work with providers to ensure stability, particularly in relation to staffing costs, supply, choice, services and delivery.

Gwynedd

- Recruitment and retention problems are a recurring issue, with all services reporting a real shortage and concern.
- Lack of financial support. All services have raised concerns about the ability to maintain quality services with limited resources. The lack of funding often results in having to use out of county providers which results in higher costs which in itself adds to the problem.
- Significant shortfall in care within the county for children who need to be in residential care compared to other services available to children. There is relatively good provision of foster families within the county and there are many resources and services within the county for supporting disabled children. There appears to be inconsistency in provision.

Conwy

- Recruitment and retention of staff across the sector including social workers, care staff and nursing staff. This is linked to pay and conditions but not exclusively.
- Children's residential services. Provision of accommodation for both emergency and longer term placements is needed urgently and we are considering a range of options to increase provision in county and reduce reliance on costly temporary arrangements and out of county placements that are far from the family.
- Provision of domiciliary care services, with current private sector providers unable to fulfil the demand for a significant amount of time now.

Denbighshire

- We want to increase care capacity to meet population needs within Denbighshire including residential care for children, young people, people with complex disabilities, older people (including those with mental health needs), foster care, domiciliary care and reablement.
- We are committed to improving communication internally across services / teams and with partner organisations and sharing of good practice
- Increasing the availability of overnight respite accommodation is a priority within Denbighshire.

Wrexham

Key priorities within Children's Services in Wrexham are:

- Increased placement stability, reducing the number of children looked after through early intervention and preventative services and removing profit from children's placement market
- Provision of emergency accommodation for people in mental health crisis
- Increase in escalation of mental health needs and concerns of children and young people
- Developing new children's homes
- Improvement in quality of practice and performance across Children's Services

Key priorities within Adult Services in Wrexham are;

- Growth and development of services including; Domiciliary Care (includes homecare/reablement; community living and recovery)
- Day and employment services
- Emergency placements

Flintshire

The Domiciliary Care market is a priority in Flintshire to help rebalance the care sector. Independent care providers continue to work creatively with the local authority to ensure the numbers of people waiting for care at home are the lowest possible.

In Flintshire, there are some critical pressures and key issues faced by social services in the areas of workforce, commissioning and funding criteria.

As of January 2022 in Flintshire, areas of ongoing pressures include:

- double-staffed care
- provision of care in rural areas
- provision of care for patients discharged from hospital
- care packages hand-backs from providers as a result of staffing challenges
- increased business costs – utility bills and insurance
- increased fuel costs, borne in the main by care staff themselves.

Since the pandemic the market for adult residential care services has become extremely unstable with several factors contributing to the availability of independent care home provision. The council are moving forward with plans to increase in house provision for people living with dementia and new model of step down care planned to support the discharge to assess and recover programme developed by the health board.

Half of all children in residential care from Flintshire are placed out of the country in England and Scotland. In-house residential care is being developed to rebalance the market in Flintshire.

Over the next five-year period, in order to ensure stability within the market for residential services for children, the council aims to:

- Work with new and existing providers and support them to deliver of models of care that will meet the needs of children.
- Work with new and existing providers and encourage them to develop their businesses in a way that, in addition to improving outcomes for our children, also provides a wider a wider social value to our communities.
- Work with providers who are able to safely care for children with multiple high needs and are able to provide alternative accommodation to secure welfare provision.
- Identify providers who will work in partnership with us during periods of transition, including stepping down to live with a foster carer or reunification with their family.
- Welsh culture is very important to us as a region and we want more providers who are able to deliver their services in Welsh.

3. Residential services (adults)

Population overview

Demand for care home placements is likely to increase

The population assessment shows that the number of people aged over 65 in North Wales increased by 17% between 2010 and 2020 and is projected to increase by a further 20% over the next 20 years. This is likely to increase the demand for care home services. The table below shows the expected change in each county, with Conwy expected to see the biggest increase and Gwynedd the smallest increase.

Table 1: Estimated number of people aged over 65 in 2020 and projected number in 2040

Local council	2020 number	2040 number	Change number	Change percent
Anglesey	18,650	22,500	3,850	17.2%
Gwynedd	28,550	34,300	5,700	16.7%
Conwy	32,950	43,500	10,550	24.3%
Denbighshire	23,500	30,400	6,900	22.6%
Flintshire	33,300	42,400	9,150	21.5%
Wrexham	27,750	34,500	6,750	19.6%
North Wales	164,700	207,600	42,900	20.7%
Wales	668,600	850,750	182,150	21.4%

Source: Mid-year 2020 population estimates, Office for National Statistics; and 2018-based population projections, Welsh Government

The increasing population of older people is not the only factor affecting demand. There are also changes in expectations and policy which mean demand may not increase at the same rate as the total population. For example, demand can change as people are supported to live in their own homes for longer, or take up extra care accommodation to retain independence with the option of receiving support as needed.

People are tending to move into residential care at a later age and when their needs are more complex, for example, due to dementia. The population assessment

estimated a 64% increase between 2017 and 2035 in the number of people living with dementia in North Wales, around 7,000 more people. Although previous increases have not been as high as expected because the proportion of people developing dementia reduced, perhaps due to improvements in health and more years spent in education (Matthews *et al.*, 2016). It is still likely that the trend for needing increasingly specialist nursing and residential home support for older people’s mental health (EMI) will continue.

Market overview

There are around 220 residential care homes and 60 nursing homes in North Wales, which provide around 4,100 residential care placements and 2,500 nursing placements.

Table 2: Current number of **adult care homes** (age 18 and over) by type and area

Local council (a, b, c)	Residential	Residential with mental health	Nursing	Nursing with mental health	Total (d)
Anglesey	12	7	3	2	24
Gwynedd	14	9	7	3	33
Conwy	43	12	13	5	73
Denbighshire	46	13	5	5	69
Flintshire	22	12	7	2	35
Wrexham	16	10	9	2	37
North Wales	153	63	44	19	271

Source: Local authority data collection.

(a) In Anglesey most homes have some mental health beds so these have not been separated out.

(b) Denbighshire has 26 specialist residential homes for people with learning disabilities.

(c) Flintshire has 8 specialist homes for people with learning disabilities included in the residential category.

(d) Flintshire has a number of homes with dual registration. Total numbers do not sum.

Table 3: Current number of permanent care home placements available to all **adults aged 18 and over**

Local council (a, b, c)	Residential	Residential with mental health	Nursing	Nursing with mental health	Total
Anglesey	341	98	115	64	618
Gwynedd	351	199	353	175	1,078
Conwy	671	226	441	144	1,482
Denbighshire	802	0	321	0	1,123
Flintshire	416	261	179	44	900
Wrexham	223	490	526	108	1,347
North Wales	2,804	1,274	1,935	535	6,548

Source: Local authority data collection.

Notes:

- (a) The categories of care have become more fluid since the introduction of the
- (b) Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 so these categories
- (c) are only illustrative of the split between types of care.
- (d) In Anglesey and Denbighshire most homes have some mental health beds so these have not been separated out.
- (e) Flintshire have 50 specialist placements for people with Learning Disabilities, included in the residential category

Care home fees

The need for sustainable and sufficient care home fees was highlighted in the consultation for the Market Stability Report. Fee levels are based on North Wales methodology with each council taking into account local decisions and affordability considerations. There are ongoing discussions around how the sector is funded, recognising the fragility of the sector, including the rebalancing care work and strategic National Framework for care and support being undertaken by Welsh Government (Welsh Government, 2021c).

Care home vacancies

During the pandemic many care homes have carried higher levels of vacancies than previously. Average vacancy levels would normally be around 10%, which is thought to be sustainable for the sector (Laing, 2020). For some this was due to staff absences or staff vacancies due to recruitment issues, while others have needed to use additional rooms for storage of personal protective equipment (PPE) or for

additional living areas in order to reduce the size of groups of residents sharing facilities. From time to time there have been restrictions on admissions because of Covid-19 outbreaks too.

Care home vacancies were also increasing in Conwy before the pandemic due to the introduction of reablement teams who worked to keep older people in their homes for longer. This work has been less effective during the pandemic as there have been fewer domiciliary care workers out in the community.

Table 4: Percentage of vacant care home placements, 31 March 2021

Local council	Occupied	Unoccupied	Total placements	Percentage unoccupied
Anglesey	548	65	613	11%
Gwynedd	933	122	1,055	12%
Conwy	1,337	115	1452	8%
Denbighshire	1,161	249	1,410	18%
Flintshire	748	152	900	17%
Wrexham	1,059	288	1,347	21%
North Wales	5786	991	6777	15%

Source: Local authority data collection.

Self-funded care home placements

The total number of people who fund their own care home placements across North Wales is not available due to differing council policy. Flintshire had 194 people self-funding placements in care homes as at 1 February 2022.

Estimates from the Office for National Statistics (2021) found that were around 36.7% self-funded care home residents between 2019 and 2020.

Isle of Anglesey market overview

Anglesey has identified the following needs:

- Increased dementia care is required.
- Social isolation may be a particular risk for older people on Anglesey, due to rurality, lack of transport, and the distance many are living from their families.
- There is need for additional specialist services on Anglesey.

- There are not enough older people's mental health (EMI) residential and nursing beds on Anglesey.
- There is reduced demand for general residential beds.
- For older people with a learning disability who also have physical health and dementia needs, there is a lack of specialist residential and nursing placements.

Gwynedd market overview

Gwynedd has identified the following areas where there is a struggle to meet demand:

- Lack of specialist residential and nursing placements for older people with a learning disability who also have physical health and dementia needs.
- Lack of support workers in the community, and residential especially Tan y Marian and within day provision. This makes it difficult to start a service for new individuals and many individuals receive fewer support days / hours in the community.
- It is difficult to maintain and develop a service tailored to the person who needs workers who have received training in 'Personal Behaviour Support (PBS)' and Active Support.
- Demand for dementia specialist care (residential and nursing). There is currently no dementia nursing care in the Meirionnydd / Llyn area.
- There is no specialist mental health provision including for autism and severe mental illness, in Gwynedd. Conwy is the nearest location but the provision is non-Welsh speaking.
- We have seen an increase in the demand for temporary residential care as a result of a shortage of domiciliary care.
- We are unable to fill empty beds in some of the Council's homes due to the high dependency level of residents.
- Inappropriate discharges from hospital without sufficient time for recovery can result in increased dependency.
- Sickness absence and recruitment are a problem.

Future plans

There are plans to increase residential older people's mental health (EMI) provision by adapting units in the council's residential homes.

There are currently 33 providers of older people's residential and nursing homes in Gwynedd. Gwynedd Council provides 11 residential homes for older people directly.

Table 5: Gwynedd older people's care home placements

	Total registered placements	Number of dementia placements
Plas Maesincla	23	23
Plas Ogwen	27	-
Plas Pengwaith	31	-
Plas Hedd	28	7
Plas Hafan	30	8
Plas y Don	30	-
Plas Gwilym	27	-
Hafod Mawddach	25	8
Bryn Blodau	41	17
Cefn Rodyn	22	-
Llys Cadfan	33	15

Source: Local authority data

The following provides an update on our efforts to expand the provision of care for people with dementia:

- Plas Hedd. One respite bed unable to open due to construction. New development underway. Plan to change a further 8 bed unit to support people living with dementia.
- Plas Hafan. Used to full potential.
- Bryn Blodau. 9 beds for people living with dementia, due to staffing situation, unable to support individuals living with dementia, but offering a different service.
- Hafod Mawddach. New development will increase registered places to 30 with 8 beds for people living with dementia. Due for completion in September 2022.
- Cefn Rodyn. 5 beds on the first floor unused due to fire safety issues and wait for new lift. New developments completed in 2021. One room has been developed for bariatric use, the others for people with more intensive residential needs.
- Llys Cadfan. Used to full capacity. 1 respite bed for people living with dementia and 1 residential respite bed.

Over the last 5 years the Council has increased the number of older people's mental health (EMI) residential beds in their in-house homes. There were originally 38 beds between Plas Maesincla and the Bryn Blodau and Llys Cadfan units. There are now units at Plas Hafan, Plas Hedd, an additional unit at Llys Cadfan and Bryn Blodau. Further work is underway to create a second unit at Plas Hedd and a new unit at Hafod Mawddach with the hope of opening later this year. While this is significant progress, more needs to be done to change the balance of older people's mental health (EMI) placements in the county and meet needs. There are significant revenue costs associated with each unit changed from residential to older people's mental health (EMI) placements.

The following gaps have been identified:

- Dementia Specialist Care (residential and nursing) in the Meirionnydd area - there is currently no dementia nursing care there.
- Residential / nursing care for young people with physical and sensory needs.

For the future the Council hopes that residential older people's mental health (EMI) provision will be created at Plas Gwilym and Plas Pengwaith. Gwynedd Council is working in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Clwyd Alyn Housing Association and the Welsh Government to develop the Penrhos site, Pwllheli. It is intended to submit a business case to Gwynedd Council's Cabinet for the development of an on-site care home. The number of individuals with dementia is increasing, and we regularly review need and try to adapt council homes to be flexible and suitable to meet future need.

Conwy market overview

Most placements in Conwy are commissioned from private care home providers who provide 98% of the bed spaces in the county. Provision across the coast is reasonable, but there is a shortage of spaces to the south / rural parts of the county and concerns about the provision available in the Welsh language. The county is well serviced with residential and nursing places, but has a shortage of specialist mental health provision for both residential and nursing needs, in particular for those who need very specialist care. The majority of buildings utilised as Care Homes are older and often converted residential dwellings. On the whole they are well maintained by the providers, but repairs and maintenance can be costly. The physical layout of many such homes made it very difficult for the providers to

manage Covid outbreaks during the pandemic, while at the same time, the purpose built homes found that they were better equipped to manage such outbreaks.

Denbighshire market overview

Over 90% of care home placements are commissioned from external providers. There are two in-house care homes. The council closed one of the three residential homes that it had in 2019. The site, in Ruthin, is now being developed to provide more extra care apartments.

There has been a slight reduction in the overall capacity of the care home sector in Denbighshire in recent years. There is reduced demand for residential care without additional support for mental health or complex physical needs.

The majority of care homes in Denbighshire are older buildings that have been adapted. There have been a few occasions where it has not been possible to accommodate people with bariatric needs because of the structure of the buildings – size of doorways or layout of corridors. Also, few care homes have space for ceiling hoists for moving and handling or larger beds. The requirement for more staff input is also a barrier.

There are very few vacancies at the moment.

There are currently around 18 adults placed in care homes because there is insufficient support available to allow them to return to their own homes.

As of May 2021 there are 32 out of county residential older people's mental health (EMI) placements and 29 nursing placements. There are 33 out of county placements in Denbighshire for older people with mental health needs, mainly due to a lack of suitable local placements

Denbighshire has 282 places for specialist learning disability care home provision. They have identified the following trends.

- **Demography.** The number of people with learning disabilities needing support is increasing and people with learning disabilities are living longer. These demographic trends are likely to continue.
- **Attitudes and expectations.** Most individuals and their families want / expect to have a greater level of independence and to be a key part of their community.

- **Finance.** The level of spend on learning disability services has been increasing but we are now faced with supporting more people with less money (as a result of reducing local authority settlements, Independent Living Fund (ILF) closure and Housing Support Grant restrictions).
- **Existing provision.** Support is generally provided via immediate family members and / or long term paid care staff. Less use is made of informal community based assets.

Flintshire market overview

There has been an overall increase in residential provision in the last few years due to the reopening of three homes and the expansion of Marleyfield house in Buckley. One large home has changed from providing nursing to residential care which has simultaneously increased residential care capacity and decreased nursing home capacity. A general nursing home in Holywell closed in 2019 and another in March 2022 which decreased general nursing placements by 75. One care home is currently undergoing renovation work which has temporarily reduced market capacity.

Marleyfield, Croes Atti, and Llys Gwenffrwd are purpose built care homes, owned by the Council, situated in the towns of Buckley, Flint and Holywell. The buildings require little refurbishment or renovation. Llys Gwenffrwd differs in that provision is provided over three floors, which requires a change in staffing levels to creatively support people with dementia on the top floor.

There has been a historical shortage of placements which has led to placements out of county.

In addition, the complexity of need coupled with the lack of placements locally leads to in delayed transfer of care from hospital. This was evident during the pandemic, where at one point, due to active cases in nursing homes, there were no available nursing placements in Flintshire in to which to discharge people from hospital.

Within the Learning Disabilities and Physical Disabilities sector, due to the small choice of local providers and the specialist nature of support, some of these residential placements may need to be made out of county and this can incur higher costs. This has an impact on individuals and maintaining links with family and friends.

Future plans

New homes accessible to all:

- Marleyfield and Croes Atti have separate units for those with dementia related needs.

Supporting people to live at home for longer:

- Llys Gwenffrwd houses rehabilitation placements and all three homes provide a number of respite, step up / step down and assessments placements rather than permanent residential.
- Marleyfield and Croes Atti have adjoining day-care provision which would be affected with some of the options presented.
- Replace Croes Atti with a new care home on the former Flint Hospital site. The new care home will have an additional 25 beds, 12 of which will be accessible to the Health Board earmarked to provide a new model of step down care to support the discharge to assess and recover programme developed within the Health Board.

Provision for people with complex disabilities

Isle of Anglesey County Council have highlighted the need for specialised physical and sensory beds available locally.

Gwynedd Council have identified a struggle to meet demand for residential and nursing care for young people with physical and sensory needs.

Denbighshire County Council identified a lack of capacity for residential accommodation for people with complex disabilities (physical and learning disabilities), which means many people go out of county, away from family and friends. Currently there are 13 placements out of county which can incur higher costs. This also impacts on families visiting and linking to the individual.

In Denbighshire as individuals with complex needs have moved on from health settings to be supported in the community, ongoing work is required to further embed

Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) methodology within the delivery of support. This will ensure the skills and knowledge is available and maintained within the social care workforce.

Extra care, supported living and sheltered housing

Extra care housing includes specially designed self-contained properties for older adults with care and support available at a sufficient level to allow people to remain at home despite frailty, periods of ill-health or disabilities and often without the need to move to residential care.

In supported living or community living people usually live as tenants in a shared house, with formal paid support provided by a registered domiciliary care agency

Sheltered housing also includes self-contained properties for older adults and usually includes help from a scheme manager (warden) or support staff.

Anglesey extra care, supported living and sheltered housing

There are two extra care developments in Anglesey, Hafan Cefni and Penucheldre, currently providing a total of 118 extra care units, all of which are currently occupied. In March 2022, the Council committed to progress a new scheme in the Aethwy area and this will provide 40 units along with 15 specialist residential care rooms.

Analysis conducted by the Isle of Anglesey County Council suggests extra care provision is on target to meet demand up to 2025 with an additional 127 units needed by 2035 to meet projected demand. There are currently 12 people on the waiting list for extra care housing.

Evidence from local consultation supports a move toward the provision of extra care and supported housing provision and away from traditional residential care homes.

There are 71 units of supported accommodation and all are currently occupied. These are provided by 7 care providers in addition to an in house service. Demand currently outweighs capacity in regards to Extra Care and Supported Accommodation

Gwynedd extra care, supported living and sheltered housing

There are three extra care housing schemes in Gwynedd providing a mix of 1 and 2 bed self-contained apartments:

- Cae Garnedd, Bangor: 42 units all occupied and 37 applicants on the waiting list.
- Awel y Coleg, Bala: 30 units, 1 unoccupied and 3 applicants on the waiting list.
- Hafod y Gest, Porthmadog: 40 units, all occupied and 21 on the waiting list.

Extra care units are also part of the conversation regarding the development of Canolfan Llew - the health and care hub in Penygroes with Grŵp Cynefin and the development of the Penyberth site in Penrhos, Pwllheli with Clwyd Alyn. Demand currently exceeds supply and there are plans to develop more.

There are 412 units of sheltered accommodation in Gwynedd, with only 30 units having a full time warden. They are all populated and in general demand exceeds the supply in Gwynedd especially for older people who either don't need or don't qualify for warden support services, which is the main criteria for sheltered housing.

There are 78 supported living settings; 39 third sector (50%), 32 private sector (40%) and 7 in-house (10%).

Historically it is difficult to get staff in rural areas, for example, South Gwynedd and supported housing providers have had difficulty with this. Supported accommodation is a priority for the learning disability field with 75 individuals identified as needing accommodation. A high percentage of these individuals will need a supported housing model so we anticipate a need for market flexibility.

Most providers experience the same type of challenges when it comes to recruiting and retaining staff teams. However, over the last few months we have successfully introduced a number of individuals into new supported housing placements and providers are reporting that they are in a position to submit tender bids for new projects. Some external providers are progressing to develop new accommodation and support opportunities in South Gwynedd. Prior to the pandemic, providers were committed to looking at service delivery differently, such as groups sharing support, but the restrictions have had an impact on this development

Providers working within active support models and 'Personal Behaviour Support (PBS)' have been negatively impacted by the pandemic due to staffing constraints / shortages, so it is essential that we urgently address this with our providers to secure

training and mentoring to promote this way of working and ensure an outcomes based and preventative approach.

Providers generally work closely with the multidisciplinary teams to respond to demand if there is a change in needs, to respond to a crisis and so on. We have seen examples of collaboration and prioritisation with providers committing to work flexibly to ensure that individuals receive a care and support service that meets their needs.

Usually need within the service is met by tailor made packages for individuals and small-scale provision, which is not necessarily attractive or sustainable for prospective providers. Recruitment is difficult and dependent on the local population as people are unlikely to move into the region for the work because of the low rates of pay and language requirements. We are aware that some of the current providers are not on the framework so reopening the tender process for potential new providers could be advantageous. We foresee an increase in need for supported housing within the coming years in Gwynedd. We need to consider the possibility of using a '[keyring approach](#)' (KeyRing, 2022) and look at commissioning or providing the support needed within cluster areas. Consideration has been made in the past but further considerations are needed in consultation with individuals/families/providers.

Each provider is different with some having more support needs than others. The pressure on them from time to time means that they may not be in a strong position to respond to tender opportunities or to tender for the Supported Housing Agreement. Providers who support individuals with severe and complex needs regularly contact the Council to report that the level of inflationary increase offered by is not sufficient.

Providers are generally stable and able to maintain the required levels of service to supported housing provision. It is difficult to say if they are in a position to meet the demand and the increase in need as each provider's situation is different. Providing extra hours through support services has been difficult and challenging with not enough experienced staff available. This has put pressure on carers and we have had to work together as a 'wrap around' with a number of providers to meet needs.

Need close collaboration between social workers, individuals and families to ensure all options are explored. Work is ongoing through an accommodation project to identify individual needs and plan ahead to look at the most appropriate model of

support / retention within their communities and as close as possible to their family. Some individuals are receiving support from more than one provider or a combination of direct payments and commissioned provision.

Commissioner to provider relationship

- Relationships are generally good.
- Contact arrangements strengthened over the pandemic.
- Providers attend a two-monthly HR Transformation Group where they can feed into the agenda.
- Regular liaison between the providers / HR Team at different levels to air any issues that arise so that they receive timely attention.
- Providers are integral to planning future services
- Most providers now link in with our Well-being Service- virtual and face-to-face groups.
- Over the last 18 months the structure of the Learning Disabilities Service has changed - there is more emphasis on the areas - strengthening provision by having a lead for South Gwynedd and Arfon. This has strengthened commissioner / provider links.

Provider to provider relationships

Overall the relationship appears to be good although there has probably been less joint planning over the last two years due to the restrictions. We have seen examples where providers have stepped into a crisis situation to support another provider by offering staff to fill gaps. For example, in one case where an individual's situation broke down and needed 24-hour support, up to 4 providers came together to form a rota to support them in temporary accommodation. In another case where a providers had difficulties maintaining a rota when introducing an individual to a new home, another provider stepped in and agreed to work together on a temporary basis to enable needs to be met. We provided support and guidance in relation to the agreement.

Conwy extra care, supported living and sheltered housing

There are four extra care housing schemes in Conwy county, providing a total of 185 flats. Hafan Gwydir in Llanrwst, Hafod y Parc in Abergele, Llys y Coed in Llanfairfechan and Tan y Fron in Llandudno. In April 2022, there were 62 people on the waiting list of which 10 were from out of county (two from Denbighshire and eight from elsewhere in the UK but with family links to the area).

There are 46 supported living projects run by various private companies, housing associations and the council.

The majority of supported living projects only cater for several people within each project so even though there are 46 projects there are only spaces for 136 people. Which is not a high proportion especially when the population of Conwy is taken into account. There are around only 8 vacancies at present and a high demand for vacant spaces. There are no supported living projects in the south of the county.

Supported living premises are in very short supply and the council struggles to find enough accommodation for clients.

Denbighshire extra care, supported living and sheltered housing

There are three extra care housing schemes in Denbighshire and one soon to open in Denbigh. A recently closed care home in Ruthin will be used as space to expand an extra care housing scheme run by a housing association. There were occasional vacancies due to the pandemic but otherwise it is very rare to have a vacancy in an extra care housing scheme. Although the number of extra care housing flats will be increasing significantly over the year it is expected that demand will continue to increase and exceed the amount of flats available.

Within Denbighshire most people with learning disabilities live in supported housing (community living).

Most new care home placements are viewed as a temporary measure until a suitable tenancy becomes available within a Community Living setting. However, there is still a relatively high number of older people with learning disabilities living in care homes. This is historical and partly a consequence of the closure of the North Wales Hospital. Moving these individuals is not considered feasible or in their best interests.

In Community Living people usually live as tenants in a shared house, with formal paid support provided by a registered domiciliary care agency via block contract with Denbighshire. Within Denbighshire the support service is not provided by (or linked to) the landlord. Support services for all new Community Living schemes are commissioned via an agreed tendering process.

As of September 2021, there are a total of 57 Community Living properties in Denbighshire, delivered between 11 providers. Only 2 of these properties are operated by the Council. There is also a combination of national providers, smaller

local providers and both local and national providers with a charitable status. Contracts are tendered through the regional framework or commissioned through direct payments.

125 people are currently supported (capacity is 136 people), most with over 20 hours of support per week, either shared or 1:1. Most individuals have a tenancy agreement as is usually the case for Supported Living.

There are providers who are able to offer a range of support from low level to more complex needs and 24-hour support.

Recruitment of staff has been problematic for providers during the pandemic and has impacted the number of places offered periodically.

Many existing Community Living contracts have been extended past their original term and there is now considerable pressure for the whole of the scheme to be re-tendered, in line with regulations. Both the providers and the council staff feel this presents a considerable risk to individuals, providers and their staff at the current time. At worst, re-tendering could see many providers losing business, and large numbers of staff leaving the sector at a time where it is almost impossible to recruit. Any uncertainty could have the potential for many staff to leave, even if TUPE applies. This uncertainty could have a devastating effect on the local social care provider market and the citizens they support. Some providers may just hand their contracts back and not wish to bid for more. Especially with such a large number of contracts, ultimately this could all significantly further destabilize the social care provider market in Denbighshire.

Flintshire extra care, supported living and sheltered housing

Extra Care continues to be an extremely popular housing choice for older people in Flintshire, which offers them the opportunity to live independently whilst having the support of an on-site care and support team, if and when needed. This in turn, releases capacity and time in community based domiciliary care.

The benefits of living in an Extra Care facility include:

- Staying independent for longer with on-site support, in your own living space.
- Support can be increased and decreased based on needs.
- Emergency support available, including at night.
- Enables couples where one partner is highly dependent to remain living together.

- Opportunities to socialise with other residents in a community setting.

The Council currently has four Extra Care facilities, Llys Eleanor (Deeside), Llys Jasmine (Mold), Llys Raddington (Flint) and the newly occupied Plas yr Ywen (Holywell), with a total of 238 extra care units.

As of August 2021, there are a total of 60 Supported Living properties in Flintshire, delivered between 10 providers. 16 of these properties are operated by the Council. There is also a combination of national providers, smaller local providers and both local and national providers with a charitable status. Contracts are tendered through the regional framework or commissioned through direct payments.

139 people are supported, most with over 20 hours of support per week, either shared or 1:1. Most individuals have a tenancy agreement as is usually the case for 'Supported Living'.

There are providers who are able to support from a low level to more complex needs on the Framework.

When recommissioning existing services, there is a possibility of a transfer of staff (TUPE) to the new company. For new services, the provider has to recruit which can impact on the timescales and attract staff from existing providers who then have to back fill.

Wrexham extra care, supported living and sheltered housing

There are two extra care housing schemes in Wrexham with a total of 116 units. Plas Telford has 56 units and had 5 vacancies at the end of March 2022. Maes Y Dderwen has 60 units and had 10 vacancies at the end of March 2022.

Demand for those with eligible needs is low, work is currently underway to relaunch scheme to attract more applications. Wrexham County Borough Council are currently evaluating their model of extra care housing to inform further service development to ensure its sustainability in meeting changing and increasing needs. Demand is hard to estimate due to current model seemingly not being able to respond to medium and high needs. Population statistics and evidence of older people's aspirations suggest there should be increasing demand for extra care housing. The priority in the short to medium term is to ensure a sustainable model of extra care housing which provides value for money and quality services which offer real alternative to residential care.

In addition to Wrexham's extra care housing schemes, there is a rolling programme of remodelling being delivered by WCBC Housing Department to deliver improved and increasingly accessible accommodation for older people across the in-house Sheltered Housing Service.

At the time of reporting, 126 people with a range of low-level and complex support needs were supported in the independent sector by 9 supported living providers – a mix of charitable and private organisations. There are 19 people with learning disabilities supported in their own homes by the council's internal supported living service across 10 properties. The majority of the services are 24/7 although some are for day-time support only, where staff are available to support people to become more independent.

Referrals are made predominately from the Disability Service working with people with learning disabilities although there are a number of people living with mental health support needs who are supported by the council's own Recovery Service - 10 people are supported in tenanted properties funded by social care.

It is recognised that re-tendering contracts can be disruptive for the lives of the citizens supported within this model so long-term contracts of 7+3 years are used, with regular quality and wellbeing reviews during the term of the contract. The North Wales Supported Living Framework is now in place and has been used for commissioning new contracts. Recruitment and retention proves to be challenging for providers, particularly for staff who are able to drive and use a supported person's mobility vehicle.

Market stability

Regional challenges

There are some common challenges across North Wales and Wales as a whole affecting the stability of the sector listed below:

- Retention and recruitment of care and nursing staff.
- Care home fees need to be set at a sustainable rate. Increasing numbers of providers are reporting that current financial challenges and are working with commissioners to address these issues.
- Increasing demand for services with decreasing budgets.

- Increasing complexity of care needs. People are staying at home longer with a support package so when they do need a care home placement their needs are more complex and involved.

Positives identified during consultation for the market stability report were the Welsh Government funding, which has helped with voids in the residential sector along with work to promote the sector and funding to try to achieve a real living wage.

Isle of Anglesey market stability

Home closure

At the end of the last financial year in March 2022, Caledonia Residential Home (15 beds) closed.

Demand for places

The demand for care home places dropped in the early stages of the pandemic during 2020, but saw an increase in 2021-22 as the early effects of Covid started to pass and as a result of shortfalls in the domiciliary care sector. A significant increase was seen in the number of people presenting and needing an assessment, but the mostly private domiciliary care sector was at the same time losing staff and having to hand back existing care packages.

Recruitment

The largest challenge facing the sector has been the recruitment and retention of staff at all levels. Many care homes have reported vacancies which they report has impacted on their ability to take on new placements. The staff shortfall has been made worse by staff who are unable to work because they have Covid. This has meant a significant reliance on staffing agencies. We have also noted a number of changes across the sector in management staff.

Inflation

Since the beginning of 2022, the rate of inflation has increased at a faster rate and higher than the rate of increase for fees that are paid to care home providers. Utilities, fuel and insurance costs have also increased dramatically. This is proving very challenging for many providers, who, after managing through the pandemic, are finding it difficult to absorb these costs at a time when government financial support for COVID-19 has stopped.

Gwynedd market stability

Older people's care homes

With the increase in demand there are concerns that the market cannot respond sufficiently and quickly enough to demand given the current staffing crisis.

There has been an increase in the number of providers reporting that older people's residential and nursing fees are inadequate. Providers are frustrated when they report cost increases and are not offered higher payments. There is an increase in top-up charges for residential and nursing care. There's also a slowdown in the number of the workforce registering.

The threshold for self-funding has been increasing and is currently at £50,000 which means that less people are self-funding. Self-funders have a right to have their care commissioned through the council which has implications on the ability of care homes to ask for higher fees from self-funders.

Physical disability, mental health and learning disability

Each provider is different with some having more support needs than others. The pressure on them from time to time means that they cannot be in a strong position, for example, to respond to tender opportunities, or to tender for the Supported Housing Agreement. Providers who support individuals with severe and complex needs regularly contact the council to report that the level of inflation offered by the council is insufficient.

Impact of Covid-19

Some nursing providers have made the most of the financial support available, such as voids, general sustainability support, support for staff and visitor testing. It is noted that the largest providers were bidding for support, with smaller providers tending to inquire later and finding it difficult to keep up with the guidelines and guidelines support available. There is concern over the impact that the end of the financial support will have.

Flexibility of the market

There is potential for adaptation within Council care homes. Potential to adapt roles / tasks within domiciliary care plan but need support from provider to implement. Staffing is a major issue at present for domiciliary care providers and care homes.

Causes of potential business failure and contingency planning

Concerns are identified either through information shared by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) or as part of the Quality Assurance Team weekly contact. The team provide early intervention and support if any issues surrounding the viability of businesses arises. Recent financial support (COVID-19 Funds), such as support for additional empty beds due to the pandemic were met by the Hardship Fund and general market sustainability support were offered through a remedial fund through the government's recovery fund. There were no such funds available directly from the council before the pandemic except as a last resort or emergency measures and the current COVID-19 financial aid comes to end at the end of March 2022.

Gwynedd Council are currently looking to start an Open Book Accounting approach with care homes in order to better understand each other's financial obligations/limitations in order to establish whether there are areas we can offer support be that financially or by offering support to the care homes in streamlining their procedures

Care home closures

Gwynedd have had 4 homes close in the last few years. Two residential homes (Llwyn in May 2018 and Foelas in April 2022) and two nursing homes (Penisarwaun in July 2018 and Penrhos in December 2020). It is increasingly difficult for small independent care homes to be financially viable and this may contribute to further closures in the future.

Conwy market stability

Home closure

In the last year two homes have closed in the county. One was a smaller provider and the building maintenance costs of the older converted building exceeded the potential income from residents. The owners tested the market for sale but there were no offers. Conversion to nursing or older people's mental health (EMI) care was considered but the home was not sufficient size or layout to give the required return on investment and the home was closed. The second home that closed was larger and successful. There were no issues with vacant beds or quality of service, but having made enquiries for a lengthy period of time there were no buyers for the business when the owner was ready to retire, so the service closed. In both cases the residents of these homes were successfully re-located to other homes in the county.

Demand for places

Demand for care home places dropped in the early stages of the pandemic during 2020, but saw a significant increase in 2021-22 as the early effects of COVID-19 started to pass and as a result of shortfalls in the domiciliary care sector. We saw a significant increase in the number of people presenting and needing an assessment, but the mostly private domiciliary care sector was at the same time losing staff and having to hand back existing care packages. Most of the increase was on the coast in Colwyn Bay, Llandudno and the surrounding areas for residential and nursing placements. There is not yet data available on the demand for older people's mental health (EMI) care which we feel has also increased.

The number of out of county placements has slowly reduced.

Recruitment

The largest challenge facing the sector has been the recruitment and retention of staff at all levels. Almost all care homes have reported vacancies for health care assistants, senior health care assistants, nurses and domestic staff which they report has impacted on their ability to take on new placements. The staff shortfall has been exacerbated by staff who are unable to work because they have COVID-19. This has meant a significant reliance on staffing agencies who in some cases have been providing 20% to 50% of the staffing for some providers. We have also noted a number of changes across the sector in management staff. Consultation with providers has identified several possible reasons for the recruitment challenge:

- Exiting the EU has had some impact on health and social care, but has had a significant impact on other sectors such retail and hospitality which are very large in Conwy county.
- Competition from retail and hospitality. Care homes report staff leaving to join these two sectors who have increased pay and conditions to attract new staff. The work is often seen as less stressful with more reasonable hours.
- Early retirement. Many providers report staff members taking early retirement during the pandemic.
- Competition from better paid jobs with the health board, local authority and recruitment agencies.

Inflation

Since the beginning of 2022, the rate of inflation has increased faster and higher than the fees that are paid to care home providers. Utilities, fuel and insurance costs

have increased two and sometime three fold compared to previous years. Having managed through the pandemic, many providers are not able to absorb these costs at a time when government financial support for COVID-19 has stopped.

Denbighshire market stability

There has been increased focus on supporting people to remain independent in their own homes for longer. Most people say that they do not want to live in a residential care home if there is an option to remain independent. Denbighshire use “What Matters” conversations with people to enable us to agree the appropriate outcomes of their care and support. We use the resource wheel to ensure we include support that people have from family, friends and communities when discussing how to work towards the agreed outcomes.

There is a diverse provider base in Denbighshire. However, there are limited older people’s mental health (EMI) residential and nursing placements available.

The market is diverse with homes of varying size, in-house and independent. However, the majority are small, independent care homes in older buildings that are not purpose built.

The Contracts and Commissioning Team work closely with providers and offer support that is required.

There has been a lack of trained nursing staff available in the south of the county, meaning Llangollen Fechan faced prohibitive agency fees and therefore decided to cease dual registration for both residential and nursing care, concentrating only on residential beds. This means fewer nursing beds in the south.

A small provider, Chesterton found it was not financially viable so a managed closure took place with weekly meetings between council staff and home managers. All residents were relocated in a safe and acceptable manner.

The pandemic has highlighted the problems of economic viability of small, independent care homes. Difficulty recruiting and retaining staff, lack of flexibility in layouts and facilities have all indicated that there may in future be a move to larger, more modern or purpose-built buildings where economies of scale give greater resilience.

Gaps in service / support:

- Welsh speaking support staff (mainly in the north of the county)
- Social enterprises and independent providers who are based in the south of the county
- Short term, progression focused interventions with agreed outcomes
- Alternatives to traditional services (including respite and day activities)

The learning disability register and housing needs data show that numbers are not changing significantly but the complexity of need is increasing.

In the provider survey for this report, Denbighshire providers reported an average required occupancy of 85% for sustainability. Current average occupancy is 78%. At the time of the survey there was a vacancy rate of 25% in Denbighshire, this was higher than the regional average of 20%.

Denbighshire County Council recognises the value of nurturing and supporting good quality providers - for example, during Covid-19 steps were taken to proactively avoid provider failure. At the same time budgetary pressures mean that commissioners cannot always respond to fee requests in the way that providers would like them to. Generally, we have a good relationship with most providers. This can be more difficult to maintain when we need to raise concerns with a provider (e.g. regarding quality or safeguarding) and when negotiating fee increases or de-commissioning a service. During the pandemic we tried to ensure that providers (for example external day services) could survive financially and we also worked closely with providers on helping to keep people safe and well.

Provider to provider relationships improved during the pandemic and there were good examples of peer support and camaraderie between providers. One long standing good example is a local care home who led on the Person Centred Planning (PCP) community of support, with other mainly domiciliary care providers attending - each sharing good practice regarding person centred approaches, and with guest speakers talking about new initiatives in Denbighshire. Relationships in this meeting are supportive

Other challenges identified are:

- Recruitment and retention.
- High sickness absence.

- Ensuring sufficiency of placements in the local area, are able to meet the individual's level of need, while still supporting choice and control and preventing admission to acute and community hospitals.
- Lack of suitable overnight respite accommodation that can be pre-booked - unpaid carers have difficulty trying to find residential/nursing homes willing to accept people on a one off or occasional basis, particularly if they have higher needs / exhibit challenging behaviour. This may be due to funding, staffing or something else. There is a respite flat in Corwen but this is not well used mostly due to lack of availability of care packages. Staff at a nearby home don't have capacity to cover although not far away. Respite accommodation for people with complex disabilities is very limited - Alexandra House only. Ongoing negotiations with Alexandra House and Conwy CBC.

Flintshire market stability

Flintshire has a diverse provider base with no reliance on one provider but limited nursing and nursing older people's mental health (EMI) placements. The market is diverse with homes of varying size, in-house and independent, family run or as part of a larger organisation. The council is moving ahead with increasing capacity in in-house residential provision. The Contract and Commissioning Team work closely with providers on both entry and exit to ensure the process runs smoothly, offering any support that is required. Although the market is robust and each provider has contingency plans in place to deal with the majority of issues, the COVID-19 pandemic presented exceptional circumstances and providers did not have this included in their plans. These have since been updated.

Business diagnostic reviews conducted with 18 homes in 2017 identified the following issues related to stability:

- Group owned care homes had back of house support and central administration which seemed to reduce time pressures and workload compared to smaller independent homes.
- There was no discrimination identified between private and local authority funded patients but providers were requesting top up fees from local authorities due to financial pressures.
- Recruitment and retention: affected by the size of the home and the way it's managed, it helps to be on a main bus route, some concerns about image of the sectors, wages and competing with the NHS for staff.

- Sickness and absence rates are high and policies in place. The most common cause of absence is sickness and diarrhoea.
- Many homes are in older buildings with poor energy efficiency and difficult to alter. There was more space to expand and better outside space in rural homes, but these are also less convenient to access. Heating costs were a big concern and some homes suggested a joint procurement policy may help give them stronger buying power. Homes would appreciate advice on waste policy too.
- No clear view on minimum number of residents needed to make the home viable, but aware of whether they were losing money or not.
- Appreciation of a recent grant for asset purchase and recommendation for an asset library where expensive, occasional used equipment could be borrowed rather than purchased outright.
- Finances are challenging requiring top ups to local authority fees and a proportion of private patients to survive. The increase in the living wage, a general reduction in unemployment rates, increase in employment and the unknown impact of Brexit suggests that the pool of candidates will get smaller. Profit margins are tight and any increase in interest rates plus increases in other overheads such as business rates, fuel costs and food costs will have an impact on the long term sustainability of the sector.

Since the pandemic the market has become extremely unstable due to:

- Residential and nursing homes going into administration
- Residential and nursing homes being taken over leading to instability and significant changes in services
- Lack of staff due to retirement or leaving the business
- Low number of nursing placements and no providers with open placements to ensure stability of the placement
- Lack of funding to try to assist the providers during a difficult time
- Care Home closures, this could be due to a number of factors such as financial or lack of qualified staff
- Recruitment within Social Services sector is an ongoing concern, this is having an impact on the sustainability of provisions

Discussions with Responsible Individuals highlighted the following issues:

- Rapid changes in guidance
- Cost of living increases

- Hardship Fund tapering
- Recruitment and retention
- Good carers who are not IT savvy and not looking to upskill and undertake additional training for registration

Wrexham market stability

All Wrexham's care homes are outsourced and they are currently evaluating the medium to longer term viability of the private residential market and considering how they might deliver intermediate, short term care solutions in the medium to longer term as this market seemingly has some limitations to delivery in this context.

Fee setting methodology, budgets and lack of agreement regionally on the Pre Placement Agreement which sets the overarching terms and conditions is also hampering flexible, responsive residential care commissioning.

Barriers to entry into the market include suitable facilities and properties and the costs involved in development of a potential property. Plus, the already difficult recruitment market/staff shortages in established facilities. Ideas for ways the local council could support include; assistance to source suitable property, cash incentives, loans to assist with set up and possible recruitment assistance. The lack of flexibility in regional frameworks to reopen may also be a barrier. The council could work with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and Social Care Wales to enable swifter registration processes and inflation beating budget uplifts.

All contracts are subject to regular monitoring under the terms and conditions and this should pick up any potential problems/issues at an early stage to enable preventative measures and/or emergency measures to be put in place to try and avoid a crisis. The main indicators would be; reported difficulties in recruitment, retention of staff - large numbers of leavers, always had difficulties in retaining staff in the industry as a whole, monetary losses, no reserve funds, possibly the accommodation not being suitable moving forward and no funds to make changes. Escalating concerns process including engagement with other commissioning councils.

Escalating concerns

Identifying escalating concerns within care homes is part of the council quality assurance process, with the process leading to improvements in service

performance and quality and a positive impact on staff. This information can change quickly but is included below as a snapshot.

- Anglesey: No providers currently under escalating concerns (May 2022).
- Gwynedd: One home under escalating concerns for business/financial reasons. As at 31 March 2021, there were three providers in the escalating concerns process, with one other about to be placed into escalating concerns. The reasons for implementing the escalating concerns process with those four homes can be summarised as leadership, management and oversight.
- Conwy: One provider under escalating concerns at the time of writing and one further provider during the pandemic. There is a good relationship between the providers and local authority on the whole with areas of concern identified early and resolved without the need for the formal procedures.
- Denbighshire: 2 providers currently in escalating concerns (May 2022) but has been up to around 6 at the height of the pandemic. During the pandemic Denbighshire County Council's policy was to use the escalating concerns process during an outbreak in any care home. This ensured that there was a structured approach to meetings and a multi-disciplinary team was involved.
- Flintshire: 5 care homes placed into escalating concerns between April 2015 and March 2021. Non-compliance/immediate action notice issued to 3 care homes between April 2019 and March 2020 (excludes 3 providers with new owners)
- Wrexham: Three care homes placed in escalating concerned during the reporting period to March 2021, with two of those homes having completed the process within the timescales. One home remained in the process supported by social care and health colleagues until April 2021.

Care home closures

Lessons learned from care home closures

What worked well

Experience of recent closures highlight the following:

- Good working relationship between Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), the council and health board with colleagues from Continuing Health Care (CHC) and community nursing leads involved alongside social services senior staff, social workers and contracts and commissioning officers.
- Linking to advocacy.

- Provision of list of current vacancies in the sector.
- Health colleagues working with social care staff in Community Resource Teams building stronger relationships, shortening time to achieve outcomes and improving experience for residents.
- Social services senior staff, social workers and contracts and commissioning officers working more closely to improve dialogue and co-working across operational and business support teams.
- Person-centred, outcome focussed work across all teams.
- Regular communications with providers
- Importance of initiating discussions as soon as possible to facilitate joint planning and working.
- Allocated team of council staff to support people with their packing and accounting for their belongings, alongside providing a council presence in the home.

Challenges

- Could provider failure have been anticipated, risk assessed before notice given? Difficult to anticipate based on intelligence available. Perhaps a joint process could be developed based on experiences to guide future scenarios.
- Ensuring sufficiency of placements in the local area are able to meet the individual's level of need, while still supporting choice and control. Also, preventing admission to acute and community hospitals.
- Managing expectations and emotions of staff and residents during the process.
- Understanding equipment ownership – what belongs to the home, Health Board, Stores, Welsh Government such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensuring this is moved to a new setting alongside the resident.
- Working with third parties such as administrators. Differing opinions and expected outcomes, accuracy of information, understanding of Welsh policy.
- Maintaining safe level of staffing at the closing setting.
- Accessing staff files to support ease of employment to new employers.
- Complexities of a new provider taking over the home as a going concern. In particular, if there are restrictions on their registration.

Denbighshire supported providers to update contingency plans during the pandemic when new and exceptional difficulties were experienced. Denbighshire Council staff have worked alongside providers when staffing has been impossible to resource otherwise. Brought providers together to foster better relationships and share best

practice, for example, around infection control. Monitoring visits are not yet back on track since the pandemic but all homes with possible risks have been visited and interim measures included phone calls. Provider engagement meetings are now monthly but very poorly attended.

Flintshire has also found that moving away from systematic annual monitoring visits to a practice development approach has helped develop effective constructive and professional relationships with providers, which have been critical in enabling them to meet the challenges of the pandemic together.

Feedback from care home residents

All counties have systems in place to consult and engage with care home residents. A summary of feedback received is below:

- Positive feedback, particularly focussed on staff providing support. They were described as very caring, having time for people and supporting with all aspects of personal care and related needs. Managers and office staff were also mentioned in terms of being approachable and sorting out problems when they arrive. Everyone also said they felt safe in the buildings.
- Some issues were raised by individuals, not often but still important, including training and reminders to staff about issues such as knocking and waiting at doors, use of mobile phones and how their approach to tenants is important. For example, not rushing, treating them as an adult.

Feedback from providers

- Citizen's having rapid deterioration or life changing events such as a stroke then losing mental capacity with finances. Often no Lifetime Power of Attorney (LPA) in place. It would help to promote LPA more and this could reduce the council deputyship waiting list and workload.
- Transport is a huge issue for older people, particularly those living in rural areas and those with limited mobility. Bus services are very limited especially in rural areas and public transport is often not fully accessible or wheelchair friendly. Dial a ride is excellent but only operates in the North of the county and is not cheap. Taxis are expensive and not always available or accessible. One did need a mobile phone to book the new Flecsi bus – now amended.
- Welsh language capacity is problematic.

- Pressures around recruitment and retention with staff leaving sector following the stresses of COVID-19 and the ability of the sector to pay a competitive wage (compared to other sectors such as retail). Regulatory requirements. Lack of skills regarding bid writing and understanding the requirements of a tender process.

Impact of commissioning processes on the market

Each council has systems in place to support and liaise with providers, including regular meetings and discussions with providers and support with training and resources. Examples include Flintshire's 'Progress for Providers' Programme in Care Homes which is a self-assessment tool for managers to use with their staff to check how they are doing in delivering personalised support for people living in care homes.

Supported Living

North Wales commissioners from the six local councils and health board worked together to develop a Supported Living Framework which went live on 1 April 2020. Multiple service providers have already been admitted to the framework agreement following the requisite due diligence and quality checks. This enables commissioners to commission services adopting the framework agreement which can streamline processes while remaining in accordance with relevant legislation and the local authority Contract Procedure Rules.

Denbighshire County Council have 41 supported living contracts due to end 31 March 2023. These have been in place for many years and extended numerous times with a view to re-tendering. Discussions are currently underway regarding how best to re-tender. The concern is that re-tendering could have a destabilising effect on the local market exacerbating existing issues with retaining staff and risking providers handing existing contracts back rather than bid for more. Discussions are underway about what approach to take.

Welsh language

Around 24% of social care staff in North Wales can communicate effectively through the medium of Welsh (Social Care Wales, 2018b)(Social Care Wales, 2018). Across

North Wales 20% of registered care home managers are fluent Welsh speakers, which is highest in Gwynedd where 57% fluent Welsh speakers.

Engagement in Denbighshire identified receiving services in Welsh was a high priority in the Denbigh area and there is not enough care provided through the medium of Welsh in the south of the county. Many staff have some Welsh language skills but lack confidence so an internal project is looking at ways to improve this. An inspection of Cysgod y Gaer care home in Corwen in March 2022 identified that the service does provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and that it anticipates, identifies, and meets the Welsh language and cultural needs of people who use, or may use, the service.

Social value and preventative services

The concept of social value includes the following.

- The value experienced by the users of a service, delivering 'what matters' and co-producing services with people who use them.
- The added social, environmental or economic value a contract can provide over and above the core requirements.
- The duty local councils have to promote social care and preventative services provided by social enterprises, co-operatives, co-operative arrangements, user led services, and the third sector (Welsh Government, 2014).

The Wales Cooperative Centre (2021) has produced a guide to raise awareness of potential social enterprise and co-operative models in the care home sector.

We want to promote 'social value models of delivery' that:

- Achieve well-being outcomes.
- Work co-productively – giving users a strong voice and real control.
- Have a preventative and dependency-reducing orientation.
- Incorporate collaboration, co-operation and partnership.
- Add value - social, economic and environmental.

As well as to promote activities that maintain or strengthen the well-being of unpaid carers and community capacity beyond the market – without which the market cannot be stable.

Each county supports a range of preventative services which can help people to remain in their homes and avoid the need for residential or nursing care. This includes regional projects funded through the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) including falls prevention projects and step up / step down care. 'Step up' is an intermediate care function to receive patients from home/community settings to prevent unnecessary acute hospital admissions or premature admissions to long term care. 'Step down' is an intermediate care function to receive patients from acute care for rehabilitation and to support timely discharge from hospital.

Projects include; community agents, navigator and social prescribing projects which link people up to support and activities available in their local community. They also include; befriending, advocacy and respite services.

The Micro Care and Community Catalysts projects provides support to micro providers to enter the care markets. Direct payments are used to help people access personal care and live as independently as possible.

There is more information about preventative services available in North Wales in the [Population Needs Assessment](#).

Workforce

The table below shows the number of registered adult care home managers in North Wales at the 1 April 2020. Analysis of the data shows:

- In the last year 46 managers left the register and 31 joined, a turnover of 14%.
- The ratio of women to men is 6:1 and 230 are aged over 51.
- Around a third of registered managers have some Welsh language skills and 20% are fluent.

Table 6: Number of registered adult care home managers, 31 March 2020

Local council	Care home managers
Anglesey	30
Gwynedd	61
Conwy	67
Denbighshire	66
Flintshire	39
Wrexham	47
North Wales	310

Source: Social Care Wales, Registered adult care home managers

A regional survey carried out for the Market Stability Report identified that 1 in 5 care worker roles are vacant across the region, including senior care worker and care worker roles.

There are some concerns that since the introduction of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 more homes are offering both residential care and older people’s mental health (EMI) residential care without necessarily providing separate facilities for different residents and possibly without having suitable skill sets and arrangements in place.

There is an increase in training needs due to the lack of available training on offer during the pandemic, which include basic training such as inductions and manual handling.

There are some concerns that staff may have moved away from a reablement ethos due to pressures during the pandemic. For example, individuals becoming very deconditioned due to lack of activity and staff not promoting simple forms of independence, such as going to the toilet unaided.

Local authorities report that it is becoming more difficult to recruit care home managers. Alternative approaches such as the [‘Grow Your Own’](#) (The King’s Fund, 2006) may have the potential to create the conditions for sustainable workforce development.

4. Domiciliary care services

Population overview

It is predicted that the number of people aged 65 and over who struggle with activities of daily living will increase by 25% increase by 2040

There will be more people aged 65 and over living alone

The composition of households can also affect the demand for services to support independence. Data from the 2011 Census shows that there are 44,000 people aged 65 and over living alone, which is 59% of all households aged 65 and over.

Research by Gwynedd Council found a strong relationship between the number of people aged 65 and over who live alone and the number of clients receiving a domiciliary care package in an area (Regional Partnership Board, 2022).

Moreover, around 28% of people in Wales have such low incomes that they do not contribute to the cost of their domiciliary care (CSSIW, 2016). It is anticipated that 30% of people have enough capital to fund their own care in both domiciliary care and care homes (CSSIW, 2016).

Table 7: Predicted number of people aged 65 and over who struggle with activities of daily living

Local council	2020 number	2020 percent	2040 number	2040 percent	Change number	Change percent
Anglesey	5,100	27%	6,550	29%	1,500	23%
Gwynedd	8,000	28%	10,050	29%	2,050	20%
Conwy	9,450	29%	13,050	30%	3,600	27%
Denbighshire	6,450	27%	8,800	29%	2,400	27%
Flintshire	9,150	27%	12,350	29%	3,250	26%
Wrexham	7,550	27%	10,000	29%	2,450	24%
North Wales	45,700	28%	60,900	29%	15,150	25%
Wales	185,300	28%	248,900	29%	63,600	26%

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum

Source: Daffodil, Mid-year population estimates, Office for National Statistics and 2018-based population projections, Welsh Government

Market sufficiency

Market overview

The average number of hours of domiciliary care per week commissioned by each local authority and the health board is summarised in the table below.

Table 8: Average local authority/health board Commissioned domiciliary care hours per week

County	Older person	Learning disability	Older person mental health	Physical disability	Total
Anglesey	3644	390	-	582	4616
Gwynedd	-	-	-	-	11144
Conwy (a, b)	8024	5523	382	-	13930
Denbighshire	-	-	-	-	5150
Flintshire (c, d)	6,047	913	22	1,160	8142
Wrexham	5599	638	1196	955	8388
North Wales					44558

Source: Local authority data collection. Some figures are rounded so may not sum.

(a) Learning disability figure also includes physical disability

(b) Figure includes direct payments

(c) Learning disability floating support (not in supported living accommodation)

(d) Older person mental health - independent sector, but majority of support provided by in house mental health team

In terms of the balance of the market, on average more than 70% of the North Wales domiciliary care market is comprised of independent sector providers with the remainder a mixture Local Authority and Third Sector providers. However, this does vary according to local authority. For example, Gwynedd have 44% of domiciliary care being provided internally currently and 56% through the independent sector, whereas in Flintshire the local authority currently provides around 10% of the domiciliary care provision.

Table 9: Percentage market estimated share of domiciliary care sector by type

County	In House	Independent sector
Anglesey (a)	18.5	81.5
Gwynedd	44	56.0
Conwy	9.7	92.3
Denbighshire	10	90.0
Flintshire	10.5	89.5
Wrexham	3	97

Source: Local authority data collection

(a) Should be in-house/external provider (independent sector and third sector) split of 30/70%

Table 10: Number of providers working in each local authority area

County	Number of providers
Anglesey	1
Gwynedd	1
Conwy	3
Denbighshire	6
Flintshire	6
Wrexham	4
Regional (a)	52

Source: North Wales Domiciliary Care Framework

(a) Providers noted for each county are -ones who only provide services in that county. Regional providers are those that work in more than one county in North Wales.

Table 11: Average hourly rate of domiciliary care by population group (£)

County	Older person	Learning disability	Older person mental health	Physical disability
Anglesey	17.83	16.04	17.83	17.83
Gwynedd	19.13	19.13	19.13	19.13
Conwy (a)	20.60	20.60	20.60	20.60
Denbighshire (a)	19.53	19.53	19.53	19.53
Flintshire (b, c)	18.67	16.84	-	18.67
Wrexham	20.33	16.90	20.58	20.28

Source: local authority data collection

(a) Average rate across all population groups

(b) Supported living

(c) Majority of older person mental health supported in house, no average provided.

Regional market overview

Domiciliary care is a priority market identified by commissioners, with current private sector providers unable to fulfil the demand for a significant amount of time now. As such, growth and development of services including general domiciliary care (includes homecare, re-ablement; community living and recovery) have been identified as opportunities for the future.

Isle of Anglesey market overview

In Anglesey, demand is currently exceeding supply (March 2022) due to shortage of staff within domiciliary care providers.

Gwynedd market overview

In Gwynedd there has been insufficient domiciliary care provision to meet need across Gwynedd, particularly in the Eifionydd and Pwllheli area at present.

In Gwynedd, currently there is a lack of available domiciliary care, and the nature of current arrangements mean that providers can refuse to give care, or return

packages. Frequent emergencies can occur, where providers report that they are no longer able to provide care due to staffing problems.

Currently, people have little choice in the field. Getting any care is a challenge, let alone having a choice. People can choose to get Direct Payments to arrange their own care, but it is not easy to find people who can offer care. A project with 'Community Catalysts' has started, to encourage people to set up a small company to provide care, and hopefully this will improve the situation.

Conwy market overview

The numbers of people who receive domiciliary care packages in Conwy has declined over the past four years, as can be seen in the table below.

There have been a couple of principle reasons for this, the impact of COVID and carers workers leaving the sector with the sector unable to recruit new staff.

As it can be seen that during the last 12 months the numbers of citizens receiving domiciliary care had dropped dramatically and evidence from providers is that this is directly due to lack of domiciliary carers. During the May to November 2021 period approximately 950 hours of domiciliary care packages have been handed back due to private sector agencies unable to meet demand.

Table 12: Numbers of people who receive domiciliary care packages in Conwy

Year	Total clients
2017/18	898
2018/19	818
2019/20	799
2021/22	717

Source: Local authority data collection

As of this week 2 of April 2022 there are 698 packages begin delivered to older people across Conwy.

The table below shows the total number of packages and hours that are being delivered, week 2 April 2022. The areas in this table are shown as the Community Resource Team (CRT) Areas.

Table 13: Total number of domiciliary care packages and hours that are being delivered in Conwy (April 2022)

CRT area	Packages	Hours	Average hours per package
Abergele	146	1,709	11.7
Colwyn	206	2,251	10.9
Llandudno	172	2,217	12.9
Coastal	91	1,166	9.0
Rural	83	747	9.0
Total	698	8,091	11.6

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum

Source: Local authority data collection

It can be seen that the Colwyn CRT area has the most packages and Rural has the least. It is also interesting to see that the Llandudno and Coastal areas don't have the most packages but the average hours per package is higher than any other area, this is probably due to the average age of the population in those areas and the fact that they need more intensive support packages.

Denbighshire market overview

There were 585 people who received domiciliary care in Denbighshire during 2020-21. This number has increased over the last year.

Table 14: Demographic of people accessing domiciliary care in Denbighshire

Age group	Percentage of Provision
18-24	1%
25-64	19%
65-74	11%
75-84	24%
85+	45%

Source: Local authority data

Denbighshire does not have enough providers to give people a real choice or to give an element of competition in the market. Commissioners have unmet demand and are unable to provide domiciliary care for all requests. For example, at the end of March 2022 there were 116 people waiting for domiciliary care packages, of which 26 were receiving interim support. The Interim Support Team's function is to provide domiciliary care and support for a short period of time whilst care packages are secured through the provider sector. There are particular challenges in the south of the county where we have minimal independent provision. Our in-house team are only working in the south and their intervention often ends up being long term due to lack of alternative provision. Moreover, the re-ablement teams, both north and south, are finding they are picking up urgent care packages on a regular basis and this in turn has an impact on our ability to offer re-ablement services.

The range of care needs is wide and includes:

- frailty due to age related conditions
- physical disabilities
- learning disabilities, including autistic spectrum disorders
- sensory impairments
- chronic illness
- long term health conditions
- dementia
- mental health, including depression, anxiety
- substance abuse
- palliative care

We are working with Community Catalysts to ensure that Denbighshire residents are able to access the kind of care and support that suits them best. In addition Community Catalyst supports citizens who wish to, to provide care and support in a way that fits with their lifestyle.

Community Catalysts

Community Catalysts is a social enterprise working across the UK to try to make sure that people who need care and support to live their lives can get that help in ways, times and places that suit them, with real choice of attractive local options. They help people across the UK use their energies and talents to set up 'community micro-enterprises'. Community micro-enterprises are really small businesses or ventures or groups that offer help with care or health or wellbeing to local people in their area.

Community Catalysts has lots of experience and expertise and can offer people who want to set up a new care enterprise specialist advice and guidance, so they can do this safely and well.

In Denbighshire, Community Catalysts has been commissioned by the Council to use its expertise to help to tackle social care challenges.

Moving with Dignity / Right sized Care

For many years, it has been established practice across health and social care for people who need to be hoisted, or cared for in bed, to have a care package with two people to assist and carry out the care.

It is unknown where or how, this practice became established, but with innovations in moving and handling equipment and a move to a more person-centred care & support approach, this requirement is increasingly being questioned and challenged.

It has been estimated that at least 37% of Denbighshire citizens could be assisted by one carer (instead of two), with the additional benefits of maintenance of dignity and comfort together with the increased flexibility derived from the provision of only one carer. More specialist moving and handling equipment is being designed and manufactured to facilitate single handed care allowing our Citizens to have their care needs addressed with the minimum of support and intervention.

Denbighshire have been promoting this way of working across Health and Social care and training staff so that they become more familiar with specialist moving and handling equipment and so they are more confident about supporting our Citizens to have their Care needs addressed with the minimum of intervention.

The Moving with Dignity project incorporates promoting independence and appropriate handling techniques for care provision. Using kindness and a gentle, compassionate approach, it involves looking at the number of carers required to attend to a person's needs, when being lifted, transferred or repositioned using specific techniques and items of equipment.

During the last year 5 sessions were held with Occupational Therapists to refresh skills using bed management systems. As a result, the Nordic bed management system is now core stock and can be ordered directly from our Community Equipment Service (CESI) which has reduced the delay between the initial assessment and providing beds to citizens.

Formal training sessions were held with 22 care staff from our in-house Independence at Home team. Following on from the training, the team are now working towards ensuring that care packages for those being discharged from hospital are considered within the ethos of Moving with Dignity before the care is transferred to external domiciliary care providers.

A pilot project was implemented with one Domiciliary Care agency, whereby the Manager and Moving and Handling trainer received an awareness training session to discuss the ethos of Moving with Dignity, which they are now rolling out with their care team. The aim is that once all training has been completed, work will be carried out to review all double handed packages of care

Our Moving with Dignity project lead completed a training session with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health board (BCUHB) Moving and Handling trainers to discuss single handed care.

The newly created Adult Social Services Edge of Care Team fits with our strategic vision for a modern, more effective way of delivering social care support that strengthens individual and community resilience. The Edge of Care team is unique in that it is based within Adult Social Care Services and recruits, trains and deploys Volunteers. The Manager is a qualified Social Worker and Outcome focussed mentor. Two Edge of Care Coordinators support the Manager to deliver the project.

The Team has demonstrated how the project can positively impact on planned care pathways, supporting discharge from hospital for citizens, working closely with our Community Resource Teams in delivering a 'team around the individual' approach, reducing demand for traditional planned care. For example; we have volunteers providing respite to carers, with careful and considered matching of 'cared for and volunteer', the result has been an experience that is meaningful and enjoyable for both carer and cared for. We have examples of where citizens have remained on the 'edge' of planned and unplanned care for example Mental Health Services, Care Home placement and traditional domiciliary care, keeping citizens in the community

Flintshire market overview

With regard to the demographic of people accessing domiciliary care in Flintshire, the largest group are people aged 85 and over, see the table below.

Table 15: Demographic of people accessing domiciliary care in Flintshire

Age group	Percentage of provision
18 to 24	1%
25 to 64	17%
65 to 74	12%
75 to 84	27%
85 and over	43%

Source: Local authority data collection

Of those under the age of 65, a similar proportion of people receive support for a learning disability as a physical or sensory impairment.

As previously reported, the population changes over the next five years will have an impact on the sufficiency of provision. This increase number of people living in the community with dementia and complex needs may increase the demand for domiciliary care services, in particular 'double staffed packages of care'. This is something the authority needs to consider in order to continue to support individuals to live at home for longer.

Flintshire In-house Community Support Service provides care and support for adults who have an assessed need in their own homes. The service is split into three geographical localities and the service is delivered via a team of care staff who work across the whole of Flintshire. These three localities replicate social work and health teams locally and this aids in continuity and developing working relationships across different professions. The three localities are:

- Locality North East – Deeside area
- Locality South – Mold / Buckley area's
- Locality North West – Holywell / Flint area's

The Community Support Service adopts an ethos of re-ablement and supports people in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. The Community Support Service provides services to people over 18 years who have

been assessed as having a social care need living in Flintshire. The Community Support Service provide support for a range of health and care needs, including:

- frailty due to age related conditions
- physical disabilities
- Learning disabilities, including autistic spectrum disorders
- sensory impairments
- chronic illness
- long term health conditions
- dementia
- mental health, including depression, anxiety
- substance abuse
- palliative care

The Community Support Service support people via three different care and support models/approaches which vary depending on the individual and what matters to them.

Re-ablement - designed to support people to regain, improve and maintain their daily living skills and maximize their independence whilst continuing to live in their own home. This is a short term service which can be provided for up to six weeks. The service has close links with hospital discharge teams and plays an important role in contributing to a reduction in hospital admissions and readmissions and works closely with a range of professionals including Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, Physiotherapists and District Nurses. The service also plays an important role in working with people to achieve their own personal goals to aid integration back into their own environment at home and into their local community. The aim is to support people to maximize their independence as quickly as possible and ensure that if people need ongoing care and support this is at the appropriate level.

Living Well - provides flexible care and support for people living with dementia. The service is designed to allow independent living and aims to support people to stay active in their home and active in their community for as long as possible. The care and support is tailored around the individual. Care, support and activities are developed over time as the staff build up a relationship with the person and they understand what they need. This approach delivers positive outcomes and contributes to people living with dementia maintaining their independence for as long as possible.

People who have long-term complex care needs are supported to remain independent in their own home. This includes daily living support, helping to achieve identified goals, support with medication as well as end of life / palliative care as required. In supporting people with complex needs the service offers stability and reassurance, and can that can support people overcome a crisis as necessary.

In addition to Local Authority's in-house care provision, the Commissioners in Flintshire actively utilise 28 providers from the North Wales Domiciliary Care Framework. There are also a small number delivering supported living exclusively under an alternative framework.

Both independent sector and Local Authority services are currently delivering around 7500 hours of domiciliary care per week. Flintshire County Council in-house provision delivers approximately 12% of this market, but aims to increase service delivery in this area to support more people to live at home, in line with the Council Plan. These figures exclude the provision of Extra Care, from which the Local Authority delivers around 370 hours of care per week.

Wrexham market overview

The population of Wrexham is just over 135,000 according to the 2017 census. Over 45% (58,359) of that population are over the age of 45 years. Further 23% (31,700) of the population is over the age of 60 years. Those in fair health are 19,000 (14%), those in bad health are 6,500 (5%) and very bad health 1,800 (1%). Domiciliary care provision in Wrexham is provided through a patch-based model.

Of those there are a number who provide care services to those in need who are unpaid. These are broken down as follows: 8,900 provide 1 to 19 hours unpaid care a week; 2,200 provide 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week and 4,000 provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week. It is likely that over a five-year period all of these people will need to access services at some level.

Market stability

Regional challenges

A gap in services exists in relation to short home calls for support with medication. Neither health nor social care services provide calls only for medication, but older

people with memory problems do need this vital care (Regional Partnership Board, 2022).

The current economic situation with rising inflation and fuel costs, and wider cost of living pressures in early 2022 are creating instability for domiciliary care providers and their staff for example in-work poverty.

Decreasing budgets could present further challenges around the level of services which are able to be commissioned and provided. Across North Wales, providers have appreciated the support funding throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, an additional £1m for domiciliary care which has provided stability during the pandemic. There is concern over the impact the end of the financial support will have.

Isle of Anglesey market stability

Post pandemic, recruitment and retention of staff remains an issue with the staff turnover rate in Social Services having increased in 2021/22.

There is an increasing demand for services, but budgets along with inflationary pressures are struggling to keep up with this demand.

Gwynedd market stability

Gwynedd has recently begun to establish the new domiciliary care model and early indications are very positive with providers having more recruitment successes. The domiciliary care tender opening in early April 2022 will give commissioners the opportunity to establish the new model across the county, and hopefully achieve much more stability thereafter. It is hoped that it will be possible to recruit more staff, achieve more with the same staffing level, and achieve greater efficiency (less travel and less bureaucracy) which results in more time to care and better outcomes for people (through focus on what makes a difference to the individual and tailor the care appropriately), through the adoption of the new model. The intention in the new model is to maintain the 50:50 split between the internal and external sectors for provision. The inclusion of the new contract for the external providers means that we have the freedom to adjust this ratio over the life of the agreement. Frequent emergencies in domiciliary care where providers report that they are no longer able to provide due to staffing problems. As the new arrangements come into effect a transition period will be required including effective shadowing and training.

Conwy market stability

The Independent sector market has been unable to fulfil the county's domiciliary care requirements since the pandemic. Conwy currently (April 2022) has over 900 hours of un-brokered care that the market cannot supply (60+ packages). This has been consistent for over 12 months and is being met by in house and BCUHB provision. Discussions with providers suggest that this is purely down to staff / recruitment problems faced by the sector. Things are slowly improving but at a pace too slow to meet the rising demand.

Denbighshire market stability

Denbighshire's in house provision adopts an ethos of re-ablement and supports people in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, providing services to people over 18 years of age who have been assessed as having a social care need and living in Denbighshire.

Denbighshire's in-house provision consists of Re-ablement, Health and Social Care Workers and the Interim Support Team - all services are intended to be short term interventions.

The Interim Support Team's function is to provide domiciliary care and support for a short period of time whilst care packages are secured through the provider sector in the South of Denbighshire. Increasingly, all elements of the in-house provision are holding cases for longer due to the lack of domiciliary care available. Due to the low number of providers able to deliver care in the south of Denbighshire, there is a commitment to expand the in-house provision.

Across social care there have also been high levels of staff absence that are likely to be linked to high levels of stress and anxiety post the pandemic.

Commissioners are struggling to secure packages of care, particularly in the south of Denbighshire. The main reason for this is lack of available care staff. This is a long term problem which is worsening. Domiciliary care providers handed back around 600 hours of care packages in 2021 due to lack of available staff.

There is a good range of providers in Denbighshire, although not all on the framework actively bid for packages. The domiciliary care sector in the county has been severely affected by the pandemic. In particular, sourcing double handed care packages is a challenge, as is the lack of availability of care provision in the south of

the county and in rural areas. We are also aware that domiciliary care services in rural settings is more expensive – some research suggests up to 20% more, and the average hourly rate is up to 11% higher. Increasing costs of transport fuel is challenging for all providers

Denbighshire County Council are considering opportunities to develop enhanced domiciliary care provision for citizens with higher levels of care and support needs. The model would necessarily be flexible (rather than ‘time and task’), to support care staff to build relationships and person-centred working, gain enhanced skills through training and play a key role in care and support planning for citizens. Ultimately, the provision would have a clear outcomes focus, and success would be measured by those outcomes.

Denbighshire is hoping to conduct a pilot involving electric vehicles for provision of care during 2022.

Flintshire market stability

In Flintshire, the market is a mixed model with continued expansion of in-house domiciliary care. This is a priority for the Council to help rebalance the care sector. Independent care providers continue to work creatively with the local authority to ensure the numbers of people waiting for care at home are the lowest possible. However, during the last 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic, this has been challenging.

We now start to see creative solutions including the use of electric vehicles to support domiciliary care staff through the proposed WG scheme. They will be used to support domiciliary care staff who cannot drive by accessing WG scheme to prioritise driving tests for domiciliary care workers who are awaiting a test date. Flintshire is continuing the expansion of Micro-care to support individuals locally. The market remains challenging, but all stakeholders continue to work in partnership to overcome the well-known challenges currently faced across the UK.

In Flintshire, considering independent providers only, no provider holds more than 12% of the independent market share in the local area when considering delivered hours, with the average for a provider being 4.5%.

With regard to the balance of the market in Flintshire, the vast majority (12 out of the 18) are local providers either exclusively in Flintshire, or within Flintshire and

neighbouring authorities. Another 4 provider's work across the North Wales region, while they also have 2 national providers.

In Flintshire, there are some critical pressures and key issues faced by social services in the areas of workforce, commissioning and funding criteria. The local authority is looking at how to address some of these issues through the reviewing of social work roles, improving the career pathway in social care, and offering greater clarity on the criteria applied to particular funding streams.

There are other challenges that local, regional, and national work-streams are looking to address, such as recruitment with WeCare Wales and children's placements, however it is important to note that these still present as critical pressures for the delivery of social services in Flintshire.

As of January 2022 in Flintshire, areas of ongoing pressure include:

- double staffed care
- rural areas
- discharge from hospital
- hand-back packages from providers as a result of staffing challenges
- increased business costs – utility bills and insurance
- increased fuel costs, impacting on care staff themselves.

Need outweighs supply in Flintshire. Due to the challenging financial climate and need to encourage more people into the care industry, consideration is being given to other ways for care to be provided for example Micro-care.

There is a challenge of a deficit of care workers, those requiring care are struggling with a decreasing pool of care staff. Large care agencies have premises and overheads to pay for and investors/stakeholders to satisfy, so care per hour costs are higher.

Within older people's services, there is a diverse provider base, no reliance on one provider or sector. However, within learning disability and physical disability services, there is a small number of providers to choose from who are relied upon to meet the needs of the service.

There is a broad range of services available depending on what the individual would prefer such as traditional homecare care, Micro-care and Direct Payments.

Wrexham market stability

There are currently (April 2022) significant shortfalls in all areas of domiciliary care and wider health and social care market in Wrexham which was not seen in the April 2021 figures and is likely a result of wider, national workforce and COVID-19 recovery challenges.

Rotational and other respite solutions also present significant challenges. A lack of capacity to deliver regular and flexible respite and short breaks continues to burden unpaid carers who are already feeling increased demands from their caring role as a result of COVID-19 and other workforce challenges.

More rural areas of the county prove most difficult in achieving sustainable domiciliary care services. Since April 2021, microenterprise capacity has grown and Wrexham have approached English agencies to support to meet the demand but the sustainability of these approaches is not evaluated.

There is little flexibility in the current market (April 2022) due to significant workforce and COVID-19 recovery challenges across health and social care. Whilst there has been a 30% reduction in domiciliary care waiting list times since April 2021, it remains significantly high with any short to medium solutions yet to be evaluated and tested in terms of their longer term market stability. COVID-19 recovery funding and hardship funding supported much of this recovery during 2021-22 with longer term financial stability remaining a challenge.

Domiciliary care registration can also hamper commissioning and service delivery flexibility. RISCA requirements, while attempting to drive up quality, can prove a barrier to some organisations and staff when recruitment is already a challenge. In addition, as a border town, Wrexham does rely on providers from England in some areas. Providers are restricted in the numbers of people they can support outside of Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) registration which can be very lengthy.

Feedback from citizens and providers

While emergency care is being provided for older people who fall and are injured, a response service is needed for non-injured fallers and for out-of-hours domiciliary care. Currently, if an older person needs additional support due to an unexpected incident, such as their carer becoming unwell, they have no access to support (Regional Partnership Board, 2022)

“Independent domiciliary care providers told us they have managed to start care delivery within the 48 hours but it has been a struggle. The biggest challenges and delays are arranging care for people who have complex needs” (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2019a)

“Independent providers of domiciliary care told us about providing care for people who miss out on a period of re-ablement when there is no capacity in the re-ablement team. We found this is often because there is a waiting list for the service due to it being dominated by people being discharged from hospital with low level needs, requiring convalescence” (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2019a)

Feedback from the Regional Provider’s survey [February 2022] details the challenges faced by providers as:

- Recruitment of staff. The employment market is highly competitive and we must be able to offer a financial package to care workers, that is both competitive and worthy of the role.
- Retention of staff due to poor terms and conditions in the social care sector. The cost of fuel and the cost of living crisis is now beginning to be felt in the sector where providers are seeing more staff suffering in-work poverty.
- Staff leaving the sector due to poor working conditions and lack of respect for the work they do and the levels of responsibility involved. Staff feel undervalued and overworked.
- Retaining staff who are new to the sector who are not able to deal with the intensity of the job supporting people with conditions such as autism, people requiring personal care etc. Need better support for staff to meet the challenges of the role.

Providers also gave suggestions on ways to improve the sector and the quality of care, including:

- Enable flexibility in using commissioned care hours. Whilst appreciating budget restraints for all, it can be frustrating when trusted providers are not able to be flexible with hours etc. More time is spent justifying any variance, rather than being able to 'bank' these hours to achieve people’s outcomes and therefore improve quality. Sometimes flexibility is the best way when supporting someone (make the most of a particular mood or motivation).
- Development of true partnership working with providers.

- A level pay structure for all providers to stop the swapping from one to another for better rates.
- Recognition of the *true* costs of providing care services to enable providers to continue to provide quality services and attract / retain quality staff.
- More emphasis on using local providers instead of national companies with local offices.
- Shared resources between providers such as training of staff.

Other market stability factors

Consideration of market quality

Flintshire use *Progress for Providers* in care homes, a self-assessment tool for managers to use with their staff to check how they are doing in delivering personalised support for people living in care homes. 'Personalised Support' is a key aim of national policy and means tailoring support to the individual, and enabling them to have as much choice and control over their service and life as possible, rather than supporting everyone in the same way. The programme has been expanded to include domiciliary and extra care services in 2020/21.

In Denbighshire, commissioners have recognised the need to work with domiciliary care providers to embrace a more outcome focused approach. Further work will be done co-productively with providers in the future.

In Gwynedd, commissioners have worked with Health Board colleagues on 'Due Diligence' processes. All providers who apply to be part of the Council's new delivery model must meet certain requirements.

Impact of commissioning practices on the market

The Integrated Care Fund and Transformation Funding moving to the Regional Investment Fund's (RIF) five-year programme is welcomed, however we continue to work through the guidance and impact of the changes. Due to the value of this funding, it is critical that any changes in criteria are articulated with notice so local authorities and other partners can consider and plan services with this in mind.

Where there has been a need to commission directly with a provider, current procurement practice has often been a barrier to the need to act rapidly. Procurement processes have proved onerous and unattractive to certain providers,

particularly in the third sector, which then hinders the number of suppliers submitting tender applications.

The Contracts and Commissioning Teams in each Local Authority and the Health Board have facilitated regular meetings with residential care, domiciliary care and Supported Living providers. Whilst these meetings took place before the pandemic, their frequency increased. The support and networking became a vital resource for providers. The meetings were also attended by colleagues from the Environmental Health Team, Health and Safety Officers and BCUHB officers so partners could advise and support when needed

Alongside these meetings, a dedicated email address has been established where providers could pose COVID-19 related questions and queries where they could be responded to in a timely manner.

The team have also had daily phone contact with providers to collect data, enquire about PPE supplies, discuss any arising issues or just to be there to listen and support in this difficult time.

Denbighshire use Third Party Administered Support Budgets. This is where the money is transferred from the Local Authority directly to a third party who could be directly providing some of the person's care and support or providing a managed account service. The money is spent on whatever is agreed in the citizen's care and support plan to assist them in meeting their agreed outcomes. In this arrangement the third party holding the budget is responsible for paying providers or services and one off purchases and co-produce with practitioners.

Denbighshire will also continue to commission some long term managed care and support including domiciliary and residential care for those who need it.

Provision of service in the Welsh language

Information from the Population Needs Assessment (2022)2022 detailed that many care homes and domiciliary care providers find it difficult to follow through with the provision of a Welsh speaker. More needs to be done to attract Welsh speakers to the profession and to support staff to improve their Welsh. This needs to include opportunities for both complete beginners and those who need to gain confidence. Many organisations provide Welsh language training to their staff, either formally or informally. Examples included:

- Courses offered by the local council or health board.
- Lunchtime Welsh language groups.
- Welsh speaking staff delivering workshops to their non-Welsh speaking peers.

In the Provider Survey (February 2022) providers note that it is a challenge to recruit Welsh speakers within their setting, help and support to advertise/translate would be helpful moving forward for smaller companies.

Providers are actively trying to increase our use of the Welsh language, but difficult to sustain any learning when not using it frequently enough (on a personal level as well as for the organisation).

Flintshire note that as part of the Mwy Na Geiriau framework the Council ensures that service users and their families are in receipt of the Active Offer. Whilst this has been taken up for some social work assessments, individuals and their families are aware of the current shortage in care staff and we have not received requests for care to be delivered by Welsh speaking carers. They are however, very conscious of this and throughout the recent pandemic have observed an increase in the numbers of staff who are learning Welsh and those who are re-kindling previous Welsh language skills which may not have been used for many years. The Council works in partnership with our local Further Education Institutions to provide Welsh Language courses at all levels to meet individual's needs.

Denbighshire ensures residents receive the Active Offer whenever they contact the local authority for information, advice or support. In the provider network there is a general lack of capacity and lack of available services with Welsh speakers is an issue for them. Useful tools such as Welsh language symbols on files are used as timely reminders to staff. However, the recruitment crisis affects both Welsh and English speakers currently. There has been discussion about placing recruitment adverts in local Welsh language publications, such as Y Bedol.

The Gwynedd position in terms of Welsh speaking staff is highlighted in the table below.

Gwynedd has a significant Welsh speaking domiciliary care workforce, a significant proportion of whom are fluent Welsh speakers.

Gwynedd has invested heavily in the promotion and development of Welsh language skills amongst care staff and in recruiting care staff who are able to speak Welsh or

are willing to improve their Welsh language skills. In terms of care tasks spoke Welsh skills are more important in communicating with citizens and giving care in their language of choice.

Table 16: Welsh Speaking Care Staff in Gwynedd domiciliary care provision (April 2020)

Position	% of registered who are 'fluent' in Welsh	% of registered who have 'some' Welsh language skills	% of registered with no Welsh language skills
Domiciliary Care Workers	51.2	23.0	9.8
Domiciliary Care Managers	56.4	17.9	12.8

Source: Gwynedd Council data collection

Sustainability of provision

Flintshire County Council has recently employed a Planning and Development Officer to support the independent adult social care sector through the recent COVID-19 pandemic, and to become confident and resilient to meet the support needs of older people in Flintshire into the future. The officer will work closely with the adult social care sector to aid sustainability and recovery following the pandemic. This will include supporting with sustainability plans and recruitment drives in house and across the sector.

People often have little choice in reality. Getting any care is a challenge, let alone having a choice. People can choose to receive Direct Payments to arrange their own care, but it is not easy to find people who can offer care.

Risks to market stability

Both in-house and independent care providers continue to have significant staff vacancies as existing carers vacate the care sector for a variety of well-rehearsed reasons. This is of concern with regard to market stability, and particularly the ability to deliver care particularly to harder to reach areas.

Whilst WG have made provision for the delivery of the Real Living Wage to direct care workers, this will have an impact on pay compression and ability to recruit /

provide career progression to more senior roles. This may have an impact on market stability as the next financial year unfolds.

Business costs, outside of wages are also increasing with inflation escalating and fuel costs in particular increasing significantly. For domiciliary care this has a significant impact on the attractiveness of the role and the financial viability of existing business models.

A consultation exercise with providers [in-house and external] run by Flintshire identified the following market Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. These themes are shared across the region.

Strengths

- Good Brokerage relationships with providers and excellent communication between the team and providers.
- Support from provider meeting with virtual meetings and senior leadership representation.
- Commissioners are on the end of the phone for support and advice
- Providers work together and not in conflict or competition.
- Additional meetings for Responsible Individuals are positive and helpfully in getting support from peers
- Open working together – developing a support network
- Open book on finances and having honest conversations enables informed decision making
- Commissioners understand “how it is on the ground”

Weaknesses

- Administration of responding to call, for example, if the carer is late
- Still stuck in task and time
- Unemployment in the general economy is low which creates competition for staff, such as with seasonal retail jobs
- Expectations of citizens can be a challenge for tasks over and above the care plan
- Losing staff to other economic sectors, to the health board and to other roles within the social care sector such as care homes / Supported Living
- Carers who are not I.T. savvy
- Providers need better support from Care Inspectorate Wales

- Salaries we can offer to staff are not competitive enough for the work involved in domiciliary care

Opportunities

- Social care is on the political agenda – decision makers cannot ignore social care any more
- Flexibility within time and task time bands
- Engagement with commissioners and the network of framework providers could be built on
- Providers need to engage with potential employees face to face and show them what the work is
- Greater understanding of the cost of running a domiciliary care agency – looking at the “Unfair to Care” document
- Realistic assessment of the responsibilities of the caring role in comparison with other roles for example police officer
- Need to hear more from the citizens and the benefits that this support gives
- Multi-channel advertising of roles not just online, for example, radio, buses, billboards.
- Opportunity for more joint work with health to ensure people in hospital have access to therapists to support discharge.

Threats

- Young people not attracted by domiciliary care or care in general
- Increasing older workforce and no succession planning
- Terms and Conditions in the sector are poor for the type of work and responsibilities involved
- Care not valued or seen as important in comparison to other sectors, for example, emergency service and health
- The registration and qualification frameworks and requirements are putting carer’s off, particularly those will literacy and numeracy challenges
- The care sector is close to collapsing
- The Health sector does not recognise the importance of domiciliary care
- The role of carers is challenging and they are being asked to undertake more complex tasks – need to develop a stronger relationship with district nursing
- Better terms and conditions in local authority care and Health Board roles leading to destabilisation
- State Benefit restrictions disadvantage care workers and creates in work poverty

Preventative services

A long term priority is to continue to support people to regain their independence and reduce reliance on the statutory care sector. This will be done by providing effective access to the social prescribing / third sector services through the Single Point of Access (SPOA) as well as effective management of admissions to set up / step down beds.

Some local examples of community preventative approaches are:

- Age Friendly Communities - The Ageing Well in Flintshire Action Plan identifies what needs to be done and by whom, to make growing older in Flintshire a good place to be.
- A short term project to establish proof of concept for social prescribing is also being run by Flintshire Local Voluntary Centre (FLVC) on behalf of the Health Board.
- Flintshire Social Services and BCUHB commission a carer respite service for carers. This service provides a sitting and domiciliary care service within Flintshire, which is accessed via Carers Trust North Wales Crossroads Care Services. The respite is currently available to those that have high demanding caring roles, including carers of people living with dementia. This service is offered for a 12-week period followed by signposting to SPOA to explore ongoing respite options.
- Community Navigators – Social Prescribing in Denbighshire employed by The British Red Cross and Age Connects. The Community Navigators are part of the four Community Resource Teams. They use ‘Talking Points’ in Denbighshire libraries as a place to meet people, although this was not possible during the COVID-19 pandemic and a lot of support was provided via telephone at that time. They are a source of current, accurate and timely information about a range of support that is available in the community. They are key in connecting people, reducing social isolation and loneliness. During 2020-21, the Community Navigators assisted 2,424 Denbighshire residents.

Denbighshire seek to commission services from providers who embrace:

- Having meaningful conversations with people
- Connecting people with what matters to them
- Working with people to take control of their lives
- Building on the strengths and abilities of people to identify individual solutions

Denbighshire's focus is on earlier intervention, increasing preventative services within the community and helping people maintain their independence. Our mission is to place people at the heart of decisions about the type of community support services they access. For many people, this will mean that they may be given a support budget to manage their own care and support to achieve agreed outcomes. This could be in the form of a Direct Payment, a Third Party Managed Support Budget or a Local Authority Managed Support Budget for the individual. Support budgets will operate under a less restrictive legislative framework, and one that supports innovation. In Denbighshire the following work is taking place.

- Men's Sheds – The national UK Men's Sheds Association is a place for men where they can share the tools and resources they need to work on projects of their own choosing at their own pace and in a safe, friendly and inclusive venue. They are places of skill-sharing and informal learning, of individual pursuits and community projects, of purpose, achievement and social interaction. A local Men's Shed's operates in Denbigh.
- Carers Trust North Wales Crossroads Care Services offer 'Gwalia Care' which takes over the roles of the unpaid carer so they are able to take some time out. This can be on a regular or ad hoc basis and is chargeable.
- Age Connects North East Wales (ACNEW) – ACNEW are part of the national Age Connects Cymru programmes, a social enterprise providing support for people aged 50+. Locally, the service provides short-term housing related support, toe nail cutting, a cleaning and shopping service and social activities.
- Education and Learning – Many local projects are referring people to the University of the Third Age (U3A). U3A provide opportunities for retirees and semi-retired people to come together and learn, not for qualifications, but for 'own reward'.
- DEWIS - Dewis Cymru is a website that aims to help people with well-being, whether that is their own well-being or the well-being of a family member or friend. The website contains information that can help people think about what matters to them and has information on services that can be accessed for support. Organisations across Wales can upload their own information to the site
- Community Agent's – at Wrexham the service is commissioned from and managed by Community Councils. Community Agents can tap into third sector services around the county to support people in their community. GP surgeries are linking people in to the Community Agents.

Wrexham County Borough Council supports the following third sector services.

- NEWCIS (North East Wales Carers Information Service) Carers information, advice, support and respite services
- Alzheimer's support: The main theme within the Welsh Government Dementia Action Plan is to enable people living with dementia (including young-onset dementia) to maintain their independence and remain at home where possible, avoiding unnecessary admissions to hospital or residential care and delays when someone is due to be discharged from care or hospital.
- Community Catalyst: Step up and support of an online directory of social care enterprises in Wrexham to allow easier access to information for citizens and professionals. They provide 6 days' worth of support to the development of third sector organisations interested in developing domiciliary care provision.
- Vision support: The purpose of the service is to enable adults who are blind or visually impaired to carry out their daily activities with confidence, through the provision of professional training in new and/or adaptive independent living skills, as well as to register individuals who have been assessed as having sight loss, or severe sight loss as recommended, by a consultant Ophthalmologist through the Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) process. The provider holds a small number of specialist pieces of equipment that can be loaned out to individuals in order to support them with their visual impairment.
- Deaf Support Network: The purpose of this service is to provide practical support, information and advice to children and adults who are deaf (member of the Cultural Deaf Community who use British Sign Language as their first language), living with hearing loss or who are Deaf Blind (dual sensory loss). As well as providing direct support, the provider will signpost individuals to other services who may be able to support that individual. The provider will hold a small number of specialist pieces of equipment that can be loaned out to individuals in order to support them with their communication/ hearing loss.
- Delta (Telecare): Telecare is a service that can help to keep you safe at home and enable assistance to be summoned in the event of an emergency. Telecare can help you to live independently in your home, by providing the peace of mind that someone can be automatically alerted if you need assistance or in the event of an emergency situation.
- British Red Cross: A Third Sector Link Worker has been commissioned to work with the Wrexham's SPOA to ensure that information on third sector provision is readily accessible to relevant professionals. The worker supports Wrexham

citizens to access non-statutory forms of support, including the provision of information, advice and assistance, to enable them to maintain their independence, and prevent escalation of need

- Hafal, part of Adferiad Recovery (partnership with housing): Supported Accommodation and floating support for those with Mental Health conditions
- Recovery Service: Supported Accommodation and floating support for those with Mental Health conditions.
- Stepping Stones: Individual specialist counselling, support and group work for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, including counselling support for individual pre-trial, during trial and post-trial. This specialised area of counselling is intended to meet the person's needs, with a commitment to supporting individuals for as long as necessary, recognising that many people are very vulnerable and may at times self-harm or have suicidal feelings.

Other considerations affecting the market

Social value

The North Wales Population Needs Assessment 2022 notes “Co-production and social value: Delivering services for older people must include the views of the population. Older people should have a voice in shaping services that they may access. The Wales Cooperative Centre has published a paper outlining how services, such as domiciliary care, can be commissioned using an outcomes based approach for provision, which focuses on well-being. as well as any immediate need” (Regional Partnership Board, 2022).

Flintshire has moved towards Micro-care delivery models and has a pilot programme as part of the ongoing Social Services offer. To meet the growing demand for care, the Micro-care pilot project has been established to expand both the supply of care in and the choices available for people across Flintshire. Micro-care enterprises are small businesses ranging from sole traders up to businesses employing 5 people who offer flexible and personalised care and support services to vulnerable people, tailored to their individual's needs. The aim is to encourage people to become Micro-carers who are either:

- Interested in providing social care services to older people but may have no experience
- Currently working in the care sector but interested in being their own boss

- Actively supporting people in their local communities
- Want to do something that support others and makes a difference

The Micro-care team work with individuals to:

- Support them to develop their business or idea
- Provide information on training, funding and other available support and resources
- Support individuals to develop and deliver a quality service in line with current WG legislation and regulations
- Providing links to a network of other Micro-care providers for mutual support

As of February 2022, there were 27 Micro-carers trading in Flintshire. The Flintshire Micro-Care Team have also created Micro-care web pages for use by both micro-carers and people looking for Micro-carers. It provides key information for people considering working as a Micro-carer. For the public it also has explanations about Micro-care and lists Micro-carers and their contact details. This will support our aim to develop ongoing sustainability in the project. The website is located at www.careatflintshire.co.uk This programme is now moving out of the 'pilot' phase and incorporated in to Flintshire's offer.

Also in Flintshire the recruitment of volunteers began at the start of April 2021 initiated by colleagues in FLVC. The Flintshire Social Care Workforce Development Team, supported by FLVC, provided basic training to volunteers, relating to safeguarding, food hygiene, health and safety, consent, data protection, dignity, principles of care and confidentiality. By the end of April 2020, following the training and required Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, a group of 64 volunteers were available for deployment to volunteering opportunities across the county.

Flintshire benefits from a strong third sector presence and networks and a positive relationship between the Council and FLVC. The Wellbeing Team in FLVC and AVOW (Association of Voluntary Organisations Wrexham) supports the third sector and statutory partners in a number of ways:

- Promoting third sector organisations, services and activities to statutory partners
- Representing the third sector at strategic planning and partnership groups
- Engaging the third sector in consultations and engagement about health and social services
- Promoting partnership working within the third sector and across sectors

- Signposting to or providing business support and funding
- Providing training to organisations to improve their capacity and effectiveness
- Explaining the complexities of commissioning and procurement
- Helping keep services up to date with the latest evidence base, whilst guiding them through the changes in NHS and local authority structures.
- Helping the start-up of new services or groups
- Supporting the third sector in Flintshire and Wrexham to access FLVC and AVOW's services

Community Catalyst are commissioned as a project through the Community Transformation WG Fund in Wrexham. The project's aim is to support the development of micro-enterprises to support the domiciliary care offer in Wrexham. The enterprises are not to replace the offer from domiciliary care agencies, rather to support stability and allow choice and control for citizens. It supports the direct payment options for citizens. There are currently 37 microenterprises that have completed the 'Doing it Right' standards and actively on Wrexham's register of providers.

Gwynedd notes that there is 44% of domiciliary care being provided internally today. There are several small independent companies that are local to Gwynedd and a few larger companies. The Gwynedd market does not have many co-operatives and social enterprises, but they are developing. There are third sector providers within the county but not a consistent presence as the local authority would like it be in each part of Gwynedd. Commissioners find it very difficult to obtain provision in rural areas often. Some areas have a strong informal community network already in place.

Gwynedd is proposing to develop Social Enterprises through community hubs that focus on the elements of well-being and also to develop a specialist equipment assessment provision - smart house. Gwynedd has currently 15 Third Sector Providers operating in Gwynedd.

As explained above in Gwynedd people have little choice of domiciliary care provision. Securing care is a challenge, let alone having a choice. People can choose to arrange their own care via Direct Payments, but it is not easy to find people who can offer care. A project with 'Community Catalysts' has started, to encourage people to set up a small company to provide care, and hopefully this will improve the situation.

Direct payments

Local authorities promote Direct Payment through highlighting a person centred service that reflects voice, choice and control by empowering individuals to be as independent as possible in their own local community.

Some benefits of choosing Direct Payments are:

- Individuals choose who delivers their care and support
- Individuals choose when their care is delivered to suit their everyday life
- Direct payments is flexible to meet individual requirements

Isle of Anglesey Council is dedicated to developing the service by consulting regularly with direct payments experts (citizens) and to make sure that the service is fit for purpose.

Our vision and our way of implementing change has resulted in the increase in service take up and its success resulting in 243 individuals taking control of their care package and choosing to receive support through direct payments on the island compared to 35 individuals in 2015.

Denbighshire will continue to develop and utilise Direct Payments, where individuals, or their chosen responsible person, receive money directly from the Council to fund their agreed care and support needs in their chosen way. This might be through recruitment of a Personal Assistant or by paying for services of their chosen agency or organisation.

At present there are not enough providers to give people a choice or to give an element of competition. Community Catalysts are helping small local providers (Micro providers) launch services but few are willing to provide personal care, which is where the biggest gap is. Whilst there may be a reduction in the care and support needed by individuals because of earlier interventions and preventative work, we anticipate growing numbers of people with more complex needs such as dementia. Denbighshire has recruited for two Independent Living Advisers (ILA) posts. Part of their role will be to join things up and offer consistent and helpful advice to families for example about Direct Payments, Micro providers and other support available for citizens and carers.

In Flintshire Direct Payments are an important mechanism by which people can exercise choice, voice and control to decide how to achieve their needs for care and

support and achieve their personal outcomes. In Flintshire the approach focuses on strengths and outcomes, which they aim to enable citizens to retain autonomy over their life, support, self-determination and autonomy and efficient use of resources.

In recent years the Flintshire Direct Payments Support Services has been completely redesigned and now provides a far more holistic service benefitting both Flintshire citizens, social services and third sector partners. Some of the key benefits of the service are:

- Far greater control over the service and how it meets the department's priorities.
- Service works collaboratively with social work teams to embed person-centered practices in line with the SSWB (Wales) 2014 Act
- Shared systems, improved communication, and better access to the service.
- Outcomes focused Referral process centres on what is to be achieved and supports joint working with the individual to own the outcome and develop bespoke solutions.
- Better placed to work in partnership with third sector organisations.
- Autonomy to develop, test and imbed innovation in line with the departments ambition and priorities.
- Far more holistic approach, centred on the needs of citizens in the first instance, but also practitioners, communities, partners etc.
- Consideration for the Personal Assistant market in terms of standards, quality, training and opportunities for progression.
- Support that is proportionate. Importantly, we don't want to over support people, but enable them to manage their own arrangements.

During Quarter 2 (July to Sept) of 2021/22, 498 people received a Direct Payment in Flintshire. This represents the highest number of recipients per head of population of any Welsh Local Authority. Direct Payments currently make up 39% of home based services.

Table 17: Flintshire direct payments by category Q2 2021/22

Service category	Number of direct payments
Learning disabilities	169
Physical / sensory impairment	104
Children with disabilities	78
Older people	65
Children's services	49
Mental health	24
Vulnerable adults	9
Total	498

Source: Local authority data collection

Working in partnership with a small local film company (Follow Films) Flintshire Direct Payments recipients have been supported to tell their unique stories of their lives and how Direct Payments have contributed towards them achieving positive outcomes and improved life experiences. The impact of these films and the feedback received has been significant and the films are now being utilised by local authorities and institutions far and wide.

Workforce

As outlined in The North Wales Social Care and Community Health Workforce Strategy, the sector is under significant pressure as a result of:

- Changes to legislation as a result of the Regulation & Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA)
- A new qualification framework
- Competitive pay structures with other sectors
- Competition from other sectors

There is an urgent priority around ensuring a sufficient workforce is in place for the delivery of social services and social care functions. The recruitment and retention of Social Workers, Occupational Therapists and direct care workers has become a particular challenge across North Wales.

The North Wales Social Care and Community Health Workforce is in a time of unprecedented change whereby they are required to deliver services differently with a focus on prevention, protection, intervention, partnership and integrated working,

coproduction and empowerment; requiring a different emphasis on workforce skills and training.

Much has been written on the issues surrounding recruitment and selection in the Domiciliary Care workforce. In March 2016, WG published a research report on the 'Factors that affect the recruitment and retention of domiciliary care workers and the extent to which these factors impact upon the quality of domiciliary care' (Atkinson, Crozier and Lewis, 2016). The research, undertaken by Manchester Metropolitan University sought to identify factors that influence whether people choose to 'become and remain working as domiciliary care workers'.

There are approximately 17,000 domiciliary care staff employed by commissioned care providers in Wales (Social Care Wales, 2018a). WG's consultation in to the Domiciliary Workforce (Welsh Government, 2016) recommends that those working in the sector are recognised as the skilled professionals they are. The negative image of the sector must be challenged to encourage people to join the social care workforce.

The key factors highlighted by this consultation included:

- Low wages
- Work pressures
- Unsociable hours
- Poor terms and conditions
- 'Zero hours' or 'non-guaranteed hours' contracts deterring people from joining the sector, as there were no guaranteed hours
- Some call times not enough to address the needs of the individual
- Lack of training and career development opportunities
- Seen as a low status job compared to healthcare

Local Authorities have extended their Care First and other Employee Assistance Programmes to the external [non local authority] workforce. Care First/Employ Assistance Programmes provide confidential, impartial advice and support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, online or via the free-phone telephone number. The service is free for all employees to access whenever they need it.

The care provided by domiciliary carers for those with mental health needs could be improved by ensuring staff are encouraged to work in the field where they have most talent. Those working with people living with dementia require specialist training and

extra time to complete tasks. There is a lack of dementia trained care workers, which should be addressed by the local authorities. Commissioners are keen to ensure the agencies they employ to provide dementia care are fulfilling their obligations and following care plans carefully. The profile of the profession needs to be raised to attract a high calibre of staff. (Regional Partnership Board, 2022).

Gwynedd note that there is the potential to adapt roles / tasks within their domiciliary care plans but need support from providers to implement. Staffing is a major issue at present for both domiciliary care providers and care homes.

In Flintshire, the local authority has also worked with Mind in North East Wales to provide extra support for social care workers. Information, talking therapies and activities designed to support wellbeing during this difficult time is available.

Providers in Flintshire have reported that the All Wales Jobs Fair is difficult to use and the IT is clunky particularly if you have no digital support.

Flintshire has worked in collaboration with citizens to design and implement a unique platform that supports both Direct Payments employers and Personal Assistants. The [Flintshire PA Portal](#) enables Direct Payments employers to search for available Personal Assistants in their area autonomously and for Personal Assistants to promote themselves and their availability to work. Personal Assistants complete a profile describing themselves, their experience, availability etc. and prospective direct payments employers can search the data base and engage with people they feel may be able to help meet their needs and/or achieve personal well-being outcomes. Recently they have added a vacancy page that enables citizens to post their requirements i.e. needs to be met/outcomes to be achieved, making the system a two-way process.

The Flintshire direct payments scheme has consciously set out to change the support available for this significant, but sometimes disassociated workforce. Some of the initiatives to date are:

- Personal Assistant Coordinator engaging with the workforce. Pastoral support for Personal Assistant's working in complex/isolated positions being built into the role.
- Personal Assistant Code of Conduct developed and implemented. This has helped them understand their role, where they fit in and what the expectations of them are.

- Flintshire Personal Assistant Induction Certificate developed around 7 core modules and designed specifically around the PA role. Since its introduction 11 Personal Assistants have completed the certificate and a further 35 are working towards the award. For those enrolled on the scheme there are a further 50 training modules that they are able to access in their own time. This is the first initiative of its kind and the local authority are in discussions with Social Care Wales regarding the potential for a National approach.
- Personal Assistant Portal developed to aid recruitment for Direct Payments employers and to promote work opportunities for prospective PA's.

The recruitment of care and support staff, has historically been problematic due to the small workforce pool, lack of awareness or recognition of the roles and the risk of destabilising the private market. However, following a review of recruitment and the launch of new initiatives such as, WeCare campaign and the values based recruitment work, we have seen an increase in the number of new and returning candidates to the profession.

5. Residential services (children)

This chapter focuses on residential care services for children and young people. For the purpose of this assessment, the chapter includes those aged between 0 to 18 as well as those who are eligible for services until they are 25 years of age, such as disabled people and care leavers.

Residential services include:

- Care Homes (Children) – care in a home with paid staff
- Secure Accommodation – a secure safe place
- Residential Family Services – accommodation where parents and children stay together to be assessed / receive care

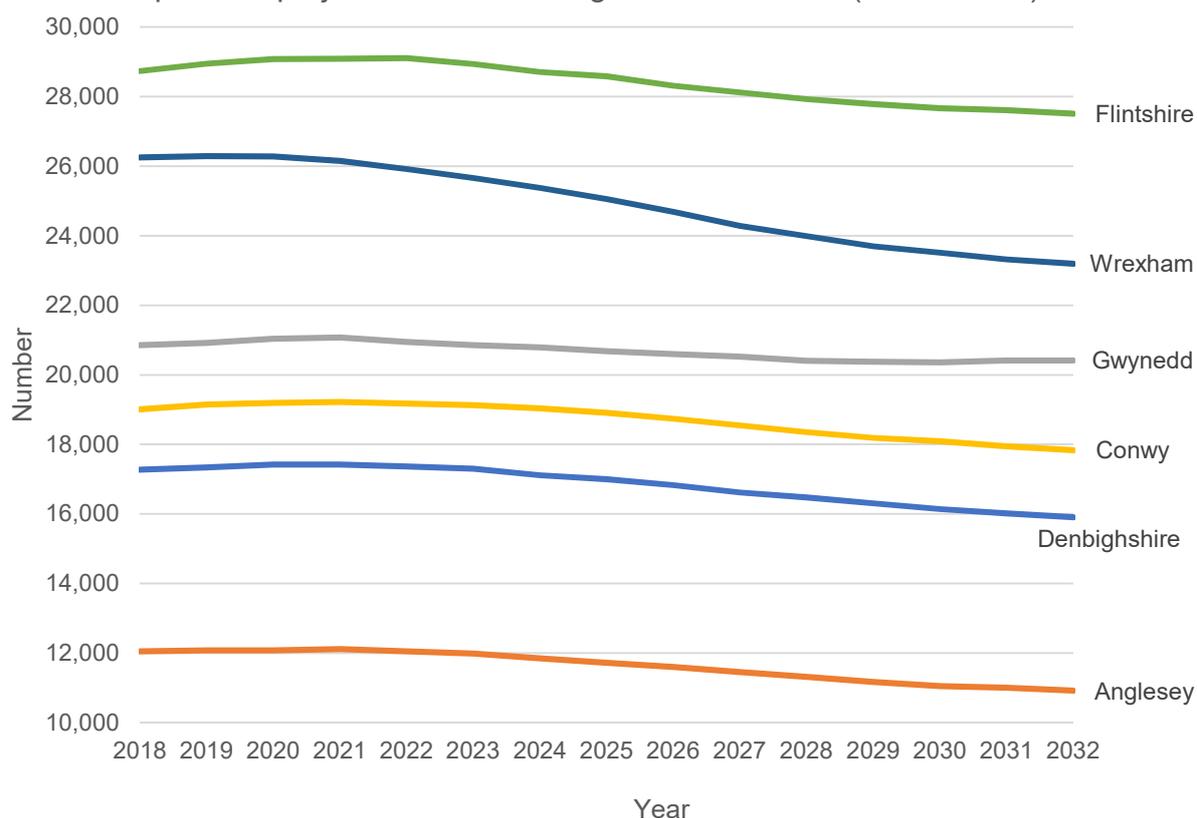
There are separate chapters about fostering and adoption services.

Population overview

The number of children is predicted to decrease

In 2020, there were around 123,700 children aged 0 to 15 in North Wales (Welsh Government, 2021b). There has been little change in the number of children between 2015 and 2020 across North Wales or in each county. The number of children is projected to fall in North Wales by 7% over the next 15 years (Welsh Government, 2020). The level for each local authority varies from a 2% decrease for Gwynedd, to 12% in Wrexham as shown in the chart below. This is a nationwide trend, with numbers also projected to fall by 5% in Wales as a whole.

Chart 1: Population projections, children aged 15 and under (2018 based)



Source: 2018-based local authority population projections for Wales (principal projection), Welsh Government

The number of children receiving care and support has increased

In 2020, there were almost 2,900 children receiving care and support across North Wales. This is 2,300 children for each 100,000 children in the population, which is slightly lower than the rate for Wales as a whole with 2,550 children in need for each 100,000 children in the population. The numbers vary across North Wales and over time with no clear trend.

In 2018-19, there were 575 children on the child protection register in North Wales. Although the numbers vary year to year for each local authority, overall for North Wales, the level has remained similar, with a small decrease of 3% (15 children). Due to the small numbers involved it is not possible to identify clear trends as, for example, a dramatic change from one year to the next may be due to one family moving to or from an area.

The number of looked after children is not expected to continue to increase

Although the overall figures for all looked after children have shown a steady increase year-on-year to date, this is not expected to continue in the future (Regional Partnership Board, 2019).

Children who are care experienced were more vulnerable to the pandemic

The Rapid Review of the Population Needs Assessment (Regional Partnership Board, 2020) highlighted the impact of the pandemic on care experienced children which included isolation and loneliness, and disruptions in access to services. In North Wales, there was an initial dip in child protection referrals but then the rate of referrals returned to expected levels. An increased level of monitoring visits took place to households where there were children on the child protection register – weekly visits instead of the 10-day timescale.

There is an increase in newly accommodated looked after children and young people

In 2021 there were 1,470 local children and young people looked-after by North Wales local authorities, which is similar to the national picture across the whole of Wales. The number of children looked after in North Wales has increased by 350 during the time frame shown in the table below. North Wales has a lower number of children looked after per 100,000 population than the rest of Wales, however there are significant variations across the region, from 800 in Flintshire to 1,300 in Wrexham. It is important to note that the number is currently fluctuating rapidly with a significant increase in newly accommodated young people.

Table 18: Number and rate per 100,000 of children looked after (under 18) by local authority, 2017 and 2021

Local council	2017 No	2017 Rate	2021 No	2021 Rate	Change No
Anglesey	140	1,039	160	1,214	20
Gwynedd	220	927	280	1,210	65
Conwy	180	829	215	1,015	35
Denbighshire	160	825	180	923	20
Flintshire	210	654	255	795	45
Wrexham	215	736	375	1,304	160
North Wales	1,120	805	1,470	1,063	350
Wales	5,960	949	7,265	1,153	1,305

Source: StatsWales

Market overview

Despite a shared commitment to prevention and early intervention, there will always be a small proportion of looked after children who need residential placements.

Depending on care needs this may be in a:

- Residential Care Homes with paid care staff
- Secure Accommodation Unit
- Residential Family Unit

The updated Market Position Statement (Regional Partnership Board, 2019) provided a breakdown of residential care provision in North Wales. As at 31st March 2020, there were 70 North Wales children living in a care home. The total number of children living in a children's home increased by 133% in North Wales between 2016 (30 children) and 2020 (70 children). The table below shows that figure has more than doubled to 158 between 2020 and 2021.

Table 19: Snapshot of number of young people in residential placements at 31 Mar 2021

County	Residential
Anglesey	10
Gwynedd	21
Conwy	37
Denbighshire	20
Flintshire	39
Wrexham	31
North Wales	158

Source: Local authority data collection

Notes: Residential includes children’s homes, family residential services, residential school placements

Market share

There were 17 independent providers of residential care for children, operating 42 settings and providing 180 registered places (‘beds’) across North Wales.

Due to the limited residential in house provision in the region, authorities have to pay external organisers known as ‘providers’. You can find information on work to increase residential in house capacity within the Children’s Transformation Programme section.

Secure accommodation

There is no secure accommodation provision in North Wales. There is a national purpose built secure children’s home in South Wales. Hillside can accommodate up to 18 children and young people of either gender between the ages of 12 to 17 years.

The children placed in secure accommodation are done so by order of a court and numbers are very low, between 0 to 2 per authority each year with no clear trend. There are no plans to extend this provision in North Wales.

Step down provision from secure accommodation and secure welfare placements are discussed in the [emergency accommodation](#) section.

Market sufficiency and stability

Placement within county or nearby is known to be important for children and young people to maintain their established positive social networks both with family (parents, siblings and others) and school – which helps them to develop their identity and emotional maturity (NICE, 2021).

The table below shows that Conwy and Gwynedd have the highest proportion of placements outside of North Wales. Over half of all residential placements across the region are placed outside of North Wales.

Table 20 Number of residential out of county placements

County	Total placements	Placements outside North Wales	% of placements outside North Wales
Anglesey	16	5	31%
Gwynedd	16	10	63%
Conwy	16	12	75%
Denbighshire	10	5	50%
Flintshire	31	17	55%
Wrexham	18	8	44%
North Wales	107	57	53%

Source: Market Position Statement (Regional Partnership Board, 2019)

There is a shortage of local residential providers

In August 2020, ADSS Cymru published a report which examined the case for rebalancing social care provision in Children’s Services (ADSS Cymru, 2020). The report identified a significant imbalance of power in the children’s residential care market, which is affecting placements and choice, the ability to make the best match to a child’s needs, the workload, and the outcomes for children. Without rebalancing, there will be a continued reliance on private providers with, in some cases, high cost, and questionable value for money, greater instability for children and poor outcomes. The aim of any rebalancing must be to develop stable, resilient markets, which offer options and choice, quality care, fewer placement breakdowns, and good outcomes for children.

An increasing demand for residential placements and a lack of supply in local residential providers has resulted in a 'providers market'. Providers are able to be more selective of the young people they accept, which may result in those with higher levels of complex needs and behavioural challenges being more difficult to place. This may be due to the skill/expertise of the provider, a concern about how behaviour might impact other residents and the local community, and worries that all of this might impact upon the outcomes of the service.

Alongside the financial pressure, there is also a pressure on staff time. In the event of a bed becoming available, a number of local services may be seeking to secure it, resulting in competition.

This high demand puts pressure on local authority finances, with providers able to dictate the cost of the provision. There is a risk that expenditure on out of county placements increases as placement costs increase in a demand led market.

North Wales is currently reliant on the independent sector for children's residential care provision. The Children's Transformation Programme and Integrated Care Funding has been used to increase in house provision and fund preventative activity. Local authorities continue to explore opportunities to facilitate a different approach to help reduce the reliance on out of county placements which lead to unsustainable financial pressures for social services and education.

There is a shortage of specialist provision for children and young people with complex behavioural and emotional needs

In 2019 over half of children placed in residential care were receiving care primarily due to emotional and behavioural needs and two thirds of those children were aged between 13 to 16 years old (Regional Partnership Board, 2019).

There is a significant shortage of specialist placements for young people with significant emotional and behavioural needs in North Wales. Children are often placed in England, away from their families. There is limited provision in England. Social workers struggle to place children with severe needs as providers tend to reserve places to try to place a child with less severe needs.

Some children may have received their education through the Welsh language and therefore have difficulty coping in an English medium school and need a tutor or assistant to provide additional support.

Young people in crisis often attend Accident and Emergency and stay in hospital settings in an emergency situation.

There is a shortage of emergency accommodation

Social services across the UK are facing increased pressures to find placements in emergencies. Locally, we do have situations where no placement can be sourced for a child. This necessitates the development of a holding position to provide accommodation and support until a placement can be found. These situations may arise from difficulties in placing young people following the breakdown of relationships at home, transfer of children where the police have used their powers of protection to remove children and a lack of secure beds for young people with high level needs and welfare risks.

It is important to emphasise that these arrangements are used as a last resort in emergency situations, due to exceptional circumstances and for a short period until a regulated provision can be sourced. Safeguards around unregulated placements include the need for senior manager approval, notification to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as our regulator, a care and support plan, completion of social work visits, involvement of Independent Reviewing Officers and supervision of social workers to look at arrangements / move on plans.

The arrangements that local authorities have to put in place in emergencies can amount to unregulated placements. Under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 it is an offence for a person to provide a regulated service without being registered in respect of that service.

Local market overview

The Market Position Statement 2021 appraised the market and set out what is happening, residential services needed for children in the region and aspirations for future providers.

- The number of children who live in a children's home has increased, some of these children are able to live in a foster placement but there are currently not enough foster carers with the right skills to support them.
- Some of our children who live in a children's home live outside of the local authority boundary despite sufficient in-area capacity.

What we don't need:

- We do not encourage expansion in North Wales by independent providers of residential care for children whose services are not developed to meet the needs of our children.
- We do not want providers to operate children's homes without a clear model of care or deliver standard provision only.

What we want:

- We want to work with new and existing providers and support them to deliver models of care that will meet the needs of our children.
- We want to work with new and existing providers and encourage them to develop their businesses in a way that, in addition to improving outcomes for our children, also provide a wider social value to our communities.
- We want providers who are able to safely care for our children with multiple high needs and are able to provide alternative accommodation to secure welfare provision.
- We want providers who will work in partnership with us during periods of transition including stepping down to live with a foster carer or reunification with their family.
- Welsh culture is very important to us as a region and we want more providers who are able to deliver their services in Welsh.

Isle of Anglesey

There are 3 small group home resources on Anglesey with a potential to offer 5 bed spaces for children that require the service. Our 4th property is being renovated and the works will be finished by August 2022. This will enable the local authority to offer another 3 potential bed spaces locally to reach a total of 8 bed spaces.

The Ynys Môn small group homes service enables young people with complex needs to remain with their birth family for as long as possible. The aim is to avoid the need for specialist Out of County residential placements in the event of family breakdown.

Our multi-disciplinary team of professionals support the family and care staff who will be responsible for the day to day care of the young person. This provides consistency across the range of care and support provided to the individuals.

Outcomes

- Be able to develop and offer an increased 'shared care' option for individuals and families to delay complete family breakdown.
- Be an opportunity for the young person to develop new skills and experiences that may enable them to move on to alternative supported accommodation to meet their individual needs.
- Be able to provide longer term care and the opportunity to work in partnership at an earlier stage with Adult Learning Disability Services to support them through the transition process.
- Be available to meet the needs of other young people who have complex care and support needs, dependent on their assessed needs.

Gwynedd

There is an identified shortfall of capacity in residential child care settings in Gwynedd and in Wales more widely. Current provision does not address the need and there is no prospect for new provision in the near future. Current providers are very small ones which leads to children having to go to England which can lead to secondary problems, especially as there is no sufficient supply in England either. Social workers encounter difficulties in placing children with intensive needs as providers tend to keep placements for children with less intensive needs. It has been noted that it is possible to ensure a placement for each individual, but that more discussion is needed in order to place those with more intensive needs. The fees are also very high.

The following issues have been raised as barriers to developing residential care:

- There is still a stigma associated with children's care homes.
- Children placed together in a care home setting need to be able to coincide and they can often have very different or conflicting needs which can be very complicated and a daunting prospect for new providers given the financial risks in establishing such a business.
- The substantial increase in housing stock prices in Gwynedd makes a business case in Gwynedd less attractive.

Conwy

The table below shows the type and number of placements in Conwy over the last five years.

Table 21: Type and number of placements, Conwy, 2017 to 2021

County	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
Foster Placements	-	249	221	212	203	208
Adoption/Placed for Adoption	-	11	16	15	17	22
Independent Living		15	16	23	29	23
Residential Homes/Schools/Hostel		30	31	33	37	48
Young Offenders/Secure Accommodation		1	2	2		
Placed with Parent/other parent		46	41	38	24	39
Est Med/Nursing Care		11	4	1	1	
Family Centre or Mother/baby unit					1	5
Section 38(6) Court Directed Unregulated Placement					3	12
Temporary Placements					3	11

Source: Local authority data collection

The number of looked after children has reduced, this is in parallel with a significant investment and focus on early intervention and preventative services. The Conwy Family Support and Intervention team saw 4,400 referrals between April and September 2021. The team has received an increased number of referrals. Anecdotally there has been an increased complexity of cases.

Key challenges to maintaining provision includes:

- Workforce - Recruitment of child care workers, particularly those with experience is a significant challenge. Experienced social workers look for alternative roles due to the nature of child protection work and the impact that this has on work life

balance and mental health. Local authorities are competing with agencies to attract social workers, who provide higher rates of pay.

- Endeavouring to change the status of looked after children through Special Guardianship Orders (Kinship).
- Working within effective partnerships with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) continues to be inconsistent while each agency has different perspectives and conflicting priorities – challenging, high risk, time consuming casework.
- Shortage of emergency accommodation and reliance on out of county / temporary placements. This is a key priority for us at this time.

Costs for placements have almost doubled from an average per week of £3,500 in 2017 to some commanding between £6,000 and £7,000 in 2021/22.

Denbighshire

Denbighshire County Council have 20 children or young people placed within care home provisions, more than half of these children and young people are placed outside of Wales. Whilst these children and young people have been appropriately placed in residential settings based on their presenting needs, the lack of local options have resulted in some placements being made at a considerable distance from their home area.

There is a demand for residential placements for children with mental health issues and who present with complex, trauma induced behaviour. Placements with the ability to support children and young people who have experienced Child Sexual Exploitation or Child Criminal Exploitation are also lacking.

Flintshire

Flintshire County Council commission 39 children's care home services, half of these children and young people are placed out of the country in England and Scotland. A focus is needed on initiatives designed to reduce the number of children who are placed out of county from the outset. While children have been appropriately placed in residential settings based on their presenting needs, there had been few viable alternative approaches available which could have contributed to a de-escalation, eliminating the need for out of county placement.

There is a demand for residential services for children who suffer with their mental health, and there is not the sufficient level of care and support with the local authority area to provide this. Services are being sought out of county which incurs further cost implications.

A number of local residential providers also have plans for expansion, which presents another opportunity to work in partnership to align the provision to meet local needs.

Over the next five-year period, in order to ensure stability within the sector, the council aims to:

- Work with new and existing providers and support them to deliver models of care that will meet the needs of children.
- Work with new and existing providers and encourage them to develop their businesses in a way that, in addition to improving outcomes for our children, also provides a wider social value to our communities.
- Work with providers who are able to safely care for children with multiple high needs and are able to provide alternative accommodation to secure welfare provision.
- Identify providers who will work in partnership with us during periods of transition, including stepping down to live with a foster carer or reunification with their family.
- Welsh culture is very important to us as a region and we want more providers who are able to deliver their services in Welsh.

Wrexham

Wrexham County Borough Council do not commission any in house provision for children's care home services, though we do have 33 children and young people placed in out of the county placements in England and Wales. A focus is needed on initiatives designed to reduce the number of children who are placed out of county from the outset.

Utilising Welsh Government Integrated Care Capital Funding, this year we were able to launch our Care Closer to Home Programme which will remain a priority into the next 4 years. The Programme focuses on the purchase, repurposing and/or redevelopment of property either by WCBC or in partnership with Registered Social Landlords to deliver supported living schemes and small children's homes within

Wrexham, enabling people to return to the Borough to meet their housing and/ or care needs and preventing the need to commission out of county placements in future. This year, we secured three properties and more are in the planning under the new and expanded Welsh Government capital grant schemes.

There is a demand for residential services for children who suffer with their mental health, and there is no the sufficient level of care and support within the local authority area to provide this. Services are being sought out of county which incurs further cost implications.

A number of local residential providers also have plans for expansion, which presents another opportunity to work in partnership to align the provision to meet local needs.

Over the coming year, our priorities will focus on:

- Maximising regional capital funding to expand care closer to home and develop non-profit, local care solutions for looked after children.
- Reunification framework project – using NSCC process to improve reunification success.
- Improving discharge planning with dedicated legal and social work support committed to discharge planning and delivery of Discharge Care Orders.
- Continued growth of special guardianship offer and support.
- Launch of 'Reflect' – programme to support reduction in number of recurring pregnancies ending in children being removed.
- Evaluation of rates of pay for Foster Carers to better reflect costs of living and reducing poverty related risks.
- Delivery of Kick start and Supported Lodgings Projects
- Multi Systemic Therapy – continued roll out of MST approach across services to include move-on / step down support for families.
- Early Permanency Process to be established prioritising permanency from the start.

We also aim to;

- Maximise the use of new and increasing regional capital funding to develop new emergency placement accommodation/ units to increase the provision of emergency respite accommodation for those families in crisis.

In-house children's care home provision

North Wales secured £3.8m grant funding for a regional transformation programme for children and young people for 2021/22. The strategic partnership of local authorities and health board in each geographical area within the region are overseeing the delivery of the transition programme. In the Central and East areas, two purpose built Residential Assessment Centres will be opened in 2022/23. They will support the provision of in house care closer to home for children with complex behavioural and emotional needs.

Table 22 Additional annual capacity created by Transformation Programme Funding 2021/22

Area	Annual Assessment Placements	Annual Emergency Placements	Care Home placements
West (Anglesey and Gwynedd)	-	-	-
Central (Conwy and Denbighshire)	12	-	12
East (Wrexham and Flintshire)	12	182	4
North Wales	24	182	4

Source: Local authority data

Notes: East and Central annual assessments based on 4, 16 week placements. East annual emergency placements based on 1 placement with a 2 night maximum stay.

Isle of Anglesey and Gwynedd Councils and BCUHB (West)

There was insufficient demand to justify commissioning a full-time residential family centre unit. Current capacity is adequately fulfilled.

The Transformation Team on Anglesey is a new service that will provide a multi-agency provision of intensive services in Anglesey.

The Team will work with families, aged 0 to 25, who are either at risk of coming into the care of the local authority or where there is a possibility for them to return to the home or remain in the care of their parents / carers safely.

The team consists of a practice leader, psychologist, social worker and two support workers. Their focus is on working with children and young people where a neurological condition may be impacting their behaviours at home, school or out in the community.

Denbighshire and Conwy Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (Central)

Bwthyn Y Ddol

The Bwthyn Y Ddol multi-disciplinary team continues to work with children and young people who are at the edge of care and are at risk of becoming looked after.

The team will initially focus on completing a holistic assessment through a consultation process, in order to recommend a program of interventions.

A new evidence based model of care has been developed through a multi-agency team. This has been tailored to the needs of young people within Denbighshire and Conwy. Early indications suggest that the intervention has helped young people remain at home safely.

A person centred, whole family approach has seen multi-agency collaborative discussions routinely taking place which has promoted partnership work across all agencies.

The new residential assessment centre will provide:

- Four placements for residential assessment
- Short term, unplanned 'emergency' accommodation for two children and young people

It is envisaged that the development will be completed in early 2023.

Flintshire and Wrexham Councils and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (East)

Ty Nyth a Residential Assessment Centre and Children's residential home will provide support underpinned by the Multi Systemic Therapy (MST) Family Intervention Transition (FIT) approach.

The MST (Multi Systemic Therapy) Team became operational in May 2020 during the COVID lockdown, comprising of a supervisor, four therapists and an

administrator. The MST team provides intensive assessment and therapeutic support for young people with significant needs, often with high levels of challenging behaviours across multiple areas which can include verbal and physical aggression, substance abuse, missing from home, self-harm and patterns of school exclusion / risk of exclusion. Each family has a bespoke package of care tailored to the needs of their family, leveraging off existing strengths in the family to provide the best possible opportunity for long term sustainability. The MST Team have met the criteria to operate MST UK model under strict licensing requirement including competency to practice through intensive training. MST is an evidence based clinical model that works with all systems surrounding the child, including education, community influences and any significant adults / others in the family. It builds resilience of the family and offer supports that is accessible '24/7'. Acknowledging that problems in the families can occur at any time of the day or night. Appointments take place in the family home at times that are convenient to the family. The team operates with MST's ethos of 'whatever it takes.' The team provides direct support to build the resilience of families for between 3 and 5 months. The focus is preventing out of home placement by care or custody in youth presenting with anti-social behaviour at home, in the community and/or in school.

The service will provide:

- 4 residential assessment placements at any one time (12 to 16 week length of stay) aged 12 to 17 years.
- Support to young people's carers by the MST FIT team to increase skills and support a smooth transition home.
- Ongoing family support for up to a further 4 months and with other key agencies, such as social care and schools' and other community based support networks. The goal is to improve family independence, reducing long term reliance on statutory services.
- 1 placement for children requiring emergency accommodation (2 night maximum stay).

Park Avenue will offer 4 long term placements for those children who do not suit support in larger settings. Indicatively the strategic partnership are seeking to commit to 6 small group homes over the next 3 years.

Consideration of market quality

Regional

Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4C's) are a Welsh National Team working to support Local Authority Children's Social Services Departments to commission and contract placements for Children Looked After. They manage the the All Wales Residential Framework for the Provision of Services for Children & Young People Looked After across Wales.

Framework monitoring of Quality Assurance and Risk Management processes within the Framework identifies trends in relation to providers and issues.

Isle of Anglesey

Anglesey has two registered Small Group Homes – known as “Catrefi Clyd Môn” - that are registered and running – Cartref Clyd Bryn Hwfa, and Cartref Clyd Llanfairpwll, - both of which have been running at full capacity throughout the year, working with young people with complex care needs who have suffered early childhood trauma and struggle with attachment disorders.

Following the success of the first two homes, Anglesey is currently nearing opening its third Catrefi Clyd Môn in Caergybi (Holyhead), a specialist small group home, which will be an opportunity for respite for children supported by the specialist children's services.

During the next twelve months a fourth property will be opened, which is still in its planning and registration phase -Cartrefi Clyd Môn Rhosybol.

There is another project with the planning and registration phase of Catrefi Clyd Môn Llangristiolus, which will be a modern facility specialising in Day Services for its Specialist Children's Services. With the opening of these 2 new facilities in 2022, out of county placements will be reduced further.

The facilities at Cartref Clyd Bryn Hwfa in Llangefni and Cartref Clyd Llanfairpwll were inspected by CIW in 2020 and both were judged to be Excellent.

Denbighshire

Denbighshire is committed to continuous improvement through engaging with and listening to children and young people and their carers and paid staff via surveys and at key stages of the support process for example end of placements.

Children have helped to shape contracts for the Care Leaver Service and Regional Advocacy Services through the evaluation process.

There is an ongoing consultation with Children and Young People in conjunction with children and young people about the language used by professionals when discussing verbally or in writing the lives and circumstances of care experienced children and young people. This is in response to requests by Voices from Care, Young Commissioners and the Family Justice Young People's Board who have highlighted the language used by professionals and its impact on children and young people.

Collaborative Conversations Training has enabled Children's Service practitioners to consider how to build better relationships with people. There was significant practitioner feedback as part of a reflective exercise.

Flintshire

During April 2021, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) completed an assurance check to review how well the Local Authority Social Services continue to help and support adults and children with a focus on safety and well-being. The key lines of enquiry were focused within the four principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and findings / judgements were aligned to these – People – Voice and Control, Prevention, Well-Being, Partnerships and Integration.

Current and projected trends

- Challenges in accessing secure welfare beds and local alternatives that provide crisis intervention and diversion from secure accommodation.
- Challenges in sourcing appropriate local placements for children and young people with complex needs.
- Need for additional and appropriate short term care arrangements and facilities for children. This also includes children with additional needs and on occasions their siblings.

- Children ages 16+ often have complex needs and placement options are limited, a strategic approach is needed in supporting the accommodation and support needs of young people ages 16-18 and for care leavers.

Impact of commissioning practices on the market

All Wales Local Authority Frameworks are used to commission individual placements across a range of placement types. These frameworks deliver strategic level partnerships with providers in fostering and residential services. The frameworks are used where either the Regions Sufficiency Duty necessitates external commissioning or where best quality, outcome delivery and value for money is achieved through external commissioning rather than internal service delivery. The All Wales Frameworks are managed by the 4C's.

The vehicle used for e-tendering external fostering and residential placements is the Children's Commissioning Support Resources (CCSR) which offers transparent and outcomes focused placement commissioning for both Framework and Non-Framework regulated placements and allows compliance with the relevant procurement guidance and regulation that underpins commissioning.

Provision of service in the Welsh language

Children who are placed out of country due to lack of specialist placements do not have the option to receive care services in Welsh. This is a particular issue in Gwynedd.

Preventative services

The Population Needs Assessment identified a key priority to support child and adolescent health and well-being with an emphasis on preventative services. This was identified as a key area of priority across the region.

The Integrated Care Fund 2016-22 has been used to explore new and innovative ways to provide early intervention to those in most need. Without this funding children and families may have required increasing interventions from Social Care, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services in both Tier's 3 and 4 and North Wales Police, and may have not been able to remain with their families.

Learning from previous projects should be used to further explore the development of preventative services through the Regional Investment Fund 2022-27.

Isle of Anglesey

The children and families service continues to invest in preventative services to decrease the number of children and young people requiring to be looked after. The main preventative provision is the resilient families team. They provide intensive support for families where substance misuse, domestic abuse and parental mental health difficulties have been identified and contribute to the risks that the children and young people may face at home. Through utilising strength based and psychological informed interventions the team has consistently demonstrated that these are effective ways of decreasing risk and facilitating change that allow families to remain together. In addition, a peer mentor programme has been developed and although it's early days we expect this to be an effective addition to the offer.

The Transformation Team is a new service established in 2021. They will provide a multi-agency provision of intensive services in Anglesey. The Team work with families, aged 0 to 25, who are either at risk of coming into the care of the local authority or where there is a possibility for them to return to the home or remain in the care of their parents / carers safely. The team consists of a practice leader, psychologist, social worker and two support workers. Their focus is on working with children and young people where a neurological condition may be impacting their behaviours at home, school or out in the community. In 2022 the team will be incorporated into the resilient families' team widening the remit and scope of that team.

The service aims to provide at the earliest possible opportunity, early intervention and prevention services to families. Provisions include the team around the family that has recently been increased in size from 6 to 8 support workers. Our commissioned services include GORWEL domestic abuse service, Action for Children emotional wellbeing and young carers, Adferiad parental mental health support and the early Help Hub and One Front door multi-agency meetings.

Gwynedd

Through ICF monies, Action for Children have established the Gwynedd Repatriation and Prevention (RAP) service for Looked After Children which provides a direct therapeutic service to reduce the number of Looked After Children, including

reducing the need for, and the number of expensive out of county placements and to support the development of a high quality local care provision for Gwynedd children. The service also prevents family breakdown including adoption breakdowns which result in the need for a looked after placement.

The predominant need from referrals is to stabilise foster placements, we offer support directly and indirectly via carers and other professionals. The support to foster parents is not just to new foster parents but also to experienced and established carers. As always, collaborative working is key to the success and in these instances working in close partnership with fostering is vital particularly focussing on self-care for foster parents. The RAP service has continued to be active to members of the closed Gwynedd fostering Facebook group, sharing advice and links on a variety of topics from parenting to pandemic issues.

The outcomes of the service are to:

- Reduce the number of Children Looked After.
- Develop a whole systems therapeutic approach to the families at risk of breakdown.
- Prevent children becoming looked after by providing Attachment-Focussed Therapy to enable children, young people and their families to better understand trauma and its impact.
- Ensure children and young people are able to achieve and maintain stable care placements by therapeutically supporting carers to understand and manage behaviours that challenge.
- Support and upskill carers to develop nurturing, therapeutic responses to behaviours which helps stabilise placements and prevent placement breakdown.
- Deliver an accessible, timely solution focussed, non-stigmatising service.
- Provide intensive support and therapeutic input for looked after children who are suitable to be repatriated to their home community in Gwynedd.
- Work with adoptive families to achieve placement stability

The service is person centred in its approach, the creativity and adaptable support of the staff ensures this.

The feedback has been very positive with one example below:

“Absolutely brilliant and invaluable support and advice. The service has been a real support and something we feel confident in and know that their always there for us

as a family to help guide us through the bad times and for us to just vent our frustrations to! their level of commitment to us shows in their aftercare contact making sure we are ok after contacts and bad weekends. Cannot rate this service highly enough”

Conwy

Youth Justice

- Referral orders – 38 young people engaged in the last 6 months, 4 re-offended
- Enhanced Restorative Justice Work - 66 initial referrals
- Supported 78 people who had been harmed and then 44 of the young people (perpetrators) were supported to engage in specific interventions guided by the victim’s views to develop an understanding of the impact of their behaviour
- No young people that engaged within the project were made subject to custodial sentence

Table 23 Conwy Youth Justice Referrals, April to September 2021

Type of referral	Number
Yellow Cards	203
Flat Community Resolution	13
Prevention referrals	44
Community Resolution +	24
Youth Caution	0
Youth Conditional Caution	6
Total	290

Source: Local authority data

Denbighshire

2021 saw the establishment, via Children and Young People’s Transformation Programme funding of LIFT (Local Integrated Family Team). LIFT offers targeted early support for families experiencing difficulties with managing emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The team, which includes wellbeing navigators, occupational therapists, behavioural support specialists and a psychologist, works with families to understand the challenging behaviour and act as a source of information and support to help

develop and implement positive behavioural plans and to provide specialist consultation when required.

The multi-agency team consisting of multi-disciplinary professionals have developed a specific model of care and a partnership approach to support families in Denbighshire and Conwy. They are now operational and working directly with children and young people and their families.

The programme has also upskilled 78 local authority and health staff in therapies that the team will be using, this has encouraged a common approach and shared language, providing consistency across partner agencies and teams. The independent evaluation of the project stated:

- Strong partnership approach at senior level was a key driver in getting the new services up and running.
- Partner agency staff were impressed at how quickly the LIFT team came back to them in response to referrals and requests for advice and guidance.
- Opportunities for consultations and joint working which they felt was contributing to learning and development for the children's workforce.
- Families have engaged well.

Feedback from parents:

- "Life is so much better at home now since [staff members] made that video for us"
- "M is so much more in touch with his feelings as I am since LIFT has been helping us, his behaviour has also improved"
- "It has been lovely to have been listened to and not judged"

During the period where the Integrated Care Fund was provided to Denbighshire the provision of this edge of care support has worked with 122 families (accounting for 200 children).

Integrated Families First / Flying Start programme (IFFFS)

The IFFFS programme provides a range of Family and Parenting Support in Denbighshire. We aim to provide early intervention and prevention services for vulnerable families to avoid escalation and ensure children in our most deprived areas receive extra help.

In 2021-22, our Families First services received 302 referrals. We had an average monthly waiting list of 18, and an average waiting time of 26 days from receipt of referral to allocation of a worker. We supported 369 families and newly assessed 114 families' needs.

The Team Around the Family (TAF) coordinates multiple services and interventions around individual families, securing engagement, assessing need and planning support. Amidst ongoing issues and fluctuating needs around Covid-19, to date the TAF team have successfully concluded 29 action plans with families. Using a Welsh Government piloted methodology, we estimated the potential cost savings achieved by TAF for other services. The most recent available figures for January to December 2021 show savings of £122,823.

Table 24 Potential cost savings from TAF to services, January to December 2021

Service area	Estimated savings	Issues addressed
Crime	£52,272	Antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse & criminal behaviour
Education	£22,264	Absence, exclusion & school readiness
Health	£6,187	Drug misuse
Mental health	£18,052	Mental health issues in children, young people & adults
Employment	£24,048	Support to gain employment
Total	£122,823	

Source: Local authority data

In 2021, our Flying Start Health Visitors supported 1,182 children under 4 in the most multi-deprived parts of Prestatyn, Rhyl and Denbigh. We supported a further 52 families across the county through Outreach. Our Speech and Language therapists helped 102 children alongside our Early Language Development team, who delivered Portage and Laugh and Learn interventions to 36 children. From January to December 2021 we provided 31,998 free childcare sessions to 366 children, and provided 1,348 additional sessions.

Our Health Visitors contribute significantly to safeguarding children in Denbighshire. From January to December 2021 the team made 218 contacts with children in Child

Protection measures, 135 contacts with children with a Care & Support Plan and 115 with Looked After Children. They made 639 contacts with children needing a Tier 3 Intensive service.

Table 25 Denbighshire health visitor activities, 2021

Activity	Number
Child Protection Referrals	102
Court Reports / Police Statements	12
Case Conference reports/attended	77
MARAC Reports	26
Looked After Children Reviews attended	29
Safeguarding Pre-Birth Assessments	97
Safeguarding related meetings attended	337

Source: Local authority data

In January we appointed a new Safeguarding Nurse who attended four Case Conferences and six professionals' meetings (Core Groups/Care & Support Plans/Looked After Children).

Flintshire

REFLECT

The REFLECT Service supports women who have had one or more children removed through care proceedings and are at high risk of having children who will be subject to the same experience.

The Early Help Hub is a multi-agency early help resource for children and families demonstrating two or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Partners include Social Services, Police, Health, Youth Justice, Housing, Flintshire Customer Connects, Education, Family Information Service, Early Years Support and Flintshire Local Voluntary Council (FLVC).

The Early Help Hub received 2,641 referrals between April 2020 and end of March 2021 and the team have adapted to meet needs during the pandemic. All Early Help Hub members quickly reverted to having discussions online and agencies adapted well during lockdown and there was no interruption with meetings. Referrals slowed down slightly during April/May but started to pick back up again from June.

Parent and Child Together Placement'

The 'Parent and Child Together Placement' recruitment campaign is beginning to come to fruition. This aims to keep children with their parents in a specially assessed foster care setting.

Flintshire closely scrutinise decisions about whether older young people should be taken into care and, in particular, what difference can be achieved at this relatively late stage.

Flintshire Meeting Service

Flintshire Meeting Services approach is aimed at keeping families together wherever possible. Families are offered a Family Group Meeting at the earliest opportunity, to prevent them from reaching crisis. Family Group Meetings explore if wider family members or connected persons would be willing to put themselves forward to be assessed to care for the child. Further funding has been made available to strengthen this approach. We have seen an increase in referrals to the service and it's been noted that families during this period required additional support due to the impact of COVID19 and the strain and increased pressure / stress on family life. We have also seen a sharp increase in referrals from statutory services which again highlights the strain the pandemic has and is having on families.

Family Information Service (FISF)

The Family Information Service is a statutory local authority service providing free and impartial information, advice and guidance to families (and those working with families) on a range of topics and in various formats.

Topics include health, education, leisure, finance and registered childcare. The service processes an average of 20,000 enquiries each quarter either face to face, by telephone and email or on the website and via social media.

Wrexham

Throughout the year, the Department has made steady progress in the development of early intervention and preventative services. In November 2021, the Early Help and Prevention Framework document was published, following a multi-agency launch along with the Children's Services Threshold document.

The Prevention and Early Help Framework document is to assist all when planning Prevention and Early Intervention Services. It supports in considering who needs to be involved, what the principles are that will drive discussions and decisions and it enables individuals to develop a clear business case for enhancing, expanding or repurposing current services.

Since the development of the Prevention and Early Help Framework, a new Prevention and Early Help Partnership has been established and work is currently underway to develop a strategy that will help to focus both the Council's and its Partner's on ensuring that support to children, young people and families is available to them before issues worsen. It aims to help children, young people and families to help themselves in the first instance but when more help is needed, we aim to provide the right support much earlier. Further development of the Prevention and Early Help Partnership will continue throughout the coming year.

6. Fostering services

Population overview

The number of children is predicted to decrease

The estimated number of children (aged 0-15) in 2020 and the projections for 2040 demonstrate the number of children in North Wales is predicted to decrease over the coming years (Welsh Government, 2020). This decrease can be seen across all of the local authorities in North Wales, with the exception of Gwynedd which is predicted to have a slight increase (1.8%). Overall the number of children in North Wales is expected to reduce by 6.1%

The Market Position Statement update (2021) gave an overview of key statistics;

- The number of children who required a foster placement increased by 34% during the period April 2016 (600 children) to March 2020 (805 children).
- As at the 31st March 2020, there were 805 North Wales children living with a foster carer, 40% (325 children) were living with an independent foster carer and the majority of those children required a specialist placement in order to support their needs, which could not be supported by our in-house services.
- There are currently 11 children who are living in a children's home who could be supported by specialist foster carers. There are not enough foster carers with the right skills to support the needs profiles of our children.
- During the period April 2020 to the end of February 2021, there were 34 children who required a parent and child placement and assessment.

Demand for foster care has increased

The number of children in foster care in North Wales has increased year on year since 2015 to around 945 in 2020. Wrexham had the largest increase, with the number of children doubling. Gwynedd also saw a significant increase. Numbers in the other local authorities have fluctuated.

Table 26: Number of children looked after in foster placements at 31 March

Local council	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Anglesey	90	100	100	90	110
Gwynedd	145	145	145	165	200
Conwy	120	125	150	140	140
Denbighshire	125	110	110	115	115
Flintshire	135	140	135	150	140
Wrexham	120	135	170	175	240
North Wales	735	755	810	835	945
Wales	4,250	4,425	4,700	4,840	4,990

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Children looked after by local authorities in foster placements. Stats Wales, Welsh Government

Despite the increasing numbers in foster placements, the Market Position Statement (2019) expressed that a large increase was not expected in the future.

Local authorities have in-house foster care places and independent fostering agencies providing places. Some of the independent foster agencies are charities or co-operatives. The table below shows the number and percentage for each type of foster placement provision, broken down by Local Authority.

Table 27: Number of foster placements in the local authority area commissioned by provider type

Local council	In House (number)	Independent provider (number)	Total (number)	In House (percentage)	Independent provider (percentage)
Anglesey	37	32	69	54%	46%
Gwynedd	98	31	129	76%	24%
Conwy	82	41	123	67%	33%
Denbighshire	69	19	88	78%	22%
Flintshire	55	13	68	81%	19%
Wrexham	119	21	140	85%	15%
North Wales	460	157	617	75%	25%

Source: Provided by each local authority

Predicted increased demand for foster parents

The National Foster Network calculated a need for, an estimated, 550 new foster parents across Wales every year to keep up with demand. This suggests there could be a shortage of foster placements in coming years, given the increasing demand.

Sufficiency issues for some children

The Market Position Statement (Regional Partnership Board, 2019) identified sufficiency issues with finding placements for children with particular needs including:

- Respite care
- Young offenders
- Refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers
- Young parents
- Sibling groups
- Emergency situations

The stability of the workforce is an issue, with increasing demand for placements and the number of placements projected do not meet with the forecast demand.

The Foster Wales website facilitated the joining of the 22 Local Authorities to form a national network of local fostering expertise. Its focus is to make a bigger impact on a national level, working together with foster carers, to build better futures for local children. Sharing one brand and, one voice, to strengthen recruitment and support of foster carers.

The National Fostering Framework

The National Fostering Framework (2018) finds children who live with foster carers in their own locality more likely to thrive and children in local authority provision more likely to stay in their home authority, enabling them to maintain important links. It is vital local authorities increase local placements and reduce out of area placements. According to the National Fostering Framework (2018), connected fostering (with family or friends) has seen increased demand. It also finds that local authority placements have better outcomes for children. The framework states that local authorities need to be able to have capacity to facilitate this, or otherwise ensure that the child has opportunities to maintain connections if placed in alternative fostering.

Market overview

Regional market overview

The table below shows a breakdown of fostering provision by provider type.

Table 28: Fostering placements, beds and market share by provider type.

Provider Type	Market share (Percentage)	Placements (number)	Care settings (number)
In House	62%	776	453
Private	37%	469	206
Third sector	1%	16	7
North Wales	100%	1261	666

Source: CCSR data accessed 31/05/22

Isle of Anglesey market overview

The table shows how many children in Anglesey are increasingly being placed outside of their local authority.

Table 29: Number of children in foster placements by area - Anglesey

Location of placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change No
Inside local authority	65	60	70	80	-45
Outside local authority (Wales)	30	30	30	20	50
Outside Wales	0	0	0	0	0

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Table 30: Number of children in foster placements by type - Anglesey

Type of Placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change no
With relative/ friend, inside local authority	30	25	25	35	5
With local authority, inside local authority	20	20	40	40	20
With agency, inside local authority	15	15	10	10	-5
With relative/ friend, outside local authority	5	0	0	0	-5
With local authority, outside local authority	0	0	0	0	0
With agency, outside local authority	25	25	25	25	0

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Gwynedd market overview

Figures in the table below, show children in the Gwynedd area have been increasingly placed into foster placements within Gwynedd. The number placed outside of Gwynedd but still in Wales has reduced. However, placements outside of Wales have increased.

Table 31: Number of children in foster placements by area - Gwynedd

Location of Placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change No
Within Local Authority	110	120	140	135	25
Outside Local Authority Wales	35	40	50	50	15
Outside Wales	0	5	5	15	15

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. StatsWales, Welsh Government

The figures below show children in Gwynedd are increasingly placed into foster placements both within and outside Gwynedd. They have also seen increased numbers of placements with family/friends.

Table 32: Number of children in foster placements by type - Gwynedd

Type of Placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change No
With relative/ friend, within local authority	35	50	50	45	10
With local authority, within local authority	70	65	85	85	15
With agency, within local authority	0	0	0	0	0
With relative/ friend, outside local authority	5	10	15	25	20
With local authority, outside local authority	10	15	15	10	0
With agency, outside local authority	20	20	30	30	10

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Gwynedd local authority themselves report a “relatively good provision” of foster placements available within the county, when compared to other provision but recognise there is potential for shortages in foster carers in the near future. The local authority anticipate approximately 10 to 12 new foster placements would be required each year to maintain this and at least 18 to 20 to improve provision.

Conwy market overview

Conwy has increased foster placements inside the local authority and those outside of Wales have reduced significantly. However, those outside of Conwy but still in Wales have increased, see figures below.

Table 33: Number of children in foster placements by area - Conwy

Location of Placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change No
Inside Local Authority	95	85	100	100	5
Outside Local Authority Wales	20	35	35	35	15
Outside Wales	35	25	5	5	-30

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Conwy has seen a reduction in foster placements with the local authority and a small increase in agency placements.

Table 34: Number of children in foster placements by type - Conwy

Type of Placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change No
With relative/ friend, inside local authority	25	20	15	20	-5
With local authority, inside local authority	65	60	55	55	-10
With agency, inside local authority	25	30	35	30	5
With relative/ friend, outside local authority	10	10	10	15	5
With local authority, outside local authority	0	0	0	0	0
With agency, outside local authority	20	20	20	20	0

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Conwy report that both emergency and longer term placements are needed urgently. The local authority recognises the importance of local placements for children, they are considering a range of options to increase provision in the county and reduce reliance on costly temporary arrangements and out of county placements that are far from the family.

Denbighshire market overview

The figures in the table below show placements for children from Denbighshire have increased both inside Denbighshire and outside of Denbighshire but still in Wales.

Table 35: Number of children in foster placements by area - Denbighshire

Location of placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change No
Inside local authority	85	90	90	90	5
Outside local authority Wales	15	15	15	20	5
Outside Wales	10	10	10	10	0

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Denbighshire has seen increased agency use inside and outside of the area and increased placements with family/friends out of area.

Table 36: Number of children in foster placements by type - Denbighshire

Type of Placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change No
With relative/ friend, inside local authority	20	20	20	20	0
With local authority, inside local authority	60	70	65	65	5
With agency, inside local authority	0	5	10	5	5
With relative/ friend, outside local authority	5	10	10	10	5
With local authority, outside local authority	10	5	0	0	-10
With agency, outside local authority	10	10	10	15	5

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Denbighshire local authority have identified a need to increase care capacity to meet population needs within Denbighshire for foster care services. They also recognise a shortage in the availability of overnight respite accommodation for children with complex disabilities.

Flintshire market overview

In Flintshire children have increasingly been placed outside of Flintshire both in Wales and outside of Wales. The figures also show a reduction in placements in Flintshire.

Table 37: Number of children in foster placements by area - Flintshire

Location of Placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change No
Inside Local Authority	95	95	90	90	-5
Outside Local Authority Wales	25	35	30	45	20
Outside Wales	15	20	15	20	5

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Data in the table below shows a considerable increase in the use of agencies for Flintshire both inside and outside of the local authority.

Table 38: Number of children in foster placements by type - Flintshire

Type of Placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change No
With relative/ friend, inside local authority	35	35	35	30	-5
With local authority, inside local authority	60	60	50	55	-5
With agency, inside local authority	5	5	5	15	10
With relative/ friend, outside local authority	15	15	15	15	0
With local authority, outside local authority	15	15	10	15	0
With agency, outside local authority	5	15	20	25	20

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Flintshire report as of 31 March 2021, there were 109 children and young people in foster placements within and outside the Local Authority Area (not including kinship

placements) and as of 16 February 2022, this figure was 102. They state they are currently able to look after the majority of children under 8 within in house fostering services.

The local authority identified the following market sufficiency issues:

- Need to meet the forecast demand with in-house foster carers.
- Foster parents to support children in the age categories 10 to 14 and 15+.
- Sourcing appropriate local placements for those with complex needs.
- Meeting demand for children who need complex multi-agency care packages or have challenging risk management plans, example behaviours include anger management issues, verbal and physical aggression towards adults.
- Shortages for sibling groups and children with disabilities.
- Not enough skilled foster parents for children at the highest end of needs profile, those currently living in care homes.
- Insufficient placements lead to children being placed in unregulated settings.
- Not enough carers who speak Welsh.
- North Wales has a shortage of parent and child places, especially in Wrexham and Flintshire.

Wrexham market overview

The table shows how there has been an increase in all types of placements in Wrexham, including children placed out of area.

Table 39: Number of children in foster placements by area - Wrexham

Location of Placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change No
Inside Local Authority	115	120	145	150	35
Outside Local Authority Wales	30	40	65	75	45
Outside Wales	20	15	20	25	5

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. Stats Wales, Welsh Government

The table below demonstrates a sharp increase in the use of agencies for Wrexham, with the steepest increase outside of the local authority.

Table 40: Number of children in foster placements by type - Wrexham

Type of Placement	2018	2019	2020	2021	Change No
With relative/ friend, inside local authority	60	70	75	80	20
With local authority, inside local authority	65	55	70	70	5
With agency, inside local authority	15	20	25	30	15
With relative/ friend, outside local authority	0	0	0	0	0
With local authority, outside local authority	20	20	15	15	-5
With agency, outside local authority	15	15	40	55	40

Numbers have been rounded so may not sum.

Source: Looked After Children Census. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Progress has been made in the implementation of the 4C's Framework and a Placement Officer has been appointed to manage the Framework database within Wrexham. The usage and expectations of the 4C's Framework continues to be embedded into practice as evidence as best practice. We have experienced an increased demand for placements able to meet the need of highly complex young people. This has led to an increase in the number and cost of such placements. In order to deliver against the not for profit agenda, further investment will be needed in the development of local authority residential care.

Wrexham see reducing the number of looked after children as a priority, as well as removing profit from the children's placement market. The local authority also recognises a lack of intermediate or short term placements for children.

Market stability

Regional challenges

The Market Position Statement (2019) and 'Foster Wales' (2021) identified challenges to the stability of fostering services in North Wales and Wales as a whole listed below:

- Recruitment and retention issues
- Placements for children with particular needs including; respite care, young offenders, refugees/immigrants/asylum seekers, young parents, sibling groups and emergency situations
- It is estimated that Wales will need 550 new foster parents every year to meet demand

Isle of Anglesey market stability

The local authority recognises the following as issues affecting the future stability of the fostering service:

- Workforce – recruitment, retention, age profile of workforce, costs
- Supply and choices available
- Can the cost of living crisis impact the numbers of looked after children and therefore hamper the projection of decrease in demand?
- Impact of children seeking asylum on resources including placements and support available.
- Impact of unplanned arrivals to the Port of Holyhead.

Gwynedd market stability

Gwynedd have identified several factors that may influence fostering stability:

- Recruitment and retention of staff
- Potential shortage of foster placements, an estimated 10-12 new placements needed each year to maintain and at least 18-20 to improve provision
- Finance - concerns around maintaining quality services with limited resources
- Lack of funding often results in using out of county providers which results in higher costs contributing further to the problem

Conwy market stability

Conwy refer to key issues around future stability of their fostering service:

- Recruitment and retention (linked to pay and conditions but not exclusively)
- Emergency and longer term placements in county are needed urgently

Denbighshire market stability

Denbighshire recognises some key factors that may affect stability of the service:

- Increase in capacity to meet population needs within Denbighshire
- Staffing and recruitment issues
- Specialist training and knowledge
- Possibly long term funding problems
- Increased complexity of need
- Supply of specialist care not meeting demand
- Overnight respite care for children with complex disabilities
- Lack of placements for children with challenging/complex behaviour

Sustainability of provision

- Denbighshire recognises the following issues affecting sustainability of the service: Recruitment of in-house foster carers has been impacted by the pandemic with a lack of applicants coming forward, resulting in increased use of Independent Fostering Providers.
- Lack of availability has resulted in no offer or placements at a considerable distance, which is not always in the best interest of the young person.
- Children who require a placement but where foster care cannot be sourced are being escalated into residential care, but there is placement insufficiency and a perceived reluctance to offer placements to young people with complex needs. This can result in a placement at a distance away.
- Particular pressure if a child/young person presents with self-harm or suicidal ideation, providers show reluctance to offer placements to and emergency provision is extremely limited.

Preventative actions for children on the edge of care

During the period where the integrated care fund supported the provision of edge of care support, there were 122 families (200 children) supported including:

7 parents and 2 foster carers (19 children) attended new Parent Participation Group (collaboration with Parents and Carers Against Exploitation, North Wales Police, Health colleagues and Denbighshire Safeguarding Lead). Of these children, 6 no longer reach criteria for multi-agency oversight within Denbighshire's Exploitation Panel and 2 have been closed to social care.

2 children in long-term foster placements received an intensive intervention which stabilised their placement and enabled the foster carer and parent to have a shared understanding of each child's individual needs.

16 staff across Social Care, Early Intervention and Housing attended Dialectal Behavioural Therapy (DBT) Skills training and the Therapeutic Service will mentor these staff to develop DBT Skills groups for Foster and Kinship Carers, Looked After Children, Care Leavers and Semi-Independent and Homelessness Projects.

1 young person received an intensive intervention from the Therapeutic Service following police colleagues using their Powers of Police Protection. The young person required short-term foster care and was rehabilitated back to their family within 6 weeks, they are now closed to Social Care.

Engagement

Denbighshire list the following engagements used to help improve quality of service:

- A quality of care evaluation will be carried out of Denbighshire Fostering Service in April and May 2022. Questionnaires will be sent to gain views of children/young people, foster carers, kinship carers, panel members and parents, the results will assist in making improvements where required as well as recognising good practice.
- Closed Facebook group for foster carers developed with views from foster carers and is regularly being updated with information. Creating the page/group has provided another avenue to obtain feedback, information is circulated to a larger geographical area and accessibility has improved.
- Two children/young people's forums meet on a regular basis. They have not been able to meet over the last year, but staff running the forums kept in touch regularly.
- Kids in Care Young People's Forum (KIC Club) for young people aged 8 to 15 living with foster carers. They meet and do activities during half terms, share their experiences, say what is going well and what they would like to change.
- KWC Club (Kids who care) is a group of children/young people whose parents foster and are also part of the fostering process. They meet during half term, share experiences, say what's going well and what they would like to change.
- Foster carers virtual coffee mornings, invites were sent with a package containing a tea bag and packet of biscuits. To allow better conversation, foster carers were

split into groups based on their supervising social worker. Facilitated by the supervising social worker with drop-in appearances from; Head of Service, Service Manager, Fostering Team Manager and Placement Commissioning Officer/Recruitment Officer. It had good attendance, lots of laughter, discussion and feedback from attendees was very positive.

- The Fostering Service have increased the level of communication with Foster Carers with a regular newsletter and the Denbighshire Fostering Service Competition, whereby children have been asked for Christmas cards to be designed, pebbles to be painted and a Sunflower growing competition.

Flintshire market stability

Flintshire identified several issues impacting the stability of fostering services:

- Foster carers with skills/experience to support teenagers and sibling groups
- Increase in 14, 15 and 16 year olds entering care
- Parent and child placements

Action taken to improve stability

Recruitment of foster parents has been identified as an issue for Flintshire, in response the [Foster with Flintshire](#) portal has been developed to promote Fostering roles. The site contains a wealth of information, resources and stories from some of Flintshire's current foster parents. They have also targeted their recruitment strategy to address demand for foster parents with skills and experience to support children age 12 and over.

Mockingbird Programme

Flintshire was the first council in Wales to introduce the evidence-based Mockingbird model for foster placements. The programme nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community of six to ten satellite families called a constellation. The aim of the model is to improve foster care and outcomes for fostered young people.

Action for Children - Repatriation and Prevention (RAP) Service

The service provides intensive therapeutic support for Children Looked After with support from experienced foster carers. The service is a partnership between the local authority, health, CAMHS and Action for Children.

The aims of the service are to:

- Prevent placement breakdown and escalation to crisis point leading to out-of-county placements
- Return young people to stable placements in their home
- Ensure looked after children can access educational opportunities
- Increase resilience and confidence in children and carers

Adaptations to Foster Carers Homes Policy

'Adaptations to Foster Carers' Homes' policy was introduced in 2020, supporting foster carers make necessary adaptations to their home to provide adequate space for children/young people. It supports; sibling placements, the needs of children with multiple disabilities, secure extra capacity for foster placements and to meet health and safety requirements which would otherwise result in a child being moved.

Funding compliments existing support and is a step forward in securing local and stable placements for children. Applications for grant funding will be considered up to £36,000, and £20,000 for relocation to a more suitable property. To access the grant, carers and social worker must first exhaust other options/resources.

Grants are also available to; existing or prospective adoptive families, family and friends/carers of children under a Special Guardianship Order and carers who are committed to their caring role for the long term, or at least until the child reaches 18.

Placement stability meetings - Facilitated in house, when issues with maintaining a placement arise and the Independent Fostering Agency chair when requested.

Disruption meetings - The family group meeting service will bring together stakeholders and look at lessons learnt.

Wrexham market stability

Wrexham identified the following issues that may impact stability of fostering:

- A need to reduce the number of looked after children
- Removing profit from children's placement market
- Intermediate/short term care placements
- Staffing shortages
- Lack of appropriate placements

Carers are needed to support teenagers and mother and babies in the Wrexham area. To recruit carers to meet these needs, the local authority have;

- Commenced a review of rates of pay for carers, proposing an increased rate for specialist/skilled carers able to care for children with complex needs.
- Carried out a recruitment campaign using buses, billboards and social media.

Wrexham's Care Leavers Offer has been progressed throughout the year and the development of accommodation pathways for young people are underway. This will provide varying degrees of support on their pathway to independence and their own tenancy.

This will be achieved by developing in-house services including;

- Supported Lodging's Service
- Kick Start Project
- Step Down Project
- Use of a training flat.

The Leaving Care Team are located in accessible 'info shop' with their social workers while being able to take advantage of the 'one stop shop' for any identified areas of support including access to funding grants and employment support.

Consideration of market quality

The State of the Nation report from the Fostering Agency (2021) provided insight into the quality of foster services across the whole of Wales, the key findings were:

- 44% of independent and 51% of local authority foster carers said they were not supported to maintain contact with children they had cared for. Foster carers perceived this as 'cruel', ending significant relationships for children who have experienced so much loss already.
- Some fostering services are not maintaining foster carer approval, even if they intend to continue fostering. This, and dropping financial support, are barriers to young people entering 'When I am Ready'.

- 20% independent and 12% local authority foster carers have no children in their care. It recommended better use of foster carers skills to meet the needs of children.
- 57% local authority foster carers had an agreed learning and development plan, 31% did not and 12% didn't know. 66% independent foster carers had a learning and development plan, 22% didn't and 12% didn't know.
- Local authority foster approvals were more restrictive and limited than independent approvals, it recommends local authorities assessments use broader approval statuses, robust matching procedures and placement stability processes.
- Foster carers would like to build relationships with social workers and children in their care to have stability and continuity of social worker. Over the previous two years, 53% of foster carers had one supervising social worker, 29% had two, 12% had three and 6% had four or more.
- Foster carers felt 'dismissed', 'ignored' and their role is not valued by the social care workforce. Lack of respect for their commitment, skills and dedication is a long-term, well reported issue in fostering.
- Foster carers want allowances to cover the full cost of caring for a child and payment reflecting their value as a member of the team around the child. Sufficient payments are a must to attract new skilled, committed foster carers.
- Lack of placement choice. To secure good matches for children, services would need to see a significant increase in access to local, quality placements.
- Staffing levels are not sufficient to provide required support for foster families. Services would like staffing to enable best practice and improve standards.
- Trauma-informed practice – concerns about access to training and additional services for those caring for traumatised children. Services would like children looked after to have priority status for services across health and education.
- Support for foster carers with improved peer support services and out of hours provision. Services with this support saw improved retention and stability.

Current and projected trends

Key current trends and projections for the future of foster services:

- Increased demand for placements
- Lack of places for older children
- Lack of places for children with complex care plans/behavioural issues

- Lack of foster parents with skills to support children with complex needs
- Projected increase in demand for placements
- Predicted potential shortage of placements, supply not matching demand

Welsh language

A shortage of Welsh speaking foster parents was identified in Flintshire.

The provision of Welsh language across the rest of North Wales will be discussed within the children's services chapter of this report.

Other provision

There is a significant lack of foster or residential placements for children and young people with challenging or complex behaviour.

Recruitment of in-house foster carers has been impacted by the pandemic with a lack of applicants coming forward. This has resulted in an increased use of Independent Fostering Providers.

Lack of availability has resulted in no offer or placements only at a considerable distance, which is not always in the best interest of the young person.

Children who require a placement but where foster care cannot be sourced are being escalated into residential care, but there is both placement insufficiency and a perceived reluctance to offer placements to young people with complex needs. Again this can result in a placement at a distance away.

There is particular pressure if the child/young person presents with self-harm or suicidal ideation, with providers showing reluctance to offer placements to this cohort. Emergency provision is extremely limited.

Workforce

The National Fostering Framework (2018) highlighted a loss in the number of approved foster households. The framework states improvements need to be made to increase; enquiries, conversions, approvals and retention of foster parents.

The table below shows numbers of foster parents and places have seen a slight increase overall across North Wales. However, Gwynedd and Denbighshire saw a

drop in both the number of foster parents and places available, and Flintshire saw a drop in foster parents but increase in places. If reductions in foster parents or places continue this could result in insufficient spaces for children in these local authorities.

Table 41: Number of approved foster spaces as of 31 March

Local council	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Anglesey	86	69	43
Gwynedd	164	178	198
Conwy	113	130	127
Denbighshire	156	155	149
Flintshire	133	157	156
Wrexham	161	172	166
North Wales	813	861	839
Wales	4,075	4,170	4,317

Source: Children Receiving Care and Support. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Table 42: Number of approved foster parents as of 31 March

Local council	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Anglesey	45	38	39
Gwynedd	103	111	120
Conwy	70	84	80
Denbighshire	78	77	74
Flintshire	77	77	76
Wrexham	100	112	110
North Wales	473	499	499
Wales	2,347	2,443	2,462

Source: Children Receiving Care and Support. StatsWales, Welsh Government

Carer skill set & training desired:

Carers who are able to work with our internal services and are trained in the delivery of therapeutic trauma informed care.

Carers who are aware of the impact of county lines and have received training to support children who are vulnerable to exploitation via these gangs. This includes the resilience to work with children who are being exploited by gangs, frequently abscond and can display verbal and sometimes physical aggression.

- Resilient & trained to work with childhood trauma, absconding, exploitation and self-harm behaviours.
- Carers who are trained to understand the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on children who they care for.
- Carers who are trained in crisis intervention, and can work calmly under the pressure of emergency planning.
- Resilient when faced with threat of physical harm & trained in de-escalation, with positive behaviour management planning, minimising use of restraints
- Carers with the ability to speak Welsh or commitment to learn.

Social value

Three providers offer a total of 16 beds in 7 care settings across the region, this accounts for 1.3% of market.

Taking profit out of care for looked after children

One of the wellbeing objectives established within the Welsh Government Programme 2021-2016 is to protect, rebuild and develop our services for children and young people. A key priority in this area of work is to eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after.

Commissioning placements to independent foster agencies can impact on provisions being provided from within the local authority., Local authorities are keen to work in partnership with independent care providers to ensure that both the in-house and independent sector market function to meet foster care needs. Flintshire local authority highlighted this as a potential risk and stated how they were focusing the use of independent foster agencies for those services that they struggle to provide with local authority services.

The foster care allowances survey from The Fostering Network (2020) found even though all local authorities in Wales are paying at or above the national minimum allowance, foster carers feel their current allowance does not meet the full costs of looking after a child. The network recommend foster payments must be transparent

so it is clear to foster carers how much constitutes the allowance, and must be spent on the child, and how much constitutes the fee and is payment for the foster carer's time and skills.

7. Adoption services

North Wales Adoption Service overview

The North Wales Adoption Service provides a regional adoption service on behalf of Wrexham, Flintshire, Denbighshire, Conwy, Gwynedd and Anglesey local authorities. Working regionally helps find new families more effectively, place children quicker and improve adoption support services. In April 2014 it was integrated into the National Adoption Service. The services comply with updated adoption legislation, regulations and statutory guidance in line with the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA) and with the policy and procedures of the service, within the resources allocated. There is a framework which aims to make it easier for adopters, children and young people get support when needed.

Services provided by the adoption service include:

- Preparing the child for adoption.
- Family finding and matching.
- Safeguarding children.
- Provision of adoption support.
- Recruitment, assessment and approval of adopters.
- Preparing to adopt training (pre/post approval).
- Adoption support (pre/post adoption, buddy system, post adoption contact).
- Birth parent counselling.
- Relinquished babies.
- Services for adopted adults.

Population overview

The table below shows the number of looked after children who were placed for adoption in each local authority. It is worth noting that the service has undergone significant transformation since 2020, therefore it is difficult to compare local data and it does not reflect the service now.

Table 43: Number of children looked after placed for adoption by local authority 2020/21

Local Council	No of Children
Anglesey	6
Gwynedd	2
Conwy	17
Denbighshire	7
Flintshire	1
Wrexham	11
North Wales	44

Source: Figures provided by each local authority

Current and predicted trends

The following issues were raised with regards to adoption services for children:

- Highest placement need is for children from the East.
- Highest number of adopters are from the East.
- Fewer adopters in the West and children needing to be placed away from the East.
- Nationally there are more children than approved adopters available
- Consideration of the number of Welsh language speakers (adopters/children).

The following issues were raised with regards to adoption services for adults:

- Adults requesting their birth records to find their birth parents was shut down during the pandemic, majority of services have resumed but there is a backlog.
- Staffing - 43 staff, 10 are off or due to go off on maternity leave, it is difficult to recruit to fixed term posts so the ability to assess may be impacted in 2022/23.

Quality reports

The Quality of Service Review from the North Wales Adoption Service (2020) highlighted the following areas to improve market stability:

- Increase the number of approved adopters.
- Reduce the number of children waiting for an adoptive family.
- Develop the adoption support service.
- Recruitment - sessional workers and adoption panel vacancies.

Care Inspectorate Wales (2019b) inspection identified these areas for improvement:

- Further develop quality assurance processes and assessment of the degree to which aims and objectives of the statement of purpose are met and evidence demonstrating how these support well-being outcomes for children.
- The availability of the 'Active Offer', to provide services in the Welsh language.
- The statement of purpose and adopters' information pack includes information about the independent review mechanism so adopters are aware of this.
- Intermediary files should include a clear audit trail of work undertaken.

8. Unpaid carers

Population overview

Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 carers have the same rights as those they care for and local councils have a duty to assess their needs and promote their well-being. Supporting unpaid carers is a preventative measure for both the individual carer and the sustainability of health and care services.

There are around 79,000 people of all ages providing unpaid care in North Wales, according to the 2011 census, and we expect this number to be increasing as the need for care and support increases. More unpaid carers came forward during the pandemic to access support.

Much of the support that unpaid carers need is provided through care to the person they care for, so lack of provision in the care market leads to additional demands on unpaid carers. The population assessment identified that issues within wider social care workforce recruitment and retention is leading to additional demands on unpaid carers. Specifically, this is impacting the complexity of care meaning that unpaid carers are experiencing caring responsibilities with higher needs of care. Other priorities were the early identification of carers, carer breaks (respite care), improving unpaid carer assessments and digital inclusion.

Market sufficiency

The number of carers is increasing. The largest growth is in those carers providing between 20 and 49 hours a week. There has also been a rise in the number of carers providing 50 or more hours of care per week, in Denbighshire approximately 46% of these carers are over 65 years. It is these carers who are likely to have more intensive caring roles and who will have the greater support needs.

These demographic trends are reflected in the increasing number of people living with long term conditions including learning disabilities, dementia and mental health conditions, as well as a general growth in the older population.

We know from talking to unpaid carers and the mapping work that has been done, that some carers who need support find it difficult to get alternative care and many have been unable to have a break for a long time, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

“A short break is any break which strengthens and /or sustains informal caring relationships and enhances wellbeing of carers and people they support” Carers Trust Wales, Road to Respite Report, July 2021.

Welsh Government awarded local authorities a carers respite grant in 2021-22, with emphasis on supporting the development of flexible and person centred forms of respite instead of the more traditional sitting service or replacement care support.

The population needs assessment identified a wide range of services provided across the region to support carers. The Regional Project Manager leading on carers within the regional collaboration team continually maps the full range of services available to carers across North Wales, identifying any areas of duplication and also collaborative opportunities across all six councils and the health board.

In addition to the need for more carer breaks (respite care) provision across the region, the following local needs have been identified:

The following factors have an impact on unpaid carers;

- Gaps in general provision in services for carers of older people and the individuals receiving care.
- Waiting lists for domiciliary care support in each part of Gwynedd because of a lack of provision.
- Gaps in the provision for short term respite from caring when the individual who is being cared for has needs that cannot be met by voluntary/third sector support.
- day centres have been closed during the COVID period – we have been working to provide alternative support on a 1:1 basis. We are reopening day centres gradually and in the process of remodelling day care services for older people developing a more local provision for a smaller number of individuals.
- Respite care in residential homes came to an end during the COVID period as a result of the regulations. This provision has started again, but staffing challenges exist in the Council’s eleven residential homes.
- There are areas where there is a high percentage within the population of older people, and a low percentage of working age population – a recruitment

challenge and competing with other local services/younger individuals leaving the area for work opportunities.

- The geography of the area contributes to the gaps, with a number dependent on public transport for access to appropriate support.

Ynys Môn

The Council are committed to supporting unpaid carers by planning for the future. Forward Thinking Forward Planning is a project within Carers Outreach funded by Local Authority. The project focuses on having conversations with a carer about their current and future needs. Having a conversation at the earliest possible stage allows time to identify and arrange any changes or adaptations they require to support the person they care for, and themselves as the carer.

Gwynedd

The learning disability service has succeeded in continuing to offer respite for services over the Covid period. Over the past six months we have succeeded in increasing this provision, introducing individuals to respite for the first time e.g. transition age individuals, as well as being able to offer regular stays for individuals living at home with unpaid carers/family.

The demand for counselling services provided by the third sector (Carers Outreach) is substantially more than the provision which is currently available.

Day opportunities and support services are continuing to face a challenge regarding the staffing deficit/recruitment therefore a number of individuals are receiving less days/hours.

Use of a holiday bungalow (provided by Antur Waunfawr) has been extended for another six months, with the offer to anyone who is caring in Gwynedd to arrange a free short stay. A number of carers have taken advantage of this.

The Gwynedd community resilience work programme is looking at developing information hubs/community enterprises to meet needs on a local level.

There are respite opportunities for individuals with learning disabilities available through the Gwynedd and Môn Shared Lives Scheme and Seren Cyf. Work is continuing through the community hubs mentioned above to offer opportunities and activities locally and also through our Llwybrau Llesiant Team.

Denbighshire

There is increasing demand for more flexible provision of alternative and respite care covering weekends, overnight or pre-planned periods such as 'Respitivity' for older adults and for both children and adults with complex disabilities, to reduce carer breakdown, to reduce emergency admissions to residential care and to provide more life choices.

Flintshire

- Demand for respite and support for parent carers is a growing service demand, given the complexity of multiple health conditions some children have, as well as a high prevalence of children with Neurodevelopmental Conditions.
- Sourcing respite for children and adults with complex needs, including health needs, remains an ongoing challenge.
- Finding suitable Personal Assistants can be a challenge and an area that we need to develop as well as expanding community based support to build family resilience and capacity to sustain their caring role. Supporting the recruitment of Personal Assistants
- Local building based respite opportunities were severely impacted by the pandemic, with only emergency places being offered.

Wrexham

Engagement with unpaid carers in Wrexham has highlighted a number of significant challenges since the pandemic. Action plans have been developed in partnership with unpaid carers and support organisations. In order to drive the agenda forward, funding for an Unpaid Carers Lead Officer has been secured from the Regional Investment Fund 22/23.

The Unpaid Carers Direct Payment Scheme was launched in 2021/22. 31 payments were made last year. This enabled unpaid carers to purchase respite solutions which meet their needs flexibly.

Market stability

A wide range of support for unpaid carers in North Wales is grant funded or commissioned to third and voluntary sector organisations who have a long and

valued history of supporting unpaid carers. The third and voluntary sector can effectively draw in external funding to develop services for unpaid carers to provide added value to service provision. However, a reliance on grant funding can put the sustainability of some services at risk. Some carers services in North Wales are commissioned regionally or sub-regionally to try to streamline the commissioning and reporting requirements for organisations that work across the region.

The Population Needs Assessment identified that social value delivery models and added social value can be achieved through the shared experience of peer-carers, mutual support and reciprocity. Unpaid carers will require support to create co-operative arrangements and commissioners will need an investment strategy that builds capacity beyond the market.

It is important to have a balance of preventative services that address the health and wellbeing of carers and commissioned services that meet the assessed needs of carers.

The commissioning of services are set against the need to respond to budgetary pressures that are being faced nationally, and therefore investment in sustainable services is key to meeting demand.

We commission services that:

- are flexible, accessible county wide and meet the individual needs of carers
- are more sustainable in the long term.
- encourage engagement with, and access to, community based activities that support the carer and / or the cared for person.
- will enable carers to continue caring, including the provision of information, advice, peer support, training and short breaks away from the caring role.

Gwynedd

The domiciliary-care project is working to address the issues regarding domiciliary care and support for individuals in the community. The community resilience preventative agenda is looking at developing communities to support the preventative agenda. We are also adapting the Council's residential homes to create more dementia care units and day care and respite provision.

Denbighshire

Locally, a lot has been achieved to modernise support and ensure future services are commissioned with input from unpaid carers and families, to help identify 'what matters' and using Denbighshire's asset based approach to help them find solutions.

We encourage the creative use of direct payments and Bridging the Gap vouchers to support individual choice and allow unpaid carers to have a break or pursue social or leisure activities, with or without the cared-for person. For example, to enable unpaid carers to attend concerts, weddings, or pay for gym membership, flooring, new washing machine, training courses, driving lessons.

Identified needs in Denbighshire include:

- More specialist (condition specific) respite support to reflect the range of different needs, for example places that are suitable for people with acquired brain injury, stroke, dementia and other neurological conditions (in an emergency and also available to pre-book).
- Community based activities/events that provide respite care and benefit unpaid carers, with the capacity and trained staff/volunteers to continue to support people with progressive conditions who require higher levels of care.
- A wide range of flexible options including more sessional and community services spread across the whole of Denbighshire, especially in rural areas.
- Both emergency crisis support to keep people living independently at home and out of hospital and more regular, consistent respite options that are easy to book in advance.
- Group/individual support available in the evening and weekends, particularly for those carers who work and cannot attend support groups or access other services during the day.
- Good quality information, advice and assistance about the various respite options available.

Respite/short breaks work best when carers are confident with the arrangements, which in turn helps to reduce anxiety. The current recruitment crisis is impacting on providers who are finding it difficult to recruit staff and volunteers with the right skills and values to deliver high quality respite.

Respite support that works best for the carer and the cared-for person includes meaningful activities that fit in with their interests and hobbies. Denbighshire County

Council is promoting the development of Community Catalysts /Micro Employers and using additional volunteer capacity alongside commissioned services. We also encourage local social enterprises to run innovative projects to support unpaid carers.

We await further guidance from Welsh Government about developing respitality and a National Short Breaks Scheme. Locally carers can book guest accommodation in Extra Care schemes and two recently adapted properties in Ruthin and Corwen. Shared Lives is also available, mainly for people with complex disabilities who are matched with Shared Lives families. NEWCIS and Carers Outreach have respite property and a caravan.

Flintshire

We welcome the additional funding provided by Welsh Government to scale up a range of respite options for Carers to meet the anticipated spike in demand for respite services caused by the impact of the pandemic on the mental and physical health of carers.

We continue to explore flexible respite options for carers based on the outcomes the carer wants to achieve, alongside a meaningful activity to the cared for.

Our focus on ensuring stability of support for unpaid carers includes;

- Consider how micro-care can support an offer of day/ respite services.
- Further development of our Direct Payment offer for carers.
- Further development of Young Carers Services and the ID card.

9. Advocacy services

Advocacy means getting support from another person to help someone to express their views and wishes, and help stand up for their rights.

All people are very different from each other. Their needs for support are different, and may change during their life. A variety of advocacy has developed to recognise these differences.

All advocacy types are of equal value. What advocacy is used, and when, should depend on what is best suited to the person who seeks it. One type of advocacy is Independent Professional Advocacy which involves a professional, trained advocate working in a one-to-one partnership with an individual to ensure that their views are accurately conveyed and their rights upheld.

Children and young people

Advocacy is one of the key foundation stones in achieving our commitment to children's rights, ensuring children and young people can get help when they need it and from people that will listen to them and represent their views.

By law all local authorities in Wales must have advocacy services for children and young people to use, and that an Active Offer for advocacy must be made. Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) provide advocacy services to children and young people in North Wales.

When children and young people need services, sometimes an advocate is required to meet with them to explain what these services are. This helps them to understand what is on offer and how the service is able to help them. This is called an Active Offer.

An active offer must be made to:

- Children in care.
- Young people leaving care.
- Children and young people who need extra support.

Councils have a statutory responsibility to provide an independent professional advocacy service for children and young people which complies with all regulations,

standards, legislation, directions, code of practice, outcome framework and any amendments or replacements relevant to the service.

This includes but is not limited to:

- The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.
- The Service is an 'advocacy' service for the purpose of paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 1 of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016, and is accordingly a regulated service and must comply with the provisions/requirements set out within the Regulated Advocacy Service (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019.
- Independent Professional Advocacy: National Standards and Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in Wales.
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: Part 10 Code of Practice (Advocacy).
- Statutory Guidance relating to Parts 2 to 15 of The Regulated Advocacy Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019.

Young carers

A common need of young carers identified by service providers is advocacy support to have their voices heard.

Specific support for young carers and young adult carers has been commissioned across North Wales from the third sector. WCD / Credu Young Carers is commissioned to provide these services in Wrexham, Denbighshire and Conwy, NEWCIS provide the service in Flintshire and Action for Children provide the service across Gwynedd and Anglesey.

Adults

Local authorities must consider individuals' needs for advocacy support when carrying out various functions involving decisions that will have a significant impact on the person's day to day life, for example:

- Assessment of needs for care and support, support for carers and preventative services
- Provision of information, advice and assistance

- Preparing, maintaining or reviewing care and support plans
- Protecting property of persons cared for away from home
- Determination of person's ability to pay a charge
- Safeguarding and duty to report adults or children at risk
- Promoting integration of care and support with health services
- Receiving complaints or representations about social services

Advocacy:

- safeguards individuals who are vulnerable, discriminated against or whom services find difficult to serve
- speaks up on behalf of individuals who are unable to do so for themselves
- empowers individuals who need a stronger voice by enabling them to express their own needs and make their own informed decisions
- enables individuals to gain access to information, explore and understand their options, and to make their views, wishes and feelings known, and
- actively supports people to make informed choices.

Older people

The Golden Thread Advocacy Programme was funded by Welsh Government for four years from 2016 to 2020 to run alongside and support the implementation of Part 10 (Advocacy) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The programme has now ended, but Age Cymru's commitment to advocacy in Wales continues through the HOPE project.

Anglesey, Gwynedd and Wrexham: North Wales Advice and Advocacy Association (NWAAA) offer advocacy to over 65s

Conwy and Denbighshire: DEWIS Centre for Independent Living offer advocacy to anyone over 65, or any carer.

People living with dementia (all counties): Alzheimer's Society offer support for anyone living with dementia, whether they have capacity or can communicate or not.

Mental Health

People receiving secondary mental health care may need help from an Independent Mental Health Advocate (The Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010) or an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate.

Advocacy may be required for older people with dementia who have lost contact with all friends and family, or people with severe learning disabilities or long term mental health problems who have been in residential institutions for long periods and lack outside contacts.

Other people with mental health conditions may want support from another person when expressing their views, or to seek advice regarding decisions that impact them.

The following organisations provide specialist advocacy support for those with mental health needs;

- The Conwy and Denbighshire Mental Health Advocacy Service (CADMHAS) (Conwy and Denbighshire)
- Advocacy Services North East Wales (ASNEW) (Wrexham and Flintshire)
- Mental Health Advocacy Scheme (Gwynedd and Anglesey)

Learning disability

People with a learning disability often have poorer access to health improvement and early treatment services; for example, cancer screening services, diabetes annual reviews, advice on sex and relationships and help with contraception (Harris *et al.*, 2016). The Learning Disability Health Liaison Service in BCUHB work across North Wales to raise awareness and reduce inequalities.

Advocacy is also geared towards wellbeing outcomes. Local authorities have a duty to consider individuals' needs for advocacy when carrying out assessments and care planning. People with a Learning Disability may need support in ensuring that their voices are heard and their rights upheld.

Dewis Centre for Independent Living provide advocacy services for vulnerable adults aged 18 to 64, including people with learning disabilities. Anglesey also commission North Wales Advocacy Association (NWAA).

Autism

Advocacy for autistic adults, children and their carers ensures that individual rights are met. Advocacy can provide support in a number of ways including seeking a diagnosis, overcoming barriers and accessing services.

Self-advocacy

Additionally, there has been an appointment of a Regional Self Advocacy Officer as a result of a need to bring in new voices to self-advocacy groups across North Wales. This is being taken forward in a partnership between Conwy Connect, NWAAA and All Wales People First. The Self Advocacy Officer is a person with a learning disability and is employed by Conwy Connect. Their role is to link into local organisations and groups across North Wales to raise awareness and promote the benefits of self-advocacy to people with learning disabilities.

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (including Welsh Language & Socio-economic Duty) V9

Name of Policy or Practice	North Wales Social Care Market Stability Report		
Responsible Officer / Head of Department (responsible for the Policy or Practice)	Morwena Edwards and Claire Darlington		
Service / Department	North Wales Social Care and Wellbeing Improvement Collaborative	Start Date of Assessment	06/06/22

Name of officer(s) (and partners) completing the EqIA		
Name(s)	Job Title(s)	Signature(s)
Page 324 Catrin Perry	Regional Business Manager – Commissioning and Workforce	
Sarah Bartlett	Regional Innovation Coordination Hub Manager	
Natalie Pryor	Regional Innovation Coordination Project Manager	
	Commissioning, Contracts and Transformation Manager - Gwynedd County Council	
	Quality and Policy Officer - Denbighshire County Borough Council	
	Planning and Development Officer – Flintshire County Council	
	Planning and Development Officer – Wrexham County Borough Council	

	Isle of Anglesey County Council	
	BCUHB	
	Public Health Wales	

*Consider including only job titles when publishing

Document Version	Revision Date	Briefly Describe the Changes

EqIA Approved by Responsible Officer / Head of Department / Service / Committee	
Date EqIA Concluded	
Name	
Job Title	
Signature	

Page 2 of 2

Introduction

This document is a multi-purpose tool ensuring the appropriate steps are taken to comply with the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) Equality Impact Assessment legislation and to demonstrate that we have shown due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage when taking strategic decisions under the [Socio-economic Duty](#). It also ensures consideration of the [Welsh Language Standards](#).

When we plan to introduce a new, or revise an existing, policy or practice, make changes or cuts to a service or make strategic decisions, we are required to consider if the decision would have a disproportionate impact on people sharing one or more [protected characteristic](#) or whether it could create inequalities of outcome around socio-economic disadvantage. Where this is likely to be the case, we must take appropriate action. The EqIA process is not intended to prevent us doing things but to ensure we have considered the impact. It helps us focus on the actions we can take to remove and/or mitigate any disproportionate or discriminatory impact and introduce measures to advance equality of opportunity.

To comply with the [General Duty](#) and [Socio-economic Duty](#), we must have 'due regard' (or consciously consider the need) to: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations and to the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. The greater the relevance and potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. The General Duty will be more relevant to some functions than others and they may also be more relevant to some protected characteristics than others. Our duty must be exercised with rigour, an open mind and considered at a time when it can make a difference to our decisions. Policies with high

relevance, such as strategic budgetary decisions, grant-making programmes, changes to service delivery (including withdrawal or reorganisation of services), and recruitment or pay policies should always be subject to an assessment for impact. For further guidance see [EHRC Assessing Impact Guidance](#). Our duty to comply with this legislation cannot be delegated.

This form should demonstrate the steps taken to carry out the assessment including relevant engagement/consultation, the information taken into account, the results of the assessment and any decisions taken in relation to those results. The EqIA should be published where it shows a substantial (or likely) impact on our ability to meet the General Duty.

Benefits of undertaking an EqIA:

- Gain a better understanding of those who may be impacted by the policy or practice
- Better meet differing needs and become more accessible and inclusive
- Enable planning for success – identifies potential pitfalls and unintended consequences before any damage is done
- Enable improved planning that will make decisions proactive rather than reactive, avoid having to reverse decisions which could have cost and reputational implications
- Demonstrate decisions are thought through and have taken into account the views of those affected
- Enable us to manage expectations by explaining the limitations within which we are working (eg, budget)
- Help avoid risks and improve outcomes for individuals
- Remove inappropriate or harmful practices and eliminate institutional discrimination
- Ensure we put Welsh and English Language on an equal footing. and that decisions are made that safeguard and promote the use of the Welsh language

Whilst this document may seem lengthy, as well as containing the necessary steps in the process, it also contains guidance notes in the key areas to assist you in undertaking the EqIA. Additional links to further information are also included for assistance. Further information can be found on NHS/ WLGA PSED/ EIA [here](#).

Equality and Welsh Language Impact Assessment Steps

- Step 1 - Identify the Main Aims and Objectives of the Policy or Practice
- Step 2 - Data, Engagement and Assessing the Impact
- Step 3 - Procurement and Partnerships
- Step 4 - Dealing with Adverse or Unlawful Impact and Strengthening the Policy or Practice
- Step 5 - Decision to Proceed
- Step 6 - Actions and Arrangements for Monitoring Outcomes and Reviewing Data
- Step 7 - Publishing the Equality Impact Assessment

Important Note to Completing Officer(s):

It is important that the EqIA is completed when the policy or practice is being developed so that the findings from the EqIA can be used to influence and shape the policy or practice. It is recommended as a minimum, it is completed by a lead officer who is responsible for the policy or practice, a subject matter expert and a critical friend with at least one who has received formal EqIA training. This document needs to be presented to the decision makers along with the draft policy or practice as part of the decision making process.

Where you are developing a high level strategy or plan that does not contain sufficient detail to show how it will impact on individuals or groups (ie, where there will be plans and actions sitting beneath the strategy that will determine this), you should still undertake the full Equality Impact Assessment. You may also need to complete additional EqIA(s) on the plans and actions beneath the high level strategy. This will ensure you demonstrate that you have shown due regard to complying with the General Duty, the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Welsh Language Standards and the [Socio-economic Duty](#).

If your policy or practice is as a result of a UK, Welsh Government or Local Authority wide directive, you should still assess the impact of this locally to identify any differential impact due to local difference.

You should consider whether other events, eg, Covid-19, Brexit, Black Lives Matter, etc, have highlighted or exacerbated inequalities that need to be addressed as you work through the EqIA.

STEP 1 – Identify the Main Aims and Objectives of the Policy or Practice

1. What is being assessed? (Please double click on the relevant box(es) (X) and select 'checked' as appropriate)

- New and revised policies, practices or procedures (which modify service delivery or employment practices)
- Service review or re-organisation proposals which affect the community and/or staff, eg, early years provision, care, education
- Efficiency or saving proposals, eg, resulting in a change in community facilities, activities, support or employment opportunities
- Setting budget allocations for new financial year and strategic financial planning
- Decisions affecting service users, employees or the wider community including (de)commissioning or revised services
- New project proposals affecting staff, communities or accessibility to the built environment, eg, new construction work or adaptations to existing buildings, moving to on-line services, self-service, changing location
- Large Scale Public Events
- Local implementation of National Strategy/Plans/Legislation (refer to any national EqIA and consider local impact)
Strategic directive and intent, including those developed at Regional Partnership Boards and Public Service Boards which impact on a public bodies functions
- Medium to long term plans (for example, corporate plans, development plans, service delivery and improvement plans)
- Setting objectives (for example, well-being objectives, equality objectives, Welsh language strategy)
- Major procurement and commissioning decisions
- Decisions that affect the ability (including external partners) to offer Welsh language opportunities and services
- Other please explain in the box below:

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To ensure that the Market stability report draws on the Population Needs Assessment findings to reflect the needs of all people who require support from social care services and highlight gaps in provision for those individuals in North Wales including those with protected characteristics.

All actions arising from this assessment reflect the identified needs of people with protected characteristics and highlight gaps in services which will prevent inequality of service provision in the future through commissioning strategies and area plans.

2. What are the overall aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the policy or practice?

The North Wales Market Stability Report (MSR) assesses the supply and sufficiency of the social care market. The aim is to highlight gaps in service provision and provide information to support a more sustainable social care market and will be used as a tool by commissioners to analyse supply and demand alongside the Population Needs Assessment. The purpose of this Equalities Impact Assessment is to ensure that this is done in an inclusive way.

Together the PNA and MSR reports highlight areas of inequalities in social care provision across the region for specific population groups, intended to inform social care strategy, policy, planning and practice

The MSR highlights negative impacts of shortage of supply within the social care market, and have it will have a positive impact across all protected characteristics which will be realised through Local Area Plans, commissioning plans which dictate operational activity which impacts on those at most risk of inequality.

The MSR will provide

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A better understanding of the current picture of service provision across the region

Services can be developed based on actual need

Because the assessment is being done on a regional basis it's easier for people with protected characteristics to get involved and can develop regional response to the assessment which may have financial benefits, avoid duplication and so on.

3. Who are the main consultative groups (stakeholders)?

- *Regulated social care providers including private, third sector local authority 'in house' providers*
- *Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB)*
- *Public Health Wales*
- *Citizens receiving care and support*

In addition to the nine protected characteristics, the needs of the following health population groups were assessed within the PNA. There is a strong link between these groups and some protected characteristics.

- *Children and young people (Age)*
- *Older people (Age)*

- *Health, physical disability and sensory impairment (Disability)*
- *Learning disability (Disability)*
- *Autism (Disability)*
- *Mental health (Disability)*
- *Unpaid carers (Disability)*

4. Is the policy related to, influenced by, or affected by other policies or areas of work (internal or external), eg, strategic EqIAs if this is an operational EqIA and vice versa?

Note: Consider this in terms of statutory requirements, local policies, regional (partnership) decisions, national policies, welfare reforms.

- *The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced a new duty on local authorities and health boards to develop a joint assessment of the sufficiency and sustainability of the social care market.*
- *The Market Stability Report has been produced by the North Wales Regional Partnership Board in line with the Code of Practice (Welsh Government, 2021).*
- *The Market stability report will inform high level strategic priorities based on supply and demand analysis within Local Area Plans, which will in turn inform Strategic Commissioning Strategies and Market Position Statements.*
- *This is the first Market Stability Report produced and takes into account the findings from the North Wales Population Needs Assessment 2022, which provides data and insight from all stakeholders, including those receiving care and support to inform this impact assessment.*
- *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*
- *Regulation of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016*
- *Children Act 1989*
- *Childcare Act (2006)*
- *Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Bill 2015*
- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *Play Sufficiency Duty*
- *Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-23*
- *United Nations Principles for Older Persons*
- *Welsh Government Declaration of the Rights of Older People in Wales*
- *Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010*
- *Mental Capacity Act 2005*

- *Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015*
- *Serious Crimes Act*
- *Housing (Wales) Act 2014*

STEP 2 - Data, Engagement and Assessing the Impact

When completing this section, you need to consider if you have sufficient information with which to complete your EqIA, or whether you need to undertake a period of engagement/consultation before continuing. The legislation relating to the EqIA process requires you to **engage and involve people who represent the interests of those who share one or more of the protected characteristics and with those who have an interest in the way you carry out your functions**. The socio economic duty also requires us to **take into account the voices of those in the community including those with lived experience of socio economic disadvantage**. You should undertake engagement with communities of interest or communities of place to understand if they are more affected or disadvantaged by your proposals. This needs to be proportionate to the policy or practice being assessed. Remember that stakeholders can also include our own staff as well as partner organisations.

Before carrying out particular engagement activities, you should first look to data from recent consultations, engagement and research. This could be on a recent related policy or recent assessments undertaken by colleagues or other sources, eg, [Is Wales Fairer?](#), [North Wales Background Data Document](#), Info Base Cymru, WIMD. This can help to build confidence among groups and communities, who can see that what they have said is being acted on. If you have very little or no information from previous engagement that is relevant to this EqIA, you should undertake some engagement work with your stakeholders and with relevant representative groups to ensure that you do not unwittingly overlook the needs of each protected group. It is seldom acceptable to state simply that a policy will universally benefit/disadvantage everyone, and therefore individuals will be affected equally whatever their characteristics. The analysis should be more robust than this, demonstrating consideration of all of the available evidence and addressing any gaps or disparities. Specific steps may be required to address an existing disadvantage or meet different needs.

The Gunning Principles, established from past court cases, can be helpful in ensuring we apply fairness in engagement and consultation:

Principle 1: Consultation must take place when the proposals are still at a formative stage. You must not have already made up your mind.

Principle 2: Sufficient reasons must be put forward to allow for intelligent consideration and response. Have people been given the information and opportunity to influence?

Principle 3: Adequate time must be given for consideration and response. Is the consultation long enough bearing in mind the circumstances?

Principle 4: The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when finalising the decision.

5. Have you complied with the duty to engage as described above and are you sufficiently informed to proceed?

Yes X No *(please cross as appropriate X)*

6. If Yes, what engagement activities did you undertake and who with?

The MSR draws on the consultation and engagement work during the Population Needs Assessment. This includes;

- *A survey completed by over 350 individuals, organisations and partners. A detailed consultation report provides further detail on the methods and process.*
- *A comprehensive literature search undertaken with regard to the protected characteristics*
- *Findings from relevant research, legislation, strategies, commissioning plans, other needs assessments, position statements and consultation reports.*
- *A communications sub group of the Market Stability Report Steering Group led on the creation of a Registered Providers Survey. An invitation was sent to all registered providers by local authority commissioners. A total of 63 responses were received.*
- *Local teams undertook their own engagements where it was not being covered at regional level. Including 1-1's with registered providers.*

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If No, you may wish to consider pausing at this point while you undertake (further) engagement activities which you can include in the action plan below. Please incorporate any information obtained from this additional activity in the boxes in question 8.

Action	Dates	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility	Information added to EqIA (✓)

8. What information do you hold about the impact on each of the following characteristic and statutory considerations / duties from your experience of current service delivery and recent engagement or consultation? Include any additional relevant data; research and performance management information; surveys; Government, professional body or organisation studies; Census data; Is

Wales Fairer? (EHRC¹ data); information from initial screening; complaints/compliments; service user data and feedback; inspections/ audits; socio-economic data including WIMD² data. You may wish to include sub-headings showing where each element of your data has come from, eg, national data, local data, organisation data, general or specific engagement exercises, etc.

Consider any positive or negative impact including trends in data, geography (urban or rural issues), demography, access issues, barriers, etc. Also include any areas where there are inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage or other relevant issues identified by communities of interest or communities of place (ie, where stakeholders, service users, staff, representative bodies, etc. are grouped together because of specific characteristics or where they live) and any issues identified for people living in less favourable social and/or economic circumstances.

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
<p>Race</p>	<p><i>People from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups have higher coronavirus mortality rates. (PNA page 22)</i></p> <p><i>Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities' mental health were disproportionately affected by mental health needs due to the pandemic. (PNA page 214)</i></p> <p><i>BME communities told us that access to mental health services was an area for improvement. (Pg 211 PNA)</i></p> <p><i>Children with the lowest educational attainment before the pandemic will have fallen further</i></p>	<p>Positive Impact <i>Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</i></p>	<p>Consider Ethnicity Nationality Gypsies / Travellers Language: interpreter provision Refugee / Asylum Seekers Migrants Positive Action Awareness events United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD)</p>

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¹ Equality and Human Rights Commission

² Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	<p><i>behind their peers including children of certain ethnicities (PNA Pg 22)</i></p> <p><i>There is a lack of research about the experience of people from Black and minority ethnic groups with experience of Autism. This means it can be even harder to get the support they need. We need to understand the experiences of autistic people and families from different backgrounds and cultures and help create a society that works for all autistic people. (PNA page 196)</i></p>		
Disability	<p>Local Data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average local authority/health board Commissioned domiciliary care hours per week • Average hourly rate of domiciliary care by population group (£) <p><u>People with Mental Health needs</u> <i>There is a shortage of mental health provision across North Wales (PNA 2022)</i></p> <p><u>People with Learning Disability</u> <i>The level of spend on learning disability services has been increasing but we are now faced with supporting more people with less money (as a result of reducing local authority</i></p>	<p>Positive Impact <i>Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</i></p> <p><i>There is no specialist mental health provision including for autism and severe mental illness in Gwynedd. Conwy is the nearest location but the provision is non-Welsh speaking (MSR 2022).</i></p> <p>Positive Impact: <i>The MSR provides evidence to develop new and expand</i></p>	

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	<p>settlements, Independent Living Fund (ILF) closure and Housing Support Grant restrictions) (MSR 2022)</p> <p>There is a high demand for supported living accommodation for people with a LD (PNA 2022)</p> <p>This increase number of people living in the community with dementia and complex needs may increase the demand for home care services, in particular 'double staffed packages of care'. (MSR)</p> <p><u>Adults with learning difficulties and others with complex disabilities</u></p> <p>More bespoke housing is needed to cater for individual needs, particularly Step up/step down services are needed, where there is a placement breakdown and an individual needs more intense support for a period, rather than admission to hospital (PNA 2022)</p>	<p>existing services where there are gaps in provision.</p> <p>Positive Impact Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</p> <p>The information from the MSR will help commissioners support private and in house providers to improve financial sustainability and plan budgets effectively.</p> <p>The information from the MSR will help commissioners to devise strategy and plans to mitigate the risk of longer waiting times and individuals moving into to residential homes.</p>	
Disability continued	<p><u>Unpaid carers</u></p> <p>There are around 79,000 people of all ages providing unpaid care in North Wales (2011), and we expect this number to be increasing as</p>	<p>Positive Impact Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</p>	<p>Mobility / Dexterity Blind or Visually impaired Deaf or Hearing impaired Mental Health Learning Disabilities Dementia Neurological difference / Autism Access to buildings/ facilities</p>

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	<p><i>the need for care and support increases. The PNA Unpaid carers chapter</i></p>	<p><i>The information from the PNA and MSR identifies the lack of provision in the care market leads to additional demands on unpaid carers. Specifically, this is impacting the complexity of care meaning that unpaid carers are experiencing caring responsibilities with higher needs of care. People living longer coupled with Covid-19 increased the pressure on unpaid carers further.</i></p> <p>Positive impact: <i>The MSR provides the evidence needed to support business cases, funding applications and justify increasing resources to support unpaid carers.</i></p>	<p>Access to communication methods Carers Dietary requirements Other Long Term Health Conditions United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)</p>
Sex	<p><i>Men have higher corona virus mortality rates (PNA Pg22)</i></p> <p><i>Women and girls often struggle to get referred to Autism diagnostic services, with many being forced to pursue private diagnosis. (PNA page 196) .</i></p> <p><i>Studies have shown that disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse and are also twice as likely to suffer assault and rape (Safe Lives: 2017).(PNA Page 150)</i></p>	<p>Positive Impact; <i>insight into the inequalities faced by men and women will help to identify likely support needs and plan services effectively.</i></p>	<p>Men / Women Gender Identity Toilet facilities/baby changing Childcare Gender Pay Gap Sex workers United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UNCEDAW)</p>

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	<p><i>Research suggests that women experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to experience a mental health condition, while women with mental health conditions are more likely to be domestically abused. 30-60% of women with a mental health condition have experienced domestic violence (Howard et al: 2009). (PNA page 217)</i></p>		
Age	<p><u>Older People who need residential care</u> Regional/National data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Estimated number of people aged over 65 in 2020 and projected number in 2040 (Mid-year 2020 population estimates, Office for National Statistics; and 2018-based population projections, Welsh Government)</i> - <i>Older people have increased covid-19 mortality rates (Pg 22 PNA)</i> <p>Local data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Current number of adult care homes (age 18 and over) by type and area (Local authority MSR data toolkits)</i> - <i>Current number of permanent care home placements available to all adults aged 18 and over</i> - <i>Percentage of vacant care home placements, 31 March 2021</i> - <i>Gwynedd older people’s care home placements (local authority data)</i> 	<p><i>The PNA highlighted the need for specialist provision for older people in a residential care setting. The MSR identified this as a gap in provision. This includes residential care for older people including;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dementia care provision</i> • <i>Older peoples mental health residential and nursing placements</i> • <i>For older people with a learning disability who also have physical health and dementia needs</i> <p>Positive impact: <i>The MSR will provide evidence to make these types of provision a priority when considering development of workforce training needs, establishing and developing new services and development of buildings to meet demand.</i></p>	<p>Older People Children Young People Working Age People Young Families Demographics NB: Where children / young people are affected complete the Childrens Rights Checklist United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Caring responsibilities</p>

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anglesey MSR adult residential care market overview - No of out of county placements for specialist residential care provision in Denbighshire (local authority data) - No of care home closures 2019-2021 (local authority) - Feedback from care home residents - Feedback from providers <p>Due to a combination of people living at home longer and an ageing population, the complexity of those requiring adult residential care, and demand for care placements is increasing. The current mix of general needs and specialist residential care provision does not match projected future demand (MSR)</p>	<p>Positive Impact Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</p> <p>Older people requiring specialist residential care are more likely to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have their discharge delayed (Increase in Delayed Transfers of Care from hospital) • Be placed out of county <p>Positive impact: MSR provides insight which may help providers to repurpose and create new provision where needed to meet demand.</p>	
Age continued	<p><u>Older People who need Domiciliary Care National Data</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Predicted number of people aged 65 and over who struggle with activities of daily living (Daffodil, Mid-year population estimates, Office for National Statistics and 2018-based population projections, Welsh Government) 	<p>Positive Impact Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</p> <p>There is a lack of available domiciliary care across the region impacted by a shortage of care staff. The nature of current arrangements mean that providers can refuse to give care, or return packages. Frequent emergencies</p>	

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Average local authority/health board Commissioned domiciliary care hours per week (local authority data collection) - Percentage market estimated share of domiciliary care sector by type (local authority data) - Number of providers by operating area (Local authority data) - Numbers of people who receive domiciliary care packages in Conwy (local authority data) - Demographic of people accessing domiciliary care in Flintshire - Number of care hours handed back by providers (<p>Demand for domiciliary care exceeds supply of domiciliary care provision in every area of North Wales. The majority of people who access domiciliary care across the region are over 65. Although this is also likely to impact on adults with long term health conditions and physical disabilities.</p>	<p>can occur, where providers report that they are no longer able to provide care due to staffing problems</p> <p>The MST provides analysis which may support providers and commissioners to develop mitigating actions to reduce the risk of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People not receiving the care they need and are at risk of ‘slipping’ through the net’. • moving into residential care instead. • increased pressures for those who have family, friends or other support networks taking on the role of an unpaid carers 	
Age (continued)	<p><u>Children and Young People who need residential care</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children and Young People’s Market Position Statement (2021 update) 	<p>Positive Impact Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</p>	

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Out of county placements (StatsWales)</i> <p><i>Over 50% of children in residential care from North Wales are placed out of county, away from parents, siblings and support networks, impacting on the whole family (MPS)</i></p> <p><i>There is a shortage of;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>local residential providers.</i> - <i>specialist provision for children and young people with complex behavioural and emotional needs</i> - <i>emergency accommodation</i> 	<p><i>For children and young people who cannot access safe/emergency accommodation due to their complex behavioural and emotional needs; cases of the use of s136 suites, inappropriate presentation/admission to hospital, delays in discharge and the use of unregulated care have been identified by local authority Children’s services.</i></p> <p>Positive Impact: <i>The MSR provides information which may help commissioners to rebalance the care market, develop new models of care and create increased care capacity to meet the needs of children and young people. There is competition for placements, providers can ‘cherry pick’ individuals with least complex needs. Meaning those with a greater level of need wait longer to be placed or are sent further away from home.</i></p>	
Religion & Belief		<p>Positive Impact <i>Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</i></p>	<p>Faith Communities Non Beliefs Dietary requirements Vegetarianism/Veganism Other philosophical beliefs Dress code/uniforms Religious festivals/activities</p>

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
Sexual Orientation	<p><i>Surveys suggest older lesbian and gay people also experience higher levels of loneliness. Loneliness is associated with a range of health risks, including coronary heart disease, depression, cognitive decline and premature mortality (Valtorta et al., 2016).</i></p> <p><i>Risk factors for poor mental health disproportionately affect people from higher risk and marginalised groups. This includes Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (PNA Page 219)</i></p> <p><i>Surveys suggest older lesbian and gay people also experience higher levels of loneliness. Loneliness is associated with a range of health risks, including coronary heart disease, depression, cognitive decline and premature mortality (Valtorta et al., 2016).</i></p>	Positive Impact <i>Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</i>	Gay Lesbian Bi-sexual Heterosexual Terminology Confidentiality about sexuality
Gender Reassignment		Positive Impact <i>Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</i>	A person who proposes to, starts or has changed their gender identity Transgender Appropriate language use, ie, appropriate pronouns Gender neutral changing facilities and toilets
Marriage & Civil Partnership		Positive Impact <i>Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</i>	Marital status Civil Partnership status

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
Pregnancy & Maternity		Positive Impact <i>Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</i>	Pregnant mothers Those entitled to maternity and paternity leave Foster/Adoption Breastfeeding mothers
Welsh Language	<i>Shortages of staff, service availability lead and of county placements. This increases the likelihood of first language welsh speakers receiving care in English. This has been highlighted in particular for individuals where welsh language is a fundamental element of service provision, including; children and adults with complex needs such as individuals living with physical and learning disabilities including mental health and Autism.</i>	Positive: <i>The MSR provides an assessment of the gaps in care provision of private providers in the welsh language and identified barriers to receiving care in welsh for planning future provision; including workforce recruitment and retention issues and increased out of county placements.</i>	Ensuring equal status of both Welsh and English languages. Availability of and access to services, activities and information. Technology Rights of individuals to ask for WL services. Impact on Welsh speaking communities, including: Positive / negative effects on opportunities to use the WL. Possible changes to number/percentage of Welsh speakers Migration Job opportunities / Staffing changes. Training needs and opportunities Availability of Welsh medium education
Socio Economic Considerations	<i>People from certain ethnic groups, children, disabled people, carers are all more likely to experience poverty. (PNA Page 22)</i>	Positive Impact <i>Having a stable social care market and delivering care closer to home and improving access will have a positive impact on those with lower socio economic status</i>	People living in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others in the same society. Disadvantage may be exacerbated by many factors of

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	<p><i>Rhyl West 1, Rhyl West 2 and Queensway 1 in Wrexham are within the ten most deprived areas in Wales (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019)</i></p> <p><i>People living within the most deprived communities in North Wales have a 25% higher rate of emergency admissions, there is a stark life expectancy disparity of 7 years and a general poor health and disability discrepancy of 14 years (BCUHB Annual Equality Report 2020-2021).</i></p>		<p>daily life, not just urban or rural boundaries.</p> <p>'Intersectionality' issues - where identity compounds socio-economic status, eg, single parents (often women), disabled people, some BAME groups.</p>
Human Rights	<p><i>People from Minority Ethnic groups are more likely to be sectioned under the Mental Health Act (Race and Mental Health – Tipping the Scale, Mind, 2019)</i></p> <p><i>The restrictions that have been implemented to manage the pandemic have impacted on children's ability to access their human rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the right to access to health care... and less well protected from violence, abuse and neglect. (PNA Page 76)</i></p> <p><i>In the report 'Locked Out: Liberating Disabled People's Lives and Rights Beyond Covid-19' (2021) it is recognised that the pandemic has</i></p>	<p>Positive Impact <i>Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</i></p>	<p>See Human Rights Articles below. https://humanrightstracker.com/en/ on EHRC website</p>

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	<i>had a detrimental impact on many areas of life for those with learning disabilities.</i>		
Other (please state)		Positive Impact <i>Having a stable social care market will have a positive impact on all protected characteristics. Key areas for mitigation in area plans and commissioning strategies below.</i>	Eg, Modern Slavery, Safeguarding, Other Covid effects, Carers, Ex-offenders, Veterans, Care Leavers, Substance Abuse, Homeless

Page 344	Human Rights Act 1998	
	Article 2 Right to life	• Article 8 Respect for private life, family, home and correspondence
	Article 3 Freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment	• Article 9 Freedom of thought, belief and religion
	Article 4 Freedom from Slavery and forced labour	• Article 10 Freedom of expression
	Article 5 Right to liberty and security	• Article 11 Freedom of Assembly and association
	Article 6 Right to a fair trial	• Article 12 Right to marry and start a family
	• Article 7 No punishment without law	• Article 13 Right to access effective remedy if rights are violated
	• Article 14 Protection from discrimination	

9. Are there any data or information gaps and if so what are they and how do you intend to address them?

To strengthen future work, local authorities could review equality information for those individuals receiving services by protected characteristic to strengthen understanding of needs at a strategic level. Regionally this data could be analysed against population data to check whether groups can access services when they need them and receive the same quality of care as the general population.

Note: If it is not possible to obtain this information now, you should include this in your action plan in Step 6 so that this information is available for future EqIAs.

10. How does your proposal ensure that you are working in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011), to ensure the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language, and that every opportunity is taken to promote the Welsh language (beyond providing services bilingually) and increase opportunities to use and learn the language in the community?

Welsh language considerations were taken into account – all consultation was bilingual including surveys and correspondence. The MSR is issues for stakeholder approval bilingually and published bilingually. Where requested documents have been translated for local authority staff who were first welsh speaking.

11. **If this EqIA is being updated from a previous version of a similar policy or practice, were the intended outcomes of the proposal last time achieved or were there other outcomes?** (Please provide details, for example, was the impact confined to the people you initially thought would be affected, or were other people affected and if so, how?)

N/A

12. **What is the cumulative impact of this proposal on different protected groups when considering other key decisions affecting these groups made by the organisation?** (You may need to discuss this with your Service Head or Cabinet Member to consider more widely if this proposal will affect certain groups more adversely because of other decisions the organisation is making, eg, financial impact/poverty, withdrawal of multiple services and whether this is disadvantaging the same groups, eg, disabled people, older people, single parents (who are mainly women), etc)

13. **How does this proposal meet with the 7 goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 including to create a More Equal Wales? (Summarise findings if you may have already considered this as part of the screening process)**

For more information, please see: <https://futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

The MSR highlights challenges faced in the last 5 years within the social care market which are barriers to achieving the vision of A Healthier Wales and a More Equal Wales by setting out service provision and providing data, research and analysis to inform future planning.

14. **Describe any intended negative impact identified and explain why you believe this is justified** (for example, on the grounds of advancing equality of opportunity or fostering good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not or because of an objective justification¹ or positive action²)

N/A

Note¹: Objective Justification - gives a defence for applying a policy, rule or practice that would otherwise be unlawful direct or indirect discrimination. To rely on the objective justification defence, the employer, service provider or other organisation must show that its policy or rule was for a good reason – that is 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'. A **legitimate aim** is the reason behind the discrimination which must not be discriminatory in itself and must be a genuine or real reason, eg, health, safety or welfare of individuals. If the aim is simply to reduce costs because it is cheaper to discriminate, this will not be legitimate. Consider if the importance of the aim outweighs any discriminatory effects of the unfavourable treatment and be sure that there are no alternative measures available that would meet the aim without too much difficulty (proportionate) and would avoid the discriminatory effect.

Note²: Positive Action - Where an employer takes specific steps to improve equality in the workplace to address any imbalance of opportunity, lessen a disadvantage or increase participation in a particular activity, for example, increasing the number of disabled people in senior roles where they are under-represented by targeting specific groups with job adverts or offering training to help create opportunities for certain groups. The public sector is expected to consider the use of positive action to help them comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

15. Could any of the negative impacts identified amount to unlawful discrimination but are perceived to be unavoidable (eg, reduction in funding)?

Yes No Not Sure (Please double click on the relevant box (X) and select 'checked' as appropriate)

16. If you answered Yes or Not Sure to question 15, please state below, which protected group(s) this applies to and explain why (including likely impact or effects of this proposed change)

Page 32/36
32/A

17. If you answered No to question 15, are there any barriers identified which amount to a differential impact for certain groups and what are they?

The populations health needs are more likely to be more intensive for Older People, Children and Younger People and those with a Physical or Learning disability – impacting significantly on the protected characteristics of Age and Disability.

The work of the MSR and PNA seeks to identify those barriers and will not pose any new negative impacts.

STEP 3 - Procurement and Partnerships

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires all public authorities to consider the needs of protected characteristics when designing and delivering public services, including where this is done in partnership with other organisations or through procurement of services. The Welsh Language Standards also require all public authorities to consider the effects of any policy decision, or change in service delivery, on the Welsh language, which includes any work done in partnership or by third parties. We must also ensure we consider the Socio-economic Duty when planning major procurement and commissioning decisions to consider how such arrangements can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.

When procuring works, goods or services from other organisations (on the basis of a relevant agreement), we must have due regard to whether it would be appropriate :

- for the award criteria for that contract to include considerations to help meet the General Duty (to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations);
- to stipulate conditions relating to the performance of the contract to help meet the three aims of the General Duty.

This only applies to contractual arrangements that are “relevant agreements” which means either the award of a ‘public contract’ or the conclusion of a ‘framework agreement’, both of which are regulated by the Public Sector Directive (Directive 2004/18/EC) which regulates the specified EU thresholds. Further information can be found [here](#).

We must consider how such arrangements can improve equal opportunities and reduce inequalities of outcome due to protected characteristics and caused by socio-economic disadvantage, particularly on major procurement and commissioning decisions. The PSED applies to the work that private sector organisations undertake when delivering a public function on our behalf. We therefore need to ensure that those organisations exercise those functions by ensuring our procurement and monitoring of those services complies with the General Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. In the same way, the Welsh Language Standards applies to any work undertaken on behalf of, and in the name of, public bodies that are themselves subject to the Standards, and so consideration should be given to how these requirements are monitored and communicated through the procurement documents. The Socio Economic Duty does not pass to a third party through procurement, commissioning or outsourcing. Therefore when we work in partnership with bodies not covered by the Socio Economic Duty, the duty only applies to us as the relevant public body.

18. Is this policy or practice to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors or in partnership with another organisation(s)?

Yes No (Please double click on the relevant box (X) and select ‘checked’ as appropriate)

If No, please proceed to Step 4

19. **If Yes, what steps will you take to comply with the General Equality Duty, Human Rights and Welsh Language Legislation and the Socio-Economic Duty in regard to procurement and/or partnerships? Think about :**

Procurement

- Setting out clear equality expectations in Tendering and Specification documentation, showing how promotion of equality may be built into individual procurement projects
- On what you based your decisions in the award process, including consideration of ethnical employment and supply chain code of practice
- Ensure that contract clauses cover the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and socio-economic requirements as well as Welsh Language Duties (remember that any duties from the Welsh Language Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards are also applicable to services provided on your behalf under contract by external bodies).
- Performance and Monitoring measures are included to monitor compliance, managing and enforcing contracts

Partnerships

Be clear about who is responsible for :

- Equality Monitoring relevant data
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Delivering the actions from the EqIA
- Ensuring that equality, human rights and Welsh Language legislation is complied with by all partners
- Demonstrating due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Socio-Economic duty

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Partners are local authority commissioners and the local health board who are required to fully comply and manage compliance of equality, human rights, welsh language legislation and due regard to Public Sector Equality, and Socio Economic duty within commissioning practices

STEP 4 - Dealing with Adverse or Unlawful Impact and Strengthening the Policy or Practice

20. **When considering proportionality, does the policy or practice have a significantly positive or negative impact or create inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage?**

(Please give brief details)

Significantly positive impact	Significantly negative impact
<p><i>Thorough research was undertaken during for the PNA and MSR which will provide insight for stakeholders on which groups of people are most likely to be at risk of socio economic disadvantage and plan to support those individuals effectively. This should have a long term positive impact across the region, influencing strategy, policy making and practice for local authorities and health board commissioners</i></p>	

and independent and third sector providers within the social care market.

21. It is important that you record the mitigating actions you will take in developing your final policy/practice draft. Record here what measures or changes you will introduce to the policy or practice in the final draft which could reduce or remove any unlawful or negative impact or disadvantage and/or improve equality of opportunity/introduce positive change; or reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage? (This could also inform the Action Plan in Q30)

Unlawful or Negative Impact Identified	Mitigation / Positive Actions Taken in the Policy/Practice	Completed (✓)
N/A		

22. Will these measures remove any unlawful impact or disadvantage?

Yes No (Please double click on the relevant box (X) and select 'checked' as appropriate)

23. If No, what actions could you take to achieve the same goal by an alternative means?

N/A

24. What measures or changes in the following important legislative areas have you included to strengthen or change the policy/practice:

- a) to foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity as covered by the General Duty in the Equality Act 2010;
- b) to reduce inequalities of outcome as a result of socio-economic disadvantage;
- c) to increase opportunities to use the Welsh language and in treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language as set out in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and reduce or prevent any adverse effects that the policy/practice may have on the Welsh language?

N/A

25. Do you have enough information to make an informed judgement?

Yes No (Please double click on the relevant box (X) and select 'checked' as appropriate)

26. If you answered Yes, please justify:

N?A

27. If you answered No, what information do you require and what do you need to do to make a decision?

(Note: Should data collection be included in the action plan (Step 6)?)

You may need to stop here until you have obtained the additional information]

STEP 5 - Decision to Proceed

28. Using the information you have gathered in Steps 1 – 4 above, please state on the table below whether you are able to proceed with the policy or practice and if so, on what basis?

(Please double click on the relevant box (X) and select 'checked' as appropriate)

Decision	
X <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Continue with policy or practice in its current form
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Continue with policy or practice but with amendments for improvement or to remove any areas of adverse impact identified in Step 4
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Continue with the plan as any detrimental impact can be justified
<input type="checkbox"/> No	Do not continue with this policy or practice as it is not possible to address the adverse impact. Consider alternative ways of addressing the issues.

29. Are there any final recommendations in relation to the outcome of this Equality Impact Assessment?

--

STEP 6 - Actions and Arrangements for Monitoring Outcomes and Reviewing Data

The EqIA process is an ongoing one that doesn't end when the policy/practice and EqIA 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 if the outcomes have changed since you introduced or amended this new policy or practice. If you do not hold relevant data, then you should be taking steps to rectify this in your action plan. To review the EHRC guidance on data collection you can review their [Measurement Framework](#).

30. Please outline below any actions identified in Steps 1-5 or any additional data collection that will help you monitor your policy/practice once implemented:

Action	Dates	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility	Add to Service Plan (✓)

31. Please outline below what arrangements you will make to monitor and review the ongoing impact of this policy or practice including timescales for when it should be formally reviewed:

Monitoring and Review arrangements (including where outcomes will be recorded)	Timeframe & Frequency	Lead Responsibility	Add to Service Plan (✓)

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STEP 7 - Publishing the Equality Impact Assessment

Please arrange for this completed EqIA to be agreed by your Head of Service/Department and arrange for translation and publishing with a copy sent to the Equality Officer.

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to the Cabinet

Meeting Date:	13 September 2022
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Ioan Thomas
Contact Officer:	Dewi Morgan, Head of Finance
Contact Number:	01286 682684
Item Title:	Council Tax Premium on Second Homes and Long-term Empty Properties

1. DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1. To hold a public consultation on the possible proposal to raise the Premium on the Council Tax of Second Homes and Long-term Empty Properties beyond 100% and up to 300% for the financial year 2023/24.**
- 1.2. Delegate powers to the Head of Finance in consultation with the Head of Legal Services to prepare a public consultation package in accordance with the report and any recommendations from Cabinet.**

2. REASON WHY DECISION IS NEEDED

- 2.1. For financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23, the Council has charged a Council Tax Premium of 100%, which was the highest allowed under the law for these financial years. Legislative changes mean the Council can charge a Premium of up to 300% from 1 April 2023.
- 2.2. The full Council must make an annual decision on the Premium rate, and in order to comply with the legal requirements, if the Council wanted to increase the Premium level, there would have to be a public consultation on the proposal.
- 2.3. Details on the legal requirement to consult is outlined in part 4 below.
- 2.4. The Cabinet's decision to agree to hold a public consultation on the level of the Premium is sought, so that appropriate action can be taken that would allow the full Council to reach a decision on the Premium level for 2023/24 at its meeting on 1 December 2022, whether that is a decision to increase the Premium or to keep it at the same level.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1. Up to and including the current financial year (2022/23), the Local Government Finance Act 1992 has given the Council discretion to levy full Council Tax, allow a discount of up to 50%, or charge a Premium of up to an additional 100% on Council Tax of certain classes of second homes and long-term empty dwellings. From 1 April 2023, local authorities will be able to charge a Premium of up to 300%.

- 3.2. On 8 December 2016, the Council resolved to charge a 50% Premium on Council Tax for relevant second homes and long-term empty dwellings for the 2018/19 financial year. On 4 March 2021 the Council resolved that it would increase the Premium to 100%, the maximum allowed, for the year 2021/22.
- 3.3. On 2 December 2021, the Council resolved to keep the Premium at 100% for 2022/23. A link to the report is found here:

[Item 8 - Discretionary Powers to Allow Discounts and or Raise a Premium 2022-23.pdf \(llyw.cymru\)](#)

4. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. Local authorities were empowered to increase the maximum Premium charged to 300% from 1 April 2023 through the [The Council Tax \(Long-term Empty Dwellings and Dwellings Occupied Periodically\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2022](#) which came into force in March 2022
- 4.2. This change is part of a wider package of changes announced by the Welsh Government as part of “a wider commitment to address the issue of second homes and unaffordable housing facing many communities in Wales, as set out in the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru”.
- 4.3. According to Welsh Government, “The commitment is to take immediate and radical action using the planning, property and taxation systems.”. A link to the statement is found here: [New tax rules for second homes | GOV.WALES](#)
- 4.4. Addressing the shortage of affordable housing within Gwynedd as well as the high number of second homes are among the Council's top priorities. One of the tools available to the Council to deal with the situation is the Council Tax Premium. The Welsh Government's statutory guidance, *Guidance on the Implementation of the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes in Wales*, is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report. Paragraphs 20 and 21 state:

20. The discretion given to local authorities to charge a premium is intended to be a tool to help local authorities to:

- **bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes; and**
- **support local authorities in increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.**

21. In considering whether or not to charge a premium, regard should be given to these aims. Authorities should take into account the particular housing need and circumstances in their area.

4.5. Paragraph 22 goes on to set out the factors that will need to be weighed up as the Council reaches a final decision if it is to increase the Premium level or not for 2023/23.

22. There are a range of factors which could help inform local authorities in deciding whether to charge a premium. Whilst some factors will be specific to either long-term empty homes or second homes, others will be common to both. A list of these factors is set out below to assist local authorities. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

- **Numbers and percentages of long-term empty homes or second homes in the area;**
- **Distribution of long-term empty homes or second homes and other housing throughout the authority and an assessment of their impact on property values in particular areas;**
- **Potential impact on local economies and the tourism industry;**
- **Patterns of demand for, and availability of, affordable homes;**
- **Potential impact on local public services;**
- **Potential impact on the local community;**
- **Other measures that are available to authorities to increase housing supply;**
- **Other measures that are available to authorities to help bring empty properties back into use.**

4.6. The *Housing Action Plan*, which was adopted by the Cabinet in December 2020, sets out five objectives that must be addressed if the Council is to achieve the vision of ensuring that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable, quality home, which is affordable and improves their quality of life. The Plan includes suggestions for a comprehensive work programme, which fulfils the Council's expectation that a significant proportion of Premium income is used to achieve the vision. This is evidence of the Council using Premium income in accordance with statutory guidance.

4.7. The terminology used in Section 12B is not “second homes” or “holiday homes” but rather “dwellings occupied periodically”. The Act states that the conditions for a property to be subject to a “second home” Council Tax premium is, **“there is no resident of the dwelling, and the dwelling is substantially furnished”**. That is, the property is not anyone’s main home, but it has been furnished. The Act does not include any provision to be able to distinguish on the basis of where the owner lives, or if it is used for the purposes of holidays.

4.8. For the purposes of collecting Council Tax, regulations have categorised 'second homes' into two classes, namely classes A and B. Class C refers to empty properties:

- **Class A** – Second homes which are unoccupied and furnished, with a restriction on occupancy for a period of at least 28 consecutive days in any 12-month period.
- **Class B** – Second homes which are unoccupied and furnished.
- **Class C** – empty and unfurnished properties, and have been such for a period of over 6 months.

- 4.9. A “resident” in relation to any dwelling, means an individual who has attained the age of 18 years and has his sole or main residence in the dwelling (Section 6(5)) Local Government Finance Act 1992).
- 4.10. On 13 July 2022, there were:
- **4,656** dwellings subject to the Premium on second homes (Class B)
 - **200** further second homes in Class B but not paying the Premium as they were subject to one of the exemptions outlined in 3.11 below.
 - **761** properties within Class A where occupation is prohibited for a period of at least 28 days in the relevant year.
- 4.11. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 defines a long-term empty property, for the purposes of raising a Council Tax Premium (Section 12A), as follows: “***a dwelling is a “long-term empty dwelling” on any day if for a continuous period of at least 1 year ending with that day it has been unoccupied, and it has been substantially unfurnished***”. To be able raise a long-term empty property Premium on any day, the dwelling must be unoccupied, and unfurnished, for a continuous period of at least one year up to the day from which the Premium is payable.
- 4.12. Since the Council Tax Premium was first introduced in 2018/19, Gwynedd Council has decided annually to raise the same level of premium on long-term empty properties as on second homes, but different levels can be raised if local circumstances justify this.

4.13. The 1992 Act also contains a provision giving the Welsh Ministers the right to impose certain exceptions (in classes) where a Council Tax premium cannot be imposed. This was done through the [Council Tax \(Exceptions to Higher Amounts\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2015 \(SI 2015/2068\)](#) which came into force on 31 January 2016. The table below outlines the exemptions where a Premium cannot be raised:

Classes of Dwellings	Definition	Type of property that is eligible for an exemption from paying the premium
Class 1	Dwellings being marketed for sale – time-limited for one year	Long-term Empty Properties and Second Homes
Class 2	Dwellings being marketed for let – time-limited for one year	
Class 3	Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling	
Class 4	Dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation	
Class 5	Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings	Second Homes
Class 6	Seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited	
Class 7	Job-related dwellings	

Table 1: Exceptions where a Premium cannot be raised

5. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Consultation

- 5.1. Sections 12A and 12B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 both contain a clause stating unequivocally that the Council must have regard to any guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers: “In exercising its functions under this section a billing authority must have regard to any guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers”.
- 5.2. This guidance, *Guidance on the Implementation of the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes in Wales*, is included as **Appendix 1** to this report. They set out the framework of considerations that are relevant to a decision. Members' attention is also drawn in particular to the content of paragraph 23:

23. The determination by a local authority to charge a premium under section 12A or 12B of the 1992 Act must be made by full Council. Prior to doing so, a local authority must give due consideration to its statutory duties to carry out equality impact assessments under the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh Public Sector Equality Duties 2011 and to all other relevant considerations. A local authority should also give consideration to engagement and consultation with key stakeholders, including the local electorate, before taking a decision as to whether or not to charge one or both of the premiums.

- 5.3. A decision to increase the level of Premium without following the steps in this statutory guidance, which includes meaningful public consultation, would leave the Council open to challenge in the courts. A successful challenge can mean that the decision taken by the Council is judged to be unlawful and set aside.
- 5.4. If this were to happen, this could not only mean that the Premium could not be charged in 2021/22, but second home owners and long-term empty properties would also have to be given a 50% discount for the year as this is the default position under Section 11(2)(a) of the 1992 Act. This is why the Council must decide annually, as it has done since 1998, to allow NO discount to a second home, and has made a similar decision for long-term empty properties since 2009. Note that the Act prevents the billing authority from adjusting the level of Premium or Discount for any financial year once the relevant financial year has commenced.

Equality

- 5.5. As happened on previous occasions when the Premium was introduced or increased, an Impact Assessment on Equality, Welsh language and Socio-Economic Disadvantage will be presented to cabinet and the full Council as they consider the options available to them. A copy of the assessment when the premium was increased in 2021 has been included as **Appendix 2**, and the work of carrying out a new assessment has already begun.

Data Protection

- 5.6. One of the lessons learned from the 2020/21 consultation was that the public asked for a full copy of the responses received, and as background papers to the decision they had to be disclosed. Although the questionnaire did not require respondents to disclose any personal information, significant work was required to ensure that any information contained was removed; this was a significant use of staff resource, and we will act to avoid such a situation arising this time.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 5.7. There is a duty to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle, which is to seek to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In acting in accordance with this general duty the Council needs to consider the importance of long-term impact, being integrated, inclusive, collaborative and preventative in developing and implementing the proposal before. The requirements of the Act shall apply to the recommended direction.
- 5.8. A public consultation would allow us to gather evidence that will give us the means to ensure that the Council's policy with regards to the Council Tax Premium has been properly assessed against the sustainable development principle.

6. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 6.1. The consultation is scheduled to take place during September/October 2022 and be kept open for 28 days, reporting the results to the Cabinet meeting on 22 November 2022, so that it can make a recommendation on the level of Council Tax Premium for 2023/24 to the full Council on 1 December 2022.
- 6.2. As part of the governance arrangements, the matter will be scrutinised by the Governance and Audit Committee on 17 November 2022.
- 6.3. The Finance Department will discuss the practical stages of the consultation with the Communications and Engagement Service in the Corporate Support Department.
- 6.4. A copy of the questionnaire used in 2020/21 is included in **Appendix 3**, and a draft consultation questionnaire for a new exercise is included in **Appendix 4** for comment.

7. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION

The Cabinet is asked to commission a public consultation.

OPINION OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

With the amendments to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 now in force it is appropriate that the initial work on setting the Premium starts timeously. The requirement to consult on a revision of the Premium is clear and is a step which needs to take place in good time to allow for consideration of the response before coming to a decision on the matter. It will also support the preparation of an Equalities Impact Assessment which will be a key consideration. I have had an opportunity of advising on the contents of the report and am satisfied with the recommendations from a propriety perspective.

Head of Finance Department:

I have collaborated with the Cabinet Member in the preparation of this report and I confirm the content.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Guidance on the Implementation of the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes in Wales

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Guidance on the Implementation of the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes in Wales

Introduction

1. From 1 April 2017, local authorities will be able to charge a premium of up to 100% of the standard rate of council tax on long-term empty homes and second homes in their areas. The legislative changes were made by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the powers given to local authorities are discretionary. Whether to charge a premium on long-term empty homes or second homes (or both) is, therefore, a decision to be made by each local authority.
2. The purpose of this guidance is to assist local authorities in their decision whether or not to charge a premium in their area.
3. This guidance has been produced to ensure that there is a fair and consistent implementation of the premiums and their exceptions across Wales.
4. The guidance is statutory and is issued under powers in sections 12A (3) and 12B (4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 ("the 1992 Act") as inserted by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 ("the 2014 Act"). It applies to all local authorities in Wales.
5. This guidance should not be treated as an interpretation of the legislation. The interpretation of legislation is in the first instance a matter for the local authority, with definitive interpretation the responsibility of the courts.

Legal Framework for the Council Tax Premiums

6. Paragraphs 7 - 14 set out the legal framework which is common to both the premium on long-term empty homes and the premium on second homes. Requirements which are specific to long-term empty homes are set out in paragraphs 15 - 17, and those which are specific to second homes are detailed in paragraphs 18 - 19.
7. The 2014 Act amends the 1992 Act by inserting new sections 12A and 12B to enable a billing authority (a county council or county borough council) in Wales to disapply any discount granted to long-term empty dwellings and dwellings occupied periodically and apply a higher amount of council tax (a premium).
8. Local authorities have discretion to decide on the amount of the premium up to a maximum of 100% of the standard rate of council tax that applies to the dwelling.

9. Where a determination to charge a premium is made, a local authority must publish a notice of the determination in at least one newspaper circulating in its area within 21 days of the date of the determination.
10. A determination by a billing authority to charge a premium will also disapply any discount that is granted under section 11(2)(a) of the 1992 Act for dwellings in which there are no residents.
11. A billing authority can make, vary or revoke a determination made under sections 12A and 12B of the 1992 Act, but only before the beginning of the financial year to which the determination applies.
12. The Welsh Ministers also have powers under section 12A(4) and 12A(5), and 12B(5) and 12B(6) of the 1992 Act to prescribe through regulations certain classes of dwelling which may not be subject to a premium. The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts Wales) Regulations 2015 have been made under these powers and the exceptions they prescribe are detailed later in this guidance.
13. The council tax system already provides a number of specific exemptions from council tax. The exempt groups are set out in the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992. There are a number of exemptions in place for unoccupied dwellings, such as, for example:
 - where the resident is in long-term residential care or hospital,
 - where a dwelling is being structurally repaired (for up to one year),
 - where the resident has died (for up to six months after grant of probate or letters of administration).
14. A dwelling that is exempt from council tax is not liable for a premium. However, where a dwelling becomes no longer eligible for an exemption, but remains unoccupied, it will become liable for the premium. In the case of an empty home, it will be liable for a premium after it has been empty for a continuous period of one year.

Section 12A: Higher amount for long-term empty dwellings

15. A long-term empty dwelling is defined as a dwelling which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least one year.
16. In determining whether a dwelling has been empty for one year, no account is to be taken of any period before 1 April 2016. In addition, the furnishing or occupation of a dwelling for one or more periods of six weeks or less during the year will not affect its status as a long-term empty dwelling. In other words, a person cannot alter a dwelling's status as a long-term empty dwelling by taking up residence or installing furniture for a short period.

17. Where a local authority makes a determination to charge a premium on long-term empty dwellings, it may specify different percentages (up to a maximum of 100 per cent) for different dwellings based on the length of time for which they have been empty. This will enable local authorities to take a stepped approach with incremental increases applying over time.

Section 12B: Higher amount for second homes

18. A second home is defined as a dwelling which is not a person's sole or main home and is substantially furnished. These dwellings are referred to in the 1992 Act as dwellings occupied periodically but they are commonly referred to as "second homes".

19. In order for a premium to apply to dwellings occupied periodically, a billing authority must make its first determination under section 12B at least one year before the beginning of the financial year to which the premium relates. This means that in order to charge a premium from 1 April 2017, a billing authority must make a determination before 1 April 2016. A determination to charge a premium in 2018 must be made before 1 April 2017 and so on.

Making a Determination to charge the Council Tax Premiums on Long-term Empty Homes and Second Homes

20. The discretion given to local authorities to charge a premium is intended to be a tool to help local authorities to:

- bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes; and
- support local authorities in increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.

21. In considering whether or not to charge a premium, regard should be given to these aims. Authorities should take into account the particular housing need and circumstances in their area.

22. There are a range of factors which could help inform local authorities in deciding whether to charge a premium. Whilst some factors will be specific to either long-term empty homes or second homes, others will be common to both. A list of these factors is set out below to assist local authorities. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

- Numbers and percentages of long-term empty homes or second homes in the area;
- Distribution of long-term empty homes or second homes and other housing throughout the authority and an assessment of their impact on property values in particular areas;
- Potential impact on local economies and the tourism industry;
- Patterns of demand for, and availability of, affordable homes;

- Potential impact on local public services;
- Potential impact on the local community;
- Other measures that are available to authorities to increase housing supply;
- Other measures that are available to authorities to help bring empty properties back into use.

23. The determination by a local authority to charge a premium under section 12A or 12B of the 1992 Act must be made by full Council. Prior to doing so, a local authority must give due consideration to its statutory duties to carry out equality impact assessments under the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh Public Sector Equality Duties 2011 and to all other relevant considerations. A local authority should also give consideration to engagement and consultation with key stakeholders, including the local electorate, before taking a decision as to whether or not to charge one or both of the premiums.

24. Having made a determination to charge a premium, in addition to the requirement to publish a notice in a local newspaper within 21 days, a local authority should give consideration to how its decision is communicated more widely, particularly to those who might be affected. This may be through the publication of press notices, providing information on website pages or other avenues to raise awareness such as, for example, direct communication with council taxpayers who are likely to be liable for the premium. A local authority may also wish to give consideration to how they advise or inform those who may be affected but who normally reside outside the local area.

Exceptions to the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes

25. Sections 12A and 12B of the 1992 Act provide Welsh Ministers with powers to make regulations to prescribe one or more classes of dwellings in relation to which a billing authority may not make a determination to apply a premium. The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015 are made under these powers – a premium may not be charged on a dwelling that falls within an exception. A local authority must have regard to these exceptions before deciding to implement a premium.

26. The regulations prescribe seven classes of exempt dwellings. Classes 1, 2, 3 and 4 apply to both long-term empty homes and second homes. Classes 5, 6, and 7 only apply to second homes. The classes of dwelling are outlined in the table below and are detailed further in paragraphs 28 - 46.

Classes of Dwellings	Definition	Application
Class 1	Dwellings being marketed for sale – time-limited for one year	Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes
Class 2	Dwellings being marketed for let – time-limited for one year	
Class 3	Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling	
Class 4	Dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation	
Class 5	Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings	Second Homes
Class 6	Seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited	
Class 7	Job-related dwellings	

27. Each exception is described further in the next section. Additional guidance will be provided in relation to assist local authorities in the application of the exceptions for:

- dwellings being marketed for sale;
- dwellings being marketed for let; and
- job-related dwellings.

Class 1: Exception for dwellings being marketed for sale

28. This exception applies to both the premium on long-term empty homes and the premium on second homes. It excepts dwellings that are being marketed for sale. It also covers dwellings where an offer to buy the dwelling has been accepted but the sale has not yet been completed.

29. In order to qualify for this exception a dwelling must be on the market for sale at a reasonable price. In considering whether a price is reasonable, regard should be given to the sale price of comparable dwellings in the area. Additional guidance will be provided to assist local authorities in the application of this exception.

30. The exception period runs for up to one year from the granting of the exception. After an exception has ended, a dwelling being marketed for sale will not be eligible for a further exception period unless it has been sold.

Class 2: Exception for dwellings being marketed for let

31. This exception applies to both the premium on long-term empty homes and the premium on second homes. It excepts dwellings that are being marketed for let. It also covers dwellings where an offer to rent has been accepted but the tenant is not yet entitled to occupy the property because the tenancy has not yet started.
32. In order to be eligible for this exception, a dwelling must be on the market for let at a reasonable rent, that is, the rent the property would be expected to fetch having regard to the rent raised on comparable dwellings. Additional guidance will be provided to assist local authorities in the application of this exception
33. The exception period runs for up to one year from the granting of the exception. After the end of the exception period, a dwelling being marketed for let will not be eligible for a further exception period unless it has been subject to a tenancy that was granted for a term of six months or more.

Class 3: Exception for Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling

34. This exception applies to both the long-term empty homes premium and to the second homes premium.
35. This exception applies where an owner has adapted their dwelling to provide an annexe and the annexe is now being used as part of the main dwelling.

Class 4: Exception for Dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation

36. This exception applies to both the long-term empty homes premium and to the second homes premium.
37. This exception applies to dwellings that would be a person's sole or main residence but which is unoccupied because that person resides in armed forces accommodation.
38. This exception is also intended to cover armed forces personnel whose homes are unoccupied because they are living in armed forces accommodation overseas.

Class 5: Exception for Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings

39. This exception applies to the second homes premium. It covers dwellings that consist of a pitch occupied by a caravan or a mooring occupied by a boat where the boat or caravan currently has no resident, but when next in use will be a person's sole or main residence.

Class 6: Exception for Seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited

40. This exception applies to the second homes premium. It is applicable to dwellings that are subject to planning conditions that prevent occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in any 12-month period.
41. This exception is intended to cover purpose-built holiday homes or chalets which are subject to planning conditions restricting year-round occupancy. The exception is based on the definition of the existing discretionary discount for seasonal homes (Class A) in The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (Wales) Regulations 1998¹.

Class 7: Exception for job-related dwellings

42. This exception applies only in relation to the second homes premium and applies to dwellings occupied by a person who is:
- a qualifying person in relation to the dwelling, but who is resident in another dwelling which is job-related (as defined in Schedule 1 to the Regulations); or
 - a qualifying person in relation to a job-related dwelling.
43. A qualifying person is defined as:
- a person who is liable for council tax in respect of a dwelling on a particular day, whether or not jointly with another person; and
 - a person who would be liable for the council tax in respect of a dwelling on a particular day, whether or not jointly with another person if that dwelling did not fall within:
 - i. Class O of the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992; or
 - ii. Class E of the Council Tax (Liability for Owners) Regulations 1992.
44. This exception applies where a person is required to reside in a job-related dwelling. It applies to a second home that is occupied periodically because a person is required to live in job-related accommodation elsewhere. It also applies where the job-related accommodation is a person's second home.
45. The definition of a job-related dwelling is given in the Schedule to the Regulations. Although this exception is similar to the job-related discount under the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (Wales) Regulations 1998, it differs because the discount only applies if the job-related dwelling is a person's sole or main residence.

¹ SI 1998 No 105

46. Another difference from the job-related dwelling discount is that there is no requirement for the taxpayer to be liable for council tax in respect of two dwellings, meaning that a person who has either a main home abroad or a job-related dwelling abroad can also benefit from the exception. Additional guidance will be provided to assist local authorities in the application of this exception

Reducing Liability for the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty and Second Homes

47. Under section 13A of the 1992 Act, a billing authority has discretionary powers to reduce council tax liability to such extent as the billing authority thinks fit. The power can be exercised in particular cases or by determining a class or case. The power may be used to reduce council tax liability in circumstances where a local authority may otherwise charge a premium.

48. Some illustrative examples of where a local authority might consider using these powers include:

- where there are reasons why the dwelling could not be lived in;
- where there are reasons why a dwelling could not be sold or let;
- where an offer has been accepted on a property but the sale has not yet been completed and the exception period has run out;
- where charging a premium might cause hardship.

49. The above list is not exhaustive and billing authorities will want to consider all factors they think are relevant.

50. It is a matter for a local authority as to whether the discretionary 13A powers are used to reduce council tax liability in respect of a premium. In the interest of fairness and transparency, a local authority should have a clear policy on whether, and how, these powers will be used. The authority should, however, consider each case on its merits having taken into account the circumstances of the case.

51. It should be noted that deliberations around the use of the discretionary 13A powers are likely to be different when they are considered to reduce council tax liability resulting from a premium compared to reducing liability from the standard rate of council tax. This is because dwellings liable to a premium are already liable for the standard rate of council tax.

Appeals

52. If a person is aggrieved by a calculation by the local authority of the amount of their council tax liability including their liability to pay a premium, they must, in the first instance, make an appeal to their local authority.
53. If they are aggrieved by the decision taken by their local authority or if the local authority does not provide a decision within the required timescales, they can appeal to the Valuation Tribunal for Wales but only after they have exhausted the local authority's appeals process.
54. Further information on the appeals process can be found on the Valuation Tribunal for Wales' website via the link below:
- <http://www.valuation-tribunals-wales.org.uk/home.html>.

Next Steps

Amendments to related legislation

55. In order to ensure that local authorities are able to administer and enforce the premiums the Welsh Government will amend relevant legislation to reflect the introduction of the premiums for example, changes to the calculation of the tax-base and to the appeals process.

Administration and Enforcement

56. In order to assist local authorities with the administration and enforcement of the premiums, in particular the application of the exceptions, additional guidance will be provided.
57. In response to concerns raised by some authorities about administrative difficulties and potential avenues for abuse, this guidance will also provide additional information to assist local authorities in applying the exceptions for:
- dwellings being marketed for sale;
 - dwellings being marketed for let; and
 - job-related dwellings.

Use of additional revenue generated from the Council Tax Premiums

58. A local authority will be able to retain any additional funds generated by implementing the premiums and amendments to the calculation of the tax base will be made to facilitate this. However, authorities are encouraged to use any additional revenue generated to help meet local housing needs, in line with the policy intentions of the premiums.

59. Specific requirements in relation to reporting on additional revenue generated and its subsequent use will be set out in further guidance. Further details on this are provided in the next section.

Monitoring and Reporting

60. In order to monitor the effectiveness of the premiums and to ensure that information on their usage is clearly made available to local council tax payers, the Welsh Government will require local authorities to monitor and report on the implementation of the premiums.

61. The specific requirements in relation to this will be set out in further guidance which will be published prior to April 2017. This is likely to include:

- Number of properties liable for the premiums;
- Additional income raised from implementing the premiums;
- How any additional income has been used;
- Number of empty homes which have been brought back into use.

62. A new module is currently being developed on Datatank for local authorities to use in modelling, monitoring and reporting on the premiums. This will be available to all authorities in the New Year.

Local Taxation Team
Welsh Government
December 2015

Equality Impact Assessment

For help to complete this form see the *How to Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment* leaflet. You are also welcome to contact Delyth Gadlys Williams, Policy and Equality Officer on ext. 32708 or DelythGadlysWilliams@gwynedd.llyw.cymru for further assistance.

The Council's is required (under the Equality Act 2010) to consider the effect any change in policy or procedure (or the creation of a new policy or procedure), has on people with protected equality characteristics. The Council also has a general duty to ensure fairness and foster good relations. A timely Equality Impact Assessment must be undertaken before making any decision on any relevant change (i.e. which has an effect on people with protected characteristics).

I Details

I.1. What is the name of the policy / service in question?

Council Tax Premium on Long-term Empty Dwellings and Second Homes

I.2 What is the purpose of the policy / service that is being created or amended? What changes are being considered?

Since April 2018 the Council has charged a premium of 50% on the Council Tax of second homes and long-term empty dwellings. A report was presented to the Council meeting on 3 December 2020 recommending that the Premium level be kept at 50% for the 2021/22 financial year. An amendment to this proposal, for the Cabinet to consider consulting on increasing the level of the premium to up to 100%, was tabled and passed. At its meeting on 15 December 2020, the Cabinet agreed to hold a public consultation on the proposal to increase the Premium on Second Homes and Long-term Empty Properties up to 100% for the 2021/22 financial year.

Having considered relevant issues, including the housing situation within Gwynedd and the outcome of the public consultation, the Cabinet recommends increasing the level of Premium on second homes and long-term empty dwellings to 100% in 2021/22.

1.3 Who is responsible for this assessment?

Dewi Morgan, Assistant Head of Finance (Revenues and Risk)

1.4 When did you commence the assessment? Which version is this?

15 December 2020. This assessment began after Cabinet decided that it would undertake a public consultation to ascertain public opinion on the proposal to change the Premium rate.

2) Action

2.1 Who are the partners you need to work with to undertake this assessment?

The Council has the power under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) to adjust the Level of Premium by up to 100%. However, it is an explicit expectation that we should consult with the public and key stakeholders. A public consultation was held, with attention given in the local press and on social websites, and the Council wrote to owners of properties subject to the Premium.

The partners and key stakeholders were:

Gwynedd Residents
Taxpayers on empty properties and second homes

There was collaboration with several internal partners, e.g.:

Finance Department
Corporate Support Department
Gwynedd Council Cabinet Members
Full Council

2.2 What measures have you taken to engage with people with equality characteristics?

We have endeavoured to identify individuals with protected characteristics as the public consultation asks respondents to inform us of any protected characteristics so that these can be taken into account in the development of the policy.

The consultation was public and the questionnaire was available to anyone to complete online. Two press releases raising awareness of it were issued, and social media was used to raise awareness.

The Council wrote to all households subject to the Premium with a letter drawing their attention to the consultation. Where the different correspondence address was recorded in the Council Tax system, this was used. The letter referred to the Council's website and the opportunity to complete the questionnaire there, but the Council's website stated that anyone could contact the Council if they wished to receive a paper copy of the consultation.

2.3 What was the result of the engagement?

A public consultation was held between 22 December 2020 and 1 February 2021. 6,213 responses were received on the formal questionnaire, as well as around 100 separate letters and messages expressing dissatisfaction with the proposal.

The views of those who responded were divided, but over 70% of respondents were against increasing the Premium level. In general, second home owners in particular were opposed to the proposed raising of any premium, while another significant proportion supported charging a premium of up to 100%.

Respondents' comments were sought on the impact of the Premium on a number of aspects of social issues. A number of those who opposed the increase indicated that they had owned their property in Gwynedd for several years, and were very fond of the area. On the other hand, some of those responding claimed that there was a racist motive behind the intention to increase the Premium as the Council is against people from outside Gwynedd and that it is racist. No evidence was submitted to support this view.

There are two different categories of properties subject to the Premium, namely second homes and long-term empty properties.

Very few people want to pay more tax, and there was vehement opposition from second home owners in particular. It stands to reason that increasing the level of premium would have a financial impact on these individuals, but there was no evidence that any protected group would be affected. However, a number of those who have responded to the enquiry claim that the policy of raising the Premium is racist, anti-English, although no discrimination exists when setting the premium.

2.4 On the basis of what other evidence are you operating?

The Equality Act 2010 allows the Council to act positively towards some cohorts if there is evidence of need ("take action to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these differ from the needs of others"). Several studies by the Council have identified that there is a problem with the availability of housing for young families in Gwynedd, so we have identified a problem and are taking steps to deal with that. Young people have been priced out of the local housing market.

On 25 November 2020, there were:

- 4,718 dwellings subject to the Premium on second homes (Class B)
- 165 further second homes in Class B but not paying the Premium as they were subject to one of the statutory exemptions
- 811 properties within Class A where the occupation is prohibited for a period of at least 28 days in the relevant year and no Premium may be charged.

At the same time, 1,130 properties were subject to the Premium on long-term empty properties

Study on the Effect of Holiday Homes

A key consideration by the Council in voting on the amendment to postpone the decision on charging a premium in 2021/22 was the detailed report Holiday Homes Research Work that was submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 15 December 2020:

<https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/s27960/Item%208%20-%20Report%20Holiday%20Homes.pdf>

This follows a similar study carried out in 2013.

This report shows that the total number of holiday homes (second homes and self-catering holiday units) within Gwynedd continues to increase, and asks for the Cabinet's commitment to take decisive action to address the situation.

The study is the result of detailed research that has been undertaken over recent months, and highlights that there are a number of factors that influence Gwynedd's housing stock. It builds on studies that have been undertaken in the past and highlights that there are pressing issues that continue to need attention, and that the situation within Gwynedd communities, particularly those that attract visitors, is intensifying.

Whilst the scope of the study also extends to planning issues, leading attention is given to the financial incentive that exists of owning a holiday home as well as the taxation advantage that exists of meeting the legal thresholds for transferring property to the non-domestic rates regime (these properties are not subject to the premium).

Property Values

Second home Council Tax bands are generally higher than Gwynedd properties as a whole. In December 2020, 33.9% of Gwynedd's second homes were in Council Tax Band E or above, compared with 21.5% of Gwynedd properties overall. On the other hand, long-term empty property bands are lower. Only 17.8% of these properties are in band E or above.

One of the themes emerging from the consultation was that a number of second homes were a family home that had been inherited and retained by the family, or that the property had been owned by the family as a second home for a number of years.

2.5 Are there any gaps in the evidence that needs to be collected?

Apart from the sense of some respondents that Gwynedd Council is generally racist by considering raising the Premium and then increasing it, no evidence has been received to support that as studies have been undertaken suggesting that action is needed to address housing problems in rural areas of Gwynedd.

The consultation included an equality questionnaire. This suggested that a higher proportion of second home owners than the general population are older people.

Disability	Insignificant	There is a small possibility of differentiation indirectly on the grounds of disability if someone with a disability keeps an adapted property in Gwynedd as they cannot have a holiday elsewhere.
Sex	None	No impact has been identified
Age	Positive	<p>A 2013 study showed that the demographic makeup of communities with high proportions of second homes was different; in general, the resident population is 'older'. This affects the balance of communities and will have an impact on the future resilience and sustainability of these areas.</p> <p>It went on to note that the profiles of second home owners themselves suggested that they were generally middle-aged or retired, and richer than the national average. Shelter (2011) (<i>Taking Stock, an assessment of under-utilisation of housing stock in England</i>) estimated that 60% of second home owners nationally were aged between 45 and 60 compared with 40% across all owner-occupied in this age group. The responses from the current public consultation have suggested the same.</p> <p>Therefore, there is evidence that the financial losers are older, but it is expected that older people living in the relevant areas throughout the year will benefit as local society will be more resilient and sustainable.</p> <p>However, there is strong evidence that care providers face serious recruitment difficulties. Achieving community balance is vital to getting enough younger people to protect and care for older people, and the policy of raising a Premium is intended to help young people stay in the local area by being able to provide them with homes locally. Overall, therefore, the policy will have a positive impact as it helps young families to have a home. This will then have a more positive than negative impact on community balance.</p>
Sexual orientation	None	No impact has been identified
Religion or belief (or non-belief)	None	No impact has been identified
Gender reassignment	None	No impact has been identified

Pregnancy and maternity	None	No impact has been identified
Marriage and civil partnership	None	No impact has been identified

3.2 The Council has a duty under the 2010 Equality Act to contribute positively to a fairer society by promoting equality and good relations in its activities regarding the following characteristics – age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, gender reassignment, disability and pregnancy and maternity. The Council must give due attention to the way any change affects these duties.

General Duties of the Equality Act	Does it have an impact?*	In what way? What is the evidence?
Abolishing illegal discrimination, harassment and victimisation	No	
Promoting equal opportunities	Yes	This will provide equal opportunity for local people who are currently unable to afford a home. The current housing situation is unequal and the decision is intended to stabilise and rectify this situation.
Encouraging good relationships	Yes	<p>The policy of charging a Premium can promote good relationships with people within the communities of Gwynedd if the Policy gives them the opportunity to have a better home, or a first home, as the number of holiday homes and empty dwellings is found to have a detrimental effect on the ability of local people to have a place to live. A policy of charging a Council Tax Premium on second homes and empty dwellings can improve relationships if Gwynedd residents feel that the policy helps them to have a better chance of having a home in their local area.</p> <p>Some second home owners have claimed in their consultation response that increasing the level of the Premium will cause community ill feeling, but there is no evidence to support this claim. The current disparity is more likely to create resentment.</p>

4) Analysing the results

4.1 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, positive impact on any of the equality characteristics or the General Duty and what is the reason for this?

One of the main outcomes of the Premium is the funding of the Housing Action Plan. This scheme will address social disparity within Gwynedd. The Equality Impact Assessment completed during the preparation of the Housing Action Plan sets out the very positive steps that will result from the implementation of the Scheme, with the financial support of the Premium:

<https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/s27958/Item%206%20-%20Appendix%20B%20-%20Equality%20Impact%20Reprt.pdf>

The Premium is intended to aim to reduce inequality within the communities of Gwynedd, and contributes to that by funding specific projects.

Details of an assessment of the Well-being of Future Generations Act can be found in the body of the Cabinet report.

4.2 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, negative impact on any of the equality characteristics or the General Duty and what is the reason for this?

The premium will be subject to two specific cohorts of the population, namely second home owners, and owners of long-term empty homes.

It should be noted that consultation responses, together with national studies strongly suggest that second home owners tend to be older people. A number of the consultation responses suggest that some of these older owners are "asset rich / cash poor". That is, they have bought the property for several years or inherited it, but their income is not necessarily high. This ultimately raises a very small amount of doubt if the Council is fulfilling its statutory duties, but that must be weighed against the poverty, unemployment and homelessness in rural Gwynedd. According to the Housing Action Plan, 59% of Gwynedd residents have been priced out of the market in Gwynedd.

A number of the responses to the public consultation have stated that this Policy is racist as it targets individuals living outside Wales. However, the Premium is charged to all properties that are second or long-term empty properties without considering ownership. A significant proportion of second home owners identify themselves as English, and increasing the Premium would have a negative financial impact on this cohort. However, the Equality Act 2010 states that this is legal if the policy is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, and in this case it is a means of realising a positive action, namely tackling the housing crisis for local people.

4.3 What should be done?

Choose one of the following:

Continue with the policy / service as it is robust	
Adapt the policy to delete any barriers	
Suspend and delete the policy as the detrimental impacts are too big	
Continue with the policy as any detrimental impact can be justified	✓

4.4 What steps will you take to reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?

There is some evidence that increasing the premium on second homes would be discriminate against a protected group, with data suggesting that second home owners tend to be older people and identify themselves as English. The policy in relation to Council Tax Premium is intended to recognise that long-term empty properties and second homes increase some of Gwynedd's social problems, and the owners should make a financial contribution to alleviate some of the disadvantages they cause.

There is a claim that the policy of raising the Premium is racist because of where second home owners live, but a number of those who have answered the consultation note that Welsh people own a property in Gwynedd while their main home is outside Wales. The Premium will be charged based on the characteristics of the property, not the characteristics of the owner and there is a positive impact if local families can afford to buy a property in their local area rather than having to move away to get a home. There is recognition that there is a negative financial impact on people living outside Gwynedd, with a large number of them identifying themselves as English. In line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, increasing the level of the Premium is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, which is to fund a Housing Action Plan that addresses some of the damage that second homes and empty dwellings cause to the communities of Gwynedd.

Individuals who are for and against raising the Premium have expressed dissatisfaction with the same question on the impact of the Premium on the economy (claiming to be "leading"), which suggests that the balance of questions is correct.

4.5 If you are not taking any further action to delete or reduce the negative impacts, explain why here.

The level of premium is ultimately a political issue, taken on the basis of the evidence available. Elected members will reach a decision on the appropriate balance between the additional cost to owners of second homes and long-term empty properties and the associated incentive of bringing properties back into use, against the social well-being that would result from the ability to realise specific schemes to address social disparity.

5) Monitoring

5.1 What steps will you take to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the policy or service (action plan)?

The setting of the Premium level will require the annual approval of the full Council. The Finance Department will continue to keep track of changes to the status of long-term empty properties and second homes, and act as necessary to assess if there are equality issues behind transfer to non-domestic rating.

Cyngor Gwynedd - Premiwm Treth
Cyngor ar Ail Gartrefi ac
Anheddau Gwag Hirdymor

Holiadur Ymgynghori

Mae Ddeddf Cyllid Llywodraeth Leol 1992 yn diffinio **ail gartref** fel "*annedd lle nad oes trigolyn ac y mae wedi ei ddodrefnu yn sylweddol*".

Mae Ddeddf Cyllid Llywodraeth Leol 1992 yn diffinio **annedd gwag hirdymor** fel "*annedd nas meddiannwyd ac sydd heb ei ddodrefnu yn sylweddol*".

Mae Adrannau 12A a 12B at Ddeddf Cyllid Llywodraeth Leol 1992 yn rhoi'r hawl i gynghorau godi Premiwm ychwanegol ar Dreth Cyngor eiddo gwag hirdymor (Adran 12A) ac ail gartrefi (Adran 12B).

Ers 1 Ebrill 2018 mae Cyngor Gwynedd wedi codi Premiwm o 50% ar Dreth Cyngor yr eiddo yma, ond mae'r Cyngor rŵan yn ystyried cynyddu graddfa'r Premiwm i hyd at yr uchafswm a ganiateir dan y gyfraith, sef 100%. Rydym yn ymgynghori er mwyn derbyn barn trethdalwyr Gwynedd, perchnogion tai, ac eraill ar sut y dylai'r Cyngor weithredu'r grym yma.

Gwynedd Council - Council Tax
Premium on Second Homes and
Long-term Empty Dwellings

Consultation Questionnaire

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 defines a **second home** as a "*domestic property where there is no resident of the dwelling, and the dwelling is substantially furnished*".

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 defines a **long-term empty home** as a "*domestic dwelling that has been unoccupied, and has been substantially unfurnished*".

Sections 12A and 12B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 give Councils the right to raise an additional Premium on the Council Tax of long-term empty homes (Section 12A) and second homes (Section 12B).

Since 1 April 2018 Gwynedd Council has raised a Premium of 50% on the Council Tax of these properties, but the Council is now considering raising the Premium rate to up to the maximum permitted by law, which is 100%. We are consulting in order to gather the views of Gwynedd taxpayers, homeowners and others on how the Council should implement these powers.

1. Ydych chi'n gyfrifol am dalu Treth Cyngor i Cyngor Gwynedd am unrhyw eiddo?

Are you responsible for paying Council Tax to Gwynedd Council on any property

Ydw / Yes

Nac Ydw / No

2. A ydych chi'n berchen ar annedd gwag hirdymor neu ail gartref yng Ngwynedd?

Do you own a long-term empty dwelling or second home in Gwynedd?

Trwy'r holiadur mae 'annedd gwag hirdymor' yn cyfeirio at annedd sydd wedi bod yn wag a heb ei ddodrefnu i raddau helaeth am gyfnod di-dor o flwyddyn o leiaf.

Mae 'ail-gartref' yn yr holiadur yn cyfeirio at annedd nad yw yn unig neu brif gartref unrhyw berson ac sydd wedi ei dodrefnu'n sylweddol.

Throughout this questionnaire a 'long-term empty property' is defined as a dwelling which is unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least one year.

The use of 'second home' in the questionnaire refers to a dwelling which is not a person's sole or main home and is substantially furnished.

Nac Ydw / No

Ydw – ail gartref / Yes – second home

Ydw – annedd gwag hirdymor / Yes – a long-term empty dwelling

Ydw – annedd gwag hirdymor ac ail gartref /
Yes – both a long-term empty home and a second home

3. Yn eich barn chi, pa effaith mae ail gartrefi yn ei gael ar gymunedau lleol ar hyn o bryd?

In your opinion, what impact do you believe second homes currently have on local communities?

Cadarnhaol / Positive

Niwtral / Neutral

Negyddol / Negative

Rhowch unrhyw sylw pellach / Note any further comments below:

4. Yn eich barn chi, pa effaith mae anheddau gwag hirdymor yn ei gael ar gymunedau lleol ar hyn o bryd?

In your opinion, what impact do you believe long-term empty dwellings currently have on local communities?

Cadarnhaol / Positive

Niwtral / Neutral

Negyddol / Negative

Rhowch unrhyw sylw pellach / Note any further comments below:

5. Mae'r Cyngor yn ystyried cynyddu lefel y Premiwm Treth Cyngor ar ail gartrefi ac anheddau gwag hirdymor (sy'n 50% ar hyn o bryd). A yw hyn yn briodol yn eich barn chi?

The Council is considering increasing the Council Tax Premium charged on second homes and long term empty dwellings (currently 50%). Is this appropriate in your opinion?

- Ydi / Yes
- Nac Ydi / No

Rhowch unrhyw sylw pellach / *Note any further comments below.*

6. Yn eich barn chi, a fyddai cynyddu lefel y Premiwm Treth Cyngor ar anheddau gwag hirdymor neu ail gartrefi yng Ngwynedd yn cael effaith ar yr iaith Gymraeg?

In your opinion, would increasing the Council Tax Premium on long-term empty dwellings or second homes have an effect on the Welsh language?

- Byddai / Yes
- Na Fyddai / No

Rhowch unrhyw sylw pellach / *Note any further comments below.*

7. Os byddai lefel y Premiwm Treth Cyngor ar anheddau gwag hirdymor neu ail gartrefi yng Ngwynedd yn cynyddu, byddai nifer yr ail gartrefi yng Ngwynedd yn ...

If the level of the Council Tax Premium on long-term empty dwellings or second homes were to be increased, the number of second homes within Gwynedd would...

- Cynyddu / Increase
- Aros yr un fath / Stay the same
- Gostwng / Decrease

Rhowch unrhyw sylw pellach / Note any further comments below:

8. Os byddai lefel y Premiwm Treth Cyngor ar anheddau gwag hirdymor ac ailgartrefi yng Ngwynedd yn cynyddu, credaf byddai nifer yr anheddau gwag yng Ngwynedd yn...

If the level of the Council Tax Premium on long-term empty dwellings or second homes were to be increased, the number of long-term empty dwellings within Gwynedd would ...

- Cynyddu / Increase
- Aros yr un fath / Stay the same
- Gostwng / Decrease

Rhowch unrhyw sylw pellach / Note any further comments below:

9. Os byddai lefel y Premiwm Treth Cyngor yn cynyddu, byddai argaeledd tai fforddiadwy yng Ngwynedd yn...

If the level of the Council Tax Premium were to be increased, the availability of affordable housing within Gwynedd will...

- Cynyddu / *Increase*
- Aros yr un fath / *Stay the same*
- Gostwng / *Decrease*

Rhowch unrhyw sylw pellach / *Note any further comments below:*

10. Os byddai lefel y Premiwm Treth Cyngor yn cynyddu, byddai'r effaith ar y gymuned leol yn...

If the level of the Council Tax Premium were to be increased, the effect on the local community will be...

- Gadarnhaol / *Positive*
- Niwtral / *Neutral*
- Negyddol / *Negative*

Rhowch unrhyw sylw pellach / *Note any further comments below:*

11. Os byddai lefel y Premiwm Treth Cyngor yn cynyddu, byddai'r effaith ar dwristiaeth yn...

If the level of the Council Tax Premium were to be increased, the effect on tourism will be...

- Gadarnhaol / *Positive*
- Niwtral / *Neutral*
- Negyddol / *Negative*

Rhowch unrhyw sylw pellach / *Note any further comments below:*

12. Os byddai lefel y Premiwm Treth Cyngor yn cynyddu, byddai'r effaith ar yr economi leol yn gyffredinol yn...

If the level of the Council Tax Premium were to be increased, the effect on local economy will be...

- Gadarnhaol / *Positive*
- Niwtral / *Neutral*
- Negyddol / *Negative*

Rhowch unrhyw sylw pellach / *Note any further comments below:*

13. Buasem yn croesawu unrhyw sylwadau eraill sydd gennych:

We welcome any other comments you may have:

Monitro Cydraddoldeb / Equality Monitoring

1. Rhyw:

- Dyn/Gwryw
- Dynes/Benyw
- Gwell gennyf beidio â dweud
- Arall -

1. Sex:

- Man/Male
- Women/Female
- I'd rather not say
- Other -

2. Grŵp Oedran:

- 15 oed neu iau
- 16-24 oed
- 25-34 oed
- 35-44 oed
- 45-54 oed
- 55-64 oed
- 65-74 oed
- 75-84 oed
- 85 oed neu fwy
- Gwell gennyf beidio dweud

2. Age Group:

- 15 years or younger
- 16-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65-74 years old
- 75-84 years old
- 85 years old or elder
- I'd rather not say

3. Pa un o'r rhain sy'n eich disgrifio chi orau?
Does dim rhaid i chi ateb y cwestiwn yma
os ydych o dan 16 oed

- Heterorywiol/Strêt
- Dyn hoyw
- Dynes hoyw/lesbian
- Deurywiol (Bisexual)
- Gwell gennyf beidio â dweud
- Arall -

3. Which one of these describes you best?
(You do not need to answer this question if
you're under 16)

- Heterosexual/Straight
- Gay man
- Gay women / lesbian
- Bisexual
- I'd rather not say
- Other -.....

4. Ydych chi'n deall, siarad, darllen neu'n
ysgrifennu'n Gymraeg?

- Deall Cymraeg ar lafar
- Siarad Cymraeg
- Darllen Cymraeg
- Ysgrifennu Cymraeg
- Dw i ddim yn deall Cymraeg (ddim un o'r
uchod)
- Gwell gennyf beidio â dweud

4. Can you understand, speak, read or write
Welsh?

- I understand spoken Welsh
- Speak Welsh
- Read Welsh
- Write Welsh
- I can't understand Welsh (none of the
above)
- I'd rather not say

5. Pa un o'r rhain sydd yn eich disgrifio chi
orau?

- Cymro/Cymraes
- Sais/Saesnes
- Albanwr/Albanes
- Gwyddel/Gwyddeles o Ogledd Iwerddon
- Prydeiniwr/Prydeines
- Gwell gennyf beidio â dweud

5. Which one of these describes you best?

- Welsh
- English
- Scottish
- Gaelic from Northern Ireland
- British
- I'd rather not say

6. Beth yw eich hil?

- Gwyn
- Du/Affricanaidd/Caribïaidd
- Sipsiwn/teithwyr Gwyddelig
- Asiaidd
- Cymysg/sawl grŵp ethnig
- Gwell gennyf beidio â dweud
- Arall-

6. What is your race?

- White
- Black/African/Caribbean
- Gypsy/Irish traveller
- Asian
- Mix/many ethnic groups
- I'd rather not say
- Other-.....

7. Beth yw eich crefydd neu gred?

- Cristion
- Mwslim
- Bwdhaidd
- Hindŵ
- Iddewig
- Anffyddiwr
- Gwell gennyf beidio â dweud
- Arall -

7. What is your belief or religion?

- Christian
- Muslim
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Atheist
- I'd rather not say
- Other -.....

8. Ydi eich hunaniaeth rhywedd wedi newid o'r hyn a bennwyd adeg eich geni? (h.y ydych chi'n drawsrywiol neu trans)
(Nid oes angen i chi ateb y cwestiwn yma os ydych o dan 16 oed)

- Ydw
- Nac Ydw
- Gwell gennyf beidio â dweud

8. Has your gender identification changed from when you were born? (i.e. are you transexual or transgender)
(You do not need to answer this question if you are under 16 years old)

- Yes
- No
- I'd rather not say

9. a) Mae Adran 6 (1) o Ddeddf Cydraddoldeb 2010 yn datgan bod anabledd gan unigolyn os:

a. Oes gan yr unigolyn hwnnw nam corfforol neu feddyliol, a

b. Bod gan y nam effaith andwyol sylweddol a hirdymor ar allu'r unigolyn i gyflawni gweithgareddau arferol o ddydd i ddydd

Gan ddefnyddio'r diffiniad hwn, a ydych chi'n ystyried eich hun yn berson anabl?

Ydw

Nac Ydw

Gwell gennyf beidio â dweud

9. a) Section 6 (1) of the Equality Act 2010 states that a person has a disability if:

a. the person has a physical or mental impairment, and

b. the impairment has a substantial and long-term effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Using this definition, do you consider yourself a disabled person?

Yes

No

I'd rather not say

9 b) Allwch chi nodi os oes gynnwch chi un o'r cyflyrau neu amhariadau canlynol?

Yn ddall neu'n cael problem gweld

Yn fyddar neu'n cael problem clywed

Cyflwr corfforol

Anhawster dysgu (anabledd dysgu)

Cyflwr iechyd meddwl

Gwahaniaeth Niwrolegol (ee ar y sbectrwm awtistiaeth)

Gwell gennyf beidio â dweud

Arall -

9 b) Can you note if you have any of the following conditions or impairments?

Blind or have a visual problem

Deaf or have hearing problem

Physical Impairment

Learning Impairment (learning disabilities)

Mental Health Condition

Neurological difference (eg on the autistic spectrum)

I'd rather not say

Other -.....

Diolch yn fawr i chi am gwblhau'r holiadur

Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire

Appendix 4 – Draft Consultation Questionnaire

Are you responsible for paying Council Tax to Gwynedd Council on any property?

- Yes
- No

Do you own a long-term empty dwelling or second home in Gwynedd?

- No
- Yes – second home
- Yes – a long-term empty dwelling
- Yes – both a long-term empty home and a second home

In your opinion, what impact do you believe second homes currently have on local communities?

- Overall Positive Effect
- Overall Neutral Effect
- Overall Negative Effect

In your opinion, what impact do you believe long-term empty dwellings currently have on local communities?

- Overall Positive Effect
- Overall Neutral Effect
- Overall Negative Effect

The Council is considering increasing the Council Tax Premium charged on second homes and long term empty dwellings (currently 50%). Is this appropriate in your opinion?

- Yes
- No

If you have answered "Yes" to the previous question, what level do you think would be appropriate to set the Premium:

- Up to 150%
- Up to 200%
- Up to 250%
- Up to 300%

If you think the Premium should be increased, do you have an opinion on how to deliver that increase:

- Gradually over several years
- Right away

Gwynedd Council is currently charging the same level of Premium on second homes and long-term empty dwellings. Do you have an opinion on this?

- Both should continue to be kept at the same level
- Premium should be lower on second homes
- Premium should be lower on long-term empty dwellings

Please explain the reason for your reply

In your opinion, would increasing the Council Tax Premium on long-term empty dwellings or second homes have an effect on the Welsh language?

- Yes
- No

If the level of the Council Tax Premium on long-term empty dwellings or second homes were to be increased, the number of second homes within Gwynedd would...

- Increase
- Stay the same
- Decrease

If the level of the Council Tax Premium on long-term empty dwellings or second homes were to be increased, the number of long-term empty dwellings within Gwynedd would ...

- Increase
- Stay the same
- Decrease

If the level of the Council Tax Premium were to be increased, the availability of affordable housing within Gwynedd will ...

- Increase
- Stay the same
- Decrease

If the level of the Council Tax Premium were to be increased, the effect on the local community will be ...

- Positive overall
- Neutral overall
- Negative overall

If the level of the Council Tax Premium were to be increased, the effect on tourism will be ...

- Positive overall
- Neutral overall
- Negative overall

If the level of the Council Tax Premium were to be increased, the effect on local economy will be ...

- Positive overall
- Neutral overall
- Negative overall

We welcome any other comments you may have:

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to a meeting of the Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting: September 2022
Cabinet Member: Councillor Beca Brown
Contact Officer: Buddug Mair Huws
Contact Telephone Number: 34319
Title of Item: REVIEW OF THE GWYNEDD STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) CONSTITUTION

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

(i) The Cabinet is requested to approve the recommendation of the Education Department and the Gwynedd SACRE Committee to change the membership of Group B, as noted:

- Group A - Christianity and other Beliefs
- Group B - representation of Teachers and Headteachers – retain at 5

The seats will be allocated as follows:

3 seats to be shared between the recognised Teachers' Unions (NAS/UWT; UCAC; NEU; ASCL and NAHT) – to be decided by the Gwynedd Teachers' Union Forum.

1 seat to be filled by the Primary and Special Catchment Areas Consultative Group (GYDCA)

1 seat to be filled by the Gwynedd Secondary Headteachers Group (GSCU)

- Group C - Elected Members - retain at 7
- Co-opted - SACRE Committee to retain the right to co-opt members
- (there are 3 votes, which is 1 for each Group. The Co-opted members do not have a vote)

2. THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

The Council has not considered the constitution since 2019, and as a result the existing constitution notes that teacher representatives come from the Teachers' Unions that are active within the Authority:

ASCL (1)

NAS/UWT (1)

UCAC (1)

NUT (1)
ATL (1)

However, the NUT and ATL Unions merged in 2017 to create the NEU Union, and the NAHT Union is also recognised by Gwynedd Council.

The Education Department and SACRE are of the opinion that there is a need to strengthen the teachers' representation on the Committee to add value to the Committee's meetings and actions.

The Primary and Special Catchment Areas Consultative Group (GYDCA) is a group that meets monthly and includes one Primary Headteacher from every catchment area in Gwynedd and the Gwynedd Secondary Headteachers Group (GSCU) also meets monthly and includes every Secondary Headteacher in Gwynedd. It is believed that it would be appropriate to ask for a nomination from both these groups to ensure representation of one primary and secondary headteacher/teacher on the SACRE committee.

3. INTRODUCTION AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Background

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on the local authority to establish a standing council to advise it on religious education.

SACRE Functions

In accordance with the Constitution, the functions of SACRE are as follows:

- Advise the Local Authority on worship in schools and religious education to be provided in accordance with the agreed syllabus, including teaching methods, advice on materials and the provision of training for teachers;
- Consider whether it should be recommended that the Local Authority's current agreed syllabus should be reviewed by calling an Agreed Syllabus Conference [ASC];
- Consider requests from schools to come to a decision (to be excluded from the requirement that religious worship should be "Christian"):
- Report back to the Local Authority and the Welsh Government on its activities annually.

SACRE Membership

The Act notes that SACRE should include representatives from among the following:

- A group of persons to represent the Christian denominations and other religions as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area ('Group A')
- A group of persons to represent such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area (Group B)
- A group of persons to represent the authority (Group C)

Only the above representative groups have the right to vote, and each group will have one vote.

SACRE itself could also co-opt members (but they would not have a vote)

Circular 10/94

In addition to the statutory provision, in 1994 the former Welsh Office published guidance on Religious Education and Collective Worship in the form of Circular 10/94, which includes provisions involving the implementation of SACRE.

Gwynedd Council SACRE

The SACRE membership was reviewed by Gwynedd Council's Cabinet in April 2019, and the current membership is as follows:

Christians and Other Faiths (Group A)

The Methodist Church

Union of Welsh Baptists

Presbyterian Church of Wales

Church in Wales

Congregationalist Union

The Catholic Church

one representative from the following beliefs: Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism and the Humanists

Teachers representing the following Unions

ASCL (1)

NAS/UWT (1)

UCAC (1)

NUT (1)

ATL (1)

Elected Members Membership (7)

(Based on political balance)

(Ex-officio Members, the Chair and Vice-chair of the Council)

The SACRE constitution has not been reviewed since then.

4. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 4.1 Submit the Cabinet's decision to the SACRE Committee on the 29th of November 2022.
- 4.2 Act on the change to the Constitution in accordance with the Cabinet's decision.

5. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

- 5.1 **The Gwynedd SACRE Committee's opinion on adapting the way teachers' representatives are invited** - It would be an opportunity for Gwynedd SACRE to be more representational and will enable them to increase the key teachers' representation on the Committee
- 5.2 **The view of the Gwynedd Teachers' Union Forum** - The constitution needs to be amended to reflect the current situation in terms of teachers' unions.
- 5.3 **Views of the Statutory Officers:**

i. The Monitoring Officer: The report has been the subject of advice by the Legal Services. No observations to add in relation to propriety.

ii. Head of Finance: Nothing to add from the perspective of financial propriety

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to a meeting of the Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting:	13 September 2022
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Beca Brown
Contact Officer:	Buddug Mair Huws
Contact Telephone Number:	34319
Title of Item:	TO APPROVE AND ADOPT THE GWYNEDD COUNCIL AGREED SYLLABUS FOR RELIGION, VALUES AND ETHICS

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

The Cabinet is requested to approve and adopt the Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics in accordance with the recommendation of the Education Department, the Gwynedd Statutory Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE) and Agreed Syllabus Conference and the Welsh Government's Guidance

2. THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

Every local authority has a legal duty to hold an Agreed Syllabus Conference to review the syllabus and recommend an appropriate syllabus for adoption by the local authority. Whenever the local authority is of the view (based on the observations made to it or otherwise) that the agreed syllabus for religion, values and ethics should be reconsidered, the local authority will be responsible for convening the Agreed Syllabus Conference for this purpose. The agreed syllabus for religion, values and ethics should be reconsidered every five years. As a result of the emergence of the Curriculum and Assessment Act (Wales) 2021 and the establishment of the Curriculum for Wales, the Agreed Syllabus Conference was held for Gwynedd SACRE on 15 February 2022. The unanimous decision of the Conference was to adopt the Welsh Government's Guidelines on Religion, Values and Ethics.

3. INTRODUCTION AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Background

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on the local authority to adopt a local Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics.

The Curriculum and Assessment Act (Wales) 2021 established the Curriculum for Wales under the law, replacing the Basic Curriculum (that includes, for example, national and local curricula noted in Part 7 of the Education Act 2002).

The Curriculum and Assessment Act (Wales) 2021 notes the four purposes of the curriculum under the law. It also notes the following mandatory elements that, except for English, encompass the 3 to 16 years old learning continuum:

cross-curricular skills, literacy, numeracy and digital competence

names of the learning and experience areas (Areas)

relationships and sexuality education

religion, values and ethics

Welsh

English - from 7 years old in accordance with Gwynedd's Language Policy

Once the agreed syllabus for religion, values and ethics is adopted, it will be a requirement for every maintained school and setting to consider the agreed syllabus, including schools of a religious character, when planning an element of the agreed syllabus in their Religion, Values and Ethics provision.

Should the local authority wish to adopt or adapt the guidance as their agreed syllabus, they may do this.

3.2 Statutory Function of SACRE

- Consider and recommend an agreed syllabus for the Local Authority following holding the Agreed Syllabus Conference [ASC];
- The Curriculum and Assessment Act (Wales) 2021 does not specify by which date the Agreed Syllabus Conference will firstly have to prepare and recommend the agreed syllabus. The local authority has to adopt a new syllabus to replace the existing agreed syllabus to be used in schools and settings that implement the Curriculum for Wales. Therefore, the SACREs for Religion, Values and Ethics and the Agreed Syllabus should be established in good time to present an agreed syllabus in accordance with the process of implementing the Curriculum for Wales in 2022. The local authority will be responsible for administrating this.

3.3 Legal Status of the Guidance for Religion, Values and Ethics

The Guidance on Religion, Values and Ethics in the Humanities Field is statutory and issued under section 71 of the Act, and it is proposed that it will assist those who are responsible within the Act for planning the syllabus for religion, values and ethics as part of the school curriculum.

3.4 The Welsh Government's Guidance on Religion, Values and Ethics

There was comprehensive consultation work on the Guidance from March 2020 onwards and Wales SACREs were an integral part of their creation. The output of the consultation efforts held is the guidance published by the Welsh Government.

It is not intended for the agreed syllabus to be a plan of work. Instead, it is proposed to be a guidance and a useful reference point for schools to assist them to plan an appropriate and relevant curriculum for their learners that include religion, values and ethics within the Humanities Field.

4. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 4.1 Share the Gwynedd Agreed Syllabus with Gwynedd schools by 16 September 2022.

5. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

5.1 View of the Gwynedd Education Department: The Education Department is anxious to ensure that the religious education presented in our schools reflects the nature of local society and the views of Gwynedd residents.

5.2 View of Gwynedd SACRE Committee: On 12 July 2022, the Gwynedd SACRE Committee agreed to recommend that the Cabinet should accept and adopt the Welsh Government Guidance on Religion, Values and Morals as Gwynedd Council's Agreed Syllabus.

5.3 Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. The Monitoring Officer: The report has been the subject of advice by the Legal Services. No observations to add in relation to propriety.

ii. Head of Finance: Nothing to add from the perspective of financial propriety

Background documents

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation/#crefydd,-gwerthoedd-a-moeseg>

[Guidance on Religion, Values and Ethics](#)

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to the Cabinet

Date of meeting: 13 September 2022
Cabinet Member: Councillor Beca Brown
Contact Officer: Garem Jackson
Contact Telephone Number: 32089
Title of Item: Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Education

1 THE DECISION SOUGHT

1.1 To accept and note the information in the report.

2 THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

2.1 In order to ensure effective performance management.

3 INTRODUCTION

3.1 The purpose of this report is to update you on what has been achieved in the field for which I, as Cabinet Member for Education, have responsibility. This includes outlining the latest with the pledges in the Council Plan; the Department's day-to-day work; and the latest in terms of savings and cuts schemes.

3.2 We are implementing the Council Plan for 2018-23, and I herein report on progress to the end of August 2022. I wish to remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised by me in Performance Challenging meetings. I am particularly happy with the Department's performance, and I will elaborate on the progress made in the report.

4. THE RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

Performance of Projects in the Council Plan

4.1 Sustainable Learning Communities Programme

4.1.1 The Sustainable Learning Communities Programme plans and realises innovative projects to adapt schools, or build new schools so that the children and young people of Gwynedd are educated in the best possible learning environment.

4.1.2 Despite the pandemic, the new Ysgol y Garnedd building opened its doors in October 2020 and became the new educational home for up to 420 learners in the city of Bangor. The school site also offers a nursery education and wrap-around

childcare provision in a bespoke environment with the best possible resources. Also, there is a carefully-designed space for specialist units to support child development on the site. Excellent team work and clear communication was a feature of this successful project, that managed to keep within the budget allocated to it.

The project has won two Construction Excellence in Wales 2021 awards, namely:

Digital Construction Award

Client of the Year Award

<https://www.cewales.org.uk/cew-awards/awards-2021/>

We will arrange an official opening with the school when it will be safe to do so.

- 4.1.3 Ysgol y Faenol is also in the process of having a major extension. Although the timetable slipped as a result of the pandemic, the extension has now been completed. Nevertheless, discussions continue in relation to land transfers and consequently, it is not possible to complete work on the school's car park at present. When the work on the car park will be completed, the school will be able to accommodate 315 learners as a result of the extension, which is an increase of 129 learners. The building has also been planned to be a hub for the local area, with a new community centre built as a part of the development. We anticipate that the work will be completed by the end of the Autumn Term 2022.
- 4.1.4 To respond to the increasing demand for places at Ysgol Glancegin in Maesgeirchen, we have secured funding to add an extra classroom to the school building. The work has already been completed, and the classroom was ready for use by the school at the beginning of the last educational year.
- 4.1.5 Arrangements for the project management of Our Lady's School have been agreed with the Diocese, which means that Gwynedd Council will be responsible for facilitating the project arrangements and submitting the business case to Welsh Government. Initial feasibility work has been completed to identify the needs, and there is agreement to locate the new school on the site of Ysgol Glanadda (which is now closed) and this location is in accordance with the aspirations of the community. Conceptual plans have been created to establish Our Lady's School on that site.
- 4.1.6 As a result of the poor condition of the building and existing learning environment at Ysgol Treferythyr, we will build a new school in Cricieth to improve the learning environment and ensure the best resources in order for learners to thrive. The Cabinet has already supported the proposal to increase the capacity of Ysgol Treferythyr to 150 learners, and relocate the school to an alternative site that is referred to as the A497 site, in line with the statutory procedure. A planning application has been submitted to relocate the school to the A497 site, but two matters have arisen regarding the site as a part of the planning process, and in response to that, archaeological work has been completed, and a safe routes to school survey has now been completed and a report has been submitted to the Planning Department. I look forward to see the building work progressing soon and to see the children benefiting from the best possible facilities.
- 4.1.7 As a result of the varying quality of education and learner experiences across the Post-16 Education System in Arfon, the Cabinet gave permission to the Department to contact stakeholders to discuss the vision for Post-16 education in Arfon. A series

of virtual meetings were held with headteachers, Governors, staff, parents, learners and the broader community to present the new vision for post-16 education, as well as gather views and ideas on the best way to realise the vision. We reported on the initial messages from this engagement to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in February last year, and we are now in a position to press on with this project following the delay seen over the past year.

4.1.8 Linked to the post-16 education field, I am extremely proud to note that we have abolished the fee for the post-16 travel ticket for all our learners from this September onwards. This is particularly important to ensure that as a Council we do not place any obstacles to enable our young people to continue their education after the age of 16, and even more important these days considering the tremendous increase in living costs.

4.1.9 One project within the Sustainable Learning Communities Programme, namely Condition and Suitability has faced some barriers and challenges, which have disrupted our ability to move on to implement some aspects of the project with specific schools for a period. The purpose of this project is to improve the condition of our schools' existing buildings, and make alterations to the buildings in order to ensure that they are fit for purpose and make the best use of the space available. Consequently, during 2021, we had to delay the work on a number of alterations that were programmed to take place within our schools during the summer 2021, in the hope that the construction market would stabilise and that prices would drop somewhat. I am pleased to say that the situation has improved since the beginning of the pandemic and Brexit and that we have managed to proceed to implement a number of alterations and improvements to the condition of our school buildings this year, particularly over the summer holidays.

4.2 **The Well-being and Attainment Gap**

4.2.1 As a result of the pandemic and lock-downs, the Education Department and the Council have identified the well-being and attainment gap as one of the main priorities in light of concern that some children and young people may be left behind in terms of their educational attainment, and that some will need additional support to close that gap, as well as the need for support with their well-being.

4.2.2 In response to this concern, since September 2020, all schools in Gwynedd have implemented an *Accelerated Learning Programme* with funding from the Welsh Government, to respond to the impact of the lockdown on the well-being and attainment of some specific groups of 5-16 year old learners.

4.2.3 Beyond school, we have identified two stages in a child and young person's life as being a priority in terms of responding to the well-being and attainment gap, namely 0-5 year olds, and young people post-16. Indeed, the lockdown period has highlighted the vulnerability of the early years sector, with inconsistency across the county in terms of the range and availability of services. The range of partners who are involved in the provision along with the strategic direction of the field nationally makes it difficult to structure our services here in Gwynedd. The project group has agreed upon specific work streams and has prioritised conducting a care and education provision adequacy assessment across the authority. At the same time, work is being done on different funding models, as well as the implications of

leaseholds between providers and Gwynedd Council.

- 4.2.4 Also, recognising that the 16-24 age group has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. There are more referrals for well-being, mental health and homelessness assistance among this age group. It is therefore intended to give specific attention to this field in order to mitigate any knock-on effects, ensuring that young people receive appropriate support and provision to enable them to thrive.

4.3 **Transforming the ALN&I provision**

- 4.3.1 The purpose of this project was to transform the additional learning needs and inclusion service, so as to ensure that the children and young people who need the service receive the most appropriate support to enable them to achieve their potential. The project also focused on preparing for the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018. This Act came into force in September 2021, but there is a period of three years to transform, up to September 2024.
- 4.3.2 A Welsh Government ALN Act Readiness Review shows very strong progress in terms of the Authority's preparations for the Legislation. The requisite statutory posts are in place since January 2021 and are operating effectively. Collaboration with the Health Board has developed well by collaborating with the Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer (DECLO). A number of stakeholder training events have been held in order to specify particular aspects of the Final Code. We have completed work on the dispute resolution routes to ensure that they are operational. In the early years sector the necessary systems for early identification, and establishing clear processes have been completed. Preparatory work in the post-16 sector is continuing. Also the work of developing a work, curriculum and assessment link between the mainstream and Special Schools has developed and continues to develop.
- 4.3.3 Innovative work is continuing to be done in terms of the use and continuous development of the on-line Individual Development Plan system, with the system driving the entire process for the schools, parents, external agencies and other education provisions (e.g. the early years).
- 4.3.4 Considering that the new legislation has come into force since September 2021, and that Gwynedd is in a firm position in terms of implementing the new requirements, I am of the opinion that this project in the Council Plan has now been achieved, and I am confident that the requirements associated with the legislation have now transferred into Department's day-to-day work.

4.4 **Digital Education Strategy**

- 4.4.1 What we are trying to achieve through the digital strategy is highly ambitious and is an indication of the way we prioritise our children's education here in Gwynedd. Put simply, the strategy, when implemented fully, will provide all children from year 3 to year 11 with a suitable device each to enable digital learning. Gwynedd will be one of the first authorities in Wales to do this, and it is something we can take pride in.
- 4.4.2 Considerable work has already been achieved, which included upgrading the schools' network in accordance with the education digital standards, and also

transforming web-filtering methods. A little over £1.3m has been invested in the network. Subsequently, a substantial number of devices have been distributed in accordance with the strategy. Enough *ipads* have been distributed to provide one to every four learners in the Foundation Phase, and enough *Chromebooks* have been distributed so that all learners in years 3 to 6 have one device each. Windows 10 devices are also being prepared for all pupils in years 7, 10 and 11, and every teacher in Gwynedd has received a standard device via the strategy before the end of the Summer Term this year. As a result of the decision to internalise support for all devices, and as a result of a recruitment process, the Schools Digital Services team has now been established and is operational. The hope is that these devices will further spark imagination, ingenuity and effectiveness in aspects of digital learning across the sectors.

- 4.4.3 Considering that the devices have now been shared with the learners and teachers at our schools, and that the Schools Digital Service has been established, I am of the opinion that this project in the Council Plan has now been completed, and that the work has transferred into the day-to-day work of the Education Department and ICT.

4.5 Free school meals at primary schools

- 4.5.1 In December 2021, Welsh Government announced its plan to provide free school meals to all primary pupils across Wales. Since the announcement, substantial work has been achieved jointly between the Education Department and the Property Development Team, which means that we are ahead of the national schedule to provide free school meals for all Gwynedd primary school pupils.
- 4.5.2 From the beginning of September onwards, every learner in Reception and Year One in Gwynedd will receive free school meals, by January, we are aiming for all Year 2 learners to receive free school meals also, and by September 2023, we are aiming to ensure that all Gwynedd primary school learners will receive free school meals.

4.6 Meirionnydd Collaboration

- 4.6.1 The purpose of this project is to look specifically at ensuring that the quality of the education is consistently good and sustainable for the future in Meirionnydd secondary schools. Progress on this project has been slow and has been affected as a result of the obvious challenges of the pandemic and the busy nature of secondary schools.
- 4.6.2 Nevertheless, we have sought the opinion of headteachers and representatives of the governing body of every secondary school on the potential challenges they face in terms of providing quality secondary education in the area, such as recruiting teachers, middle managers and leaders. We have also circulated a questionnaire to seek the views of learners, staff, parents and headteachers, that will inform the future direction of the project, and we are currently in the process of analysing messages from those questionnaires.

4.7 Promoting Use of the Welsh language by Children and Young People

- 4.7.1 In response to the concerns identified as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the requirements of the WESP outcomes, effective use was ensured of the Welsh

Language Grant to target the workforce's language skills and informal use of the Welsh language amongst pupils. During 2021/22, 13 Welsh Language Cluster Schemes were planned and completed under the guidance of the Language Charter Coordinator and Secondary Language Strategy Coordinator, which included all primary and secondary schools in the county. It was pleasing to see a film that had been produced of some of the examples of good practice with the work of these clusters across the county, being shown as a part of the celebrations of the Llŷn and Eifionydd National Eisteddfod Proclamation Ceremony in Porthmadog in June this year.

- 4.7.2 Advantage was taken of the opportunity to receive Welsh lessons from Bangor University's Dysgu Cymraeg Gogledd Orllewin in 2021/22 by 12 teachers as a part of plans to respond to the Education Workforce's Language Skills Self-assessment data. The teachers and assistants of Our Lady's School, Bangor, were supported to improve and refresh their Welsh language skills in collaboration with Canolfan Bedwyr, Bangor University. I am very proud that a Welsh Language Development teacher has been appointed at Ysgol Friars for September 2022 with the Authority's support, in order to support the school's workforce to build their confidence and foster their skills in Welsh, with the aim that more curricular provision will be available through the medium of Welsh for learners over the next years.
- 4.7.3 Recently, focus groups were held with a cross-section of learners in the secondary sector in order to gather their views and ideas for establishing Language Forums at every secondary school in Gwynedd from September 2022 onwards. This is an exciting development, and I look forward to hear about the ideas and activities that learners will be eager to develop in order to promote the use of Welsh amongst their peers.

4.8 The Department's day-to-day work

- 4.8.1 Safeguarding the welfare of Gwynedd children and young people is a key priority for the Department and the Council, and is even more key of course as a result of the pandemic and various lockdowns when the majority of our learners (apart from vulnerable learners and the children of key workers) had to stay at home. The Department has recently created a new training package in Welsh for Child Protection Designated Persons in schools and education centres, in conjunction with the Welsh Government's Safeguarding in Education Group. It is pleasing to say that 100% of designated Child Protection persons at our school have completed level 2 training within 3 years, as well as 100% of designated persons on our schools' governing bodies.
- 4.8.2 The purpose of the Catering and Cleaning service is to provide nutritious and healthy food for the pupils of Gwynedd Schools and to keep educational establishments clean and safe to assist pupils to reach their potential. This service has been essential and of key importance during the pandemic to ensure a regular cleaning service during the day, in order to provide a safe environment for learners and staff in our schools, and also ensure a school meals provision. The catering service also offers 13 Kickstart placements in the kitchens of secondary schools across the County that receive a catering service from the Council. The Government's Kickstart scheme provides funding to create work placements for

young people aged between 16 and 24 years who receive Universal Credit and who are at risk of long-term unemployment.

- 4.8.3 On 6 July 2021, the Cabinet approved a new vision for a modern Immersion Education System in Gwynedd, which places the learner at the centre when supporting them to acquire the Welsh language. This new vision also includes a capital investment of £1.1 million from Welsh Government for the purpose of establishing new immersion education sites in Bangor and Tywyn, as well as improving existing facilities at the Eifionydd site, Porthmadog. The work has already been completed on the Eifionydd site, and the building has also arrived the Ysgol Tryfan, Bangor site. Conceptual work for the designs of the new Tywyn immersion education site is currently underway.

Recently, the Department was fortunate to receive further capital investment from Welsh Government, and on 19 July 2022, the Cabinet approved the investment, which will involve ensuring that the resources at the primary immersion sites in Maesincla are suitable for the 21st Century, with the Llangybi immersion education site moving to Ysgol Cymerau, Pwllheli, and the Dolgellau site becoming a part of the Bro Idris site.

To this end, the Department has also been very fortunate to receive Welsh Government's Late Immersion revenue funding, and over the past months, work has been underway to draw up and record a series of webinars that will be available for the Gwynedd schools' workforce, in order to empower them with language immersion practices. The revenue funding has also enabled us to modernise the provision by commissioning *Animated Technologies* to develop a virtual town called Aber Rwla, with Anni Llŷn commissioned to create the new-look immersion plan.

- 4.8.4 The Schools Business Centre was established in September 2019 in order to offer services to the county's schools. The centre offers many services including financial management, administering appointments, arranging supply teachers and ensuring that the SIMS system is up-to-date. The centre has identified three priorities for the year, and is currently on target to deliver in accordance with the Business Plan. It is very positive that all Gwynedd primary schools are buying into the service, and see the value of it for ensuring that processes are followed correctly. The centre is evolving continuously to be able to offer more services to schools in the future.
- 4.8.5 It must be acknowledged that the report is only a summary of all of the Department and the schools' work over the past months, and consequently I would like to acknowledge and note my appreciation for the heroic work that has been happening in the Department and in our schools to ensure the best education for our children, as well as the health, safety and welfare of all of our learners and staff.

To close, I would also like to congratulate our schools and our learners for excellent results in this summer's GCSE and A Level examination.

5. **SAVINGS POSITION**

The Department has achieved all historical savings plan. The Department has no savings targets in 2022-23.

THE STATUTORY OFFICERS' OBSERVATIONS

The Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

Head of Finance:

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation of the Education Department.

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to Gwynedd Council Cabinet meeting

Meeting date: 13 SEPTEMBER 2022

Cabinet Member: COUNCILLOR IOAN THOMAS

Contact Officer: DEWI A MORGAN, HEAD OF FINANCE

Contact Number: 34684

Subject: FINANCE CABINET MEMBER'S PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE REPORT

THE DECISION SOUGHT

To receive and note the information in the report.

THE REASONS WHY A DECISION IS REQUIRED

To ensure effective performance management.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on what has happened in the areas for which I am responsible as the Cabinet Member for Finance. This will include outlining what has happened against the promises of the 2018-2023 Gwynedd Council Plan; where the performance measures are at; and the latest regarding savings plans and cuts.
- 1.2 All the matters have already been the subject of discussion and have been scrutinised by myself, along with the Corporate Director, in a Performance Challenge Meeting held on 27th July, where the Department's Management Team and service managers were present.
- 1.3 I am very pleased to note that the performance of the Finance Department has remained generally good over the last months. The Department has also made satisfactory progress on the relevant priority project.

2. GWYNEDD COUNCIL PLAN PROJECTS 2018-2023 [Improvement Priorities]

2.1 The progress made to date against the Department's priority project is set out below.

2.2 Achieving Savings

2.3.1 The Council has financial planning arrangements that have already identified significant efficiency savings in order to minimise service cuts for Gwynedd residents. In January 2021, the savings schemes were reviewed to assess which historic schemes were now unachievable, and a revised programme of savings was drawn up for 2021/22 following the removal, slipping and re-profiling of savings schemes.

2.3.2 Savings worth a total of £2,375,000 were planned for delivery in 2022/23, which were a combination of savings that had slipped from previous years and new plans. Having considered the situation, Cabinet determined as follows in January 2022 in relation to these plans:

- acknowledge that the situation had now changed so much that savings schemes totalling £489,750 cannot be achieved, by deleting them from the budget, namely:
 - End to End Review (Children and Families Department) worth £279,750
 - Transfer of playing fields to others (Highways and Municipal Department) worth £210,000
- move the delivery profile for schemes worth £1,290,250 to 2023/24 and subsequent years

2.3.3 The result is that £595,000 worth of savings plans remain to be drawn from departmental budgets in 2022/23.

2.3.4 We expect a substantially lower settlement for 2023/24 and 2024/25 than received in 2022/23 and therefore it seems increasingly likely that these savings schemes cannot be slipped further whilst allowing us to set a balanced financial plan and further, additional savings would need to be discovered.

2.3.5 Historically, the savings schemes that have slipped are ones that have proven to be very difficult to realise, and where the huge changes brought about by Covid19 have made the situation even more difficult.

2.3.6 Some of our reserves could be used to delay a few of these savings schemes and bridge the budget gap, but using reserves is not a permanent solution.

2.3.7 The relevant amounts have already been taken out of the departments' budgets in 2022/23; formal reviews will take place at the end of August 2022 and November 2022 and any overspending will be highlighted and discussed with the departments. A detailed report on each department's savings schemes will be presented to the Cabinet on 25th October 2022.

3. PERFORMANCE

3.1 Below, I outline the main issues arising from the department's performance in the period since the beginning of April 2022. The information does not refer to all services in the department, only those we feel the need to draw your attention to.

3.2 **Internal Audit Service.** Internal Audit has been able to complete 4.48% of the 2022/2023 Annual Plan by the end of June, which is 3 audits out of 67. This figure is lower than planned for, but during quarter 1, as usual, around 70 town and community councils were provided with an internal audit service. In addition, officers from the service continued on the work of assisting the Benefits Service in dealing with the processing of Self-Isolation Support Payments. This work from an Internal Audit perspective has now been completed. The Internal Audit Manager is confident the service will have caught up with the work by next quarter but the slippage in Internal Audit work has been added as a departmental risk.

3.3 **Benefits Service.** The service has been able to continue to perform against its core delivery measures, which is the average time taken to process a benefit application, and the time taken to process a change of circumstances. Both indicators show improvement in June 2022 compared to the same period in 2021/22.

As well as processing Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction applications, the service has been working to administer two major schemes on behalf of Welsh Government, namely Self-Isolation Support Payments and Unpaid Carers Payments.

3.4 **Income and Debtors Service.** The amount of arrears over 6 months old is increasing again, having recovered in the second half of the 2021/22 financial year and standing at £1,722,863 on 30 June (but adjusted for Health Board debts, the total drops to £1,406,971). However, the figure is slightly lower than it was on the same date in 2021. Although the cost of living crisis is now a factor, detailed analysis would be required before the extent of this as a factor can be definitively assessed.

3.5 **Pensions Service.** I am pleased with the performance of the Pensions Service, but I am aware that this service is one of those where staff recruitment and retention can be a concern. It is a highly specialised area and the loss of experienced staff can be a risk in terms of being able to continue to maintain the current level of performance.

3.6 **Taxation Service.** During the first quarter of the financial year, the Service has assisted in distributing £150 each to 39,486 eligible households within Gwynedd. Through a combination of payments direct to bank accounts and arrangements to provide payments at post offices, the service had managed to send a payment or voucher to 99% of eligible households by the end of June – the highest figure in Wales at the time.

Taxation is another service where recruitment and retention is a growing problem, and I am particularly aware that the service's ability to answer phone calls while at the same time undertaking processing is a difficult balance, meaning the public are not always able to connect with the service as they wish. Because of this, the Service has commissioned a review of demand with the support of the Ffordd Gwynedd Team.

Despite the challenges described above, the performance of the service in fulfilling its core role of tax collection has remained consistent with recent years. By the end of June 2022:

- Council Tax collection rate (i.e. within-year collection) is 28.96%, slightly lower than it was at the same time in 2021 (29.73%).
- Non-Domestic Rate collection rate stands at 23.78%, which is an improvement on the same period in 2021 (23.21%).

3.7 Finance and Accounting Service. The final position of the Council and all its departments was reported in the revenue and capital outturn report to Cabinet on 14th June 2022 and to the Governance and Audit Committee on 30th June.

The service has successfully completed five sets of Statements of Accounts for 2021/22 subject to audit (the accounts of Gwynedd, GwE, North Wales Economic Ambition Board, Joint Planning Policy Committee and Harbours) in a timely manner during May and June. The completion of full final accounts on behalf of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board has been additional work for Finance this year.

3.8 Information Technology Service – Infrastructure. This team continues to work diligently to maintain and strengthen the resilience of council systems. I am pleased to report that the availability of the service remains very high and there has been no incident of serious interruption to the service. The core network showed 100% availability, with critical systems exhibiting 99.99% for the quarter. In addition to the excellent work in supporting our systems, we undertook several projects to further develop the service, including upgrading the network and improving coverage in our data centres. We once again managed to confirm our compliance with the Public Services Network (PSN), ensuring that the Council had high security procedures and standards.

3.9 IT Service – Support. User satisfaction of this service continues, with all respondents reporting full satisfaction with the service received. The Helpdesk serves between 08:00 and 17:00 and on average, 19 in 20 calls received were answered.

3.10 IT Service – Digital Learning Service. This is a new service that has been established with the transfer of the function of supporting school IT from Cynnal. The service has become established rapidly and robustly, and the distribution of new laptops to teachers has been completed, with much further work completed during the summer, including preparing laptops for our secondary school pupils.

4. DEPARTMENTALS SAVINGS

- 4.1 The Covid-19 crisis led to a delay in the realisation of one £20k 'Income Generation through Fraud Prevention' scheme in 2020/21 (remaining 12% of 2021/22 schemes) and £20k relevant to 2021/22, following the suspension of interviews relating to fraudulent claims in the Benefits area over the period of the crisis. They remain unreleased as a result of the current circumstances, so a further delay in realising the £40k is anticipated.

VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

Head of Finance:

I have collaborated with the Cabinet Member in the preparation of this report and I confirm the content.