



Complete Agenda

Democracy Service
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Meeting

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time

10.30 am, THURSDAY, 17TH OCTOBER, 2024

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

Location

Hybrid - Siambr Hywel Dda, Swyddfeydd y Cyngor Caernarfon and virtually on Zoom

*** NOTE**

This meeting will be webcast

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

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(DISTRIBUTED 10/10/24)

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP (18)

Plaid Cymru (12)

Councillors

Jina Gwyrfai
Dawn Lynne Jones
Gareth Tudor Jones
Gwynfor Owen
John Pughe
Rhys Tudur

Iwan Huws
Dewi Jones
Olaf Cai Larsen
Llio Elenid Owen
Huw Rowlands
Sian Williams

Independent (6)

Councillors

Elwyn Jones
Beth Lawton
John Pughe Roberts

Gwilym Jones
Dewi Owen
Richard Glyn Roberts

Ex-officio Members

Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

With a vote on education matters only

[vacant seat]	Church in Wales
Colette Owen	The Catholic Church
[vacant seat]	Meirionnydd Parent/Governors Representative
Karen Vaughan Jones	Dwyfor Parent/Governors' Representative
Sharon Roberts	Arfon Parent/Governors' Representative

Without a Vote

Elise Poulter	NEU
Gwilym Jones	NASUWT

AGENDA

1. VICE-CHAIR

To elect a Vice-chair for 2024/25.

2. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declarations of personal interest.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

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

5. MINUTES

6 - 19

The Chair shall propose that the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held 18th July, 2024 be signed as a true record.

6. PROGRESS REPORT ON RESPONSE TO ESTYN RECOMMENDATIONS 20 - 28

Cabinet Member – Councillor Beca Brown

To consider a report on the above.

7. TRANSFORM EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN THEIR EARLY YEARS 29 - 37

Cabinet Member – Councillor Beca Brown

To consider a report on the above.

8. STAFF WELL-BEING STRATEGY 38 - 61

Cabinet Member – Councillor Menna Trenholme

To consider a report on the above.

9. ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS TO DISCUSS GWYNEDD'S EDUCATION LANGUAGE POLICY 62

To elect 5 representatives from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to attend an engagement session on 4th December between 1.30 and 3.30pm.

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 18/07/24

Attendance:

Councillors: Councillor Cai Larsen (Chair)

Councillors:- Jina Gwyrfai, Dawn Lynne Jones, Dewi Jones, Elwyn Jones, Gareth Tudor Jones, Gwilym Jones, Dewi Owen, Gwynfor Owen, John Pughe Roberts, Richard Glyn Roberts, Huw Llwyd Rowlands and Rhys Tudur.

Co-opted Members: Colette Owen (The Catholic Church), Sharon Roberts (Arfon Parent/Governor Representative) and Elise Poulter (NEU).

Officers present: Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Advisor) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

Present for item 7:- Arwyn Thomas (GwE Managing Director) and Alwyn Jones (GwE Assistant Director (Standards)).

Present for item 8:- Councillor Beca Brown (Cabinet Member for Education) and Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education).

Present for item 9:- Councillor Beca Brown (Cabinet Member for Education), Dylan Owen (Statutory Director of Social Services), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education) and Llion Williams (Assistant Head: Well-being and Equality).

Present for item 10:- Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Operational Economy Matters), Roland Evans (Assistant Head – Culture) and Angela Jones (Head of Eryri Partnerships – Eryri National Park).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Cai Larsen as Chair of this committee for 2024/25.

The Chair thanked his predecessor in the chair, Councillor Elwyn Jones, and also Councillor Paul Rowlinson, the former Vice-chair.

Two new members were welcomed on the committee, Councillors John Pughe and Sian Williams, and Councillors Paul Rowlinson and Sasha Williams were thanked for their service.

Sharon Roberts, the new Arfon Parent/Governor representative was welcomed on the committee, and her predecessor, Manon Williams, was thanked for her service.

The committee's best wishes were sent to Councillor Beth Lawton following a recent operation.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

As there was no nomination for the Vice-chair, the item was deferred until the next meeting.

RESOLVED to defer this item until the next meeting.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Iwan Huws, Beth Lawton, Llio Elenid Owen and Sian Williams; Karen Vaughan Jones (Dwyfor Parent/Governor Representative) and Gwilym Jones (NASUWT).

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

The Chair declared a personal interest in item 9 (Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools) on behalf of every member who were school governors. It was not a prejudicial interest, and those members did not leave the meeting during the discussion on the item.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 21 March 2024, as a true record.

7. GWE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

Arwyn Thomas (GwE Managing Director) and Alwyn Jones (GwE Assistant Director (Standards)) were welcomed to the meeting.

The Managing Director of GwE delivered a few introductory words, thanking Cyngor Gwynedd and also this committee, for the support given to GwE and its staff over the years.

GwE's Assistant Director (Standards) provided a summary of the content of the Annual Report and members were given the opportunity to ask questions and submit observations.

GwE was thanked for preparing a concise report this year.

It was suggested that the national trends contradicted what was noted in this report. I.e. although Key Area 2 (Improving Teaching and Learning) noted that the quality of the teaching was generally robust across the sectors, another report on this meeting's agenda declared that recent publications, including Estyn and PISA reports and the personal national report on the assessments, had noted that the quality of learning and outcomes within schools and across schools etc. required improvement. In response, it was noted that levels of contradictory evidence were inevitable until the Government's direction in relation to the Accountability Framework in Wales had emerged.

It was noted that it seemed that Key Area 5 (Support and Challenge for Schools Causing Concern) focused on academic results almost without exception, and it was asked what would happen if there were concerns regarding other matters, e.g. Additional Learning Needs or the school leadership in general. In response, it was noted that the quality of leadership was at the core of all this and that its repercussions then filtered through to the quality of teaching and the provision that the children received, ultimately affecting the children's standards.

A member enquired how the 13 improvement priorities in the Annual Report 2022/23 had now reduced to 5. In response, it was noted that all aspects had been summarised into the 5 priorities in this report.

The honesty of the report was welcomed, such as the comment '*The quality of senior leadership is generally robust, but a few challenges remain in some specific areas*' and '*Inconsistency remains in the quality of implementation across the authority ...*'.

The fact that eight teachers from Gwynedd had gained a National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) this year was welcomed, but it was suggested that it would have been beneficial to state how the figure compared with the three previous years. In response, it was noted that the figure was fairly consistent in Gwynedd, and that it would be interesting to see in the next period how many would choose to use this qualification to lead in their local area.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.

8. MIDDLE TIER REVIEW

Councillor Beca Brown (Cabinet Member for Education) and Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education) were welcomed to the meeting.

Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for Education inviting the committee's input on the proposed changes to the way that the school improvement service would be delivered in the future.

The Cabinet Member set out the context. She thanked GwE staff for all their work and support over the years, noting that their input and expert advice had been greatly appreciated by the schools.

The Head of Education expanded on the content of the report and members were then given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

It was noted that the Welsh Government's draft guidance '*Collaborative model between schools, LAs and national government*' noted that governing bodies should '*Consider their own arrangements for working with other governing bodies to support collective responsibility and collaborative improvement*', and a member asked whether there was an intention to re-establish the Gwynedd Governing Body, which was in operation before Covid. In response, it was noted:

- That they did intend to restore the Forum for governors, in hybrid form, while also looking at opportunities to make the body more collective.
- That a Children and Young People's Forum was currently being established and that it was also natural to address school governance, to have everyone's voice in moving these aspects forward.

Concern was expressed that extending the collaboration between schools could mean that the lessons provided jointly would become increasingly English, given that two secondary schools in the county mostly operated as English schools. It was questioned whether the Council had guidance for joint-working to ensure that there was no slippage in the Welsh-medium provision. In response, it was explained that the new model did not suggest moving children from one school to another to get lessons, instead it referred to school leaders working and supporting each other.

It was suggested that the proposed arrangements seemed to be extremely challenging. It was noted that there were all sorts of individual problems in every school and that it was important to have similar schools helping each other, instead of acting based on geographical clusters. It was also noted that headteachers were already overwhelmed, and that the expectation of taking on an additional role of helping other schools (although

already doing so unofficially) would place a lot of extra pressure on them, especially in small schools. In response, it was noted that:-

- Putting all of this into practice in Gwynedd schools would be very challenging for a number of reasons, including the fact that Gwynedd had so many school units, and many of those school units were small schools, and a very small number of non-contact headteachers.
- The challenges highlighted what GwE had managed to do over the years, which was to go into the schools and tailor the leadership to individual schools, regardless of size.
- They repeatedly emphasised in the discussions with the Welsh Government that our context in Gwynedd made all of this very challenging and that the capacity of the schools, rather than their ability to do the work, was the challenge.
- The geographical point was also important as the clusters in Gwynedd were very different and also schools within the same geographical cluster competed for children from the catchment area.
- It would require planning a service with people in the centre who had the ability to draw these aspects together and ensure that everyone gets their share in school improvement support as well. It was premature to say what that would look like until the details awaited from the Government were obtained, and inappropriate to mention that at this stage in the context of employment issues etc.

It was noted that the scrutineers wished to add their support to the Head of Service's efforts to secure a voice to Gwynedd's unique position.

It was questioned whether it would be possible to continue using the expertise of GwE officers during the transitional period. In response, it was noted that:-

- Care must be taken in terms of the information that could be shared due to HR issues.
- A number of GwE staff were on permanent contracts and some had been on secondments that were terminating, and the decision had been made through the GwE Joint Committee regarding the staffing structure for this year.
- As GwE was a regional service, the 6 authorities served by GwE would have to follow the same procedure in terms of responding to restructuring and alternative employment opportunities for staff, and discussions about that were currently taking place.
- In terms of funding, the grants, which had already been passed on to GwE this year, in line with the Welsh Government's desire, had exceeded the core allocation to GwE. In the meetings with the Government, assurance was sought in regard to these grants, but as the grants did not come from the settlement, there were employment implications even then in the sense that there could be no permanent employment with a grant because of the possibility that the grant would not be there in 12 months' time.
- The HR considerations were being addressed by experts from Gwynedd which alleviated concerns in terms of the process being followed correctly.

In light of the explanation regarding the funding, it was suggested that this model had the potential to be significantly cheaper in the long term, and it was asked, since a large proportion of the support was dependent on grant money rather than allocation, whether it would be fair to say that this could be perceived as a way of closing the tap. In response, it was noted that there was truth to that, and although Welsh Government officers stated that they were working hard to try and ensure that the total amount of money provided to this field would remain the same, there was no guarantee on what basis this would be allocated and there was concern regarding the schools' capacity to be able to release individuals to attend another school to do the work.

It was suggested, if the collaboration between schools was a matter of informal arrangement and headteacher discretion, etc., it could be very difficult to make a financial case for it. In response, it was noted although there was currently no assurance about the exact model, it was likely that a general offer would be made to the majority of schools based on the catchment area work, with the Authority elevating the work into more of a commission for targeting particular aspects in schools where there were more specific challenges.

A member expressed the desire to see less autonomy and more uniformity within the education system across the UK, except for the language difference and the cultural aspects of the curriculum relating to local history, etc., in the case of areas such as Gwynedd. It was believed that such uniformity would militate against the element of competition that can exist between schools, facilitate the sharing of good practice with the rest of the organisation and make it easier to set standards and measure against those standards. In response, it was noted that the point was accepted, but we did not have uniformity within the education system, nor were we likely to have it going forward.

In response to the observation, the member noted that the observations of GwE officers on item 7 noted that we did not, in effect, know what we were measuring, and that it would be nice to be able to start some sort of uniformity at almost a local level.

It was enquired whether the Education Department had the capacity to absorb all these additional responsibilities, given that it was a small department and faced many challenges over the next year and beyond. In response, it was noted that the capacity was not there at present, but that the Department would have to be re-structured to be able to incorporate the jobs and responsibilities that came with this.

It was enquired whether they could be confident that the resources released would be sufficient to meet the requirements. In response, it was noted that it was premature to give a definitive answer one way or another, but that it would be challenging due to the school numbers in Gwynedd and the dispersed nature of the county.

It was enquired whether the new system was expected to be ready by September. In response, it was noted that:-

- The Authority was obliged to introduce the new model in September/October.
- There would then be implications for the transfer of staff. They could not currently confirm whether it was possible to realise these changes by the end of March 2025, and the Authority would receive advice on this.
- It was believed that it would be best if the situation continued as it was until the end of the summer term anyway, as there was no desire to change things in the middle of a school year.
- A decision had not finally been made on this yet as so many things were uncertain at the moment.

It was enquired whether that meant they could be in a situation where there was nothing in place. In response, it was noted that this would not be allowed to happen, and that there would have to be a service in place, even if that was a continuation of what currently existed, or a different or transitional version of it.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.

9. SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS IN SCHOOLS

Dylan Owen (Statutory Director of Social Services) and Llion Williams (Assistant Head: Well-being and Equality) were welcomed to the meeting.

Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for Education in response to a request by the members to receive information on safeguarding arrangements in schools, and on the guidance and support provided in this field by the Education Department so as to give assurance to committee members of the appropriateness of the arrangements.

The Cabinet Member for Education set out the context and the Head of Education also delivered a few words at the beginning.

Members were then given an opportunity to ask questions and submit observations.

It was noted that a DBS check did not prove that someone was a safe person, but rather stated that a person had not yet been found guilty of a crime. In response, it was noted that:-

- They agreed with the observation, and as well as the DBS, this Council asked for two references before appointing to any post.
- There were only 0.07% of staff without a DBS at the moment, and there were specific reasons for that, e.g. long-term illness, a person suspended from work or people on supply lists who no longer wished to work for Gwynedd.
- Efforts were underway almost daily to meet the 100% target.
- The Safeguarding Operational Group monitored how many people have had a DBS, and if the percentages were lower than expected, it asked what was the explanation and justification for that.

It was enquired how much monitoring took place to ensure that the designated safeguarding person in a school completed all the necessary training. In response, it was noted:-

- That training was provided by the Authority in the form of small groups, so that people had the opportunity to ask questions that they might not ask in larger groups.
- That the nature of the training was now more fun and interactive, and that the feedback from these annual sessions was very positive.
- In terms of monitoring, governing bodies had a responsibility to have a person overseeing child protection on the body, and that person would be expected to meet with the designated safeguarding person to discuss the situation in the school in terms of safeguarding children.
- That training was also provided for governors on their monitoring role and supporting the designated safeguarding person within the school.
- That Gwynedd was one of the few authorities in Wales that undertook quality assurance checks, where the designated officer in the county goes to a school and carries out a detailed investigation which then feeds into an authority overview. By doing so, they could see if there were things that were not being done properly, what they were and whether the training needed to be refined to improve the guidance given to designated persons.
- That the Safeguarding Operational Group monitored the number of people who had received safeguarding training, etc., and reported regularly to the Safeguarding Strategic Panel.

It was noted that it was hoped that a staff member could not be the designated governor. In response, it was noted that there was no desire for this to happen, and if it was seen to happen, the impropriety of the situation would have to be brought to the attention of the governing body.

It was noted that level 2 training was extremely valuable and important and should be mandated for designated governors. A member enquired what monitoring took place to ensure governors had received level 1 training and that designated governors had received level 2 training. In response, it was noted that the Authority monitored that designated persons on the governing body had received level 1 and 2 training.

It was noted that the report gave a picture of a fairly robust system, but for a system to work the entry point must work, i.e., that a case of potential abuse must enter the system in the first place. A member asked for an explanation of the procedure from the point where e.g. an assistant in a class noticed marks on a child's body. In response, it was noted that this was explained in the policy, but the procedure was as follows:-

- Staff were encouraged and trained to listen to the child, to ask questions that were not closed questions, to record what was being said in the child's words and to refer this to the attention of the designated person within the school (most often the headteacher or a member of the management team).
- The designated person had a responsibility to contact the Reception Team in Pwllheli to receive appropriate advice.
- The safeguarding process becomes active from this point on. A social worker might visit the school to look at the marks on the child, or possibly the police could be called.
- The school was required to submit an accurately completed referral form as soon as possible, but there was no obligation to complete it before bringing the matter to the attention of the Reception Team.
- That staff would look after the child in the meantime and continue with the care surrounding safeguarding after the child had been seen by the social worker.

It was further noted:-

- That a safeguarding question was asked in every teacher job interview, and although the Head of Service had interviewed tens, if not hundreds of teachers over the years, he had never come across any candidate who was unsure of the safeguarding procedures.
- In a case of concern about a potential safeguarding issue, schools were advised to leave everything and contact the Reception Team immediately, no matter how busy the school day.

A member enquired who was responsible if a situation emerged which was not necessarily a complaint or concern, but there was information that suggested there was a risk to children. In response, it was noted:-

- That safeguarding children was everyone's responsibility, but within a school and school context, the responsibility rested with the headteacher and the designated person within that school.
- That there were arrangements and models in place for schools to record low-level concerns about children, e.g. holes in shoes etc, and recording the same concerns for days or weeks at a time might merit referral.
- If a school had genuine concerns about children, e.g. marks on their bodies, they had no choice but to refer the matter to the Reception Team.
- That schools had to make decisions on a daily basis to either refer a case or record a concern. The Authority could not intervene in the process because, with so many schools in the county, the Authority was not required to do so, nor was it practicable or reasonable for the Authority to do so.
- That the training provided guidance on identifying the threshold between low level concern and genuine concern and that the number of referrals received by the

Children's Referrals Team was testament to the fact that Gwynedd schools knew how to identify and act on risks.

Concern was expressed that the Authority's processes were not clear enough to allow people who were not part of the educational establishment, but who came into contact with children, such as parents, catering staff, etc. to make a complaint. A member asked whether they could ensure that the safeguarding guidance was clear in the safeguarding policy. In response, it was noted:-

- That every staff member who worked in a school in Gwynedd, from the catering staff to the management team, received appropriate training for safeguarding children.
- That it was a requirement for every school to display the name of the designated person at authority level on posters in the school.
- That every school had their own version of the safeguarding policy and that the version on the website was an example of a policy shared with schools, and based on national practice.

It was noted that it would be beneficial if a concise guide on how to file a complaint was readily available from any safeguarding policy.

An enquiry was made as to how, e.g. an assistant at a school submitting a complaint, could ensure that the process had been followed. It was noted that a training system could be put in place for everyone who was part of the system, but the chain would only be as strong as the weakest link in it. In response, it was noted:-

- As with any procedure, 100% certainty could not be given, but that the system was as perfect as it could be.
- DBS was a check of a staff member's situation at a point in time and was updated in accordance with national guidance.
- That it was good practice for staff who had raised a concern about a child to check if the referral had been made.

It was suggested that the one important thing missing amongst the burden of the training material for governors was the small number of simple things governors really needed to know, namely that an average governor should refer concern about school staff or a parent to the headteacher, or refer a concern about the headteacher to the authority. In response, it was noted that this was covered in the policy, but possibly needed to be simplified and highlighted a little better.

It was noted that the recent case was likely in the back of the minds of all members when discussing this field. It was likely that the headteacher in question had a DBS and that everyone around him had done the training, etc., but there was a failure nevertheless. The Head of Education was being honest in saying that no system could be perfect, and it was important to have a self-critical attitude towards the system. It was further noted that this committee had received a report from Estyn on the Education Department which stated that the system was, by and large, sound, when it was not. A member enquired to what extent the Department was discussing this with Estyn, and to what extent the discussion with the independent inspection body would be used to strengthen the Department's arrangements. In response, it was noted that the Authority had responded completely sincerely and honestly to the Estyn questions as part of the inspection, and the report highlighted that we followed the safeguarding guidelines appropriately at that time.

It was suggested that there was a place to further discuss the report with Estyn since this committee, and also the Governance and Audit Committee, relied on external regulating body reports to form an opinion on the arrangements of the Authority. It was noted that such reports could be defective as the questions asked were insufficient questions in terms

of the information they captured, therefore leading to a deficiency in the process. It was believed that this was a matter to go after to try and prevent a systematic failure.

It was suggested, specifically in relation to a complaint about a headteacher, that the matter should be referred more than once to more than one party so as to ensure that nothing was missed. In response, it was noted:-

- That there was an agreed arrangement in terms of dealing with allegations against people in a position of trust, and that the Authority followed that arrangement.
- That the Headteacher and the Education Department would be committed to any lessons and changes that may emerge from the practice review.

A member sought assurance that there was a robust training programme for the next level of people, i.e. education officers, and possibly GwE advisors, as they also received concerns about safeguarding matters. In response, assurance was given that the training was being provided to officers of the Education Department and all the other services.

It was noted that, from a parent's perspective, it would be extremely beneficial if there was a fairly simple interactive infographic available to help parents / governors to know what to refer, when to refer and where to refer. Each school could be asked to place the infographic on their website and perhaps refer to it every term, to highlight that there was now a robust process in place. It was noted that parental confidence in the system had been dented and there was work to be done to raise awareness of the inspection and the new way of doing things to ensure children were safe in schools. In response, it was noted that the point was fair and that the Head of Education would ask the officers to construct a model infographic for the individual schools to refine and place on their website.

RESOLVED

- 1. To accept the report and note the observations.**
- 2. To recommend that the Education Department provides a simple guide on referring any concerns for use by everyone who is involved with the system, such as governors and parents.**

At the end of the discussion, the Chair noted that the report gave comfort to the committee that there was a robust system in place. However, it was also true to say that public faith in the system had been undermined. He suggested, possibly, that the committee might wish to look further into this field in the near future which could be discussed further at the informal meeting of the committee following this meeting.

10. GWYNEDD AND ERYRI SUSTAINABLE VISITOR ECONOMY PLAN 2035

Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Operational Economy Matters), Roland Evans (Assistant Head – Culture) and Angela Jones (Head of Partnerships – Eryri National Park) were welcomed to the meeting.

Submitted – the report of the Leader and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Operational Economy Matters providing an update on the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035, and they invited the committee to scrutinise the progress, the Action Plan and the Measures.

The Cabinet Member set out the context and the members were then given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

The Cabinet Member was thanked for showing a genuine interest in the field and attending local meetings related to the subject, which highlighted the ease of connection within the Council to be able to make such a scheme a reality.

It was noted that the report stated that extensive consultation had taken place when developing the Plan, but with the exception of the workshops held at the beginning, it was not believed that another consultation had taken place with county councillors, at least. An enquiry was made about what consultation had taken place in the National Park area, and with whom? In response, it was noted:-

- That the consultation took place widely between everyone. Several sessions were held between the Council and the Park with all councillors across the area, including the rural area of Conwy which was in the Park.
- That the partnership that had been created replaced the former Destination Management Group which previously existed and was maintained by the Council, with the Park feeding into that as well.
- The Group that had now been established, representing businesses and communities, was an innovative group and truly represented the whole area. As such, for the first time, there was a full picture of all the projects and activities taking place across the whole area.
- In addition to the formal consultation, four briefing notes had also been sent to all community councils and councillors across the area, and a further briefing note was planned to be sent to everyone shortly providing an update on everything that had happened over the last few months.
- That there was also an intention to hold an annual conference that brought together everyone who was interested in the subject, and this was again quite a new and wide-ranging way of getting input from the whole area.

In response, it was noted that it was accepted that there had been consultation at the beginning, but it was believed that such a scheme required ongoing consultation. The member also noted that this was the first time that he had heard about the briefing note, and that he was unaware that he had received it. He also noted, as there was no statutory requirement for the Park to consult with county councillors, they were usually left out, and he called on the Park to consult much better with county councillors on matters that were happening within the Park.

The officers were asked to elaborate on the role of the Ardal Ni local consultation groups. In response, it was noted:-

- That the Ardal Ni groups was a fairly new Council forum for engaging with communities to see what their priorities were at a local level.
- That some of the main issues within the 13 areas were how to get sustainable tourism within the area, with many of the issues also relating to the infrastructure of the visitor economy.
- That the responses at community level were quite high-level and they had gone through all of the action plans that had been identified and prioritised to try to incorporate them into the action plan.
- That consultation was currently taking place to agree the operating structures within the 13 Ardal Ni, and it was intended to continue this engagement in implementing the plan with the 13 areas through the community support officers.

Concern was expressed that the Measures Dashboard suggested that this was not a sustainable tourism plan, but a sustainable tourism growth plan, with all plans appearing to be leaning towards tourism growth. It was also noted that the data regarding the number of jobs, e.g. did not identify whether those jobs were held by local people or not and whether the wages were sufficient, etc. A desire was expressed to see this type of evidence being gathered to see whether tourism, which was likely to grow anyway, was sustainable and beneficial locally. In response, it was noted:-

- That the aim of the Scheme was not growth, it sought to ensure a visitor economy that balanced the needs of communities, supports the Welsh language and supports the culture and people of the county.
- That the councillor had focused on the third principle within the Plan which looked at the economic measures. Traditionally, these were the only measures that would have been available to measure the visitor economy in Gwynedd, and the concern was that we were measuring based on growth and value, rather than based on the outcomes for the environment, the economy and our communities and culture.
- This was why there was a dashboard attached to the report including not only the governing elements, but also how we looked at the impact of tourism on the Welsh language and on the environment.
- That a questionnaire would be sent out to communities for the first time asking if they felt tourism was having a positive or negative impact on them as a community and on their language and culture and environment.
- That there was also an intention to look at how many were employed, as this was an important indicator, but as part of that, it was also intended to look at average pay within the sector as we would wish to see the sector being one that offered good pay, all year round.
- It also looked at how many businesses used local produce and how much of the local supply chain was boosted through the visitor economy sector.
- They also looked at growth, not in terms of the number of visitors coming to the area, but how many came at different times of the year, as the aim of the Scheme was to extend the season.
- That one of the aims of the Academi Croeso Cymru Tourism Talent Network project was to collaborate with schools locally to develop their interest in tourism and the visitor economy and develop a career path for local people within the visitor economy so that the sector was seen as a career opportunity, rather than a casual opportunity or temporary work.

A desire was expressed to see more refinement of the measures. In particular, there was a desire to see detail in the number of local people working in the area. Otherwise, there was a danger of having a tourism industry that visited from other areas and did not take root in the community. Concern was also expressed after understanding that one of the aims of a sustainable tourism plan was to extend the tourism season, and the member questioned whether there had been widespread consultation on this objective, as many local people disliked the hustle and bustle of the main holiday season. In response, it was noted:-

- That a clear message had come out of the consultation about the importance of extending the tourism season to have less impact on the county's communities.
- That it was also important to extend the season so that workers in the tourism sector could be permanently employed throughout the year, and also for businesses to be able to retain their staff.
- There was a desire to see a decrease in visitor numbers during the months of July and August, with numbers spread over the whole year in order to gain more sustainable jobs within the visitor economy.

A member expressed doubt about the aim of reducing visitor numbers during July and August as people wanted to continue coming to Gwynedd during school holidays regardless.

It was noted that there were several references in the documents to research that had been or would be commissioned, which was something to welcome.

It was noted that the Office of National Statistics' website noted that 59% of the labour force in Gwynedd who operated in the restaurants and hotels sector (which tended to be lower paid seasonal work) could speak Welsh, compared with 74% in the construction field (which tended to be full-time work on higher pay). This possibly suggested that holiday homes brought more benefit to the true local population, through alterations and renovations etc., than e.g. hotels or caravan parks not in local ownership. In response, it was noted:-

- That it was believed that having people temporarily staying in a hotel or camping brought greater benefit to the visitor economy and meant that a house that could be used as a home for a family was not taken out of the housing market.
- There may be evidence to the contrary, as the holiday homes issue was complex, and the Cabinet Member would be happy to look into that.

Hope was expressed that the research in the field would cover these aspects.

It was suggested that no economic sector was as dependent on child labour as the tourism sector, and that this suggested a lack of workforce locally, or that local people did not see these as good jobs. It was noted that it was desired to see a small tourism sector locally owned and offering high salaries, but it was not thought that we were decisive enough in our discussions about this area in terms of what we would like to see. In response, it was noted:-

- That the work was only just the beginning on a plan and the implementation of an entirely new partnership which would focus on trying to achieve the sustainable visitor economy that the partners wanted.
- This was not going to happen overnight and we had to communicate to communities, members and businesses that this would be a process.
- There was little research in relation to the impact of tourism on the Welsh language or how many Welsh people were employed within the tourism sector, and through this partnership, interesting and exciting discussions were opening with Bangor University in terms of the research and collaboration opportunities that could be offered.
- That it was believed that employment for young people over the summer was thought to be quite a healthy thing within the sector, as long as those young people were not exploited, and it was in line with employment legislation. It created opportunities for young people to gain paid work experience.
- Working with Grŵp Llandrillo Menai e.g. it could be shown that employment in tourism could be seen as a career, rather than just seasonal work.
- There were companies in Gwynedd that employed very well within the visitor economy sector and there was also growing interest and activity within the community tourism sector within the county that were keen to see the visitor economy owned by local communities, provide good employment for people locally, and providing a place for the Welsh language and culture locally as well.

It was noted that we would look forward to seeing research that addressed some of the issues raised.

It was pointed out that the people serving in the hotels and restaurants could not afford to go out to eat as their wages were so low, and unless there was other work except for tourism, etc., the locals would always be poor. In response, it was noted:-

- The observation that we were always going to keep local people poor was not accepted and this scheme was part of a process of having a better economy, a more sustainable economy, better jobs and better training.
- Not all the answers were available here, but the vision was here and we were trying to move in the right direction.

Meirion / Dwyfor had been identified as the poorest income area in the UK, but an attraction such as Dyfi Cycle Park was an example of sustainable tourism, as it brought a lot of visitors and money to the area, with people staying in B&Bs on farms, etc. It had been suggested that Gwynedd was doing very little to help the economy in South Meirionnydd. They referred to a company that had moved from the area to Powys and questioned the extent of collaboration between the Planning and Economy Departments. In response, it was noted:-

- In terms of planning policy in general, the Planning Service had been involved in the development of the Strategic Plan, and the action plan had also been shared with the Department.
- That there was currently a planning policy in place and that the Local Development Plan was in the process of being reviewed. As such, it was hoped that the principles and the Strategic Plan would influence planning policy in the future.
- That the aim of the different bodies, in coming together, was to have an influence on the planning policies as they were developed.
- That the Park Authority was also about to review the Eryri Development Plan and it was hoped that the principles would also influence the review of that plan.

A member questioned how in practice the crowds could be deterred from visiting the area during the summer holidays and persuaded to come, e.g. in November. It was suggested that instead of developing and promoting tourism, we needed to talk about even reducing tourism. It was thought that Wales could sell itself on a much smaller scale, but to higher standards. It was not believed that there was enough emphasis on training in the Action Plan and we were required to upgrade ourselves to be sustainable and look after our own people, while also securing the linguistic elements.

Concern was raised that funding had not been secured for the good research that was underway. Particular reference was made to the research into the impact of tourism on the Welsh language, which was due to report back in March 2025, and questioned the feasibility of this in the face of uncertainty over the financial situation.

There was some scepticism about the measures which highlighted that local people felt positive about tourism, and questioned exactly what that meant. It had been suggested that we need to come up with something much slicker to see real benefit emerge from tourism.

The view was expressed that there was an overemphasis on North Eryri and slate in the Plan and that Merionnydd and the Llŷn Peninsula must also be remembered. In response, it was noted that the point was an important one and that the importance of spreading the benefit across the whole county was emphasised.

Concern was raised that the report had gone in all but the right direction. It was highlighted that the purpose of the report was to optimise the benefit to Gwynedd from the tourism industry, and that the beauty of Gwynedd meant that the tourism industry would stay here no matter what. It was noted that the tourism industry brought tremendous benefit to the area, but that was not to say it could be the solution to the economic crisis facing Gwynedd.

Appreciation was expressed for the plan, and a member stated they looked forward to seeing more research in the field. In response, it was noted that the points raised were appreciated, and that the Department would be sure to pursue them.

RESOLVED

- 1. To accept the report and note the observations.**
- 2. To request that the Eryri National Park Authority makes every effort to consult with the county councillors where appropriate.**

3. **That the Economy and Community Department when undertaking research, looks at the specific matters raised by the committee regarding data etc.**

11. 2024-25 FORWARD-PROGRAMME OF THE EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Submitted – the committee's forward programme for 2024/25.

RESOLVED to adopt the work programme for 2024-25.

12. FINANCE PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE MEETING

Submitted – the Scrutiny Advisor's report inviting the committee to nominate a member to represent the committee at the Finance Department's Performance Challenge meetings to replace Councillor Paul Rowlinson who had now resigned from the committee following his appointment as Cabinet Member for Finance.

RESOLVED to nominate Councillor Cai Larsen to represent the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee at the Finance Department's Performance Challenge Meetings.

The meeting started at 10.30am and ended at 2.40pm.

Chair

Agenda Item 6

MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	17 October 2024
TITLE	Progress Report - Attendance and Behaviour of pupils at Gwynedd Schools
REASON TO SCRUTINISE	
AUTHOR	Ellen Rowlands, Education Department Inclusion Manager
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Beca Brown

1. Why does it need scrutiny?

1.1 This report is submitted in response to a request from members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to receive an **update** on the progress of the Department for Education in response to the recommendations of the Estyn Report on education services at Gwynedd Council (June 2023) in relation to pupil attendance and behaviour in the county's schools.

2. What exactly needs to be scrutinised?

2.1 The Estyn Report on education services at Gwynedd Council (June 2023) set out the following recommendations, in the report is intended to report on actions against the recommendations in the context of learner attendance and behaviour.

- Improve monitoring, evaluation, and promotion of pupil attendance.
- Strengthen provision to respond to the needs of pupils with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties and ensure monitoring arrangements and improve the quality of that provision.

2.2 This report is intended to report on the actions that have been undertaken against these recommendations, giving the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to consider whether there has been sufficient progress to

- Improve attendance and behaviour within Gwynedd schools.
- act on the findings of the work that has looked at the use of inclusion funding within the schools.
- Identify challenges and opportunities in the inclusion field.

3. Summary and Key Issues

3.1 Estyn carried out an inspection of the Education Department (June 2023)

The inspection highlighted the need to strengthen provision to respond to the needs of pupils with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) as well as ensuring monitoring and improving the quality of that provision.

Subsequently during November/December 2023, Mrs Caroline Rees (who had reviewed the Inclusion Service in 2019/20) was commissioned to undertake a detailed review of the Inclusion Service with recommendations on how to strengthen the provision. Caroline Rees Report’s findings echoed Estyn’ recommendations.

- The need for the Local Authority to work with school leaders to co-produce an effective county-wide Inclusion strategy of in-school and out-of-school provision that embraces key principles of clarity of purpose, ownership, quality assurance and continuity.
- Discover suitable locations for out-of-school provision.

A Project Board has now been set up to identify options to meet those recommendations.

4. Background / Context

IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS

ATTENDANCE

4.1 Our key attendance guidance is the All-Wales Attendance Framework, Welsh Government Guidance (November 2012). The document provides standards and guidance to practitioners to ensure greater consistency of practice across Wales. It also aims to enable councils and schools to provide services that are consistent, accessible and of a high standard.

4.2 "Belonging, engaging and participating", which is guidance to improve pupil engagement and attendance, was published in June 2023 to support schools, pupil referral units, parents/carers, and Local Authorities to increase learner engagement and attendance levels, outlining approaches when absences worsen.

4.3 As Members are aware, improving attendance has been a constant focus for Cyngor Gwynedd. The link between good attendance and learning is clear. Significant work has been undertaken to improve attendance over the past year allocating additional Welfare Officer hours through the Welsh Government Attendance grant to target attendance improvements for specific individuals within schools, particularly year 11 pupils.

4.4 However, while there has been improvement over time, there is much work to be done to close the gap further and to reinforce improvements in a positive attendance trend, including a reduction in continued absenteeism.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED	IMPACT
Improving the monitoring of attendance	<p>The Department already collects data and runs reports on a weekly basis but over the last year there has been -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better sharing of data between the Authority and Schools • a strengthening of collaboration with other services 	<p>Consistency across the County</p> <p>Early identification of individuals to target.</p> <p>Schools constantly self-evaluate</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvement in lines of accountability with schools • further development in strategic leadership • assurance that appropriate support and challenge is in place. 	
Evaluating pupil attendance	Over the past year Welfare Officers have been closely scrutinising school registers. An increase in Welfare Officers has enabled us to carry out targeting work and this has been a success with several schools reporting positively on this support.	56% Increase in attendance of targeted groups Ability to be proactive. Contact with families.
Promoting good attendance	Work with schools to ensure appropriate support is in place for pupils who are struggling to attend school.	Improvement in individual attendance. Co-working has been strengthened

Update

Comparison of 2022/23 with the academic year of 2023/24

4.5 Average attendance over the 23/24 academic year is **89.1%** up from **88.7%** in the 2022/23 academic year.

4.6 Percentage of attendance of specific groups

Free school meals	85.04%
Pupils with ALN	86.99%
Looked after children	90.35%

4.7 Gwynedd was slightly higher than the national percentage. Across the secondary sector, levels of authorised absences continue to be reported in relation to illness and pupils' emotional well-being.

	Attendance	Authorised	Unauthorised
Gwynedd	89.1%	8.4%	2.5%

Cymru

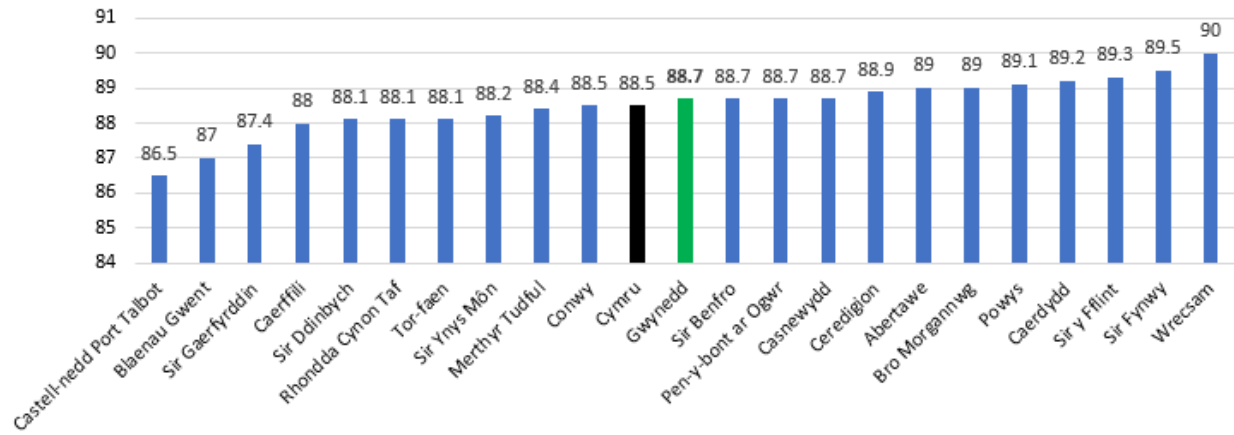
89%

7.3%

3.6%

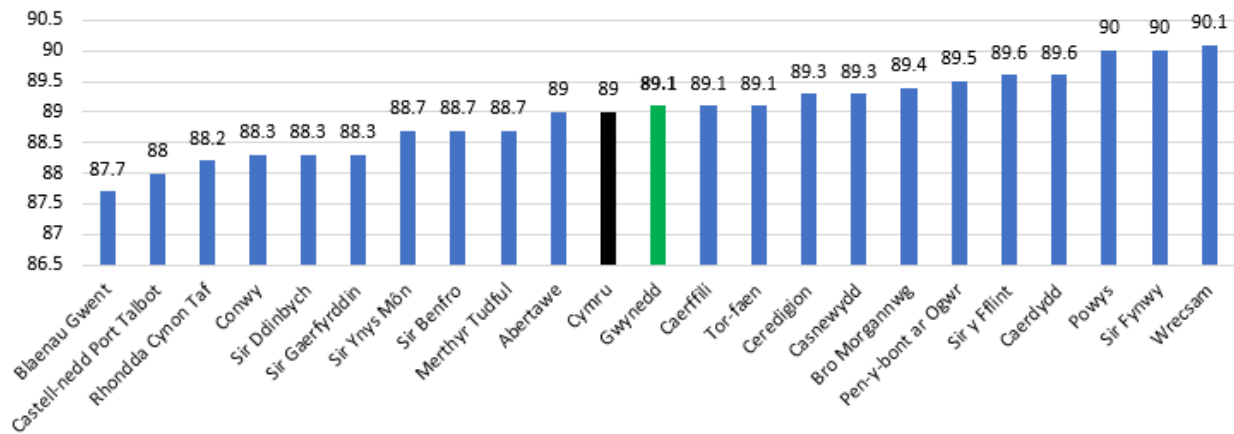
Presenoldeb fesul awdurdod lleol (2022/3)

Canran cyfartalog sesiynau presennol disgyblion ysgolion a gynhelir oedran 5-15



Presenoldeb fesul awdurdod lleol (2023/4)

Canran cyfartalog sesiynau presennol disgyblion ysgolion a gynhelir oedran 5-15



4.8 Across Wales, school attendance had been in decline since returning to school following the pandemic but is slowly recovering. Improving school attendance remains a priority for the local authority and its schools. Although the pandemic has had a significant impact on attendance, there are improvements in 2023/24, and we are hopeful that the Strategy and focus on attendance will support continuous improvement in the years ahead.

4.9 Excellent school attendance is key to increasing educational outcomes. In addition, schools play a central role in protecting children and young people ensuring their positive social and emotional wellbeing, which would not be possible without their engagement in education. We will continue to liaise with all stakeholders to ensure attendance remains a priority at local, regional, and national level. We will also continue in our ambitions to increase attendance through close working relationships with our schools and school communities and continue with the multi-agency approach to support the child, their family and their school.

BEHAVIOUR

4.10 Guidance on 'Exclusion from schools and pupil referral units' (revised April 2024) is the document that provides guidance on the temporary and permanent exclusion of pupils including the responsibility of headteachers, governors, independent review panels and local authorities. This is in line with the Behaviour and Discipline in Schools guidance which advises schools on implementing behaviour policy to create a school culture with high expectations of behaviour.

4.11 A decision to permanently exclude a learner is a serious one. This is usually the final step in a process for dealing with disciplinary offences following a wide range of other strategies which have been implemented without success. It is an acknowledgement from the school that it has exhausted all available strategies for dealing with the learner and it should normally only be used as a last resort.

ARGYMHELLION	CAMAU A WEITHREDWYD	IMPACT
Strengthen provision to respond to the needs of pupils with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties and ensure monitoring arrangements and improve the quality of that provision	In November 2023, Caroline Rees was commissioned to undertake a review of the Inclusion Service including schools' specific inclusion provision. To address Estyn recommendations and the review, a Project Board was established in February 2024 comprising Senior Authority Officers, Secondary School Headteachers, Children's Services Manager.	Authority and Schools working more closely. Collaborative planning Sharing the vision
Finding suitable venues for out-of-school provision	Internal discussions within the Department to consider possible options within the Councils resource and assets	

4.8 Exclusion data

4.12 This report provides analysis and evaluation of exclusion data over a period of 2 years to enable members to further scrutinize the content.

Secondary

Year	Fixed term				Permanent
	Number of Pupils	Number of incidents	Total days	Number of schools excluding	
2022/2023	452	823	1995.5	14	44(8 School)
2023/2024	470	869	2733	14	48(9 School)

Primary

Year	Fixed term				Permanent
	Number of Pupils	Number of incidents	Total days	Number of schools excluding	
2022/2023	47	67	151	23	1
2023/2024	57	118	325.5	25	3(3 School)

Permanent exclusions

	22/23	23/24
Girls	16	12
Boys	30	41

Schools	22/23(Number of pupils)	23/24(Number of pupils)
Arfon	36	42
Meirionydd	2	4
Dwyfor	7	5

4.13 60 % of permanent exclusions relate to persistent disruptive behaviour with the rest in relation to verbal abuse/threatening behaviour towards pupils/ members of staff, drug supply and serious attacks on other pupils.

4.14 You will note from the above information that there remain clear challenges in addressing pupils' significant social, emotional, and behavioural needs in the post-pandemic era and that no significant progress has been made but there are steps in response to the situation. This will require shared commitment, creativity, and ambition to improve the life chances of our most vulnerable and challenging learners to ensure we work together to achieve our mission as set out in the Council's Plan to give our children and young people the best possible start in life.

4.15 The Inclusion Services continue to implement a range of welfare and behaviour initiatives supported by Welsh Government grant funding (which is in addition to the core budget). In recognising the link between welfare and behaviour, grant funding has been used to deliver training to schools to support pupils who have difficulty attending school on an emotional basis, support schools in the emotional literacy field and contribute to trauma-informed school sessions.

5. Consultation

- Setting up a group to review the current Strategy with stakeholders.
-

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

- 6.1 Supporting learners experiencing significant social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties to achieve the best possible educational outcomes supports the priorities in the Council's Plan 2023-2028 – Gwynedd Tomorrow - Give our children and young people the best possible start in life.
- 6.2 The Well-being Objectives are to enable our children and young people to gain the skills they need to be ethical, ambitious, and confident individuals, to promote independence, healthy and successful lives for all and enable them to fulfil their potential and thrive. This also supports the Sustainable Development principle and the Well-being Goals of the Future Generations (Wales) Well-being Act which underpins the service's vision and working practices.
- 6.3 The Sustainable Development Principles are that the proposal would protect the long-term educational needs of children and young people to maximise their abilities and gain control of their lives.

Have you **included** residents / service users? If not, why, and how do you intend to consult with them?

An attendance campaign based on consultation with pupils, schools, and parents.	October- November
Partnership with the schools works to create ownership of the inclusion strategy and the way forward.	Complete by July 2025

Have you considered **collaboration**?

- Project Board established with membership from schools (Headteachers), Children's Services (Assistant Head), Youth Service.
- In addition, at operational level, working closely with Children's Services (Manager/team leaders), Health Service, Youth Justice Service, Careers Wales, Police and College (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai).

What has been done or will be done to **prevent** problems from arising or worsening in the future?

- Continue to work in a multi-agency way.

- Regular evaluation of impact.
- Identifying patterns that arise.

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

- Giving our children and young people the best possible start in life.
- All take ownership.
- Collaboration.

To ensure **integration**, have you considered the potential impact on other public bodies?

- A range of support available in Gwynedd makes real change for children and young people and consequently contributes to reducing future worsening problems and reducing the long-term need for support.

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

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as the contents of this report are for information purposes only.
- 7.2 The Protected Characteristics and Welsh Language impact are that the proposal would improve outcomes for all pupils, including those learning through the medium of Welsh.

8. **Next Steps**

- 8.1 Work is about to get underway to establish an Around the School Team Protocol which will provide a more collaborative framework for addressing the concerns surrounding pupils with behavioural difficulties and poor attendance. The aim is to provide support and challenge to schools where significant concerns have been identified in relation to behaviour management and exclusions.
- 8.2 In addition, the Department has invested in an AI resource (Ed-Bot) which will analyse attendance data on a weekly basis. This will enable us in the short term to recognise a pattern of low absences in specific postcodes, changes in percentage and emerging patterns, to allow us to track on real time and to be more proactive.

MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	17.10.24
TITLE OF REPORT	Early Years Transformation
REASON FOR SCRUTINY	The Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 – Tomorrow's Gwynedd
AUTHOR	Sioned Owen Early Years Service Manager
CABINET MEMBER	Beca Brown

1. Why does it need to be scrutinised?

Transforming education for children in their early years has been recognised as one of the key projects of the Council's Plan 2023-28.

Early years are key to children's social development, and the importance of this period has been seen especially during the pandemic. We want to transform this service and will work with the health service and the Mudiad Meithrin to ensure that all children in the county have the best possible start to their time in education.

The Council will deliver this project by working with the health service and the Mudiad Meithrin to transform the service to ensure that all children in the county have the best possible start to their time in education.

2. What exactly needs to be scrutinised?

- What are the steps planned to be taken to transform education for children in their early years?
- What are the timeframe and key milestones for the transformation of the service?
- How will the transformation of the early years' service be funded?

3. Summary and Key Issues

Work programme update

4. Background / Context

4.1 Transforming the Early Years is a Gwynedd Tomorrow priority in Gwynedd Council Plan 2023-28

4.2 The Early Years Unit has been working regionally since 2023 to transform the Early Years in collaboration with the Government. Disappointingly the Government stopped funding the project at the end of March 2024. Part of this work was to share good practice, collaborate on priorities such as Speech and Language and undertake an 'Early Intervention Foundation' self-assessment – an Early Years maturity matrix. Gwynedd's self-assessment was, primarily, Early Progress typical

of local areas who are committed to action and have started to develop their programme but have yet to see the benefits of their work.

4.3 During the next period the North Wales Regional Partnership Board will also focus on Early Years as a priority:

- An early years charter with agreed priorities and a shared language. Setting out our interpretation of national guidance and how we can best meet children's needs locally. Including a joint plan for how we will use funding.
- An early years workforce strategy, linked to the North Wales Workforce Board. To look at workforce planning, qualifications, skills, training, retention, and professional development.
- Communication plan to share our vision for early years, key messages and details of the support available.
- Improve information sharing between organisations.
- Work with Welsh Government to improve the stability and consistency of funding streams.

4.4 The Early Years Unit have put together a programme of work. Since the funding came to an end in March, we have lost the staff resource to drive the programme of work forward so operating on a slower pace with existing staff capacity within the Unit. The Unit is currently going through a staff restructuring process as well.

5. Consultation

5.1 A number of consultation opportunities have occurred to gather the views of families and stakeholders when looking at different areas to transform the Early Years

- **Nursery Education – Celyn report.** Within the report several factors that are important to Gwynedd families are accessibility, affordable costs and provision through the medium of Welsh
- **Language, Speech and Communication – Dr Ceryl Davies report** Within the report a number of recommendations are set out for the area such as establishing an access pathway, training staff and improving collaboration arrangements with Health.
- **Perinatal Support – Social Value Cymru report** Positive results identified from pilot in which the groups supported the well-being of families within their communities, but a greater range of support is needed including sensory sessions.

5.2 Comments and recommendations of the above reports have fed into the transformation work programme locally and regionally.

6. Impact on Equality, Welsh and Socio-Economic Duty

6.1 Impact assessments will feed and inform decision making in due course.

7. Next Steps

- Continue to work on the programme of work
- Hold discussions and seek decisions
- Consultation on the decisions
- Drafting an Early Years Strategy

Attachment

Early Years Transformation work plan

Appendix 1 – Early Years Transformation Work Programme 2023-25

	Transformation Priorities	Update	Status	Next Steps
1	Hold a workshop with our partners to carry out a self-assessment of the Early Years sector in Gwynedd, with support from the Early Intervention Foundation.	The workshop took place with our partners in April 2023. There is a report in place from the Early Intervention Foundation.	Completed	
2	Obtain recommendations from the Early Intervention Foundation and produce an action plan for designing a new Strategy for the Early Years and procedures to collaborate with our partners	As the funding period for regional transformation ended at the end of March 24, we conducted a desktop review of the self-assessment and saw that progress had been made since the workshop. Since then, it has been difficult to progress the work following the transformation officer's departure, and the Unit is going through a restructuring which in itself answers the requirement to reshape the service to meet the aim more efficiently. Regional meetings are continuing and have prioritised Oxford Brain training, the early years workforce structure and sharing good practice. A work programme by the North Wales Regional Partnership Board for Drafting the Early Years Charter and working with the Welsh Government to try to stabilise and reconcile funding for the sector. Focus on children and young people: early years (northwalescollaborative.wales)	Partial progress	Complete the restructure of the service Agree on the Council Early Years action plan Agree on the strategic accountability of the work Draw up an Early Years strategy jointly with our External Partners
3	Review and develop information sharing platforms	The views of families in Gwynedd were gathered through an external consultant, Celyn company. UK Academia was commissioned to advise on establishing a Communication and Marketing plan for the Department, and the team is currently implementing the recommendations such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the website team to develop the Gwynedd Family Hub. • Produce Welsh-medium podcasts about the field. • Rationalise the Unit's existing information platforms and develop new Facebook pages e.g. a close group for the nursery. 	Progressing well	Work is in the pipeline to establish a Task and Finish Group for developing the Gwynedd Family Hub website. Arrangements have been made to run Welsh-medium podcasts. With the branding work almost in place the work of redesigning the information platforms will be ready soon. The Nursery Team and parents are using Blossoms and there is a lot of work going on to promote the use of the Family App

Appendix 1 – Early Years Transformation Work Programme 2023-25

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of Blossoms and Family App (Flying Start) to share information with families. 		(Flying Start).
4	Map the Language, Speech and Communication provision	<p>Three workshops were held to map the provision and commission an evaluation report. We are continuing to implement recommendations from an evaluation report by Dr Ceryl Davies on the Gwynedd and Anglesey Early Years Language, Communication and Speech provision.</p> <p>Discussions have taken place with the Health Board to work together on the recommendations. The Gwynedd and Anglesey Early Years Language, Communication and Speech Forum has been established. There is an obvious shortage of Therapists. A campaign to recruit staff to the Language Therapy service will take place alongside the Government during the next period.</p> <p>We are continuing to act to up-skill staff and implement the principles of Talk with Me strategies and support parents with speech and language difficulties across Gwynedd.</p> <p>Mapping work has happened in terms of group work distribution and some piloting work such as Caffi Babis and 'Live Music Now'.</p> <p>There is a programme underway to make Childcare and Nursery Education settings communication-friendly settings.</p> <p>Discussions to produce a Welsh-medium video/podcast on the subject, jointly with the Language Therapy service.</p>	Progressing well	<p>Recruitment campaign</p> <p>Forum meetings</p> <p>Agree a programme of provision across the county.</p> <p>Jointly agree to staff up-skilling requirements in line with the All Wales Speech, Language and Communication training pathway.</p> <p>Share the messages from Talk with Me with parents e.g. a Podcast</p>
5	Perinatal Mental Health Support	<p>Investment in training for Early Years staff – 'Triple P' including a 'Baby', 'Nurture Links Welcome to the World' and 'Millpond Sleep Management' programme has taken place.</p> <p>Some group work was funded to pilot interventions in the perinatal period in various places throughout Gwynedd.</p>	Progressing well	<p>Map the early years workforce to identify the needs for the Strategy.</p> <p>Continue to fund group work if there will be funding available.</p> <p>The Language Development Team to hold more sessions</p>

Appendix 1 – Early Years Transformation Work Programme 2023-25

		<p>The 'Live Music Now' Lullaby project in Barmouth has now ended. Eight families had benefited greatly from this project, with very positive feedback, and many had given feedback that it had supported their mental health and created relationships with other parents. We will hold a Caffi Babis session in Barmouth next month. Following positive feedback again from parents who have attended mobile Caffi Babis sessions, a session will be held in Barmouth and Porthmadog during the next period. Caffi Babis has seen the need in areas across Gwynedd following our sessions. Pontio is now applying for a grant to be able to offer more sessions across Gwynedd and more regularly, the Council's Early Years Transformation Project Officer will support them to complete the mapping work so that more areas across Gwynedd are given the opportunity to attend. We will need to work with more partners during the next period to try to extend this support and share good practice.</p>		<p>using good practice from the pilot.</p>
6	Support for Fathers	<p>'Perinatal Mental Health for Fathers' training has been run for Early Years staff across the agencies.</p> <p>Unsuccessful in appointing a Fathers Support Officer. We are freezing the appointment efforts at present because of restructuring within the unit. Refer to 'How's Dad' sessions to offer support through social media and also attend sessions free of charge that are offered in the evenings or on weekends.</p>	Progressing well	<p>Fund sessions for fathers through the providers on the activity's procurement framework.</p>
7	Toileting	<p>The admissions policy for Gwynedd schools will change from September 2025 onwards, stating that children attending Nursery class in schools in Gwynedd will be expected to be toilet-trained before they start. Work has commenced to prepare parents for this. Resources have been shared with all childcare settings to be shared with parents, information has been shared on social media, a Welsh-language video/podcast has been produced by the Early Years Unit to support</p>	Progressing well	<p>Realise the policy in September 2025 Continue to share information about the support available</p>

Appendix 1 – Early Years Transformation Work Programme 2023-25

		families with the change from nappies to the potty, and toileting packs are also being prepared with toileting resources and cloth nappies, in collaboration with the Libraries and environment service.		
8	Develop a Business Case to bring the entire Flying Start package to one new area to support 25 children under four years old.	<p>New Flying Start area – Deiniolen</p> <p>A Business Case was submitted to the Government to increase the Flying Start Scheme caseload.</p> <p>Work continues in Deiniolen – an area that has joined the Flying Start service to expand the provision and the service that is available to families in the village. Staff have been appointed and the families have been registered.</p> <p>The need clearly exists in the area, and several families are receiving a higher input which proves that the right area was selected for the Flying Start project.</p> <p>Cylch Meithrin Deiniolen is currently providing a childcare service. A new building for the service to include an office for the team and a larger building for the childcare setting will be developed during the year as we have received £590k of capital from the Government. This will facilitate the joint working and locate the services so that they are accessible for the families in Deiniolen.</p>	Progressing well	<p>Complete the capital project by March 2025.</p> <p>Tender for a childcare provider by December 2024.</p> <p>Secure a lease.</p> <p>Set up an operating office for staff from Health and Cyngor Gwynedd, April 2025.</p>
9	Extend the childcare provision for two-year olds to 10 new areas to support the best start for 140 children.	<p>By now we have funded 170 children since the scheme began in September 2023 in the following LSOAs – Barmouth 1, Barmouth 2, Bala, Dewi, Hendre, Hirael and Garth 2, Porthmadog East, Porthmadog – Tremadog, Teigl and Trawsfynydd. To accompany this, we have developed a Procurement Framework of Approved Childcare Providers in Gwynedd, and 83 registered providers have been approved on the list with 21 providing the two-year-olds service through the medium of Welsh or bilingually.</p> <p>Work is continuing to try and get more on the list by working with our</p>	Progressing well	<p>Finish developing the data system for administrating payments.</p> <p>Major capital developments</p> <p>More providers on the approved list.</p> <p>Improve the quality of the provision to meet Flying Start requirements.</p> <p>Continue to market the scheme.</p>

Appendix 1 – Early Years Transformation Work Programme 2023-25

		<p>partners, Cwlwm who are Mudiad Meithrin and the Cymru Kids' Clubs. The Team of Advisory Teachers and the Childcare Officers are supporting the new settings through visits, support and start-up grants to invest in bespoke resources to ensure they can raise standards to meet Flying Start requirements.</p> <p>To facilitate the work of storing Flying Start data and processing payments promptly, we are working with IT developers in Cyngor Gwynedd and Flintshire to develop a system to administrate the work more efficiently. We have created an online Flying Start registration form, and in the end, we will be able to import this to the data system. The biggest obstacle with the scheme is obtaining the details of the two-year-olds from the Health Board, and the only solution at present is to ask the Health Visitors in the area to promote on our behalf. This is obviously affecting the numbers that take up the scheme because we are unable to target the families directly.</p> <p>The capital investments in the Bangor area – Our Lady and Hirael will support the extension in due course and offer more places in the city. It is unclear at present if the Government will be expanding the offer</p>		
10	<p>Submit individual Business Cases to create a childcare and nursery education space for four new areas.</p>	<p>The Unit has submitted four business cases to the Government - Our Lady, Deiniolen, Hirael and Bro Lleu Penygroes have already been approved. The money will need to be invested by March 2025 which is challenging. The Ysgol Treferythyr development has been operating since the beginning of September 2024. The Tywyn project has begun, and the builders are on-site with the aim of locating childcare on the site in the new year.</p> <p>Over £400k of small capital grants were invested in 46 childcare and play settings during 23/24 to improve the providers' buildings and environments, and during 24-25 we will distribute £470k to 52 settings.</p> <p>An expression of interest was submitted to the Government for possible capital offers that will be after the current programme.</p>	Progressing well	<p>Work with and meet with the Education and Property Modernisation team in the various Capital Boards to ensure the projects are implemented, following a project management procedure and communication plans.</p>

MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	17/10/24
TITLE	Draft Wellbeing Strategy
REASON FOR SCRUTINY	Scrutiny of staff well-being support
AUTHOR	Catrin Love Assistant Head of Department Corporate Services Gail Warrington Health Safety and Welfare Manager
AELOD CABINET	Menna Trenholme

1. Why it needs scrutiny?

- 1.1. This item has been identified at the annual scrutiny workshop as an item that it is thought would be timely to bring before the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in October 2024.

2. What exactly needs to be scrutinised?

- 2.1. This area has been recognised for scrutiny as the importance of staff wellbeing came to the fore following the covid-19 pandemic, and the after-effect of these extraordinary times is still very much alive amongst our workforce. The costs of staff absences due to illness are also a significant challenge associated with this area, and therefore it was felt that it would be timely to scrutinise the field to be reassured that appropriate arrangements are in place and that the proposed Strategy will greet these challenges

3. Summary and key Issues

- 3.1. It is paramount that the Council has a clear framework to be supporting the well-being of staff.
- 3.2. Deficiencies in our arrangements to protect the well-being of staff would raise financial and legal risks to the Council, as well as a moral failure to protect them from harm.
- 3.3. This wellbeing Strategy is woven into the core of wider priority workstreams in the Council's Plan, through the work on the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan, and in particular, the 'Healthy and Satisfied Workforce' workstream within that Plan.
- 3.4. The benefits of incorporating well-being from all aspects of the Council's culture include:
 - Attracting new employees
 - Retaining our current employees
 - Lowering sick leave rates
 - Improve the performance and development of our staff.

4. Background / Context

- 4.1. The draft Wellbeing Strategy presented today is a document outlining the Council's priorities for the well-being of staff over the next few years. The Council has had a detailed programme of work on maintaining and supporting staff wellbeing for many years, which in turn has led to recognition through Corporate Health Standard accreditation by the Welsh Government where the Gold award has been awarded on a number of consecutive occasions. Unfortunately, that accreditation scheme has nationally now come to an end, but more local schemes have also been adopted, such as the Corporate Services Department holding the Gold Award in terms of staff wellbeing support from Investors in People.
- 4.2. Since lockdown, however, it is recognised that the challenge of sustaining staff well-being, and the mental well-being of a general population has increased dramatically. Recent figures from the MIND' highlight that a third of the working age population believe their mental health has deteriorated significantly since March 2000. This is reflected in the Council in the numbers of staff who have been making use of support available through the Council, where there has been a significant increase in Counselling Services use etc. We also know of course that the Council's sick leave figures are an increasing challenge with the true cost in 23/24 calculated to be £5.7 million.
- 4.3. Reflecting on the extraordinary times that have taken place since March 2000, it is also fair to say that there has been a shift in mindset within the field as a whole about the effectiveness of certain well-being strategies. There is also a recognition that no well-being strategy will reach its full potential when it exists isolated within an organisation, without being intertwined into other culture and leadership priority plans. To this end, a 'Healthy and Satisfied Workforce' is now one of nine work streams in the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan that is a priority in the Council's Plan 2023-28, and this Wellbeing Strategy is an important piece of that work. This sets a robust infrastructure for staff well-being issues to be at the core of the Council's culture as a whole, and the way we develop our Leadership and Management into the future. Immediately, by having developed closer links to wider work on Council culture, a whole section was incorporated into this year's Llais Staff Questionnaire on staff wellbeing, and the results have been fed into this Strategy.
- 4.4. Legislatively, there is a statutory duty to be supporting and greeting the well-being of staff. Employment Acts, such as the Health and Safety at Work Act, and the Equality Act impose stringent requirements, and indeed, the duty to be protecting the mental health of staff is one that is increasingly being addressed by the Health and Safety Executive. The Well-being of Future Generations Act also sets requirements for the development of sustainable programmes that greet well-being, economic, social, environmental and cultural.
- 4.5. Through the above, it will therefore be seen that steps have already been taken to build the foundations, and that it is time for a new strategy that greets the demands of the post-pandemic era, and the specific challenges that will bring. The risks of not having a strategy are triple-fold. They are moral ones of being contributing to the decline of staff well-being, financial ones from the staff sickness absence figures continuing to rise along with the risks of compensation claims against the Council, and also legal ones of being unable to meet the minimum of what we should be doing to protect workers. A healthy workforce is at the heart of everything the

Council is committed to in terms of serving the Public, and it is a factor that weaves into so many other priority work streams as regards the Council's workforce, such as attracting and retaining staff, and the staff continuous appraisal process, in order to allow them to thrive at work, and give the public the best possible Service.

- 4.6. The Strategy is based on good practice and the latest research in the field nationally and internationally, and presents three foundations based on work by Investors in People. You will see at the end of the document a detailed programme for the year ahead. While many elements of that work are centrally coordinated by the Health Safety and Wellbeing Service, the success of the strategy is dependent on collaboration at Council-wide level and at all levels, so that the principles permeate the organisation and reach all staff on the front line.
- 4.7. The corporate co-ordination on this area takes place within the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service. Expenditure and the adequacy of resource is monitored and assessed as part of running that Service, and in the past bids for more money have been made, and approved. In recent years, this has included a one-time bid for funding to be targeting mental well-being within the workforce, and another bid for a permanent budget increase for Medra Counselling. Again this was approved. We will closely monitor any increase in referrals to the Occupational Health Unit following the launch of a new sickness absence policy and system, to ensure the resource is adequate to cope. It should be noted that attracting and retaining staff is historically challenging within the Council's Occupational Health Team.
- 4.8. The success of the Strategy will be measured by monitoring data, such as absence figures, support services' referral figures, and quantitative and qualitative data from the staff voice questionnaire. In addition, data will be collected from the success of any particular interventions.

5. Consultation

- 5.1. *Prior to final adoption this document shall be incorporated upon it in the following forums as well as this committee:*
 - *Corporate Management Team*
 - *Safety and Well-being health forum*
 - *Safety and Wellbeing Health Panel (made up of Elected Members and Trade Unions)*
 - *Council Staff – Staff Voice Survey results are the foundation for inclusion*
- 5.2. It will in due course be submitted to Cabinet for final approval.

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

- 6.1. As this is an internal document only for the purpose of staff well-being, there has been no direct public consultation on its contents, but it should be noted that the Council's workforce are also Gwynedd people and users of Council Services, and have had full input through the staff voice questionnaire, and safety forums.
- 6.2. The Strategy is based on the principle of collaboration across the Council and more widely. External organisations such as the Health Board, Public Health Wales and

the specialist supportive Services we commission, which are also local businesses, play a key role in the success of the strategy. As an example we have contacted Besti Cadwaladr University Health Board to get feedback on its future wellbeing programme, and are currently awaiting a response to the request.

- 6.3. Work is taking place to improve data quality and availability in the well-being field as a whole. This includes absence data, referral data to services such as Medra Counselling, accident data within the Council etc and this will be a great help in terms of the strategy drive and being able to target intervention going forward. In addition, the Staff Voice Questionnaire from this year will move to become an annual exercise which will provide more consistent monitoring of staff opinion.
- 6.4. Workforce demography is certainly a factor to consider and yet better data will allow us to better target interventions. As an example at the moment, there is a current intention to establish a young staff hub as an opportunity for young staff to come together to network. Accurate and timely data for the future will enable us to respond much more quickly to evolving challenges, along with keeping ahead of national developments in this field.

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

- 7.1. Equality issues are an important part of the strategy with an intention during the year to raise awareness of important topics such as neuro-diversity, menopause and alcohol and drug addiction.
- 7.2. One of the main challenges of the communication plan for the Strategy is to ensure that we reach all employees, in all workplaces, including the workforce who do not currently have a digital account.
- 7.3. Language issues are an issue that is continually addressed in our programme of work. The support available to staff is bi-lingual in line with the Health Services' 'More than Words' principle of accessing a Health service through Welsh. Only one element is currently an exception, the Occupational Health Consultant, but work is currently taking place with a local doctor to try and identify a successor who is a Welsh speaker. Otherwise, we pride ourselves on being able to provide a highly specialised Service entirely through the medium of Welsh.

8. Next Steps

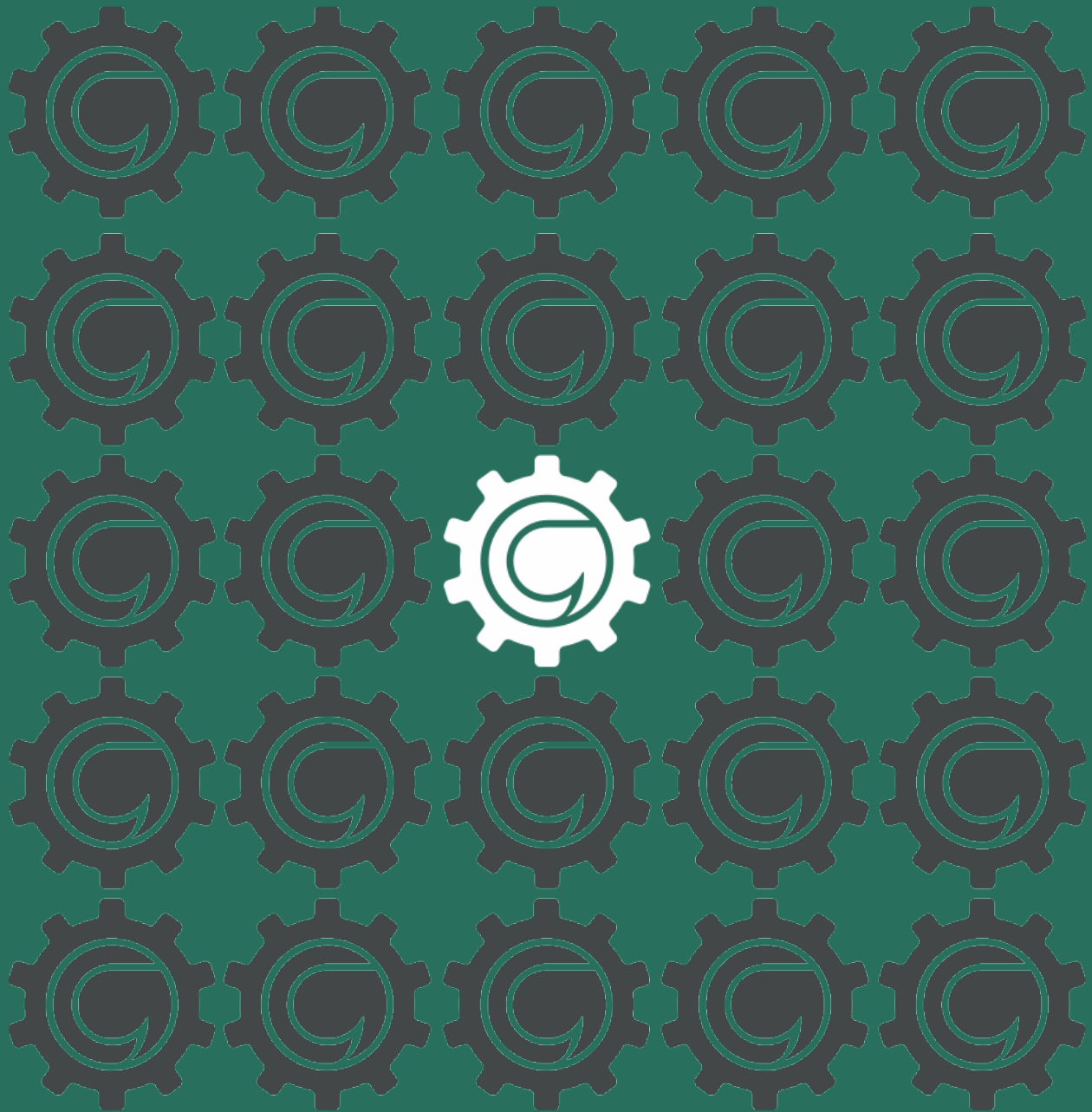
See point 5.1. above

Appendices

Council Staff Well-being Plan 2024 – 2028

Cyngor Gwynedd Well-being Programme May 2024 - March 2025

Council Staff Well-being Plan 2024 - 2028



**CORPORATE
SERVICES**

CYNGOR GWYNEDD

Health, Safety and
Well-being Service

1 October 2024

Cyngor Gwynedd Staff Well-being Plan

FOREWORD

Welcome to Cyngor Gwynedd's Staff Well-being Plan. The well-being of our workers is paramount to us in the Council and is one of the key work streams of the **Ffordd Gwynedd Priority Project - A Satisfied and Healthy Workforce**. A healthy, satisfied and resilient workforce allows us to perform better, achieve more, adapt to change more quickly and this is essential to provide first class services for the people of Gwynedd.

WHY DO WE NEED A WELL-BEING PLAN?

Having a structured and comprehensive Well-being Plan assists the Council to:

- ✓ Attract new employees;
- ✓ Engage, motivate and retain employees;
- ✓ Create a healthy and inclusive culture;
- ✓ Reduce sickness absence rates;
- ✓ Improve the performance and development of individuals;
- ✓ Improve productivity and ensure success.

WELL-BEING IN CYNGOR GWYNEDD

At Cyngor Gwynedd during 2023/24...

- The cost of absences for the Council in real terms was £5.7m
- **14,404 (22.13%)** work days were lost due to sickness absence related to stress, depression and mental health problems;
- 7,718 (11.86%) work days were lost due to sickness absence related to musculoskeletal problems;
- 'Other sickness' was recorded as the main reason for the sickness of **22.79%**;
- Long-term absences contributed to **51%** of the Council's sickness absence days;
- On average, every officer in the Council has lost **10.29** work days a year;
- **2.72%** more sickness absence days were lost in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23.

- 665 staff members were referred to the Occupational Health Service
- 194 Council staff members were referred to the Counselling Service (Medra)
- 129 Council staff members were referred to the Physiotherapy Service

During October 2023, a Staff Voice Survey was shared with every member of the Council's staff. The purpose of the Staff Voice Survey was to find out what Council employees need to ensure that the people of Gwynedd are central to their work; what support or assistance they need to do their work and what information do they need about benefits, their rights and responsibilities.

Having analysed the data and staff opinion on well-being in the Council, the following is a summary of the main themes and some of the observations made by staff on well-being matters:

Their Manager's Role

- *Need more training for Line Managers on how to deal with their staff*
- *I need more support from my line manager*
- *There is a need to maintain contact between employees and team managers to ensure that all information is shared*
- *Very fortunate to have him as a Manager. This has proven to me that the Council is genuinely concerned about staff well-being. My manager holds a 1 to 1 with me to see how I am.*

Stress

- *Too much work pressure, too much extra work being forced on us*
- *Increasing work pressure*
- *Divide work more fairly between the team*
- *It would be good to see the Council consider workload and capacity. The number of officers with large workloads will ultimately affect well-being.*

Promoting well-being events

- *I do not feel that anyone asks about my well-being*
- *It was only by chance that I found out that there are several support services available*
- *It is not good enough to leave it to the employees to try to find the support that is available for them*
- *Highlight more of the good support that is available - not everyone knows about it*

Work environment

- *The offices do not promote well-being, everything is dated.*
- *Need a working environment that is fit for purpose, and nicer*
- *Need a space where we can eat our lunch*

- *We need suitable desks and somewhere to go for a break from the desk*
- *The offices' image is disastrous and shabby and it makes one feels joyless when walking in*

We spend most of our lives in the workplace. According to Public Health Wales (2019), there is increasing evidence that the workplace could be an effective place to improve individuals' well-being. If we are unhappy at work for whatever reason - it could be poor relationships with co-workers, excessive work pressure, or an unsupportive Manager; it will affect our well-being. Being employed can offer financial security, social connections and a sense of belonging. In brief, to ensure well-being, individuals need to feel satisfied in their work. The Council therefore plays a significant part in influencing employees' general health and well-being.

By ensuring that we realise our vision, we can attract, recruit and retain staff in a way that demonstrates that we take their well-being seriously so that they contribute proactively to the Council's productivity and effectiveness.

OUR VISION

"Work together to improve well-being across the Council's entire workforce creating the best possible work environment to ensure that we create a healthy, resilient and productive workforce that can work to the best of their ability to serve the residents of Gwynedd."

OUR AIM

Our main objectives in terms of the well-being plan are based on three foundations, namely:

1. Leadership and Management
2. Sustainable support
3. Environment

There is more information about the three foundations below, but before we consider them further, we should also highlight the Plan's action principles. These are the principles that we will adhere and commit to while delivering the Plan. We commit to:

- Ensure that our vision, aim and objectives are consistent with wider arrangements and procedures in the human resources and health and safety areas;
- Ensure that the plan's key objectives are consistent with the objectives of the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan;
- Ensure that all relevant stakeholders are aware of this statutory requirement.
- Ensure that well-being matters are coordinated corporately to ensure that the service and the proposals are fair across the Council, and that specific programmes are targeted and prioritised as needed.

FOUNDATION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Objectives

- Ensure that well-being is a central part of our strategic priorities for our leaders and councillors across every function in Cyngor Gwynedd and ensure that everyone is aware of the statutory requirements.
- Create a safe and healthy work environment that nurtures a culture of positive well-being, where our employees' well-being is an integral part of everything we do.
- Create effective managers with strong working relationships in line with the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan.
- Improve leaders' visibility and ensure that they engage with employees regularly and advocate the importance of well-being.
- Ensure that our employees understand their roles, their expectations, their focus in the future and create feelings of personal commitment and satisfaction.
- Improve leadership training so that leaders understand the links between well-being and other core areas such as health and safety and performance and development.
- Equip and empower managers to hold regular conversations with their staff about their well-being.
- Improve well-being for our varied workforce and ensure that well-being is considered a responsibility for everyone across the Council.
- To be recognised as an employer of choice that is concerned about well-being and recognises the role that well-being could play in the broader picture including improving productivity and working methods.

FOUNDATION 2: SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT

Objectives

- Provide a range of effective well-being support based on the needs of our workforce, using a collaborative approach.
- Our sustainable support focuses on four key well-being principles, namely:
 - Mental
 - Physical
 - Social
 - Financial

1. Mental Well-being:

- Promote a culture where mental well-being can be discussed openly.
- Equip employees with the skills, knowledge and confidence to care for their own mental well-being and support others.
- Provide better access to support, advice and referrals.
- Ensure that stress risk assessments are completed and reviewed regularly.
- Identify 'Well-being Champions' across Council Departments with Time to Change Wales.
- Continue with the i-Act training programme and mental health first aid.
- Continue and further develop specialist support for the workforce in terms of neurodiversity.
- Hold health promotional campaigns that reach every member of staff through visits, websites, posters, qr codes.
- Develop policies and procedures that represent best practice in terms of mental health, including creating an open and inclusive culture which shows respect towards the individuals who suffer from mental health conditions and the stigma that could exist around this including an alcohol and drugs policy;
- Offer 24-hour support for all staff by providing on demand counselling services;
- Promote a zero tolerance culture in terms of bullying and harassment.

2. Physical Well-being

- Create an environment where employees feel they have been empowered and educated about their physical well-being
- Support employees to care for themselves and to take positive steps around health such as a healthy lifestyle, sleep, nutrition, physical activity, smoking, alcohol.
- Establish programmes for specific clinical conditions;
- Provide an opportunity for all employees to increase their physical activity by raising awareness of options for a healthy lifestyle, sleep pattern, smoking alcohol.
- Encourage staff to follow Public Health Wales' five ways to well-being framework.
- Support staff's physical health in the workforce by promoting our existing proposals and continuous research to develop new ones
- Support employees who are ill to remain in work and to return to work following sickness absence through the Occupational Health Service.
- Physiotherapy sessions for eligible staff who have been injured at work, or who suffer with symptoms that affect their daily duties.
- Ensure that our staff who work in a physical field receive Health Surveillance sessions in accordance with the Health and Safety legislation.
- Improve the working environment and ensure that staff complete a workstation self-assessment.

3. Social Well-being

- Continue to improve the relationship we have with each other across the Council.
- Nurture healthy, collaborative, nurturing and supportive relationships, which includes good leadership, to nurture a genuine community within Cyngor Gwynedd.
- Encourage civic and community engagement to improve a sense of belonging and create strong links within the broader community of Gwynedd.
- Create strong links with the broader environment we live in and work in by working with the people of Gwynedd.

- Develop a relationship with schools, university, the broader community to promote open opportunities such as apprenticeship programmes and Cynllun Yfory.
- Ensure that learning opportunities are available for employees such as training programmes that are relevant to the post along with opportunities to develop and expand horizons;
- Create an inclusive environment which celebrates equality and diversity.

4. Financial Well-being

Objectives

- Support individuals to become more aware of their financial situation.
- Reduce financial stress by assisting employees to manage their finances better and to become more financially secure. This will include fields such as debt management, budgeting, savings, pensions, investments and living within our means.
- Maintain and continue to develop a comprehensive benefits package for staff
- Promote employment practices that avoid low wages, unfixed contracts, unfair pay

3. FOUNDATION 3: ENVIRONMENTAL

Objectives

- Further build on the work environment in every workplace to ensure that safety and well-being is an integral part of the workplace.
- Create an inclusive environment which celebrates the equality and diversity of the workforce.
- Identify and target intervention and support in workplaces where data supports more intensive intervention / support to identify and address the root of any patterns of absence.

HOW WILL WE IMPLEMENT THE PLAN?

The purpose of our Plan is to ensure that well-being is a crucial part of our ethos as a Council. Well-being needs to be central across the whole Council by developing and creating a culture where well-being is promoted on every level across the Council and has a positive impact on everyone's individual and diverse needs.

We do this by means of:

Our Culture

- Continue to work on having the appropriate culture in place so that well-being becomes one of the core values of the Council and is integrated in our procedures, policies and work practices.
- Increase visibility and awareness of well-being, improving the way of referring to internal and external resources.
- Develop a clear communication plan to ensure that messages about well-being are embedded and reach the Council's workforce.

Prevention

- Focus on assisting employees to make better choices, to change behaviour and better manage their well-being.
- Make well-being a routine and not something that's considered only in times of change, emergency or distress.
- Increase awareness and understanding of the benefits of the Occupational Health Service and any well-being schemes related to the service.

My Well-being

We will:

- Raise awareness of the need for everyone to take personal responsibility for their well-being and acknowledge the advantages of schemes used by Cyngor Gwynedd and how they could be used to support individual needs.
- Map what well-being means to individuals at different times in their career by identifying and understanding the key times that are important to people, and the

impact these could have on their well-being which will in turn shape our well-being campaigns.

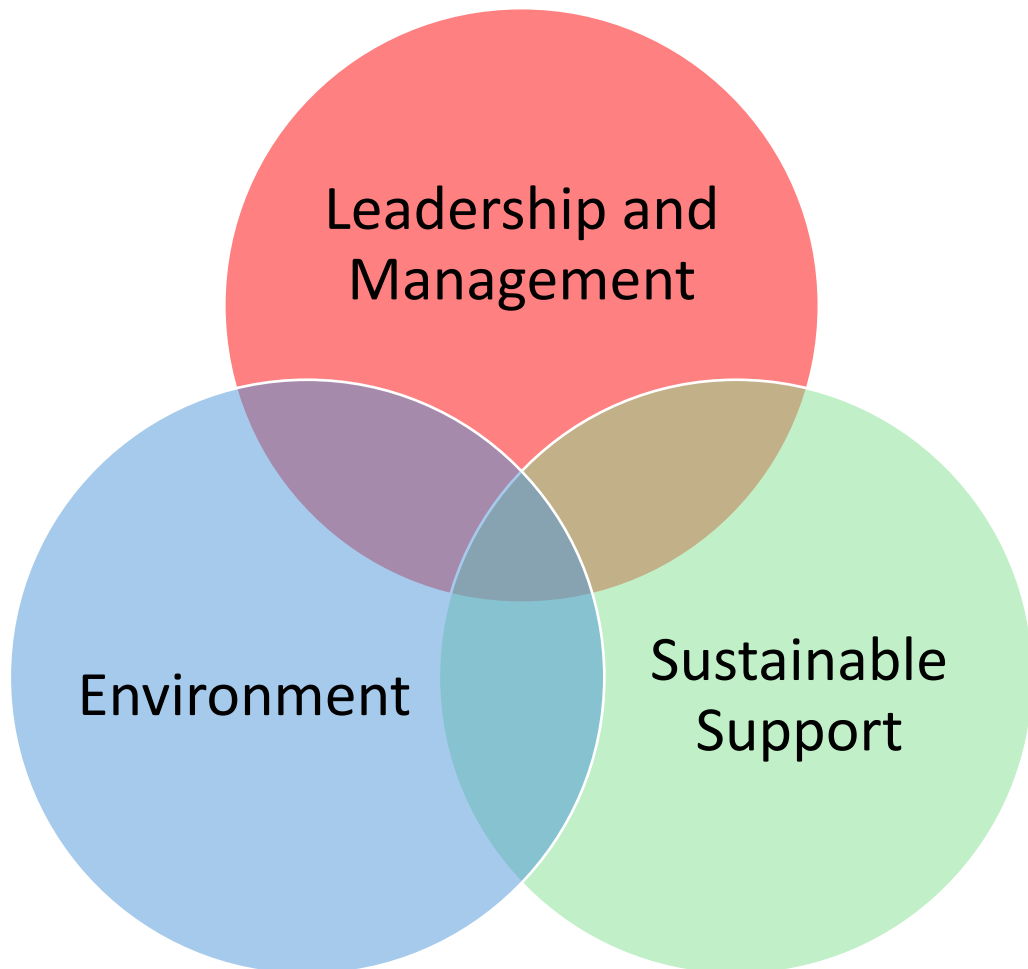
- Celebrate the diversion of our people, promote well-being inclusion and work to ensure that well-being is considered a priority for all.

Evidence-based Collaboration and Action

We will:

- Ensure that well-being initiatives are based on the workforce's needs and on firm research evidence.
- Give and receive feedback and share good practice to nurture collaboration.
- Improve our method of gathering data to learn more about our employees and track trends to measure success and areas of improvement.
- Track and measure action plans and hold regular reviews.

OUR INTEGRATED WELL-BEING MODEL

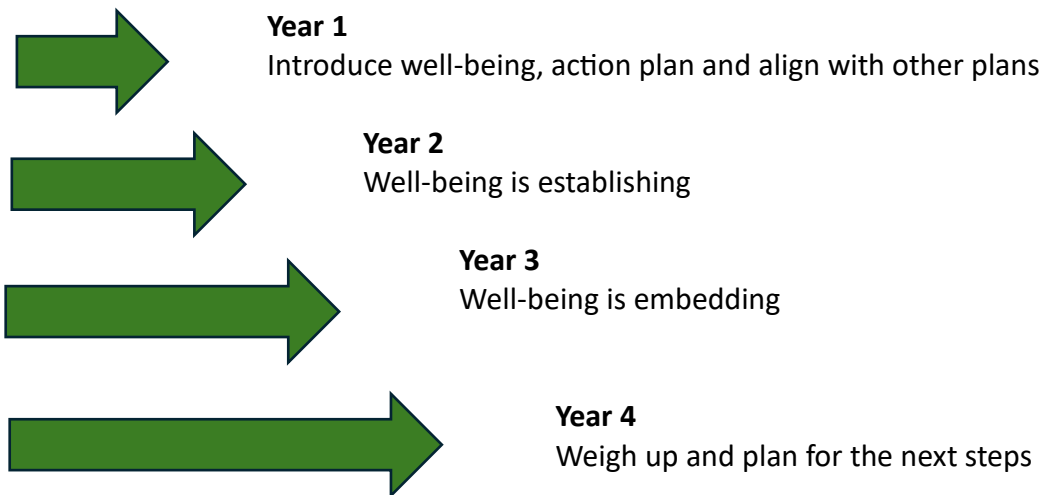


To implement the Plan effectively, a long-term action plan will be needed that includes specific details and the actions we will take as we proceed to deliver.

There will be a need to ensure that this plan is reinforced by business plans and specific services such as the Council Plan and the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan.

An annual report will be produced at the end of every year to review progress and impact and in order to ensure that the Plan aligns with the Council's broader strategic objectives.

Ultimately, every individual in the Council should see and identify with the aims and vision of our Well-being Plan.



MEASURING SUCCESS

Success can be measured in several different ways. Our method of measuring success in terms of this plan is through a cyclical process of collaboration, reflection and reviewing improvement.

We will use a variety of measures to measure the impact of the Well-being Plan and to ensure that well-being thrives and is central to the success of Cyngor Gwynedd.

Here are some of the methods we will use to measure success:

- **Sickness absence levels;**
- **Regular surveys and continuous feedback;**
- **Develop well-being impact assessments;**
- **Monitor and evaluate any well-being interventions to ensure that they remain effective;**
- **Annual evaluation report and action plans updated;**
- **Customer satisfaction / Reach organisational aims;**

RESOURCES

In light of the current financial climate, we will have to maximise our existing resources to deliver the plan. This means that the Health, Safety and Well-being Service within the Corporate Services Department will mainly lead and coordinate the work. However, there is a key role in terms of the Well-being Champions and also the departments in terms of owning, contributing and implementing this plan. It is inevitable that this means that aspects of this plan cannot be delivered in ideal methods and to an early timetable.

With more resources, it would be possible to expedite the programme and possibly offer more intensive and comprehensive interventions but a business case will need to be submitted to do this on a case by case basis.

REVIEW PERIOD

It is intended to monitor the plan's progress through the Ffordd Gwynedd Officers Group and also the Lead Group of that priority project. We will also report as needed to the departmental Performance Challenging and Support meetings and to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the Council Cabinet.

Work Programme - Year 1 (2024 - 2025)

Project Number	What?	Whom?	When?
1.	Develop the Staff Well-being Plan and obtain the observations of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	April - October, 2024
2.	The launch of the Council's Sickness Absence Policy to include the electronic system that management get access through 'hunnan wasanaeth'	Human Resource Manager	
3.	Arrange a Health and Wellbeing Road Show that targets blue collar workers and care homes.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager. OH Team Leader	
4.	Hold a strategic session with the Corporate Management Team on the contents of the plan	Assistant Head / Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	October, 2024
5.	Consult with the Corporate Forum with a request for them to submit it and discuss it at every Departmental Forum.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager. OH Team Leader	October 2024
6.	Submit the Plan to a meeting of the Council Cabinet for adoption	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	November, 2024
7.	Produce and implement a Communication and Engagement Plan with staff, add the document to the intranet, the Chief Executive's live session, staff bulletin etc.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	December/January 2025
8.	Give a Presentation on the Plan within the Managers' Network.	Assistant Head / Health and Safety Manager and the Team Leader	November 2024
9.	Recommence the I-Act training for existing managers and managers who come to work within the Council.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	October/November 2024
10.	Identify and raise awareness and hold training for Well-being Champions within Council Departments by 'Time to Change Wales'.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	October 2024
11.	Create a work programme for the role and boundaries of Well-being Champions across the Council.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	November 2024
12.	Review Cyngor Gwynedd's Well-being Policy and launch it	OH Team Leader H&S Team Leader	March 2025

13.	Create a programme of activities and support for all Council employees including an invitation for external partnerships to give presentations, such as the menopause, alcohol and drugs policy, 'Mind Cymru'	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	March 2025
14.	Develop links that can provide support for staff namely Occupational Health and Medra.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	February 2025
15.	Create reports for Heads of Department to include crucial information to create ownership and provide better data to manage well-being within their Departments.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	April 2025

Cynqor Gwynedd Wellbeing Programme May 2024 - March 2025

This list of activities is not exhaustive. Visits to specific work areas will be targeted as needed. The specific areas of work will be supported / addressed following the receipt of live data of sickness absence, symptoms of stress, musculoskeletal.

Month	Activity	Activity summary	Location	Target	Responsible
May 2024	Testicular Cancer	<p>Poster- Testicular cancer is on the rise within the United Kingdom, around 2,300 diagnosed each year. This type of cancer can usually be treated if caught early. [1]</p> <p>Raising awareness and sharing information on the importance of symptom check – testicles. QR code will be included on the poster with information in regards to testicular cancer and symptoms.</p>	Staff Toilets	All staff (Depot, Care Homes, Healthy Living, offices).	Lois Thomas
June 2024	Sun Safe	<p>Raising awareness of how to take care of self when working out in the sun/ heat and what to look out for with any growth / moles.</p> <p>Cases of skin cancer have increased steadily in recent years. Contact with the sun seems to be the main cause for this.</p>	Staff Intranet	PP/YGC Staff, Environment, Maritime.	Lois Thomas
August 2024	Health and Wellbeing Roadshows	<p>Offering health checks to staff at different locations and raising awareness of the support available within the Council.</p> <p>Wellbeing Stands include: Back Care, Drug and Alcohol, Staff benefits, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Healthy Living.</p>	Council-wide events	Members of Council staff especially staff at Depot and Residential Homes.	Lois Thomas
September 2024	World Suicide Day	<p>Suicide statistics have increased over the past year, with employed individuals being the highest. [2]</p> <p>The theme this year from WHO (World Health Organisation) are 'Changing the narrative on suicide' and 'to start the conversation'. The aim for this year is to reduce the stigma and to encourage individuals to start talking about suicide.</p> <p>Raise awareness and remind staff of the support available if they feel they require additional support. This includes Occupational Health, MEDRA, Mind Cymru and further external sources.</p>	Staff Buletin Intranet	Members of staff with access to the intranet/ emails	Lois Thomas
	Flu Programme	Flu can lead to serious illness such as bronchitis or bacterial pneumonia secondary to the elderly or those in poor health. The	Co-ordinating with Rowlands Pharmacy		

		Government's Chief Health Officer is asking employers to increase the number of employees receiving the vaccine.	for eligible staff members to receive a flu voucher.	Eligible members of staff identified by Public Health Wales	Occupational Health
October 2024	Back Care Awareness Week	One of main sickness absence within the Council is musculoskeletal illness.	Staff Buletin Intranet	Office staff members (DSE)	Lois Thomas
		Share information on how to care for ourselves, our posture, and share external sources to help them. Hybrid office / working staff to complete a workstation assessment.			
	World Mental Health Day	2 million people are waiting for mental health services from NHS World Mental Health Day - Mind Raising awareness of the support available to all Council staff, including sharing information on how to access support from external agencies.	Staff Bulletin	Members of staff with access to the intranet/ emails including Education and Home Carers/ Community	
	Restart the Heart	Promote sessions available from Healthy Living / Byw'n Iach (One week in October only) and <i>British Heart Foundation</i> to train staff on how to administer CPR. Raising awareness of all defib locations across the Council. Join the British Heart Foundation campaign.	Council Head Offices (Caernarfon, Pwllheli and Dolgellau) and virtual		
	World Menopause Day	Menopause Workshops- Parliament reported that 900,000 women had left their jobs due to menopause symptoms [3] . A number of members of staff have requested menopause sessions following the staff survey. Promote menopause sessions with an outside agency to be able to discuss feelings and share experiences. Share information and raise staff awareness of the Menopause Policy as well as menopause risk assessment.	Women's and Men's Toilets Staff Buletin	Staff members with menopause symptoms / staff in general and Managers.	
	Breast Cancer	Poster- The most common cancer in the United Kingdom, and one of the leading causes of death for women under 50 [4]		All staff	

		Raising awareness of importance to check self frequently, with a QR code to show how.			
November 2024	Men's Health Awareness Month	Targeting staff and young workers, who may be less likely to visit their GPs. Asking men to send a picture of themselves with a beard (Movember) to share on the intranet. Raise awareness about the importance for men to discuss their concerns with others.	Intranet	All staff	Lois Thomas
	Stress Awareness	Raise awareness of the support available for all members of staff. Promote the Health, Safety and Wellbeing intranet specifically the Mental Health page which shares good exercises/ useful sources and resources of how to deal with stress.	Health, Safety and Wefare Intranet		
December 2024	Alcohol and Drug Awareness	Aim to use the run-up to Christmas (as do the Police) to raise awareness of the negative effects alcohol can have on health e.g. weight, blood pressure, sleep, diabetes. Poster - Raising awareness of the support available for individuals with Alcohol and Drug addiction. Including launching campaigning on the new policy. Advise on issues that may arise, and refer to other services.	Council-wide notice boards Intranet Staff Weekly Buletin	All staff (Depot, Care Homes, Education, Offices) All staff	Lois Thomas
	Grief Awareness	Raise awareness of the Support available from Medra and Occupational Health as well as what external agencies can offer at challenging times for individuals dealing with grief.			
January 2025	Blue Monday	January tends to be a month where people feel low - 'January blues'. Share general information about what can we do to lift spirits – exercise, foods to avoid, work-life balance, good sleep hygiene. Hold virtual sessions with Time to Change Wales to highlight key facts about Mental Health and challenge stigma (including self-stigma). (Obtain a recording of the session so that Council staff - Education, Carers, Environment Staff, PP/YGC can have the opportunity to view the session).	Virtual	Any interested member of staff.	Lois Thomas/ Safety and Wellbeing Health Team

February 2025	A Time to Talk Day (Mental Health)	A session with the Wellbeing Champions for members of staff to have the opportunity to talk and open up about their feelings/ Mental Health. Share staff awareness of the Occupational Health service.	Wellbeing Champions	Office staff	Health, Safety Wellbeing Team
	Heart Awareness Month	Each year there are roughly 100,000 hospital admissions due to heart attacks. That means hospitals are receiving around 290 cases per day [5] . Arrange a competition to raise awareness of the importance of movement, stay active. This can reinforce teamwork and collaboration.	Competition	All staff	
March 2025	National No Smoking Day	Raising awareness of the impact smoking and vapes have on the body, sharing information about the support available to help quit smoking.	Intranet		Health, Safety Wellbeing Team

MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	17 October 2024
TITLE	Engagement Sessions to discuss Gwynedd's Education Language Policy
PURPOSE	To elect 5 representatives from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to attend the engagement session.
AUTHOR	Rhys Glyn – Head of Gwynedd's Immersion Education System

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Over the coming weeks and months, Cyngor Gwynedd representatives will hold a series of engagement sessions to discuss the Council's current Education Language Policy. These sessions will be an opportunity to discuss and gather ideas and suggestions about the policy, and to consider whether it needs to be revised considering the results of the 2021 Census and a number of policy developments in language and education at a national level.
- 1.2 Each representative will receive a copy of Cyngor Gwynedd's current Education Language Policy, along with a short document via email to set the context for the discussion.
- 1.3 In order to ensure fair representation, we aim to have 5 Members of the Language Committee and 5 Members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to attend the engagement meeting on Gwynedd's Education Language Policy. **The meeting will be held on Wednesday, 4 December between 1:30 and 3:30 pm.** Members can join remotely or at the venue at the Headquarters.
- 1.4 The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee is requested to elect 5 Members amongst them to attend on the above date and time. You should seek to ensure that there is representation from all political groups.