

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date:	28 June 2022
Title of Item:	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Elin Walker-Jones
Contact Officer:	Marian Parry Hughes, Head of Children and Supporting Families Service.

THE DECISION SOUGHT

To accept and note the information in the report.

THE REASON WHY A DECISION IS NEEDED

In order to ensure effective performance management

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on developments in the fields within my remit as Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families. This includes outlining the latest developments to date in 2022-23 against the pledges within the 2018-2023 Gwynedd Council Plan; issues and the progress of performance measures; and the latest on the savings and efficiency schemes.
- 1.2 I look forward to working with the department and members of the Scrutiny Committee during the coming year, to ensure that we do the best we can to put the people of Gwynedd at the heart of our children's and family support services.
- 1.3 The priority projects featured in the Council Plan are progressing, but continued staff deployment as part of the Council's Response to the War in Ukraine does impact upon our ability to deliver 2 of the priority projects, those being "Keeping Families Together" and "Supporting People's Wellbeing". However we are confident that we will be able to achieve the outcomes by the end of the year.

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2 GWYNEDD COUNCIL PLAN PROJECTS 2018-2023

2.1 Below, I outline the progress that has been made to date against the Department's priority projects. These priorities address the department's main risks. In general, I feel that every project is currently moving in the right direction against the pledges that we have made in the Council Plan.

2.2 Keeping Families Together Strategy

I am pleased to note that the RIF submitted grant applications to develop our Keeping Families Together Strategy have been successful in recent weeks. We are now able to move forward with the Effective Child Protection Programme, the work of the Emrallt Team, and integrate the Multi Disciplinary Team into our local arrangements. We will also be recruiting for a new officer in our Family Hub and Referrals Team.

I am also pleased to see the progress in the department's efforts to address the staffing challenges they've faced over recent years. An independent report has been commissioned by the department, and a targeted recruitment campaign has taken place during April this year, as the first steps in implementing the report's recommendations.

2.3 Securing a local, appropriate specialist provision for children with complex needs

We have been working with Anglesey Council and the Health Board to develop the model of a Multi-Disciplinary Team to support children with severe and complex needs. Based on an evaluation of the model we have now reached agreement on moving the Team from a sub-regional model to a model that will be integrated into our local arrangements within the Keeping Families Together Strategy. Over the next period we will move to recruit vacant posts, and recruit to new posts to ensure that the MDT model responds to local needs.

2.4 Ensure that families and children with autism have access to the support they need to thrive

We submitted the Autism Plan to the cabinet in December 2021. We have also appointed a temporary Project Co-ordinator. In consultation with the National Autism Service and Workforce Development Unit, we have begun to provide autism training to frontline workers across Departments in the Council to raise employee awareness of the needs of residents with autism. We are currently in the process of identifying jobs that are more likely to come into contact with autistic individuals as the next phase of the training programme.

2.5 Supporting People's Well-being

Work is continuing on some of the workstreams, such as tackling homelessness through our Housing Action Plan and supporting unpaid carers through the Carers Support Group. However, we have not been able to appoint a Poverty Coordinator to bring partners together to maximise our efforts to tackle the challenges of the rising cost of living, fuel poverty, food poverty and access to financial advice. We will endeavor again to recruit in order to have the capacity to do more in this area.

Work is continuing on the development of a Community Resilience Framework. We are currently evaluating our Supporting People Hubs pilot, and early indications of the impact of those local arrangements for supporting people show that residents are receiving local, timely and coordinated support within the hubs for a variety of needs.

3. PERFORMANCE AND MEASURES

- 3.1 I wish to draw your attention to the following matters, which are unrelated to the Priority Projects, but that are being addressed by the department because they are affecting the performance of services and/or causing us concern.
- 3.2 Workforce Capacity – The workforce situation remains a matter of serious concern, but recent work with the support of an independent consultant and our targeted recruitment campaigns, means that steps are underway to address this challenge. It is too early for us to see that work bearing fruit, so for now the workforce capacity remains a concern.
- 3.3 The department continues to see that the nature of the cases being supported demonstrates that children's needs are complex, intensifying, that they require a very comprehensive and specialist package of support and packages of care. Our priority projects and the sustainability and stability of our day-to-day services will be key to our ability to respond to this.
- 3.4 In terms of the department's measures, I am generally happy with their performance. I wish to draw your attention to two in particular, which illustrate the department's story during the period in question in that report.
- 3.5 We continue to see an increase in the numbers of people contacting the Department for Information, Advice or Assistance. We received a 1309 contact by families in April and May which is an almost 18% increase on the same period last year. We believe that this demand is driven by the effects of the COVID crisis and subsequent social and economic impacts putting unmanageable stresses on families.
- 3.6 I am also pleased to report that even in the early part of the year, our strategy to keep families together and not bring children into care unnecessarily is still showing success. With 851 children open to the department at the end of May, 82% of them are supported to live with their family.

4 FINANCIAL POSITION / SAVINGS

- 4.1 It was reported to the Cabinet on 14 June 2022 (Final Accounts 2021/22 – Revenue Out-turn report) that the Children and Supporting Families Department had kept within its budget and had underspent £97k during the 2021/22 financial year.
- 4.2 The Cabinet, 26 January 2021, has removed the savings target of £1,148,610 from the End to End Project, and furthermore the Cabinet, 18 January 2022, has also removed the project's further savings target for this year of £279,750 in 2022/23
- 4.3 For 2022/23, as part of the bidding process the Department has received over £ 1,031,500 worth of bids (£581,500 permanent bids and £450,000 one-off bids) to meet unavoidable

pressures mainly on children's placements in care and to support the delivery of the Autism and Supporting People's Well-being priority projects.

5 Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. The Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety

ii. Head of Finance:

I am satisfied that the report conveys a fair picture of the Children and Supporting Families Department's financial situation.

a. Views of the Local Member:

- i. Not a local matter.

b. Results of Any Consultation:

- i. None to note.
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Appendices