

QUARTERLY REPORT TO CABINET: RESPONSE PLAN PROGRAMME BOARD

PROFESSOR SALLY HOLLAND: CHAIR OF THE RESPONSE BOARD

DATE: 4th November 2025

Introduction

Since my previous report to Cabinet in July 2025, the Response Plan Programme Board ("The Board") has continued to meet regularly and monitor progress across all workstreams of the Response Plan. There have been three further meetings since my last report including one face to face meeting with the CPR review team. There has been notably high engagement with the Board, with 100% attendance at meetings by Cyngor Gwynedd representatives and external agencies, demonstrating that members and observers regard it as a priority.

The publication of the Child Practice Review (CPR) is imminent as I finalise this report and will have been published by the time I meet with the Cabinet on 11th November.

The Board acknowledges the difficult circumstances of the previous unexpected postponement of the CPR report publication, and I would emphasise that the primary consideration has been for any impact on the victims and survivors. The Board members additionally expressed concern in this period about the impact on the school and other services featured in the report and sought reassurance from senior officials in Cyngor Gwynedd that support was in place during the last three months.

Due to the very recent publication of the report, I must make clear that this report provides information about the Board's activities prior to the publication. We have not had a Board meeting since publication.

Current Position

During this quarter the Board has continued to receive updates on the improvement work that is ongoing in Gwynedd. Since my last report we have seen further developments, specifically;

- *Internal audit into the Cyngor Gwynedd workforce's awareness of safeguarding arrangements*
- *Funding agreed and post created to appointment a new Safeguarding Champion role which will help raise awareness and improve training uptake*
- *Part Ch of the workplan (Supporting and Stabilising Ysgol Friars) has been revised with the input of the Chair of Governors and interim Headteacher to reflect the key priorities for the school.*

- *Children's Services have been further reviewing procedures e.g. Strategy Discussions/Part 5 Meetings to reflect learning to date*

Challenges to progress have included:

- Ensuring all staff have completed mandatory online safeguarding training. There are specific challenges to ensuring that some frontline staff have access to computing facilities to complete this (primarily staff who are not office based such as those in the Waste and recycling Service and Cleaning service), and the Board has asked for regular updates while solutions to this are implemented.
- Regarding Article 12 of the UNCRC (children and young people's rights to be listened to and involved in decisions that affect them), it has been reported that the Gwynedd youth forum has been in the process of being re-established this year. The Board is looking forward to hearing more about young people's confidence in, and experience of, safeguarding in Gwynedd through the youth forum and other mechanisms. As Chair I have encouraged the local authority to consider reviewing and doing further work to embed all children's rights across the county, and senior officials have expressed a desire to do this. A half-day workshop has been arranged for early 2026.
- While additional resources have been made available, the improvement work is taking place in addition to high workloads of key staff. The Board continues to consider the anticipated resources required post CPR publication (i.e. staffing and training) to ensure that Cyngor Gwynedd is able to deliver on the Work Programme in a timely manner.

In anticipation of the publication of the CPR report, the Board has been actively advising on the response plan and impact measures might be reshaped and redeveloped in response to the findings and recommendations of the report. This has been with an aim of ensuring that the Board will be ready to respond promptly and comprehensively to the CPR findings, once they are available to us.

In the next meeting of the Response Board in the first week of December, members and observers will be asked to consider a further-developed workplan and set of measures.

In the meantime, there is work being done nationally and regionally which is likely to have a direct impact on the work of the Board and it will be important that the response plan is also aligned to these national developments:

- Welsh Government - [Review of Governance and Accountability Mechanisms](#)
- Welsh Government - [Review of School Governing Bodies](#).
- Children's Commissioner - Recommendation about school governance: [Children's Commissioner Annual Report](#)

The Board will continue to ensure any regional or national developments and new recommendations from these will feed into the workplan. The Board continues to be

updated and briefed on these developments by the external bodies who also sit on the Board as observers. The Board has advised that Cyngor Gwynedd should aim to make improvements that anticipate national developments, where that does not breach current guidance, rather than wait for them to be published. Cyngor Gwynedd are in full agreement with this approach.

Scrutiny and Assurance

As Chair, I keep a close eye on the various **mechanisms** available to the Board to scrutinise, support and advise on progress. In summary, these are as follows:

1. The Board receives a written update on each action in the response plan in advance of meetings. Lead officials report verbally on these in Board meetings and there is an opportunity for all Board members and observers to ask questions about these.
2. As the months progress, we are starting to receive some findings from impact measures. These mainly relate at this stage to *outputs*, e.g. how many staff have completed training, and how many schools have been visited and found to be compliant with expected policies and procedures. Measures of *outcomes*, such as the confidence of children, parents and staff in safeguarding arrangements in their settings are planned and will be reported to the Board as they become available.
3. I conduct meetings external to the Board to gauge experiences of the improvement work. For example, during this quarter I have met with Ysgol Friars Head Teacher and Chair of Governors, and RASAC (the charity providing some of the support and counselling to victims and the wider school community). I also meet the members for external national bodies who act as observers to the panel quarterly to check their views on progress. Issues raised in these meetings are noted by me and taken up with relevant senior officials.
4. The Terms of Reference for the Board are constantly reviewed. A change made since my last update has been to clarify the role of Cabinet Members on the Response Board. The four Cabinet Members who are part of the Response Board are present in order to provide accountability to the public, ensure a democratic element to the board and to ensure that resources are in place to support the work. As Chair, I meet with these members on a quarterly basis to discuss the progress of the Board.
5. There are regular inspections of schools and social care provision by the relevant inspectorates and these inspections always include examination of safeguarding. Additionally, there is a county-level joint inspection by Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales this month of safeguarding. These external inspection reports are available to the Board, and both agencies have observer status at meetings.

Using the above methods, there is some triangulation of the evidence sources by which the Response Board can scrutinise and support progress.

Next Steps

The Board anticipates reviewing the findings of the CPR report at the earliest opportunity. The Board will also review and advise on Cyngor Gwynedd's revised version of the Response Plan. This is expected to incorporate new or amended objectives and tasks. The Board is also committed to refining its impact and outcome measures to fit the redeveloped plan to ensure that progress is not only tracked but meaningfully assessed against our overarching objectives which are to *Acknowledge, Apologise, Support, Establish, Learn, Improve* and be *Accountable*.

Closing Remarks

In summary, this has been a challenging quarter due to the unanticipated delay in publication of the CPR report. This has led to a delay in being able to redevelop the response plan and impact measures to meet the findings and recommendations of the CPR. Given the very recent publication of the CPR report, this report to Cabinet is necessarily limited in detail regarding the Board's views on Cyngor Gwynedd's response to those findings. I will be in a position to provide a fuller and more substantive report in the next quarterly update.

There has also been a necessary delay in assessing the time period for the response plan and the Board to continue, before the work becomes embedded into Cyngor Gwynedd's usual practices. This will be assessed after the publication of the CPR report.

The Board remains committed to scrutinizing and advising Cyngor Gwynedd to ensure that all necessary improvements are embedded effectively and that the interests of victims, survivors, and the wider community remain central to every action taken.

I would like to thank all members of the Board and partners for their continued engagement and readiness to adapt to what will be an important and sensitive period ahead.

Professor Sally Holland

Chair of the Response Plan Programme Board