

QUARTERLY REPORT TO CABINET: RESPONSE PLAN PROGRAMME BOARD

PROFESSOR SALLY HOLLAND: CHAIR OF THE RESPONSE BOARD

DATE: 10th March 2026

Introduction

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

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

Current Position

Strategic Phases of Work

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

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

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

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

b. *System-Wide Response and Monitoring –*

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

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

The seven key themes are;

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

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

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

Child-Centred Focus and Victim Engagement

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

Children's Rights and Participation

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

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

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

Examples of how this might be done include;

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

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

Scrutiny and Assurance

Welsh Government

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

Joint safeguarding inspection by Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales

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

Evolving Role of the Board

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

Triangulating Insight and Engagement

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

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

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

Measuring Impact

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

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

Transparency and Governance

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

Next Steps

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

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

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

Closing Remarks

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

Professor Sally Holland

Chair of the Response Plan Programme Board

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