

CYNGOR GWYNEDD - Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Title of Item:	Our Bravery Brought Justice: Cyngor Gwynedd's Response Plan
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Nia Jeffreys, Council Leader
Relevant officer:	Dafydd Gibbard, Chief Executive
Date of meeting:	10 March 2026

1. The decision sought

To approve and adopt the revamped Response Plan (Appendix 1).

2. The reason why the Cabinet needs to make the decision:

2.1 The Response to Offending Plan was adopted by Cyngor Gwynedd's Cabinet in January 2025, and has been a live plan that has evolved over time since then. The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Education and the Cabinet Member for Children, was given delegated rights to make minor editorial adjustments as required. Nevertheless, it was recognised that the Plan would need to be fully revised following the publication of the Child Practice Review report.

2.2 On 4 November 2025, 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' was published and the Response Plan has subsequently been rewritten. This is the biggest change to the Plan since its adoption.

2.3 The revamped Response Plan was submitted to the Response Board on 8 December, and observations and input were received prior to its submission to the Care Scrutiny Committee on 13 January 2026, the Governance and Audit Committee on 15 January and the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 19 January. In addition, a Ministerial Assurance Group has also been established by the Minister for Education, the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Housing and Local Government and the Leader and relevant Cabinet Members report on the progress of the Response Plan every other month - it last met on 22 January.

2.4 The committees were asked to scrutinise the following stating that the recommendations of those committees would be conveyed to the extraordinary meeting of the Council on 5 February.

- That the Plan responds appropriately and fully to the 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' Report.
- Consider the main priorities for immediate action.
- Advise on dealing with dependencies (e.g. waiting for regional or national recommendations) and mitigating potential risks.

2.5 The Full Council was asked for further comments for the Cabinet to consider when adopting the Response Plan.

3. Context

3.1 The original Response Plan was adopted by the Cabinet on 21 January 2025, with 4 key work streams:

- Work Stream A – Supporting victims and survivors
- Work Stream B – Ensuring we have the best possible safeguarding arrangements
- Work Stream C – Establishing, learning and improving
- Work Stream Ch – Supporting and stabilising Ysgol Friars

3.2 A Response Board was established to scrutinise, challenge and advise on the delivery of the Plan's content, independently chaired by Professor Sally Holland. Board Membership includes a number of external organisations as observers to challenge and monitor the progress of the Response Plan, including Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales, Welsh Government, Children's Commissioner and the Regional Safeguarding Board. In addition, there is representation from Ysgol Friars (Headteacher and Chair of Governors), the Gwynedd Secondary sector, Council Officers, along with Cabinet Members from the relevant areas to set the strategic political direction of the areas of work under their responsibility whilst also scrutinising and supporting the work of officers.

3.3 The 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' report was published by the North Wales Safeguarding Board on 4 November 2025. Prior to that, and since, work has continued to review what needs to be incorporated into the Gwynedd plan moving forward including addressing the themes and recommendations identified in the report and aligning with those already included in the response plan (which also included recommendations from other reports).

3.4 Appendix 1 contains a copy of the revised Response Plan reflecting these changes. These have been set out under 7 main themes to align with the themes of the Our Bravery Brought Justice report:

- Voice of the Child and Supporting Victims
- Managing Allegations and Concerns About Adults Working with Children
- Training and Policies
- School Governance
- Restrictive Practices
- Crisis Planning and Crisis Response
- Ysgol Friars

3.5 An easy-to-read version of the Response Plan is presented in Appendix 2.

3.6 A detailed work programme is presented to the Response Board meetings and, as this has now grown in size, an overview report is also presented for each of the 7 individual themes, including an update on what has been achieved since the previous Board meeting and setting out what will be prioritised for the next period.

3.7 Attached to the progress reports for the 7 themes, a detailed Work Programme is presented to Response Board Members to give them the opportunity to challenge the detail. This work programme includes recommendations and actions from the Our Bravery

Brought Justice report, the original Response Plan and other additional actions that have been identified.

3.8 A copy of the overview reports and a detailed work programme were submitted for information to the Care Scrutiny Committee, the Governance and Audit Committee, the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the Full Council and all Response Board documents are now published on the Council's website.

3.9 To ensure and track progress effectively, a set of clear performance measures are being applied across each of the seven themes of the Response Plan. These measures include quantitative indicators (such as receiving training, and compliance checks) and qualitative assessments (such as feedback from youth forums, parents and staff surveys, and the CIW and Estyn inspection). Regular monitoring against these measures will allow the Response Board to identify areas of success and those that need additional focus, ensuring that improvements are sustained and aligned with safeguarding priorities.

4. Recommendations of the Care and Education and Economy Scrutiny Committees, the Governance and Audit Committee and the Full Council

4.1 Several valuable recommendations were made by the Committees and the Council and have been fully considered by the Cabinet (Appendix 3).

4.2 All comments have been considered leading to the modification of the Response Plan prior to its submission today, or adding to the Response Plan's work programme including:

- Note that the door would be open if victims wished to receive a support package in the future
- Reference to the Estyn inspection in 2023 removed
- Added the 'well-being' of children and young people to the description of work stream 7 - Supporting and Stabilising Ysgol Friars.
- Part 2.4 of the Response Plan has been added to in order to provide more context around an investigation into the events of 2019.
- Addressed the voice of the family as well as the voice of the child in safeguarding arrangements as part of work stream 1
- Added an external female contact name to the poster to share information about concerns and ensure that contact details are available on school websites and the Council website, and ensure that safeguarding referral forms are distributed more widely than just to headteachers and chairs of Governors.
- Several changes relating to training, empowerment and behaviour change on topics such as grooming and the use of reasonable force
- Introduce arrangements to measure that training does change behaviour and decisions in practice
- An easy-to-read version of the Response Plan and a simple document to highlight what has changed have now been developed (Appendix 2).
- Arrangements to measure how the voice of the child and victims' experience influence decisions and outcomes as part of Work Stream 1.

- Appropriate attention to children facing challenges and avoid unconscious bias
- Consider the suitability of adults to work with children and vulnerable adults as part of safeguarding arrangements
- An audit of part 5 allegations has already been extended to a five-year period
- Review arrangements to check safeguarding records
- Ensure transparency by releasing as much information as possible

5. Implementation and governance arrangements

- 5.1 The Response Board challenges and monitors the delivery of the Response Plan.
- 5.2 A Response Board was established to scrutinise, challenge and advise on the delivery of the Plan's content, independently chaired by Professor Sally Holland. Board Membership includes a number of external organisations as observers to challenge and monitor the progress of the Response Plan, including Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales, Welsh Government, Children's Commissioner and the Regional Safeguarding Board. In addition, there is representation from Ysgol Friars (Headteacher and Chair of Governors), the Gwynedd Secondary sector, Council Officers, along with Cabinet Members from the relevant areas to set the strategic political direction of the areas of work under their responsibility whilst also scrutinising and supporting the work of officers.
- 5.3 The progress report of the Chair of the Response Board is presented to Cabinet on a quarterly basis, including to this meeting.

6. Resources to implement the Plan

- 6.1 A year ago, when the original Response Plan was adopted, it was highlighted that the task of responding to this whole situation was being shouldered by a small number of officers and it is fair to say that this has resulted in a significant burden whilst trying to continue to carry out their day to day work as well.
- 6.2 Whilst additional resources have been directed to the implementation of the Response Plan, it should be noted that much of the work remains the responsibility of specific officers and has meant that risks elsewhere continue as some of the Council's key matters have to be given a lower priority.
- 6.3 We are very fortunate to have received a temporary grant from Welsh Government to fund several of the interventions that have been needed in the school itself, and we are placing an additional £600k in our budget for next year to implement several of the Our Bravery Brought Justice recommendations.
- 6.4 The requirements to respond to Our Bravery Brought Justice continue to increase and we will regularly review the resource situation to ensure sufficient capacity for this priority.

7. Other considerations

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

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 involves improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The act places a well-being duty on public bodies which is aimed at delivering the seven well-being goals, namely a prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal Wales with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language which is globally responsible. The plan has been prepared within the principles of the Act and the 5 ways of working.

7.2 In the new Response Plan, we have considered the long-term by establishing a multi-year work programme that strengthens the seven streams (e.g. the voice of the child, training and policies, school governance, and crisis planning and response) and ensures ongoing review, so that people's needs in the years to come – such as ongoing support for victims, trauma-informed services, 'easy to understand' versions for children, and robust safeguarding infrastructure that adapts as risks change – are met sustainably.

Consultation

7.3 Extensive consultation was carried out in the development of the Response Plan in order to receive input from several directions including

- Chair of the child practice review
- Children's Commissioner
- Estyn
- Care Inspectorate Wales
- RASASC
- Welsh Government
- Cabinet Members
- Cyngor Gwynedd Officers

7.4 A wide range of agencies are members or independent observers from national statutory organisations on the Response Board which is valuable in terms of receiving input and expertise from different sectors.

7.5 Representatives of service users have been consulted such as representatives of the schools sector in Gwynedd.

7.6 In addition, at the request of the Leader at the Cabinet meeting on 11 November 2025, the Independent Chair of the Response Board is currently considering the most appropriate approach to include the voice of victims in the work.

Collaboration

7.7 Collaboration is vital to the success of this Plan and through the Response Board we work collaboratively with all the agencies involved in it. The Board meets regularly every other month and there is regular contact between us. Collaboration with all these agencies, as well as others such as the Police, Health Service and other Local Authorities will be key to the success of our Response Plan.

7.8 The Response Plan was developed in the first instance in order to do everything within our power so that no one suffers in the same way again. The Plan includes proactive measures such as ongoing monitoring, regular reviews, staff training, and collaboration with partners to identify risks early, to prevent problems from arising or worsening in the future.

7.9 A large number of the recommendations of the 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' report are regional and national, or for all Local Authorities. We have already stated our willingness to take action before any change at a regional or national level and our desire to be working with other bodies such as the Welsh Government to pilot a new plan or guidance if desired.

Impact on Equality, Welsh Language and Socio-Economic Duty

7.10 In accordance with the legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 ("The Act") (including Welsh public sector duties) when making decisions, the Council must give due attention to the need (1) to eliminate unlawful discrimination (2) promote equality of opportunity and (3) encourage good relations based on the protected characteristics as well as addressing socio-economic impacts. The Plan will be delivered while addressing our duties under the Act and our responsibilities under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. We are satisfied that it is compatible with our duties.

7.11 An Equality Impact Assessment, Welsh Language Impact Assessment and Socio-economic Duty Assessment have been prepared (Appendix 4). The Equality Impact Assessment concludes that the Response Plan has a significant positive impact (no negative impacts identified). This is reflected in the plan through concrete actions such as trauma-informed training, accessible and bilingual reporting pathways, a 'Voice of the Child' policy, strengthened governance, and ongoing monitoring by the Response Board and scrutiny forums.

8. Next Steps

8.1 The progress of the work streams within the Response Plan will continue to be monitored by the Response Board every other month until all the response plan actions are embedded or addressed within the Authority's performance challenge regime and the Board members are satisfied that evidence in relation to the impact measures listed demonstrates the effectiveness of these actions.

8.2 Cabinet will continue to receive a quarterly progress report from the Independent Chair of the Response Board, Professor Sally Holland

8.3 There is an agreement in place with the Care Scrutiny Committee, the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee, and the Governance and Audit Committee to scrutinise progress every 6 months.

9. Observations of the Statutory Officers

9.1 Chief Finance Officer

Many of the actions shown in the Response Plan will be delivered by services within their budgets. On the other hand, other steps will require additional resources, whether permanently or on a one-off basis. The additional permanent costs have been considered in the preparation of the 2026/27 budget that was presented to the Council on 5 March, and one-off bids are the subject of a separate item on the agenda for this meeting and includes consideration of a request for additional funding to cover one-time costs of Our Bravery Brought Justice. As I have previously reported to Cabinet and the full Council, I am satisfied that financial considerations will not be an obstacle to the delivery of the action plan.

9.2 Monitoring Officer

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1: Our Bravery Brought Justice: Response Plan Cyngor Gwynedd

Appendix 2: Our Bravery Brought Justice: Cyngor Gwynedd's Response Plan (easy-to-read version)

Appendix 3: Decisions of the Care Scrutiny Committee, Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee, the Governance and Audit Committee and the Full Council

Appendix 4: Equality Assessment