

# OUR BRAVERY BROUGHT JUSTICE

## Gwynedd Council's Response Plan

*Easy read version*

## 1. WHAT HAPPENED

- The former headteacher of Friars School was arrested in 2023 for serious crimes against children.
- He was found guilty in 2024 and sentenced to 17 years in prison.
- In July 2024, an independent Children's Practice Review (CPR) was set up to find out what went wrong and to learn lessons.
- The final report of the CPR, *[Our Bravery Brought Justice](#)* was published in November 2025.

## 2. WHAT THE COUNCIL SAYS

- The Council apologises clearly and openly to the victims.
- The Council agrees that failures have occurred and accepts responsibility.
- The Council's aim is to ensure that this never happens again

## 3. CHILD PRACTICE REVIEW

Following the court's decision, a Child Practice Review (CPR) was immediately established. This happens every time serious abuse or neglect has occurred to a child. The Council was full of support and pledged to act on all recommendations.

The review was led by Jan Pickles, a highly experienced child protection expert, supported by two independent reviewers. They gathered evidence by speaking to victims, survivors, school staff, professionals and members of the public.

14 agencies submitted detailed information to create a timeline of the events. The Inspectors spent 9 days at the school and over 140 people were consulted.

The Panel focused on the offender's behaviour, professional conduct, and how disclosure and governance issues are managed.

A number of local and regional agencies were involved, including North Wales Councils, the Police and the NHS.

During the process, all relevant evidence was collected and presented, the review Terms of Reference were reviewed regularly, and updates were provided to the Welsh Government. The review was published in November 2025.

The Council also met frequently with the Chair of the Panel to ensure that information was shared clearly and effectively.

## Publication of the report - *Our Bravery Brought Justice*

On the 4th November 2025, the Child Practice Review report *Our Bravery Brought Justice* was published, two years after the arrest of the offender and eighteen months after the start of the Review. The report was highly critical of several organisations, particularly the Council and Friars School. It was found that a large number of opportunities had been missed over the years, and there were serious questions about some decisions made. The report also highlighted the fact that important recommendations from the Clywch Review (2004) had not been implemented nationally.

On the day of the announcement, the Council shared a public statement. The Council accepted responsibility for several failures, and a full apology was expressed. The statement stressed:

- that the Council apologises in full sincerity,
- the Council accepts all the conclusions and recommendations of the report,
- they are determined to improve and are prepared to deal openly with the issue,
- remembering the victims and their courage in speaking out,
- acknowledging that the Head who committed the crimes abused trust and deceived many people,
- and that local and national change is needed to strengthen child protection.

## 4. THE RESPONSE PLAN

After the report was published, an action plan was established, this Response Plan which explains what we will do in order to respond to the recommendations of the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report.

The Council also noted that Professor Sally Holland, former Children's Commissioner for Wales, chairs the Council's Response Board, and that improvement work is already underway. Nevertheless, there is a lot of further work to be done.

The purpose of the Response Board is to look, challenge and drive all the work streams arising from the reviews and investigations following the crimes of the former Headteacher of Friars School.

The Board is an independent one made up of professionals from other organisations such as Estyn, the Welsh Government, the Children's Commissioner and Care Inspectorate Wales, so it is able to look at the work objectively and offer independent external challenge. The Board looks at the impact of the changes that Gwynedd Council is introducing, and reports on what is working and what has changed. More

information about the Board's membership and work can be found at the bottom of this page.

This is important to give children, young people and their families confidence that steps are being taken to learn lessons from this case.

Following the publication of the report, the current action plan was reviewed to ensure that it fully responded to the recommendations. This was planned from the beginning.

## 5. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESPONSE PLAN

Seven main objectives have been identified for this Plan and we commit that we will:

1. **Acknowledge** openly and publicly that such crimes should never have happened and that no child should tolerate such experiences.
2. **Sincerely apologise** to the victims and survivors and their families for what they have had to endure.
3. **Support** the victims and survivors, the school and the wider community to try and restore their situation.
4. **Establish** all the facts of the case, the history surrounding the situation and the wider context.
5. **Learn** all the lessons that are identified as part of the conclusions and recommendations of all investigations.
6. **Improve** by responding fully and quickly to all conclusions and recommendations with the aim of giving the public confidence that we are doing everything possible to ensure that no one suffers in the same way ever again.
7. **Be accountable** by being open and transparent about our improvement progress and committing to measuring the impact of the changes we implement.

## 6. HOW THE COUNCIL WILL DO THIS

Since the original plan was announced in December 2024, many of the first tasks have already been completed. Following the publication of *Our Bravery Brought Justice*, the workstreams were reviewed and rearranged to ensure they reflected the report's recommendations. The work was organised according to clear themes.

Later in the Plan, we will explain how our progress will be monitored. We clearly recognise that we have a long and challenging journey ahead of us before we can say that we have implemented everything fully and appropriately.

## Theme 1: Voice of the Child and Supporting Victims



**We want to ensure that Cyngor Gwynedd is:**

- **Listening to children and young people, believes them and takes them seriously.**
- **Doing everything possible to support victims and survivors.**
- **Including children and young people when making decisions.**

### **What does the *our bravery brought justice report* say?**

- **Professionals had not listened to children's concerns.**
- **When safeguarding concerns were raised, workers had not spoken to the child to listen to their story at all times.**
- **More needs to be done to support victims who have experienced trauma.**

### **What has already been done to improve things?**

- **A personal apology has been offered to the girls who were abused by the former Headteacher.**
- **Cyngor Gwynedd is working with experts from the North Wales Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASAC) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) to ensure that personal support is available to those who have suffered. This includes emotional support, access to therapeutic services and practical support. Not all victims have taken up the offer, but the support will continue to be available for them whenever they require it.**
- **The Council has changed the arrangements when a safeguarding concern is reported about a child and a professional adult (known as 'Part 5 referrals'). Cyngor Gwynedd's Children Department now ensures that the child is given an opportunity to speak with social workers on every occasion.**
- **Cyngor Gwynedd is employing a worker to support the Youth Forum to ensure that young people can voice their opinion and contribute to the Council's decisions.**

- **The Council has reminded every School of the need to display posters with the NSPCC's contact details in prominent places in their schools to ensure that children and young people know how to get support if they need it.**

### **What will happen between January 2026 and July 2026?**

#### **Cyngor Gwynedd will ....**

- **Develop the Child's Voice Charter that will explain how Cyngor Gwynedd listens to children and young people.**
- **Hold a Child's Rights workshop for the Youth Forum and Members of the Programme Board (February 2026).**
- **Look at how children and young people have their say across the Council and look at what would need to be changed to ensure that Gwynedd is a "child-friendly" council.**

### **What will Cyngor Gwynedd have achieved by February 2027?**

- **All Cyngor Gwynedd staff will have an opportunity to receive training to ensure that they understand how difficult experiences can impact children. The aim is to make Cyngor Gwynedd a place that thinks about feelings and is "trauma-informed".**
- **Cyngor Gwynedd will ensure that every school pupil can recognise the signs of grooming and know how to confidently report it.**
- **An arrangement will be in place to ensure that the Youth Forum is an important part of the decision-making process, and that the Forum members can give their opinion on the Council's work.**

### **Measuring impact**

- **Feedback from the Victims Support Group about the experience and quality of the support offered by Cyngor Gwynedd.**
- **Feedback from the Gwynedd Youth Forum, considering young people's confidence and experience of the safeguarding procedure in schools.**
- **The percentage of Council staff who have completed the Trauma-Informed Training.**

- The Child's Voice/Participation Policy are reviewed and updated regularly, with input from children and young people across Gwynedd.



## Theme 2: Managing Allegations and Concerns about Adults Working with Children

### We want to:

- Protect children by ensuring that any safeguarding concerns are taken seriously and are addressed promptly.
- Ensure that Cyngor Gwynedd, the Police and the Health Board work together when responding to concerns about adults working with children.

### What does the *our bravery brought justice* report say?

- The referral form system was not flexible, easy to find or easy to use.
- Professionals didn't report their concerns.
- Information wasn't shared with professionals in the right ways, at the right time.
- Not every professional understood the field enough or understood what had to be done to respond to safeguarding concerns.
- Previous safeguarding information was not always considered when making decisions.
- Councils disagreed on what should happen when concerns about safeguarding matters arose. The right people were not present at meetings to discuss safeguarding, and decisions were not always shared.

### What has already been done to improve things?

- The sheet that is being used to record safeguarding meetings and discussions ('Strategy Part 5') has changed. By now, any previous or historical safeguarding information about the child is recorded and shared.

- The referral form for allegations of abuse is now available more prominently on the Council's website on the [Child abuse page](#).
- The Council has ensured that every school in the county has received a copy of the referral form for allegations of abuse.
- The Council has adapted arrangements to ensure that responsibility for safeguarding decisions does not fall on one worker only. Every referral is read by the Referrals Team, and then a conversation is held with the Safeguarding Officers.
- Create a Safeguarding and Well-being Team to visit and support schools.

### **What will happen between January 2026 and July 2026?**

#### **Cyngor Gwynedd will:**

- Ensure that the Human Resources Service has a list of Cyngor Gwynedd staff who have been subject to safeguarding concerns (through the procedure known as 'Part 5').
- Work with North Wales Police to look at ways of strengthening the collaboration.
- Recruit an additional Designated Officer for Safeguarding (or *DOS*) to help with the work of receiving concerns about child abuse.
- Introduce stronger collaboration arrangements between the employees in Cyngor Gwynedd's Children's Department and Education Department.

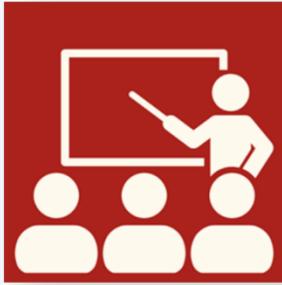
### **What will Cyngor Gwynedd have achieved by February 2027?**

- There will be a new procedure to check that the Children and Supporting Families Department's work is high-quality. As part of the new arrangement, the Council will be expected to review which officers attend safeguarding discussions (strategy "Part 5") and the quality of the records kept when making decisions about safeguarding.
- Make it easier to report a concern by creating a digital referral form through the Council's website, so that a PDF form does not have to be downloaded and sent via e-mail. A wider plan is also underway to introduce a national referral form for all Welsh councils.

## **Measuring impact**

- **A regular review by the Regional Safeguarding Board of the child safeguarding referrals ("Part 5") that are being made.**
- **Collect, analyse and report on evidence of staff confidence relating to safeguarding decisions ("Part 5").**

### Theme 3: Training and Policies



#### We want to make sure:

- That Cyngor Gwynedd staff are trained to be more suspicious, that is to think the 'worst possible' and understand that 'it could happen here'.
- That we develop and strengthen policies to ensure that there is clear guidance for Cyngor Gwynedd employees

#### What does the *our bravery brought justice report say?*

- The Designated Person for Safeguarding in the school where the former Headteacher offended had not received suitable safeguarding training. (The Designated Person for Safeguarding is the person that has been appointed to be responsible for safeguarding matters in a school).
- The school's staff and Governors had not received suitable safeguarding training.
- The School staff or Cyngor Gwynedd staff did not know when and how to raise a concern (a procedure known as "Whistleblowing").

#### What has already been done to improve things?

- Cyngor Gwynedd has included information about grooming in the training pack for every school at the start of the school year (September 2025).
- A Schools Safeguarding and Well-being Team has been newly established. The Team provides information and support to the Designated Person for Safeguarding in every school in Gwynedd.
- A worker has been appointed to raise awareness of the safeguarding field across the Council and inform staff of the safeguarding training available.
- Every department within Cyngor Gwynedd checks how many staff members have attended the Safeguarding training, and the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence training.
- Since January 2025, every school in Gwynedd is visited by the Schools Safeguarding and Well-being Team once a year. The Team will look at safeguarding within the school, and ensure that posters and information are available, and that staff know how to deal with concerns.

## **What will happen between January 2026 and July 2026?**

### **Cyngor Gwynedd will:**

- **Arrange additional training for staff working with children to help them recognise changes in a child's behaviour that could be a sign of an inappropriate relationship or abuse.**
- **Adopt a policy to raise concerns ("Whistleblowing" Policy) and do more work to raise staff awareness across the Council. A similar policy will also be introduced to Gwynedd Councillors.**
- **Introduce training on keeping safeguarding records.**
- **Members of the Council's Scrutiny Committees (a group of councillors who check that the Council is doing things right) will finish looking into safeguarding arrangements in schools.**

## **What will Cyngor Gwynedd have achieved by February 2027?**

### **Cyngor Gwynedd will:**

- **Ensure that every new member of staff receives safeguarding training timely at the start of their post.**
- **Receive the outcome of the investigation by members of the Scrutiny Committees and draw a plan to implement any recommendations.**

## **Measuring impact**

- **That every staff member who requires a DBS Certificate for their post has a current DBS Certificate. (A DBS Certificate is the inspection to check whether a person is safe to work with children or vulnerable people).**
- **Report on the number of staff who have completed the Safeguarding training and the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence training.**
- **That every school receives a visit from the Schools Safeguarding and Well-being Team, and the number of schools following the Council's safeguarding policies.**



#### Theme 4: Governance in schools

##### We want to make sure that:

- Gwynedd school governors understand their role and responsibilities to keep children safe. (Governors are a group of people who volunteer to manage a school.)
- Systems are in place to measure the well-being of pupils, staff and schools' wider culture.

##### What does the *our bravery brought justice* report say?

- The former Headteacher had too much control in the School.
- The school's governors did not feel confident to challenge the Headteacher. They said that they were not allowed to disagree with him, as this could lead to them being forced to leave the governing body.
- The school operated safeguarding policies that had been written by the Headteacher, not the county Policy.
- Governors didn't have enough safeguarding training.

##### What has already been done to improve things?

- Safeguarding training is being completed by every school governor in Gwynedd. In addition to this, additional training is given to Chairs and Governors who are responsible for Safeguarding on every governing body.
- A new governor handbook has been created and shared with all Gwynedd governors.

##### What will happen between January 2026 and July 2026?

###### Cyngor Gwynedd will ....

- Prepare, develop and share a standing agenda for the governing bodies of Gwynedd schools. The programme will focus on the matters of safeguarding well-being and provide them with information to understand how their school is doing.
- Employ an additional officer to support school governors.

##### What will Cyngor Gwynedd have achieved by February 2027?

- Cyngor Gwynedd will have implemented every relevant recommendation for county councils after the Welsh Government's review of school governance in Wales.

##### Measuring impact

- Estyn school inspections (A team of people who visit schools to see how well they are doing) show that every school is following the safeguarding procedure.

- **Measuring governors' confidence levels after receiving safeguarding training.**



### **Theme 5: Restrictive Practices**

#### **We want to ensure:**

- **That restrictive practices are only used to keep a child safe or to prevent serious harm. It should never be used to punish, control or humiliate a child.**
- **That school staff receive training and clear rules regarding when and how to use reasonable force.**
- **If force is used, the child must receive help and support if they have been hurt physically or mentally.**

#### **What does the *our bravery brought justice say?***

- Unlawful levels of force were being used in the school in question during the former Headteacher's period.
- The former Headteacher misled school staff to think that it was acceptable to use such force.
- The former Headteacher encouraged school staff to film physical restraint on children.
- When physical restraint was used on a child, there were no arrangements in place to ensure that the child had not been hurt and to offer trauma support.
- The parents of children who had been physically restrained did not feel that their complaints were being understood or respected.

#### **What has already been done to improve things?**

- When the Education Safeguarding and Well-being Team visits schools, they always look at the school's Restrictive Practices Policy.
- Restrictive Practices training is given to staff who require it.

#### **What will happen between January 2026 and July 2026?**

##### **Cyngor Gwynedd will ....**

- **Review the county's Restrictive Practices Policy and ensure that every school fully adopts this policy.**
- **Align the training being used by the Council's Children and Education Services in the field of restrictive practices to ensure that the same methods are being used.**



### Measuring impact

- That every Gwynedd school complies with the county's Restrictive Practices Policy.
- When there are incidents of restrictive practices in a School, the Council will retain evidence that professional discussions have been held.

### Theme 6: Crisis planning

#### We want to ensure:

- That there are suitable arrangements to respond to emergencies and that everyone knows what to do when a safeguarding emergency arises.

#### What does the *our bravery brought justice* report say?

- The school, where the former Headteacher abused pupils, had no emergency plan.
- It was unclear what needed to be done as the emergency related to the Headteacher.
- The police were not called straight away when one of the school's pupils was at risk.
- The former Headteacher was not blocked from coming to school when staff found out about the crime.

#### What has already been done to improve things?

- A team within Cyngor Gwynedd has had a meeting to review the emergency plan.
- Conversations with key staff members to understand what went wrong on the day of the arrest and how to improve future arrangements.
- Review of existing information sharing arrangements for safeguarding and crisis planning to see whether they need to be strengthened.

#### What will happen between January 2026 and July 2026?

##### Cyngor Gwynedd will ....

- Work with the Police to ensure that there are robust arrangements in place should an emergency safeguarding situation arise in the future.
- Prepare a training resource on how to respond to safeguarding emergencies.



### What will Cyngor Gwynedd achieve in a year?

- Staff will receive training on how to deal with safeguarding emergencies.
- The Council will work with different services and other local authorities through the Regional Emergency Planning Board.

### Measuring impact

- The percentage of Council staff who have attended emergency planning training
- Percentage of Gwynedd schools who have adopted the Emergency Management Policy
- Number of satisfactory inspections of emergency plans on Council sites

### Theme 7: Support and Stabilising Ysgol Friars

#### We want to:

- Support and Stabilising Ysgol Friars.

### What does the *our bravery brought justice* report say?

Although there is no specific recommendation for Ysgol Friars only in the Report, it clearly shows that the former Headteacher who had offended:

- controlled every aspect of the school.
- challenged anyone who raised a concern about him.
- created an atmosphere of fear and mistrust, including bullying pupils, parents and staff.

### What has already been done to improve things?

- A new Headteacher has been appointed to lead the School.
- Since September 2023, Cyngor Gwynedd's Education Department has helped the school by providing additional staff and support for the new leadership to review the policies.
- The school's staff and pupils receive support to look after their well-being.

- The school's governing body has changed. Four new members have been appointed to represent the Council, and a new clerk is helping to arrange and keep order during the meetings.

### What will Cyngor Gwynedd do between January 2026 and July 2026?

Cyngor Gwynedd will ....

- Compare the school's implementation arrangements with the arrangements of other schools in the county to consider whether there is a need to make any changes.

### What will Cyngor Gwynedd have achieved in a year?

- The School will have had a further opportunity to stabilise.

### Measuring impact

- Feedback from the School Council on safety and well-being at the school has been gathered and considered.

## 7. FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

We are carefully considering what further investigations are appropriate, thinking about the reviews that have already taken place and the work that continues locally, regionally and nationally.

Through this Response Plan, we promise to do everything possible to strengthen safeguarding, ensure accountability and restore public confidence.

Although the [our bravery brought justice](#) report has given us a lot of information, we have recognised that it is necessary to look at what further investigations or reviews are needed to:

- acknowledge what has happened,
- apologise,
- support people,
- establish the facts,
- learn lessons,
- improve,
- and ensure accountability.

We are asking for opinions and advice from external organisations and experts to help us decide which investigations would support us the most. After that, it will be necessary to decide what work to commission and create a clear remit for them.

When making decisions, we will need to check:

- do we have the powers to carry out a specific investigation,

- are we a suitable body to commission the work,
- or would it be more transparent to call on another body to consider the matter.

We have already supported the call for a Public Inquiry, and this may be the best place to deal with some aspects that are beyond the Council's powers.

The main purpose of these investigations is to learn lessons and ensure continuous improvement.

We will receive the conclusions of the investigations when they are ready, and then we will need to act on the findings and recommendations. What is expected of us will depend on those conclusions.

We have been clear from the start: we will accept and act on every recommendation from every investigation, fully and immediately. It is appropriate for us to reaffirm that here.

## **8. OWNERSHIP AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS OF THE PLAN**

- The Response Plan has been commissioned by the Council's Cabinet.
- The plan was adopted on 21 January 2025.
- Thereafter, a Response Board was set up to coordinate the work and ensure timely progress.
- Several external bodies have been invited to join, and Professor Sally Holland is an independent Chair.

The Board includes observers from Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales, the Welsh Government, the North Wales Safeguarding Board and the Children's Commissioner.

The Chairman reports to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

Several committees within the Council are also scrutinising the progress:

- Governance and Audit Committee
- Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
- Care Scrutiny Committee

The Plan must be updated regularly as it is a live plan. It is likely to change as we move from review and learning to a period of recovery.

Measuring progress is difficult due to the sensitive nature of the issues, but:

- there are over 200 tasks in the detailed work plan, and

- agreed impact measures, including the views of children, parents and staff on safeguarding in schools.

We recognise that this is a long journey, and we are committed to completing it.

## 9. COMMUNICATION PLAN

Prior to the publication of *Our Bravery Brought Justice* in November 2025, there were limits on what the Council could share, so as not to impair the review. It is now possible to share more information about the improvement of safeguarding arrangements.

However, caution must be exercised with:

- individual cases of children or adults,
- and Human Resource issues.

The original Communications Plan has already been completed. We are now developing a new Communications Plan, based on the revised work streams in this Response Plan.

In addition, a webpage has been set up so that any relevant statements and information are kept in one place - [www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/crime\\_response](http://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/crime_response).