

# **STRATEGIC SAFEGUARDING PANEL REPORT**

**2025/26**

# A SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR 2025/26



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. It has been an incredibly disturbing and challenging period for Cyngor Gwynedd in the safeguarding field, with the need to improve and strengthen safeguarding systems being central to the work this year and it will remain so for the year to come.
- 1.2. This report presents an overview of the work of the Safeguarding Strategic Panel over the period from April 2025 to March 2026. The report highlights the work achieved by the Council, as well as the work done in partnership with others, seeking to provide a fair, balanced and transparent picture of the progress and challenges.
- 1.3. The aim of the Strategic Safeguarding Panel is to ensure that appropriate arrangements and procedures are in place at a corporate level across the Council to ensure the safety of children, young people and adults. Since 2017/18 the Panel is also responsible for maintaining an overview of wider safeguarding issues across Gwynedd, such as Community Safety.
- 1.4. The Panel in turn is accountable to the Statutory Director of Social Services, who has the final accountability for safeguarding issues.
- 1.5. The term of the Chair of the Panel is two years. Up to June 2025, Councillor Menna Trenholme, Cabinet Member for Children and Family Support, was the Chair. At the meeting held on 25 June 2025, Councillor Dewi Jones was elected as Chair for the 2025-2027 period.
- 1.6. A Safeguarding Operational Group supports the Strategic Panel to implement its priorities and to deal with practical issues in its remit. This is an internal group of officers, with the Designated Safeguarding Person of each department serving on it, to ensure whole-Council ownership of safeguarding issues.
- 1.7. During the year, the terms of reference of the Safeguarding Strategic Panel and Safeguarding Operational Group were reviewed, making minor changes to ensure that they were current and fit for purpose.

## **2. REVIEWING THE SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

- 2.1. A review of the Council's Safeguarding Policy is carried out on a two-year cycle. This policy notes how the Council intends to achieve its statutory responsibilities to safeguard children and adults who are at risk, in accordance with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

- 2.2. Between January and March 2026, a comprehensive review of the Policy was carried out. A sub-group was established to lead the review, including the Director of Social Services, Safeguarding Children and Adults Managers, Learning and Development Manager, Head of Adults Department, Community Safety Officer, and Senior Executive Officer.
- 2.3. Several changes were made to the Safeguarding Policy following the review, including strengthening the clarity and usefulness of the document. More emphasis was placed on explaining the pathway for raising concerns, highlighting it clearly at the beginning of the document. More practical procedures were developed for reporting and recording concerns, including a detailed, new section, noting the information that should be recorded when seeing or hearing about a safeguarding matter.
- 2.4. The accountability and lead role of senior officers was strengthened, and the roles and responsibilities of individuals and different groups of staff were also made clearer.
- 2.5. The training requirements were explained more explicitly, emphasising the mandatory and regular (every three years) training expectations for staff and elected members, as well as strengthening the compliance monitoring arrangements.
- 2.6. Further steps were taken to strengthen accountability across the Council in the safeguarding field. The Policy now includes the following requirements:
- Including data (%) on the number who have completed safeguarding training and domestic violence training as a part of the Performance Challenge process in each department.
  - Establishing safeguarding as a permanent item on the agenda of the Corporate Management Team.
  - Asking every department to include safeguarding as a standing item on the agendas of our departmental management team.
  - Continuing with the procedure of submitting the Annual Report to the Care Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet and the full Council.
- 2.7. Input was received from the members of the Safeguarding Strategic Panel and the broader Safeguarding Operational Group, which contributed to improving the document further. The amended policy will be submitted before the Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet before it was adopted formally. It will also be submitted for information to the Full Council.

### **3. OUR BRAVERY BROUGHT JUSTICE REPORT**

- 3.1. Following the publication of the North Wales Regional Safeguarding Board's report, *Our Bravery Brought Justice*, in October 2025, Cyngor Gwynedd drew up a comprehensive response to address the recommendations, as well as broader matters noted in

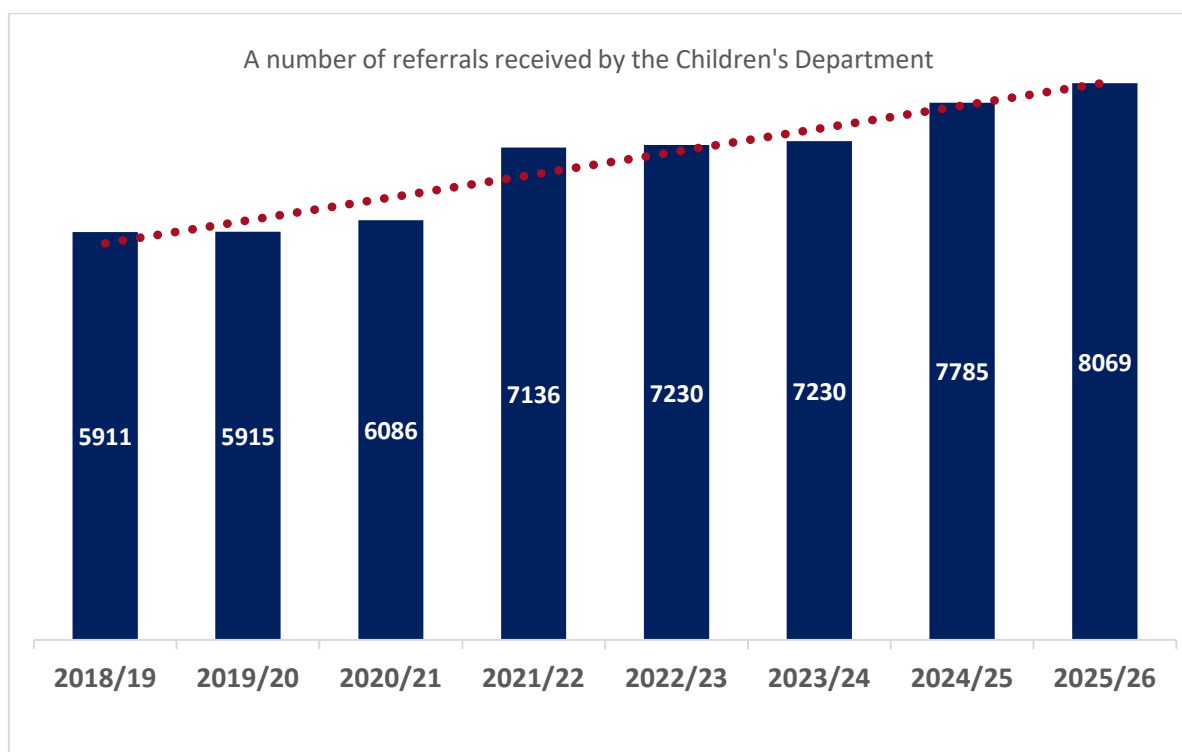
inspections and associated investigations. This was a challenging and damning report, and the Council acknowledged that there were important lessons to learn.

- 3.2. A Response Board was established to supervise the work, chaired by Professor Sally Holland, the previous Children's Commissioner for Wales. The aim of the Board is to ensure firm progress and give assurances to the Council, elected members and stakeholders that definitive steps are being taken to strengthen safeguarding arrangements and to improve the experiences of children and vulnerable adults in Gwynedd.
- 3.3. Since then, the board has met regularly and have benefited from the input and guidance from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Estyn and Welsh Government. Also considered was the learning from the CIW and Estyn joint-inspection in November 2025. Sally Holland reports every quarter to the Council Cabinet, whilst the Welsh Government's Ministerial Assurance Group also monitors progress against the recommendation.
- 3.4. By March 2026, positive progress was achieved on several of the steps noted. However, work is still to be done, and the Council remains committed to act on the learning and ensure continuous improvements.
- 3.5. The Safeguarding Strategic Panel plays a key role in terms of scrutinising progress, including monitoring the levels of safeguarding training across the Council. He will have a stronger role in the future in terms of providing a strategic overview of the progress against the recommendations.

## **4. PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS IN THE SAFEGUARDING FIELD**

### **4.1. Safeguarding Children**

- 4.1.1. **8,069** referrals to children's services were received in 2025/26. This is an increase of **3.7%** in the number of referrals compared with 7785 last year.



4.1.2. Once again, the pressure on the service has been substantial, with the workforce incredibly busy supporting children and families across the county. It is noted that the nature of the cases seen now is much more intensive and complex than in the past. During 2025-2026, referrals for families with several children, high levels of neglect, substance misuse, domestic abuse and new families, were brought to our attention, adding to the operational challenges.

4.1.3. An increase is also seen in the number on the Child Protection Register this year. On 31 March 2025, the number of children on the register was **106**, and this year, the number is **126**. Emotional abuse continued to be the main reason for including children on the register and it can be seen that children tend to stay on the register for longer periods by now. Similar patterns were seen in several Local Authorities, and it is intended to consider alternative methods of supporting children over the year to come.

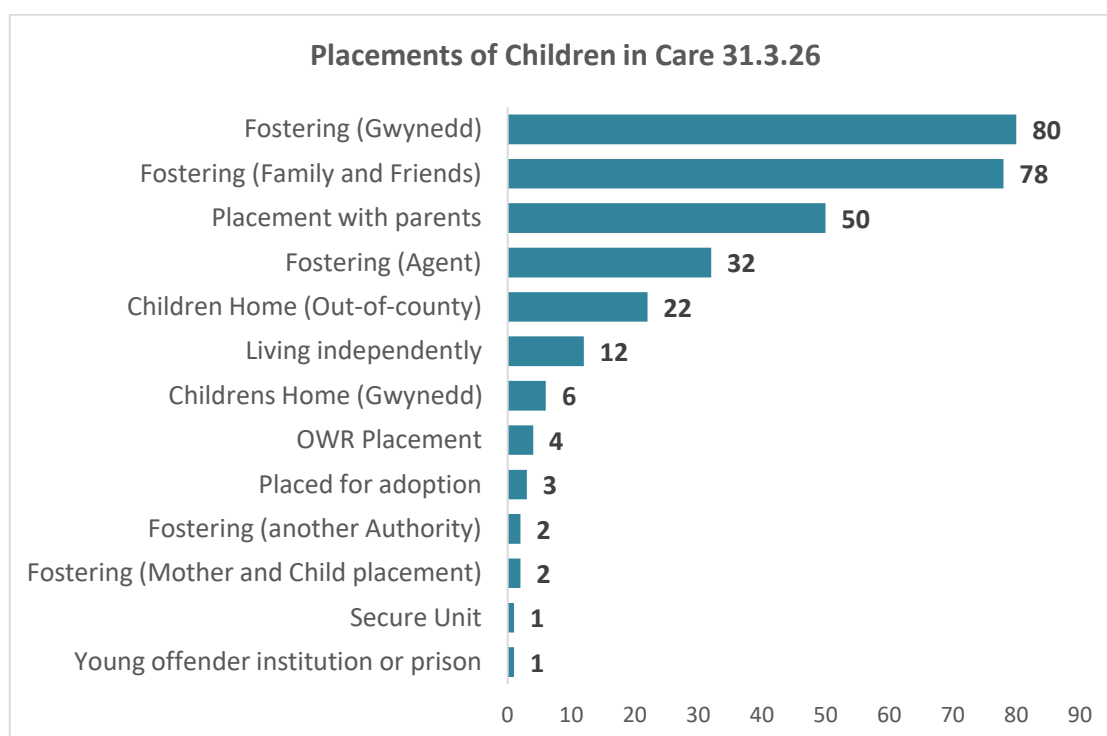
4.1.4. **84% (↑2%)** child protection reviews were held within the statutory timetable during the year. The percentage of risk assessments submitted to Case Conferences which were considered as exhibiting quality in decision making remained high at **100%**.

4.1.5. The Part 5 work of the Wales safeguarding procedures has increased again this year. Part 5 relates to safeguarding concerns about practitioners and those in posts of trust, and these procedures identify arrangements for responding to safeguarding concerns about those whose work, whether employed or voluntary, brings them

into contact with children or adults at risk. The intention is to increase capacity by creating additional posts within the Safeguarding Unit early in 2026/27.

4.1.6. Gwynedd Children’s Services now take a proactive approach to ensuring that the voice of the child is heard when responding to concerns relating to individuals working with children and young people. Some challenges remain as a result of parental refusal, meaning that individual assessments are required to determine the appropriate course of action.

4.1.7. At the end of March, there were **293 (↑12)** looked after children. Of the total number of looked after children, **66%** are in foster placements, **28 (10%)** are in residential placements and **50 (17%)** are placed with their parents. There were **3** children in adoptive placements at the end of the year, with **12** young persons living independently with support.



4.1.8. During 2025/26, unregistered placements arrangements (OWR) were used for **4** young people in care. However, the situation nationally is much more serious by now, with the majority, if not all authorities having to ensure that such an arrangement is available due to the lack of registered placements across the United Kingdom.

4.1.9. When a looked after child needs to be placed, the wish is to keep them close to their family and home area. We therefore focus on finding ways of accommodating and providing care to children and young people closer to home, so that they can continue to be part of the community and maintain their support networks.

Developing the residential provision through the Small Group Homes Scheme was a priority in the Council Plan 2023-28.

- 4.1.10. Two homes are already operational in Morfa Bychan and Deiniolen, with the children settling well into the placements. Renovation work on the home in Edern is now nearing completion. A third property was purchased in Cricieth last year, with the registration process with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) ongoing. Work also commenced during the year on the property, with the hope that it will be completed early in 2026/27.
- 4.1.11. The high cost of out-of-county specialist placements places substantial pressure on the budget, with some costs arising unexpectedly and difficult to anticipate in advance. Although some placements of this type were unavoidable, this pressure has led the Council to speed-up the work of developing small group homes to strengthen the local provision and reduce the dependency on a costly out-of-county provision. This also coincides with the children's non-profit agenda of the Welsh Government, which is seeking to ensure that children's care and accommodation is provided based on the needs of children, instead of profits. A specific role was created to support and speed-up the programme in 2026/27.

#### 4.2. Safeguarding Adults

- 4.2.1. **792** Adults reports were received in 2025/26, and this was an increase from the **750** reports received in 2024/25. On average, **94.4% (↑2.3%)** of the initial s.126 enquiries safeguarding referrals were completed within the statutory 7-day period.
- 4.2.2. From the reports of Adults at Risk received, the risk was managed in **100%** of the cases.
- 4.2.3. Although the department appointed an additional part-time Safeguarding Officer, the capacity remains challenging due to long-term sickness within the team. As a result, the additional workload has fallen on the leaders of the Community Resources Teams and the Social Work Teams to complete the safeguarding work. In order to manage the risk, a temporary post has now been advertised; however, recruitment has been challenging, meaning that the post has had to be readvertised.
- 4.2.4. The officers carry out regular monitoring and respond promptly to any concerns, ensuring that safe and high-quality care is commissioned. The data shows that regular visits are held in residential homes. A pre-monitoring form was submitted, which assisted officers to prepare more effectively for visits and to focus on potential risk areas.

- 4.2.5. The team also meets every fortnight with the Medications Team and in-house managers to discuss medication errors and preparing appropriate support. This work makes a direct contribution to the safety of residents within the provision.
- 4.2.6. One provider continues under the Escalating Concerns system, and an embargo on new admissions has been in place since October 2025. This embargo affects the ability of services to place individuals in that area, and ongoing efforts are being made to collaborate with the provider in order to ensure that necessary improvements are implemented in full.
- 4.2.7. Concerns around the DoLS (Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Arrangements) continue. At the end of March 2026, **319** individuals were awaiting a DoLS assessment, compared with **356** at the end of March 2025. It is necessary to prioritise cases according to the level of risk, paying particular attention to individuals living in supported accommodation, where an application needs to be submitted to the Court of Protection for authorisation to the deprivation of liberty.
- 4.2.8. A successful bid was made during 2024/25 to employ two Best Interest Assessors on a permanent basis. Whilst two individuals were appointed to the roles, they did not have the qualifications or experience to start straight away. By now, they have both completed their training, have qualified and have started on their workload.

### 4.3. Education

- 4.3.1. During 2025-2026, the Schools Safeguarding and Well-being Team has conducted visits to 89 schools to review and ensure the quality of safeguarding arrangements, policies and procedures. Since January 2025, every school receives an annual visit to assess the quality of their safeguarding arrangements, ensuring consistency and compliance across the county.
- 4.3.2. Almost every school visited in 2025/26 complied with the appropriate safeguarding arrangements. From these visits, **4 schools** which have received a second visit to check aspects such as arrangements for recording attendance / absences and the content of Safeguarding posters.
- 4.3.3. An Annual Safeguarding Review is completed by every school annually. The latest findings demonstrate:
- **95% (↑1%)** of the "Main Safeguarding Persons" in schools had received specific safeguarding training during the past two years;
  - **85% (→remains the same)** of Designated Governors in Gwynedd's schools had also received the relevant training for their role in the last two years;

- **100% (↑ 3%)** of Gwynedd Schools had introduced Basic Safeguarding Training to all staff before the end of the Winter term;
- **100% (remains the same)** of Gwynedd Schools noted that they were confident that all school staff and volunteers know what to do if a child should disclose information on abuse.

4.3.4. Since April 2025, the Safeguarding and Well-being Service has conducted:

- **3** Safeguarding training sessions for designated Safeguarding Governors and Chairs
- **14** Designated Safeguarding Person training sessions with a total of **161 individual** in attendance.

In addition, the Designated Lead officer has held training sessions for supply teachers, early years staff, the education modernisation team and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) staff.

4.3.5. In February 2026, an additional member was appointed to increase the capacity of the Education Safeguarding and Well-being Team. The team has already developed new resources to strengthen the response of schools to safeguarding matters, including simple flow charts for the safeguarding concerns and allegations against staff, as well as quality posters to display in the schools and their websites. The materials include the details of the designated safeguarding persons and chairs, details of the Education Safeguarding and Well-being Team and supporting clarity and accessibility of information for staff, governors and parents.

4.3.6. Every school has adopted the 'Promoting measures and practices leading to the use and reduction of restrictive intervention' exemplar policy. This is checked during the annual safeguarding quality visits. An external evaluation has been commissioned to ensure compliance with the national guidance as well as further developing training arrangements and provisions. The recommendations of the evaluation leads to developing and strengthening training and support for schools, empowering them to respond safely in cases of restrictive intervention, listening to the voice of the pupil and being reflective of any such intervention.

4.3.7. At the end of March 2026, there was a total of **282 (↑7.63%)** children receiving their education at home, through parents' choice. This figure includes **158** children who are historically on the register and **124** new children since September 2025. Not all children on the register have registered at a school previously, with some moving into the County but not wishing to register at a school and others making the decision very soon to home educate from statutory school age.

4.3.8. The main reasons for a parent's choice to home educate is lifestyle/ideology, but anxiety and mental health problems are also increasing. We managed to maintain contact with most of these families, with a small number refusing any contact (in line with their rights).

#### 4.4. **Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)**

4.4.1. The Council is working in partnership to prevent violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, raising awareness, providing support to victims and improving the response of services.

4.4.2. Following an application prepared by officers from the Corporate Support Department, the Council received a 'White Ribbon' accreditation in May 2022. The White Ribbon is an organisation that works to raise awareness and encourage people, particularly men, to act against violence against women and domestic abuse.

4.4.3. We also worked with the Police to develop an initiative called 'Safe Zones' in Bangor and Caernarfon. The method is simple, but effective, focusing on improving natural surveillance, lights and using existing CCTV systems in key locations. A successful application was made to the Home Office for finance to support the project, and further work is progressing.

4.4.4. **11.1 in every 1000 of the population** in Gwynedd experience domestic violence annually (1.1%). This compares with 10.4 in Anglesey, 17.5 in Denbighshire and 16.5 in Conwy. During 2025/2026, the Council has commissioned Gorwel (through Grŵp Cynefin) and DASU (Domestic Abuse Support Unit) to provide support services for victims, including practical and emotional support, housing and refuge for individuals in crisis, safety advice, advocacy and guidance to steer the justice system.

4.4.5. The Council has also made a successful application through the Welsh Government's VAWDASV Capital Grant to purchase 100 security cameras to support the survivors of domestic abuse in the area. The cameras will be distributed through key partners, including the Police, DASU and Gorwel, in order to provide practical support for at-risk individuals.

4.4.6. In addition, following discussions with Women's Aid Wales about supporting deaf domestic abuse survivors, the Partnership arranged British Sign Language (BSL) training through Coleg Llandrillo for Siop Gwynedd staff and local domestic abuse organisations. Feedback will be collected from participants to assess the impact of the session and note any further needs, with the possibility of arranging additional sessions in line with the demand.

- 4.4.7. The Housing Department, through Housing Support Grant funding, has commissioned a comprehensive assessment of the Domestic Violence services in order to strengthen collaboration and facilitate joint commissioning for the future. It was agreed that the current services and arrangements had been too fragmented, and that it would be beneficial to establish a specific working group on domestic violence within the Council.
- 4.4.8. Currently, the Welsh Government is holding a national consultation to review the Domestic Violence services. It is noted that there is substantial differences in the funding models and provisions across regions. For example, in the north, funding is channelled through the Police and Crime Commissioner, whilst in other areas, it goes directly to Local Authorities. The consultation therefore is an opportunity for the Welsh Government to reconcile operational methods across the country.
- 4.4.9. The Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership is responsible for commissioning Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) in Gwynedd. One DHR review has been approved by the Home Office and is about to be published, and a first draft of another DHR review has been submitted before Christmas.
- 4.4.10. By now, this statutory duty is achieved through a Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR), which incorporates Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) within the same reviewing process now used for every safeguarding review in Wales. The first review to follow this procedure has begun, with the first meeting of the Panel held in March 2026.
- 4.4.11. By now, the Domestic Abuse (VAWDASV) e-module is statutory for all members of staff. It is vital that the workforce receives the training to ensure that the Council is doing everything within its ability to support individuals and to raise awareness. 'Ask and Act' training is also promoted to give staff confidence to help individuals experiencing violence, domestic abuse or sexual violence. On 31 March 2026, **74.7%** of Council staff (including Permanent, Casual and Fixed-term staff) have completed the training.
- 4.4.12. More 'Bystander Intervention' training sessions were held for Council staff. This was provided by Welsh Government, with the aim of helping individuals to deal with potentially harmful situations such as sexual harassment, giving them confidence to have discussions with friends and colleagues about these matters.
- 4.4.13. This year, a series of training sessions for staff were commissioned by Men at Work, an organisation established by Michael Conroy, in order to give professionals more confidence and practical resources to conduct constructive conversations with boys and young men on a range of sensitive and important topics. This included healthy

relationships, on-line influences, gender stereotyping, self-image, dangerous behaviours, impacts of pornography, and well-being. The training offers a practical, open and considerate method of supporting staff to engage effectively with young people on these matters, and very positive feedback was received from those attending.

#### 4.5. Crime

- 4.5.1. The Council is collaborating with the Police through the Community Partnership Board, and a regular overview of crime levels across Gwynedd is received. In 2025/26, **a small increase of 3.6%** was seen in the number of offences in Gwynedd, compared with the previous year.
- 4.5.2. The level of Sex Offences recorded to date in 2025/26 in Gwynedd saw **a reduction of 1.5%** compared with 2024/25. There can be significant variations in crimes reported from week to week, partly because of reporting on historical offences.
- 4.5.3. Acquisitive crimes include the categories of Residential Burglary, Business and Community Burglary, Theft, Vehicle Crime and Thefts and Handling. Residential Burglary and Business and Community Burglary have reduced this year, but an increase was seen in the number of Vehicle Crimes and Thefts and Handling.
- 4.5.4. Anti-social behaviour in Gwynedd has seen a reduction to date of **0.7%** in 2025/26, compared with the same period in 2024/25. Collaborative work is being done with Town and Community Councils, the Highways Department and the Police, for example by installing CCTV cameras where the biggest need arises.
- 4.5.5. The Serious Violence Duty came into force nationally in January 2023. The duty makes it a requirement for specified authorities to work together to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence in the area. The North Wales final Strategy was published in January 2024. The Council has been part of this work since the beginning and continues to be part of the Regional Steering Group to implement the Duty.
- 4.5.6. As part of the duty, the Partnership received £65k of funding for preventative and early intervention projects to reduce serious violence by children and young people. Several projects were completed by April 2026, including:
  - 'Don't Steal My Future' sessions held by RASASC Wales (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre) to raise awareness of sexual violence with pupils and to influence attitudes and behaviours.
  - An awareness campaign around selling illegal vapes and child exploitation, with a focus on increased reporting and sharing of intelligence.

- Increase the youth provision over the summer holidays and half-term, with activities targeted for young people aged 11-25 years in areas at high risk of crime and violence.
- A schools project led by the Education Department to prevent serious violence, including training, mentoring and group work to reduce exclusions and keeping pupils safe and in education.

#### 4.6. **Modern Slavery**

- 4.6.1. Modern slavery spans several types of exploitation, namely labour, criminal, sexual exploitation and domestic slavery. In North Wales, Modern Slavery cases in the area mainly relate to drugs exploitation, where the victims are often young males who are forced to sell drugs, usually through county lines. Regionally, promoting contextual safeguarding to work with children and young people at risk of exploitation and/or modern slavery is a priority within the North Wales Serious Violence Strategy.
- 4.6.2. The Police is raising awareness of Modern Slavery amongst authorities and businesses across the region, and conducting regular visits to hotels and holiday sites, as well as providing literature in sexual health surgeries and clinics.
- 4.6.3. Between January and December 2024, North Wales Police received 112 referrals relating to modern slavery, human trafficking or exploitation through the National Referral Mechanism, with 13 of these relating to Gwynedd. A further 6 reports were received through the Duty to Notify process, with 1 relating to Gwynedd.
- 4.6.4. In 2025, the number of referrals fell to 95, with 9 relating to Gwynedd. Two reports were received through the Duty to Notify process during the year, none of which related to Gwynedd.

#### 4.7. **Counter Terrorism**

- 4.7.1. Cyngor Gwynedd holds a Public Places Group: Preparedness to Protect and Safeguard and is also a member of the equivalent regional groups, e.g., Contest Board. The aim of the group is to strengthen safety in public spaces, improving preparedness to respond to events, and raising awareness amongst stakeholders to keep communities safe.
- 4.7.2. In 2025/26, preparations were continued to ensure compliance with Martyn's Law, which is expected to come into force in 2027; the Group also considered the venue Hire Policy during the year, as well as specific safety issues raised by the North Wales Society for the Blind in relation to cycle lanes.

4.7.3. In 2024/25, the Council undertook a quality assurance process with the Home Office in order to meet the statutory requirements under the Prevent duty. Strengths were identified such as the efforts for regional collaboration and the work of managing risks in relation to radicalisation.

4.7.4. As a result of this process, two further recommendations were received, namely: developing a venue Hire Policy and develop a prevent training strategy. As above, the Hire Policy has received attention during the year, and once the Welsh training will be available, the new "prevent" training plan can be implemented.

#### 4.8. **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)**

4.8.1. The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is responsible for processing criminal checks. The purpose of DBS checks is to help employers make safer recruiting and licensing decisions, although the check is only one part of the recruitment process. When the check has been processed and completed by the DBS, the applicant will receive a DBS certificate.

4.8.2. The Operational Group has undertaken some significant work to check, challenge and revisit the corporate procedure in respect of the DBS. As a result, Departments now have greater ownership of the DBS procedures, and this has transformed how the Operational Group reports on its conformity on departmental disclosures.

4.8.3. The DBS situation has stabilised during the year, with most departments achieving 100% compliance, i.e., that every member of staff requiring a DBS for their role has a current certificate. Where individuals have no current DBS, a clear explanation is provided for the Group, mainly associated with long-term absences or maternity periods. The departments continue to monitor the situation on an ongoing basis in order to ensure continuous compliance and manage any gaps in a timely way.

#### 4.9. **Corporate Safeguarding Training**

4.9.1. During the year, a substantial effort was made to increase awareness and safeguarding training completion rates across the organisation. This work has led to the increase in the number of staff completing the mandatory training.

4.9.2. On 31 March 2025, **36.4%** of Council staff had completed the safeguarding e-module. By 31 March 2026, this percentage had more than doubled, with **75.9%** of Council staff had now completed the e-module. It should be noted that this increase is partly due to a change in the way the data is reported, with the 2025 figures including school teachers while the 2026 figures exclude them.

- 4.9.3. Every Councillor is encouraged to attend safeguarding training (specific training - Group F). **87% of Councillors** have completed the training and a further session will be held early in 2026/27.
- 4.9.4. Although completing the training is important, ensuring an appropriate level of understanding and awareness amongst staff and members, is more important. Following a request by the Safeguarding Operational Group, an internal inspection was carried out to assess the Council's field workers' awareness level of the Safeguarding Policy. The inspection highlighted that more work needed to be done to ensure consistent understanding of the Policy and associated procedures.
- 4.9.5. A Corporate Safeguarding Promoter was appointed to ensure that every member of Cyngor Gwynedd staff is aware of their responsibilities in terms of safeguarding. The role will promote key messages that safeguarding is everyone's business and educate staff to be more aware and promote confidence when reporting on concerns.
- 4.9.6. The Corporate Safeguarding Promoter is working to increase the number of staff who complete the mandatory safeguarding training. Although office staff have been directed to use the e-learning platform, the challenge is to reach members of front-line staff who have no access to the Council's Information Technology systems. To overcome this challenge, a comprehensive video was prepared that will be presented to the workforce in easily accessible and easy to understand collective sessions.
- 4.9.7. The Corporate Safeguarding Promoter is also collaborating with the Safeguarding Operational Group to develop a central page on the intranet with all promotional/associated information to the workforce regarding safeguarding. This includes the Corporate Safeguarding Policy, details of the Designated Safeguarding Officers, mandatory training and contacts for support.
- 4.9.8. A further internal audit is intended to be held during the autumn 2026 in order to assess the effectiveness of the current arrangements and level of understanding across the organisation. This will also be an opportunity to evaluate whether the new interventions have increased awareness amongst staff, and to identify any further gaps where support or additional guidance will need to be provided.

## 5. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

- 5.1. Although the Safeguarding Strategic Panel focuses on the corporate responsibilities relating to safeguarding matters within Gwynedd, collaboration also happens on a regional level through the **North Wales Safeguarding Board** for Children and Adults

Safeguarding. These are Statutory Boards with cross-agency membership and specific statutory and legal responsibilities. Further information regarding the work of the Boards can be seen here - <https://www.northwalessafeguardingboard.wales/>

5.2. During the year, the Welsh Government conducted a review into safeguarding governance and supervision arrangements. This national review focuses on how suitable the current structures are, investigating the roles of the Regional Safeguarding Boards and National Independent Safeguarding Boards, how these bodies are collaborating with regulators and inspectorates, and what improvements are needed to strengthen accountability and governance. The final report is expected in the spring 2026.

5.3. The **Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership** has also shown that working in partnership across county borders is proving to be a success. Several organisations have a statutory duty to be part of the partnership, including Local Authorities, Police, Probation Services, Fire and Rescue Service and the Health Board. Information on all aspects of community safety that the Council deal with is available on our [website](#).

## 6. THE FUTURE

6.1. In terms of the Panel's priorities for the coming year, the intention is to focus on the following priorities:

- Implement and monitor the Council's response to the recommendations of the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report, ensuring that the necessary improvements are embedded across the organisation.
- Strengthen the corporate safeguarding awareness, understanding and culture across all services, including increasing the completion of training and ensuring that staff are confident to act on concerns.
- Publish a safeguarding video to make it easy and accessible for field workers to complete the mandatory training.
- Increase capacity within the safeguarding services, particularly in relation to work on Part 5, adult safeguarding and DoLS arrangements.
- Further develop the regional and local partnership work with the Police, schools, the Health Board, Welsh Government and other partners in order to respond more effectively to complex safeguarding risks.
- Continue to strengthen the arrangements for corporate governance, accountability and scrutiny in the field of scrutiny, including the role of the Safeguarding Strategic Panel and Safeguarding Operational Group.
- Conduct further internal audits to assess the efficiency of new arrangements and identify any further gaps in awareness, training or practice.