

Report to the Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	25 September, 2018
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Dilwyn Morgan Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Contact Officer:	Morwena Edwards, Corporate Director
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Title of Item:	Children and Supporting Families Performance Report

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update you on the performance of the field I am responsible for as the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. This will include outlining the latest with the pledges in the Strategic Plan; where the performance measures have reached; and the latest in terms of the savings and cuts schemes.
- 1.2 I will remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at meetings of the relevant management team, which also included a representation from the scrutiny committee.
- 1.3 On the whole, I am satisfied with the performance of most projects and measures for which I am responsible.

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2. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1. To accept and note the information in the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

- 3.1. In order to ensure effective performance management and that we respond pro-actively to the need to achieve efficiency savings as expected.

4. APPRAISAL OF THE DEPARTMENT'S PERFORMANCE

- 4.1. I can confirm that general practice and performance in the field of Children is on the whole, robust. This was confirmed in a Full Inspection Report by the Care Inspectorate Wales on 28 August 2018. The Inspector noted that 'the Gwynedd children's services had significant strengths and they had a committed and strong workforce'.
- 4.2. The Inspectorate identified four areas for further development, and these areas are in-keeping with the priorities that are already within the Council's improvement Plan, and they have been identified within performance reports that I have submitted to the Cabinet in the past.
- 4.3. In addition, the Department's Performance Measures at the end of Quarter one demonstrates that practice continues to be strong and no performance issues require urgent attention.
- 4.4. In terms of matters that need further attention, work has been undertaken to review the 'end to end' scheme. The number of residential placements have reduced in accordance with the original expectations; nevertheless, the inspection had not taken the substantial increase in placement costs into consideration. The outlook for the financial situation to the end of the 2018/19 financial year suggests that the Department will overspend substantially. I can confirm that this increasing cost of providing placements contribute substantially to the overspend.

5. THE DEPARTMENT'S PRIORITIES

- 5.1. As I have already noted, the fields for development that the Inspectorate identified are in-keeping with three improvement plans within the Council Plan 2018-23. The Cabinet is aware that the three projects led by the Children and Supporting Families is the Supporting Families Strategy, Tackling Poverty and Corporate Parenting.

5.2 Supporting Families Strategy

The purpose of the Strategy is to develop services within the Council and with partners that are far more integrated, focusing our interventions on the early identification of needs, targeting families correctly, and providing services that reduce the need for more serious interventions.

- 5.3. I can confirm that the Department has an initial work programme in place. Over the initial period of the project, the Department has collaborated to update needs assessments, and analyse them to local levels for the Gwynedd population assessment. Further work has taken place to identify the demand for support for

families across the Council departments and our partners' services, in addition to mapping out which provisions are already available to support Families across Gwynedd. This work will improve our understanding of the current situation.

5.4 In terms of the next steps, the Department, jointly with other departments across the Council, will hold a workshop to come to an agreement on what the 'Gwynedd Supporting Families Strategy' means and to set basic principles for the strategy. Once we have this agreement, we will discuss further with our key partners such as the police, health and the third sector, by presenting the vision to the Public Services Board.

5.5 I am confident that the initial discussion within the Council will have taken place with our key partners by the next reporting cycle.

5.6 **Tackling Poverty**

The purpose of this project is to review our arrangements in the field of Poverty in order to ensure that we are targeting our efforts where it will make the most difference.

5.7 This project is an extension to a project that existed within the previous Council Plan. As the timetable for introducing Universal Credit in the County has slipped, it was determined to keep this project live up to the end of March 2019 in order to continue to support people to cope with changes in the field of welfare and benefits.

5.8 During this period, work has continued to train the front line workforce and elected members in order to improve the awareness and preparation for the Universal Credit changes. 'Pennywise' events have been held with our partners in order to raise awareness of financial inclusion with service users. Universal Credit will become active in Gwynedd in December 2018.

5.9 The main successes of this project in its entirety is that the number of families that have raised their income levels has increased, and that interventions to respond to people's poverty needs have become mainstream interventions provided by front line staff.

5.10 During the next period, there will be a need to come to an agreement on the way forward with this project. There is a clear correlation between this project and the supporting families strategy, and a decision will be required on whether two separate projects are required, or to combine elements of both. I will hold discussions with my fellow members.

5.11 **The Corporate Parenting Strategy**

The purpose of this project is to improve the opportunities for looked after children in all aspects of their lives.

5.12 It was encouraging to see that the Care Inspectorate Wales described the Corporate Parent Panel as 'ambitious for the looked after children'. Considerable work has taken place during the period to attempt to identify where we need to improve and identify good practice through the task groups that have already been established.

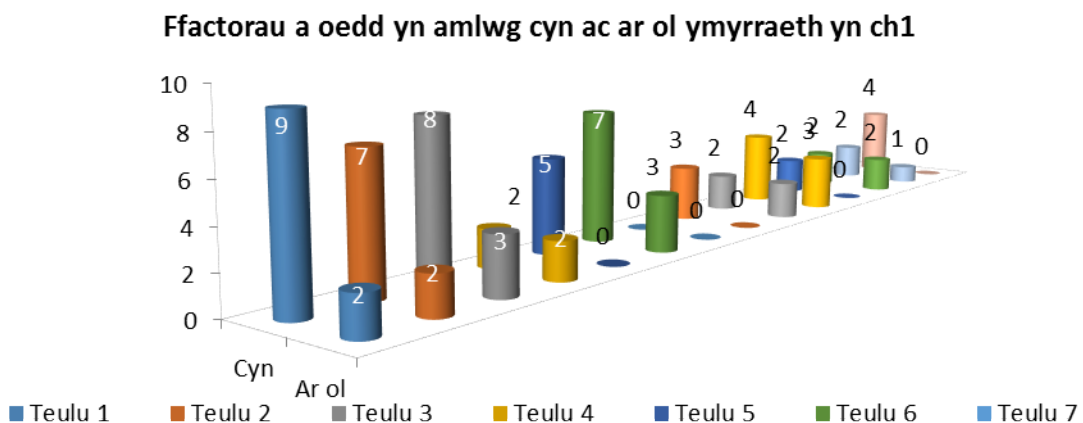
5.13 Five Task Groups have been established to look at different aspects of a looked after child's life, including health and welfare, education, safeguarding, becoming

an adult and making a positive contribution. All of the task groups have scrutinised their contribution to the fields in detail in order to ascertain whether we make a positive difference to those in our care.

- 5.14 A report of recommendations will be submitted at the next meeting of the Corporate Parent Panel and I will be in a position to report further on this in my next report. I am aware that some task groups, such as Education and Health, will develop more meaningful measures, and I look forward to presenting some to you.
- 5.15 For example, the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Education Department have a collective agreement to remove the measure of **SCC/024 Percentage of looked after children during the year who have a Personal Education Plan within 20 school days of being admitted to care or joining a new school during the year ending 31 March** and to develop a measure that the children and school services see as valuable and which focuses on quality rather than following a process. I look forward to giving you an update.

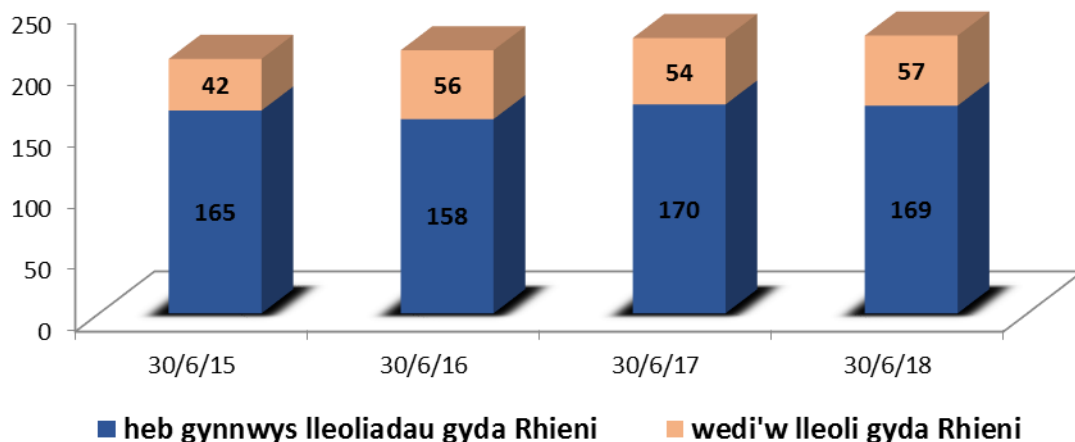
6. PERFORMANCE

- 6.1 In terms of the Department's Performance, the measures suggest a strong performance in practice and safeguarding. The measures demonstrating some deterioration since the previous quarter have been scrutinised in detail by the Department's Management Team, and during the Department's performance challenge meeting. I can confirm that there is a reasonable explanation for any deterioration.
- 6.2 Welsh Government no longer collects the SOGS Measure for **Flying Start** and we are awaiting further guidance to ascertain which measure will be used in future. Nevertheless, I would like to see the Unit developing a more local measure.
- 6.3 The **Team Around the Family** went through a recommissioning process at the end of the financial year, and have reformed. There are now three Area Teams within Gwynedd. The measure continues to demonstrate a satisfactory performance by the Team.
- 6.4 There is now a performance pattern of nearly three years for the **Edge of Care Team** which demonstrates a realistic, but also a very positive, performance. At the end of Quarter 1, a **74% reduction was seen in the obvious factors prior to intervention**. This demonstrates that the team's intervention has a positive impact on reducing risk factors that existed at the beginning of the intervention.



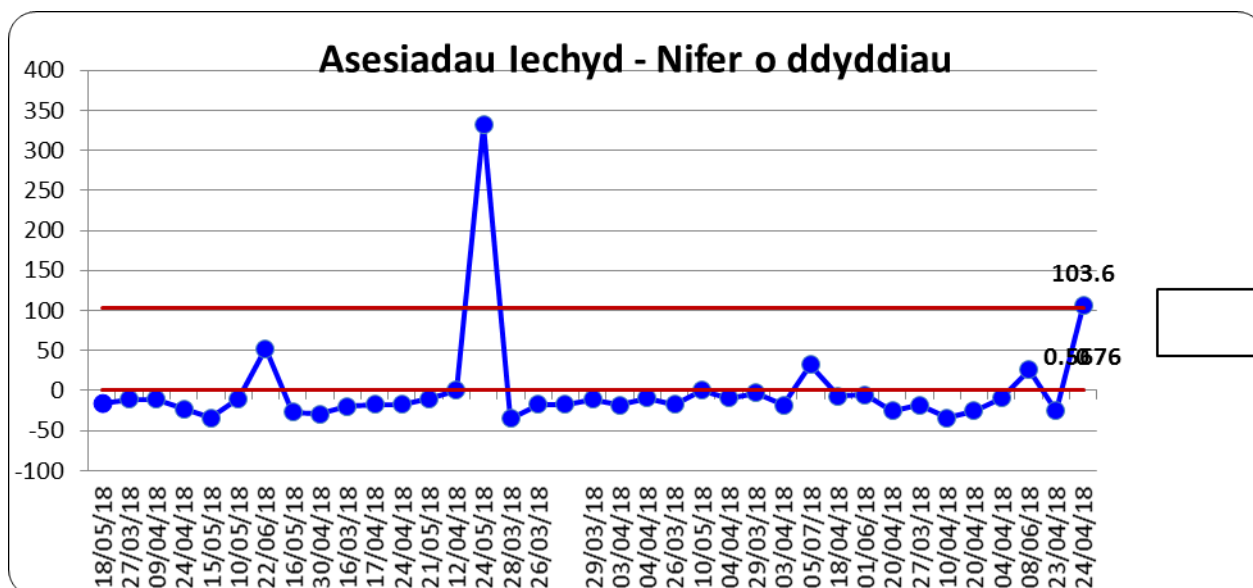
- 6.5 The **Referrals Team** still responds promptly to referrals, although the team is going through a period of change, with **93% of assessments being completed within the statutory timetable**. Since April 2018, the service has developed one front door for receiving statutory and preventative referrals. The information, advice and support service is now operational within the department, and an officer from the Team around the Family has joined the service and responds to referrals and mapping fields of need, and referring people to preventative services in the community.
- 6.6 More work is needed in order to develop the information, advice and support service, and the department has a work programme in place to respond to the Inspection's recommendations. The availability of preventative services and effective referrals to organisations in the third sector is a field that is being developed, and it will be addressed as part of our Supporting Families Strategy.
- 6.7 The performance measures involving the Statutory Teams demonstrate strong performance. The measure of **SCC/015 Percentage of initial core group meetings that should have been held during the year that were held within 10 working days of the child protection conference** show some deterioration (**73%**). Nevertheless, the circumstances have been scrutinised in detail and the explanation, in the opinion of the Head of Department and I, is reasonable.
- 6.8 639 children (0-18 years old) were open to the Arfon, Dwyfor, Meirionnydd, 16+ and Derwen children teams at the end of June. Of these, 92 children were on the child protection register and 226 were looked after children. Of the 226, 57 children were placed with their parents. In 2015, 20% of looked after children had been placed with their parents. At the end of the same period in 2018, 25% were placed with their parents.

Plant mewn gofal ar ddiwedd chwarter 1



- 6.9 Performance against the measure of **SCC39, the percentage of health assessments for Looked After Children undertaken during the year is 65%**. This means that 15 children had not received their assessment within the timetable. Work has been

undertaken to identify the barriers that exist in the system, and the Health Task Group of the Corporate Parent Panel has been addressing this issue.



7. FINANCIAL/SAVINGS SITUATION

- 7.1 As you are aware, a report was submitted to the Cabinet entitled "Improving Benefits by Transforming Children Services" in January 2014. This report anticipated that as much as £3m could be saved by reducing the number of looked after children and reviewing the residential provision.
- 7.2 Work has been undertaken to review the situation in line with the requirement. This work, which is coming to an end, has confirmed that the number of nights the children are being looked after has reduced during the period, more or less in accordance with the projections. However, the cost per unit has increased. It is important that I note that this increase was not considered within the original projections for the cost per unit, or the change in profile and the complexity of cases.
- 7.3 A report will be submitted to the Cabinet soon to explain in detail what has really happened compared to what had been anticipated, and the implications of this on the profile of future savings.
- 7.4 The timing of this meeting has meant that it is premature to be able to confirm the outlook of the financial situation up to the end of the 2018/19 financial year. However, based on the work that has been carried out so far, on the review for the first five months of the year, it is anticipated that the Department will overspend substantially. Expensive placements and the increasing demand has contributed towards this overspend.

8. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 8.1. None to note.

9. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

9.1. Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. Monitoring Officer:

No Comments in terms of propriety

ii. Head of Finance Department:

I can confirm that the financial aspects described in the report by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is an accurate reflection of the situation. The Children and Family Support Department continues to face significant financial challenges, and these matters will receive detailed and appropriate attention when the Cabinet Member for Finance presents his budgetary reviews to the Cabinet in due course.

9.2. Views of the Local Member:

Not a local matter.

9.3. Results of Any Consultation:

None to note.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Performance Measures