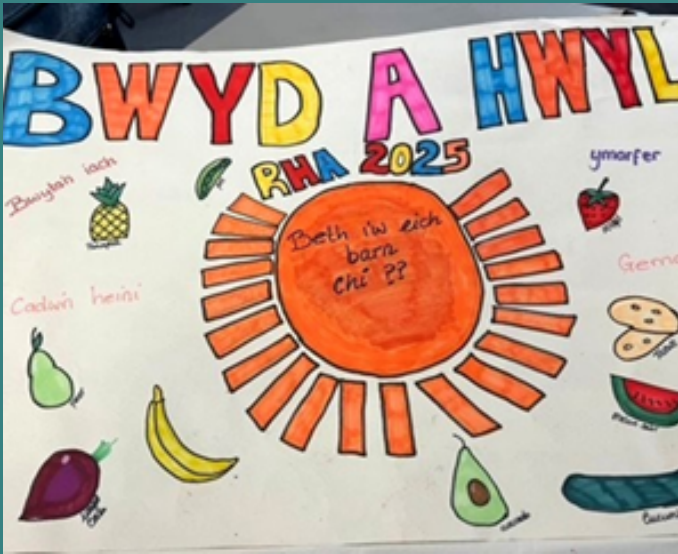


SUPPORTING PEOPLE ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26



A SNAPSHOT OF 2025/2026

£278,000

The value of the School Essentials Grant distributed



500

children received the Flying Start (Free Childcare) offer

£11.7 million

The value of council tax discounts distributed



706

children enjoyed a free Play Trailer session

£10,600

Value of energy vouchers distributed



498

residents received help from the Well-being Champions

£16.8 million

Value of housing benefit distributed



175

residents returned to work after support from Gwynedd's Work

£5,000



The value of emergency vouchers distributed

162

residents received help from the Gafael Llaw Team

£101,000

The value of free menstrual products distributed



26,300

food packages distributed to residents through the Food Grant

FOREWORD

I know that many people and families across Gwynedd still face substantial challenges in their everyday lives. The cost-of-living crisis, financial pressures and the impact on well-being has increased the need for practical, kind and fair support.

This is why the Supporting People Programme is important. This is not just service provision; it is working with people to get the best for them, going the extra mile.

This report shows the different ways that Cyngor Gwynedd supports residents - from help with food and energy costs, increasing income by claiming the benefits they are owed, support with bills and financial advice, childcare support and providing free activities and opportunities for children and young people over the summer.

Although I am proud of this work, it is important to acknowledge that poverty continues to be a fundamental challenge in our society. This means that the Council, essentially, will respond to the symptoms and seek to mitigate their impact on people and families.

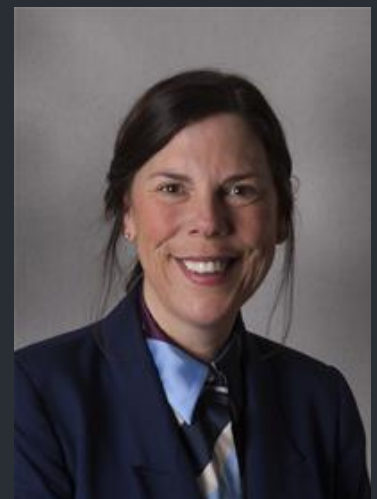
Often, it is not a single type of support that makes a difference, but a combination of support tailored to the needs of the individual or family. Although data and figures are important to show the magnitude and impact of the work, the stories and case studies by real people across Gwynedd clearly show the impact on people's lives. It is particularly encouraging to see services coming closer to people - in our libraries, through our well-being promoters, hubs and other local spaces.

It helps residents who are central to the Council's work. Whilst this report focuses on the specific work of the Supporting People Programme, further information on the broader work which helps residents and communities across Gwynedd will be available in the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services and the Council's Annual Report, when published.

I wish to thank Council staff, our partners, local organisations and our communities for their hard work over the past year to support people across Gwynedd. This report clearly shows the difference that can be done through collaboration.

Councillor Nia Wyn Jeffreys

Leader of Cyngor Gwynedd



WHAT IS THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME?

This programme is part of the “Council's Plan 2023-28” and comes under the 'A Caring Gwynedd' priority area.

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME?

- (1) Helping the people of Gwynedd to cope with cost-of-living challenges.
- (2) Helping the people of Gwynedd to get support, information and access to the services they require.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN WORKSTREAMS FOR 2025/26?

HELP WITH THE COST-OF-LIVING

Ensuring that the residents of Gwynedd receive and claim everything they are owed to help them with the cost-of-living.

COMMUNITY HUBS

Ensuring that the residents of Gwynedd have support, information and access to some of the Council's services in their communities.

OUR WAY OF WORKING

Ensuring that the Council works in a way that focuses on people and their needs.

What has been achieved during 2025/26?

HELP WITH THE COST-OF-LIVING : CLAIM WHAT'S YOURS

CAMPAIGNS

The main message is "Claim what's yours"!

Many of Gwynedd's residents are entitled to but do not claim benefits - this may be because they are not aware of their rights or do not know how or where to claim them.

So, we have been supporting the Welsh Government's national campaign, to raise awareness among the residents of Gwynedd to claim their money.

Wyt ti'n colli allan?

Gallet ti gael mwy o arian i helpu gyda chostau byw.

Darganfydda os eili di dderbyn:

- ✓ Credyd Pensiwn: £1,800 (ar gyfartaledd)
- ✓ Gostyngiad Treth y Cyngor: £800 o arbedion (ar gyfartaledd)
- ✓ Arian ychwanegol os wyt ti'n gofalu am rywun neu'n astudio

Hawlia dy arian.
Ffonia linell gymorth Advicelink Cymru am ddim neu sgania'r cod QR i ddechrau arni.

0800 702 2020 Llyn-Gwe 8am-7pm
Sad 9am-1pm

PENSION CREDIT

Pension Credit is financial support for people over pension age who are on a low income. It can provide access to support or additional benefits too.

We contacted 167 residents by letter who were eligible for but not claiming Pension Credit, offering them help to apply.

Why is this important?

It can mean up to an additional £23,000 a year for Gwynedd residents, or around £210,000 over an average claim period.

CHILD TRUST FUNDS

Child Trust Funds are savings accounts set up by the Government for children born between 2002 and 2011, with an initial financial contribution to help young people save for their futures.

Officers raised awareness among 14–22-year-olds of the existence of the funds, as many eligible young people had not claimed their savings or were unaware that an account existed in their name.

Why is this important?

Young people in Gwynedd may be missing out on between £250 and £500 of savings owed to them.

What has been achieved during 2025/26?

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNT

The Council's Tax Discount Scheme helps people on low incomes by reducing/eliminating their Tax bill.

Why is this important?

8,350 residents get a Council Tax Discount, totalling £11.7million

HOUSING BENEFIT

Housing Benefit is financial assistance designed to help low-income people pay their rent.

Why is this important?

2,557 residents receive housing benefit, totalling £11.8million

HELP WITH THE COST-OF-LIVING: FUEL POVERTY

ENERGY ADVICE

The Energy Team supports residents with energy costs, home energy efficiency and information about tariffs.

Over **100 drop-in sessions** were held to give advice and information to residents.

We administered **Fuel Bank Foundation vouchers** to help households on pre-paid meters to access emergency heating.

Why is this important?

341 residents were supported through Fuel Bank Foundation vouchers, worth a total of £10,670.



ECO4 SCHEME

ECO4 is a national initiative aimed at helping low-income households improve their home energy efficiency and reduce bills and carbon.

Why is this important?

1,140 homes have received an ECO4 grant, increasing their EPC score and reducing bills.

Between October 2022 and December 2025, the Council administered applications from residents for an ECO4 grant on behalf of the government.

What has been achieved during 2025/26?

HELP WITH THE COST-OF-LIVING: EMERGENCY FINANCIAL HELP

EMERGENCY VOUCHERS

Emergency vouchers are urgent financial help given to people in an emergency.

The Council provided urgent financial help to pay for food, energy or essential household items to residents in an emergency.

Why is this important?

101 vouchers were distributed, totalling £5,000.

HELP FOR FOOD BANKS AND FOOD SCHEMES

The Emergency Food Aid Fund is a grant aimed at supporting projects that provide food aid to people.

This year, 41 community groups were supported through the fund, with £150,300 being allocated to support food banks, food pantries, dinner clubs, and the provision of food packages.

Why is this important?

Around **26,400 food packages** were distributed ensuring urgent and vital support for households experiencing financial hardship.



Various food schemes across the county, provided by partners.

What has been achieved during 2025/26?

HELP WITH THE COST-OF-LIVING: CHILDCARE

Flying Start is a Welsh Government programme supporting children aged 0–4 and their families with free childcare and early support.

This year, Deiniolen and Penygroes were added to the Scheme, rolling out access to childcare to more families across the county.

Why is this important?

Around 500 children receive the Flying Start offer

Official opening of the Dechrau'n Deg office and a new cabin for Cylch Deiniolen



HELP WITH THE COST-OF-LIVING: ACTIVITIES

Around **31% of children in Wales live in poverty**, which limits their ability to participate in play and leisure activities, especially during school holidays. To address this, the Council provided activities, such as:

- **Trelar Chwarae (Play Trailer):** The trailer travelled across the county holding free play sessions for children up to the age of 11.
- **Summer of Fun:** Providing free or low-cost activities, in conjunction with Byw'n Iach, in leisure centres during the school holidays.
- **Youth Service:** Offering free activities such as Zorbs, darts, art and sports for teenagers.
- **Food and Fun Initiative:** 8 schools in Gwynedd took part in this national initiative during the summer holidays of 2025.
- **Upgrading Playgrounds:** £196,000 worth of the Common Prosperity Fund and Welsh Government Children's Fund grant has been used to improve 29 playgrounds.



What has been achieved during 2025/26?

HELP WITH THE COST-OF-LIVING: SCHOOLS

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

All children in Wales attending primary school are eligible to receive free school meals.

Not all children take advantage of free school meals, meaning that they miss out on a hot hearty meal, or that families are still buying and providing lunch boxes.



The Catering and Cleaning Service therefore held food taster sessions in primary schools to encourage interest

Why is this important?

83% of children now receive free school meals, which is up from 67%.

SCHOOL ESSENTIALS GRANT

The School Essentials Grant scheme helps low-income families with school costs, such as school uniform, books and learning equipment.

The Council promoted the grant during the year and administered payments to 2,128 children for this year.

Why is this important?

£278,000 was given to families towards school essentials.

REDUCING THE COST OF GOING TO SCHOOL PROJECT

A third of parents of secondary school pupils believe that school costs are too high, with the main costs including school meals, school uniform and residential trips. Parents also tell us that participation in extracurricular activities and sports is costly.

In response to these concerns, the Council's Education Department and Gwynedd's schools are working together on a 'Cost Friendly Schools' Charter. The Charter will help schools review policies and make practical changes to reduce the financial pressure on families.



The Council has been working with Byw'n Iach to collect and redistribute free sports shoes.

What has been achieved during 2025/26?

CYMORTH COSTAU BYW: CYNLLUNIAU ERAILL

CROESO CYNNES (WARM WELCOME).

Croeso Cynnes locations provide warm and welcoming spaces where people can socialise, take part in activities, have a cup of tea or some food, and reduce loneliness.

Why is this important?

67 new locations were added and £49,000 in grants were allocated to support the provision.

PERIOD DIGNITY

The Council supports the campaign to tackle period poverty by ensuring access to period products in schools, libraries, Byw'n Iach centres and community settings across the county.

Why is this important?

£101,000 worth of eco-friendly menstrual products were distributed to Gwynedd residents.

TRAVEL PASSES

The Council works closely with Transport for Wales to support travel schemes such as the 55+ travel pass, helping to make public transport more affordable and accessible for residents.

Why is this important?

On average, around 67,000 passengers per month have used the free bus travel pass.

JOB SEEKERS

Gwaith Gwynedd supports individuals who have been out of work, or who face barriers in the workplace, to develop skills, increase working hours and secure stable or better paid employment.

Why is this important?

175 residents were supported to return to work, with a further 103 developing skills to secure better pay.



A Case Study: Sion's Story *

Often, it is not one single intervention that makes a difference, but a package of support tailored to the needs of the individual or family.

While measuring quantitative data is important, there's nothing better than a story to bring the work to life, and to show the real change in people's lives.



Sion, a young father, came to the food bank and was visibly nervous and ashamed when he arrived. During a long conversation, he explained that he had only come through the door for the sake of his children.

By taking the time to listen, it was possible to discuss his situation and signpost him to further support.

He learned about free activities for children at the local library, as well as the opportunity to join other services at no cost.

A discussion was also held about the foodbank, and the Warm Welcome offer, where Sion could drop in on Tuesdays and Fridays for a snack, cuppa and a sympathetic chat.

His financial situation was discussed, including bills, and he was signposted to Dŵr Cymru's social tariff scheme to help him. He wanted to go home and apply, knowing that he could return for further assistance if needed.

He and his partner were given extra support in the form of SIM cards, which would save them around £30 a month over a six-month period. He clearly felt much more comfortable after the conversation, and appreciated the welcoming environment, noting that he planned to return with his children.

In Sion's words:

“I didn't know that there was help like this available!! Thank you so much, everyone is so friendly here, I was worried before coming but I'll come here again - thank you thank you!!”

During a follow-up visit, it was noted that he was still feeling under pressure, underlining the importance of providing sensitive and ongoing support.

**To protect individuals' privacy, we have changed the names in the stories that appear in this report.*

What has been achieved during 2025/26?

COMMUNITY HUBS

COMMUNITY HUBS

The community hubs provide local access to information and support, bringing Council services and partners closer to residents

There is a network of 11 Community Hubs where the Council works with community and voluntary partners to support them

Each Hub has been developed based on the community's needs and the provision available in them includes digital support, financial assistance, access to food and fuel vouchers, a warm setting, health and well-being activities and advice and signposting to other services.

WELL-BEING CHAMPIONS

Well-being Champions provide direct financial support to residents, including verification of entitlement to benefits, help with bills, maximising income and signposting to specialist services.

Local drop-in sessions have been crucial in reaching people and raising awareness of the support available, with the service receiving positive feedback about its impact on helping residents cope with the pressures of the cost-of-living.



Why is this important?

498 received advice and support from the well-being champions in 2025/26.

A Case Study: Bethan's Story *

Often, it is not one single intervention that makes a difference, but a package of support tailored to the needs of the individual or family.

While measuring quantitative data is important, there's nothing better than a story to bring the work to life, and to show the real change in people's lives.



Bethan was put in touch with the Wellbeing Officer by her daughter, who was concerned about her welfare. Bethan's home was often cold, and her daughter had noticed clear changes in her mother's living habits, particularly in relation to eating and energy use.

Over time, and through sensitive conversations with Bethan, it became apparent that rising living costs had forced her to cut spending on essentials, with heating and food being reduced in order to manage costs. Bethan had also been forced to sell her car due to the financial burden of maintaining it.

Following an initial assessment of her financial situation, it became clear that she was only claiming her State Pension and was not receiving any of the additional support to which she was entitled. Support was provided to help her apply for Pension Credit.

In addition, it was identified that Bethan's husband was experiencing declining health and facing daily challenges with everyday living activities. Information was provided about Attendance Allowance, a benefit that Bethan had not been aware of, and it was explained that it could make a significant difference to their situation. Bethan was referred to Citizens Advice for further assistance with completing the application form.

As a result of the intervention and support provided, Bethan successfully claimed both Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance. In a follow-up conversation, Bethan's daughter expressed her gratitude for the support that had been provided, noting that it had made a significant difference to her parents' quality of life. The household was now more financially stable, with a gradual improvement in their living conditions. Some of their usual routines had begun to return, and the home was warmer and more comfortable as a result.

**To protect individuals' privacy, we have changed the names in the stories that appear in this report.*

What has been achieved during 2025/26?

OUR WAY OF WORKING

GAFael LLAW

The “Gafael Llaw” pilot project was launched to respond to pressure on the Galw Gwynedd (Cyngor Gwynedd's Contact Center) service by offering a more personal and proactive approach to supporting residents with complex issues. The project focuses on well-being conversations, particularly with older people and those making applications for a blue badge, to try to prevent their situation from worsening and maintain their independence.

Some callers to Cyngor Gwynedd's contact centre therefore receive “Gafael Llaw” support when needed.

Why is this important?

Support was provided to 162 residents through the Gafael Llaw Team during 2025/26.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Council has delivered Money Guiders training to front-line staff in libraries, Siopau Gwynedd receptions and Galw Gwynedd, to strengthen financial support for residents. The three-level training gives staff the skills and confidence to provide sensitive and effective support, moving towards a more comprehensive approach that understands the wider needs of residents and facilitates referral to the appropriate support.

EQUALITY AND EQUITY PROJECTS

Equality is a priority for the Council, guided by the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28. The Supporting People Working Group used data to address inequalities in services in two specific projects during 2025/26:

- Schools, governing bodies and Byw'n Iach have been engaged to address a decline in swimming lessons in schools, with some barriers such as transport being identified.
- A review of disability parking spaces, bringing departments together to consider user needs, the fairness of the system and laying the foundations for further options.

Astudiaeth Achos: Stori Dewi *

Often, it is not one single intervention that makes a difference, but a package of support tailored to the needs of the individual or family.

While measuring quantitative data is important, there's nothing better than a story to bring the work to life, and to show the real change in people's lives.



Dewi was contacted by a member of the Gafael Llaw team after he applied for a disabled parking badge.

Dewi explained that he was managing to cope with most day-to-day things, but that he felt as though he was “on the verge of” needing more help. He said that he had a cleaner in the past but hadn't been coming lately.

He was asked if he had applied for an Attendance Allowance to help with additional costs.

He said that Age Cymru had been extremely helpful and had recently applied on his behalf, and that he was awaiting a decision. He also confirmed that he had discussed Pension Credit with them.

Safety at home was discussed. Dewi explained that he had handrails on the stairs, and although he was mobile around his small home, he sometimes struggled. He also had an episode of light-headedness that morning. It was suggested that he made an appointment with his practice nurse to get a health “MOT.”

Telecare was discussed, as he could find it helpful should he happen to fall and be unable to call for help. Dewi was really interested and asked for a referral for more information. Due to his mobility difficulties, a request was made for him to have a bin collection service from the back door, as he had noted that he found it difficult to carry the bins over a platform at the front of the house.

Socially, Dewi said he sometimes went out. He didn't drive, but friends picked him up from time to time, and he enjoyed having dinner with his daughter once a week. He was also given information about a community hub in his area.

Dewi was very grateful for the call and appreciated the help and information.

**To protect individuals' privacy, we have changed the names in the stories that appear in this report.*

What will we do in 2026/27?

MAIN AREAS

COST-OF-LIVING SUPPORT

We will continue to promote the financial support and benefits available and ensure that everyone claims their money. In particular, we will:

- Promote automatic enrolment for social tariffs and the Priority Services Register
- Run campaigns at specific times, such as school holidays and seasonal events
- Look for ways to reduce digital exclusion and improve access to on-line services

SUPPORTING PEOPLE HUBS

- Re-examine the hub model and implement a transformation programme to ensure a more coherent provision across the county.

OUR WAY OF WORKING

- Evaluate the “Gafael Llaw” pilot and plan for the future.
- Embed an informed trauma training and children's rights awareness work programme within the work of the Working Group.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

- Number and % of Housing Benefit claimants
- Number and % of Discretionary Housing Payment claimants
- Number and % of free school meals claimants
- Number and % of Breakfast Club attendees
- Number and % of free childcare claimants
- Number and % of free travel pass claimants
- Number of emergency vouchers provided (Charis)
- Number of emergency fuel vouchers awarded
- Number of individuals supported back to work
- Number and value £ Council Tax discounts
- £ more money in the pockets of Gwynedd residents
- Number of cost-of-living advice sessions held (Well-being Champions)
- Number and % of residents reporting that they had received the support they required, at the first point (Hubs)
- Number of Gafael Llaw enquiries
- % of Gafael Llaw cases resolved and supported
- Number of staff receiving customer/person-centred care training
- Number of staff completing financial guide training
- Case studies and residents' stories