Meeting:	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	08 October 2026
Title:	Update on the Progress of the Response Plan: Our Bravery Brought Justice
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Nia Jeffreys – Council Leader
Contact Officer:	Dafydd Gibbard - Chief Executive
Reason for Scrutiny:	The item has been included on the scrutiny work programme following the committees' previous consideration in January 2026 and as part of the need to scrutinise the progress of the Response Plan.

1. Why it needs scrutiny

1.1. *Our Bravery Brought Justice* (Child Practice Review Report by North Wales Safeguarding Board) was published on 4 November, 2025.

1.2. Prior to that, the Council had adopted its original Response Plan in January 2025 and following the publication of *Our Bravery Brought Justice* a revamped Response Plan was submitted to the Response Board on 8 December, the Care Scrutiny Committee on 13 January 2026, the Governance and Audit Committee on 15 January 2026, the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 19 January 2026 and the Full Council on 5 February.

1.3. Following input from the above Committees the Cabinet adopted the final Plan, on 10 March 2026.

1.4. This report is presented to provide an update on the progress of the Response Plan. It is recognised that delivering the Response Plan involves more than completing individual tasks. Further work continues on more long-term matters related to culture change, measuring impact and embedding improvements sustainably. In any programme of significant change such as this, elements such as embedding culture are ones that will need to continue for a significant period of time and will need to be continually revisited over the coming years.

1.5. The report also sets out the actions taken in response to members' comments and recommendations during the forward scrutiny, provides an overview of progress made across the work-streams and outlines the next steps.

1.6. The purpose of the scrutiny is to enable members to consider and challenge the progress made, how the work has been influenced by the committees' previous comments and recommendations, and what the arrangements are to continue to ensure progress.

2. What exactly needs scrutiny?

2.1. The Committee is asked to:

a) Note and scrutinise the progress made in delivering the Response Plan.
b) Consider the response to the comments and recommendations submitted by the Scrutiny Committees in January 2026.
c) Offer any further comments on the work that is underway.
ch) Note the suggestion regarding the future scrutiny arrangements of the Response Plan.

3. Progress update

3.1. Since the publication of the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report in November last year, significant progress has been made across all themes of the Response Plan's work programme.

3.2. Following the publication of the report the Council stated clearly that we would implement the recommendations in full.

3.3. *Our Bravery Brought Justice* made 27 specific recommendations and placed the responsibility for taking action on various local and national organisations. The report emphasised not only the need to improve arrangements locally, but also the need to learn the lessons and improve nationally if we are to give the best chance of preventing such horrific crimes in the future. The recommendations and the responsibility for taking action can be summarised as follows:

Recommendation for whom?	Number
Cyngor Gwynedd	1
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	1
Regional Safeguarding Board / Regulators	4
All Organisations / Local Authorities	8
Welsh Government	13

3.4. Although there was only one recommendation specifically for Cyngor Gwynedd, we stated clearly that we would act on all possible recommendations. Whilst it was not possible for us to act on a recommendation to the Health Board (1), we were able, and indeed needed, to ensure that we were ahead in terms of the recommendations that had been designated for "All Local Authorities" and also to tried to do everything within our power to deliver the Regional and National recommendations, whilst accepting that we would not be able to fully deliver these until other organisations had carried out their work.

3.5. In addition to this, it was also made clear that our Response Plan would go further than the specific recommendations set out in Our Bravery Brought Justice. We went through the body of the report with a fine comb identifying every opportunity for us to learn, thereby strengthening our arrangements and the safeguarding culture. We had also commissioned a number of independent investigations and specific recommendations had stemmed from these and it was therefore important that they were included in our Response Plan.

3.6. Therefore, the Response Plan consists of a total of 55 work-streams, and these can be summarised as follows:

WORK-STREAMS	**QUANTITY**
OBBJ Recommendations (to Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	9
OBBJ Recommendations (National/Regional)	17
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	29

3.7. In order to carry out this enormous work, a detailed work programme was developed consisting of over 200 individual actions and tasks. It was agreed to give the highest possible priority to delivering the work. A Theme Leader was identified to correspond to each theme within Our Bravery Brought Justice and in setting a budget for 2026/27 the Council decided to invest an additional £600,000 of revenue budget into areas of work related to Safeguarding. In due course other Authorities will need to invest similar amounts, if they are to incorporate everything that was in Our Bravery Brought Justice into their working arrangements.

3.8. One year later the delivery and progress across all work-streams in the Response Plan can be summarised as follows:

WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Incorporated permanently (in Gwynedd)	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	9	8	1	0
OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	17	9	1	7
TOTAL OBBJ RECOMMENDATIONS	**26**	**17**	**2**	7
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	29	26	2	1
TOTAL OF ALL RESPONSE BOARD WORK-STREAMS	55	43	4	8

3.9. As can be seen from the table, 43 out of all 55 work-streams have now been delivered and/or incorporated as ongoing arrangements and activities within the Council's services.

3.10. 8 out of the 9 Our Bravery Brought Justice recommendations that had been designated to Cyngor Gwynedd (or all Councils) have been delivered with the remaining one in the pipeline and scheduled for completion before Christmas.

3.11. 9 of the 17 Our Bravery Brought Justice recommendations designated to Regional and National organisations have been delivered in Gwynedd. 3 of these have been delivered by those organisations, with the other 6 delivered by the Council itself. The remaining 8 recommendations are dependent on factors beyond the direct control of the Council, as they are regional and/or national matters that are dependent on implementation by those organisations.

3.12. A further 4 work-streams are underway and nearing completion, with the timetable to complete these before Christmas.

3.13. We will therefore have completed all work-streams that are within our control as a Council by the end of 2026.

3.14. In addition, the vast majority of recommendations received from the scrutiny committees, the Governance and Audit Committee and the full Council have now been fully implemented, with 28 of the 30 completed. The remaining two recommendations are in the pipeline, with the progress and impact of which detailed in part 5 of this report.

3.15. It is recognised that delivering the Response Plan involves more than completing individual tasks. Further work continues on more long-term matters related to culture change, measuring impact and embedding improvements sustainably. In any programme of significant change such as this, elements such as embedding culture are ones that will need to continue for a significant period of time and will need to be continually revisited over the coming years. This is detailed in part 6 of this report.

3.16. The Response Board has monitored progress across each of the work themes and has established thematic reporting arrangements to enable detailed attention to progress, risks, actions and measuring impact. These arrangements have matured further since the last reporting period and provide greater certainty about the delivery of the work programme. This, and the work of the Ministerial Assurance board, is detailed in part 7 of this report.

3.17. In response to feedback and requests from the Scrutiny Committees and others, this year further progress has been made in strengthening transparency and accountability by publishing the Response Board papers on the Council's website and developing more accessible materials. This includes a version of the Response Plan for children and families, along with infographics, to make key information easier to understand to a wider audience. (See **Appendices 3, 4 and 5**)

3.18. Members will be aware of the commitment to commission further investigations into certain areas. These were commissioned by Cabinet on 19 May 2026 and a copy of that report can be seen at **appendix 7**. All of these have been commissioned and have followed/are following the timetable agreed at the time.

4. What has been achieved per Response Plan theme?

4.1. The Our Bravery Brought Justice report was divided into 6 Themes, and as set out in 3.7 above, the Council identified an individual Theme Leader to accompany each of these Themes and lead on the delivery of all the resulting work-streams.

4.2. The Themes, and the Theme Leaders, are as follows:

Theme	Leader
Theme 1: Voice of the Child and Supporting Victims	Gwern ap Rhisiart, Head of Education
Theme 2: Managing Allegations and Concerns About Adults Working with Children	Sharron Williams Carter, Head of Children and Supporting Families Department
Theme 3: Training and Policies	Ian Jones, Head of Corporate Services
Theme 4: School Governance	Alison Halliday, Assistant Head of School Support
Theme 5: Restrictive Practices	Llion Williams, Safeguarding and Well-being Quality Leader
Theme 6: Crisis Planning and Crisis Response	Catrin Love, Assistant Head of Corporate Services

4.3. To provide more detail on the progress made, please see below a summary of the main developments under each of the themes of the Response Plan.

4.4. Theme 1 – The Voice of the Child and Supporting Victims

THEME 1 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	6	6	-	-
OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	1	-	-	1
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	2	2	-	-
TOTAL	9	8	-	1

4.4.1. All recommendations under Theme 1 that are within the Council's control have now been completed or incorporated into ongoing arrangements that are established and operational.

4.4.2. Key developments include:

- Developing the Voice of the Child Strategy from an early draft to a comprehensive strategy with four specific appendices. It will be submitted to Cabinet in October to be formalised.
- Extensive consultation and engagement with the Youth Forum throughout the period.
- Ensuring that all schools now have access to an electronic system to record concerns and changes in behaviour.
- Creating a work programme for trauma-informed and compassionate training, and children's rights training for the workforce.
- Continuing to support victims through regular engagement, ISVA support and interventions tailored to the needs of individuals and families. This is an ongoing area of work that provides long-term support.
- Ensuring that all children named as part of a referral have the opportunity to have a conversation with a social worker so that their voice can be heard.

4.4.3. The only remaining recommendation* under this theme is one that depends on national curriculum changes by the Welsh Government, and is therefore outside the Council's direct control.

**Recommendation 8 OBBJ: That the Welsh Government develop the curriculum to ensure pupils have the knowledge to understand grooming behaviour by adults and know how to report this safely to an adult*	*We cannot act until the national curriculum has been adapted*

4.5. Theme 2 - Managing Allegations and Concerns About Adults Working with Children

THEME 2 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	1	1	-	-

OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	6	4	-	2
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	8	7	-	1
TOTAL	15	12	-	3

4.5.1. All recommendations under Theme 2 that are within the Council's control have now been completed or incorporated into ongoing arrangements that are established and operational.

4.5.2. Key developments include:

- Developing and implement a new Quality Assurance Framework across the Children's Department.
- Ensuring that information on historical claims is considered as part of the Part 5 threshold assessment process.
- Holding a successful pilot of *Beam Notes* (formerly Magic Notes). Beam Notes has now been incorporated as part of wider developments within Social Services recording arrangements. Training was provided to the entire workforce, with a particular emphasis on the proper recording of safeguarding matters.
- Reviewing the arrangements for the transfer and sharing of information in relation to safeguarding and employment matters.
- Providing additional funding to the Children's Department, enabling the creation and filling of new posts to strengthen the capacity of the service.
- Carrying out an audit of Part 5 referrals, reviewing historical referrals to ensure that concerns have been addressed and dealt with appropriately.

4.5.3. The remaining recommendations* under this theme are subject to national changes and reviews, as well as the results of the referral form pilot. Although preparatory work and a number of tasks have been completed internally, it has not been possible to implement all the proposed changes until decisions are made at a national level.

**Recommendation 10 OBBJ: That the Welsh Government ensure that the review of Section 5 procedures is informed by this Review and takes into account what has been learnt from it*	*There are inconsistencies between the new Part 5 procedures and the OBBJ recommendations, and Cyngor Gwynedd has raised the issue with the Welsh Government.*

**Recommendation 15 OBBJ: That the Welsh Government consider requiring schools to develop a 'Adult Conduct of Concern Policy' (known as the 'Low-level Concerns Policy' in England), and consider providing guidance on safe working practices.*	*We are awaiting guidance from the Welsh Government.* *Cyngor Gwynedd has consistently raised this issue through the Ministerial Assurance Group.*
**Further Response Plan Work-stream: Ensure that the public is aware of the referral procedure, and that the referral form for professionals is accessible and simple to complete.*	*As the referral form has been adopted on a regional basis, any changes require the agreement and support of partners across the region.*

4.6. **Theme 3: Training and Policies**

THEME 3 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	2	1	1	-
OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	5	2	1	2
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	10	9	1	-
TOTAL	17	12	3	2

4.6.1. Three-quarters of the recommendations under Theme 3 that are within the Council's control have now been completed or incorporated into ongoing arrangements that are established and operational.

4.6.2. The two remaining work-streams are underway and relate to the roll-out of the NSPCC grooming training module across the whole workforce and the completion of the establishment of appropriate training levels across the workforce, with development work already underway through the Safeguarding Operational Group.

4.6.3. Key developments include:

- The Council formally adopted the Whistleblowing Policy, with further work underway to promote awareness of the policy amongst the workforce.
- Introducing mandatory training on "Whistleblowing" for the workforce.
- Developing bespoke safeguarding training in the form of a video for frontline staff.
- Reviewing and strengthening the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.
- Increasing the percentage of the workforce who completed the safeguarding e-module from 36.4% to 77.8% over the year, although it should be noted that a change in the reporting method contributed in part to this increase.
- Completing an internal audit of workforce awareness of the Council's safeguarding procedures, with a view to repeating the exercise before the end of the year in order to measure further progress.

4.6.4. The remaining recommendation under this theme depends on the Welsh Government's work to develop a national training resource based on the findings of Our Bravery Brought Justice, for use across schools and other agencies working with children.

4.7. **Theme 4: School Governance**

4.7.1. Progress under this theme has been largely dependent on the Welsh Government's review of school governance arrangements. Despite this, significant work has been carried out locally to strengthen internal arrangements and support developments in the field in the interim.

4.7.2. The Council has maintained an ongoing dialogue with the Welsh Government regarding the need for necessary changes to the national arrangements, and has ensured that local views and experiences are reflected by contributing to the consultation.

THEME 4 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	-	-	-	-
OBBJ Recommendations	3	2	-	1

(Regional and National)				
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	4	4	-	-
TOTAL	7	6	-	1

4.7.3. The key developments under Theme 4 include:

- Strengthening the capacity of the governance service by doubling the size of the team from two to four members of staff.
- Piloting the GovernorHub platform with a sample of schools to support communication, governance and information sharing.
- Introducing a new questionnaire to assess governors' confidence in their role as critical peers and to inform the future development of training
- Establishing a regular forum to support engagement and sharing of good practice among governors.
- Raising concerns about the status and role of governors to the Welsh Government, contributing to the national debate on reforming governance arrangements.
- Providing a comprehensive training programme and revised training for Safeguarding Designated Governors and Chairs of Governors.

4.8. **Theme 5: Restrictive Practices**

4.8.1. Theme 5 has progressed significantly beyond the original scope of the Our Bravery Brought Justice recommendation, which focused on school events filming arrangements*. This particular recommendation could not be delivered as it relied on national action by the Welsh Government.

**Recommendation 25 OBBJ: That the Welsh Government publish an appendix to the 2022 Framework guidance for reducing restrictive practices involving adults filming events and provide guidance on the retention period of such videos*	*The Council is awaiting any further guidance or revisions from the Welsh Government.*

4.8.2. Nevertheless, the work-stream was used as an opportunity to strengthen wider arrangements that support the safety and well-being of children and young people in relation to restrictive practices.

THEME 5 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond

			of the year	the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	-	-	-	-
OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	1	-	-	1
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	5	5	-	-
TOTAL	6	5	-	1

4.8.3. The key developments under Theme 5 include:

- Strengthening school monitoring arrangements to ensure consistent adoption and implementation of the Regional Policy, with all schools visited having adopted the model policy.
- Undertaking a comprehensive external evaluation of the Reasonable Force Policy and Arrangements, informing a programme of further work to strengthen the existing arrangements.
- Establishing an internal group made up of representatives from the Safeguarding and Well-being, Education and Inclusion services to oversee this area, monitoring the implementation of existing arrangements and driving further improvements.

4.9. **Theme 6: Crisis Planning and Crisis Response**

THEME 6 WORK-STREAMS	Number of Recommendations	Completed / Permanently incorporated	Underway and on track to be completed by the end of the year	Number which will not have been delivered or are beyond the Council's control
OBBJ Recommendations (Cyngor Gwynedd or all organisations)	-	-	-	-
OBBJ Recommendations (Regional and National)	1	1	-	-
Work-streams Beyond OBBJ Recommendations	-	-	-	-

TOTAL	1	1	-	-

4.9.1. The key developments under Theme 6 include:

- Developing and refining a Crisis Plan in consultation with schools and key partners, ensuring that it reflects the needs of schools of different sizes.
- Preparing a collaboration agreement with North Wales Police, establishing a more flexible model for a multi-agency response, including the possibility of seconding a social worker when required.
- Preparing an awareness raising programme to be delivered during the autumn term 2026 to ensure a consistent understanding of the relevant arrangements and responsibilities.

4.9.2. The focus of Theme 6 has now shifted to monitoring the implementation of the arrangements and ensuring consistent understanding across schools. To avoid duplication and integration of this work with existing processes, this will be incorporated as part of the regular Health and Safety visits to schools.

4.10. Theme 7: Ysgol Friars

4.10.1. In addition to the 6 themes in Our Bravery Brought Justice, another theme has been added to our Response Plan in order to support and stabilise Ysgol Friars.

4.10.2. Significant work has been done to stabilise arrangements at Ysgol Friars. A strong emphasis has been placed on the well-being of pupils and staff by widening access to counselling services, establishing bespoke well-being spaces and strengthening the support available to pupils with emotional and well-being needs. Additional investment from the Council, combined with grant funding from the Welsh Government, has enabled the school to further strengthen this provision and begin to deliver trauma-informed training to staff.

4.10.3. In terms of leadership and governance, a new governing body and management team are now in place. The appointment of a permanent Headteacher and the implementation of a clear plan in response to the Estyn inspection have provided a solid foundation for continuous improvement.

4.10.4. The school continues to play a full part in the work of the Programme Board, contributing openly and constructively and demonstrating an ongoing commitment to the improvement programme.

4.11. Appendix 2 includes the full suite of Programme Board progress reports, providing further details on the implementation and progress against each theme in the period since January.

5. What changes have been made as a result of scrutiny?

5.1. The comments and recommendations of the Scrutiny Committees have led to 28 definite changes to the work of the Response Board. These include reforming the Response Plan, strengthening safeguarding and quality assurance arrangements, extending the scope of further inspections and reviews to test the effectiveness of arrangements, developing new training and resources, improving the accessibility of information for children and the public, and increasing transparency through wider publication of information and reports.

5.2. There are two remaining scrutiny recommendations in the pipeline, mainly relating to the development of measuring the more long-term impact of the plan (see part 6 below).

5.3. A detailed response to the comments and recommendations submitted through the Scrutiny Committees is provided in **Appendix 1**.

5.4. Attention is also drawn to **Appendices 1a** which include work commissioned or developed directly as a result of requests made by Members during scrutiny sessions

6. Measuring impact and culture change

6.1 In trying to achieve change, and embedding that change across all parts of a large and broad organisation such as a Local Authority, some elements of change are easier than others to implement and their impact measured.

6.2 As can be seen in parts 3 and 4 above, most of the tasks and actions that needed to be focused on have now been completed. Staff resources clearly had to be prioritised and allocated to achieving that as a matter of urgency; our priority was to ensure that we responded to the recommendations contained in the report, as well as the improvements that were needed to our working arrangements.

6.3 We have now started to move from delivery to the implementation phase of the new arrangements, and as a result, measuring what a difference this has all made/will make to ensure that our safeguarding arrangements are to the highest possible standard.

6.4 We have a cache of anecdotal evidence showing that the change in our Safeguarding arrangements is now leading to a change of culture across the organisation. Safeguarding and challenging are being discussed more naturally across the organisation in departments beyond those which deal with the day-to-day work of child protection. We see this in management team meetings across the council, in performance challenge meetings and in informal situations in our offices.

6.5 While formal arrangements to measure impact over time are not yet fully established, there are a number of sources of information available that provide an initial picture of the current situation and provide a baseline for measuring future progress. These include:

- A questionnaire to Governing Bodies to gauge members' level of confidence in carrying out their responsibilities and to identify what additional support would help them to act more effectively as critical friends.
- Independent research by Dr Ceryl Davies, Bangor University, as part of the Scrutiny Investigation into safeguarding arrangements in schools has provided insight into children and young people's awareness of processes to raise concerns, highlighting strengths and areas for development.
- An internal aduti of staff awareness has provided a picture of staff's understanding of the Council's safeguarding policies and procedures, helping to identify areas where further support or communication is needed.
- A staff experience questionnaire of the Section 5 referral process distributed to a sample of staff who have made a referral in order to understand their experience of the process and identify opportunities to improve guidance and support.

6.6 Together, these activities provide an important baseline and offer a picture of the current situation. However, these measures will need to be tracked over time in order to be able to demonstrate change and evaluate the impact of the work more robustly.

6.7 Therefore, we have developed impact measures across each of the themes, as follows:

What is being measured?	How will we measure impact?	Timeline

To what extent children and young people feel that their voice is heard and taken into account in decision-making.	Through the Voice of Children and Young People Questionnaire, measuring the extent to which children and young people feel that their views are heard and taken into account, that they can influence decisions, and that they know where to go for help when needed.	Annually, with the questionnaire being conducted in secondary schools one year and primary schools the following year.
Victim support	Gathering feedback from victims through support officers and IDVAs, asking if they are getting the support they need and if there are areas that could be improved.	Every 6 months
Employee experience of making part 5 referrals to Children's Services.	Through a follow-up questionnaire to the referral process, including questions about the experience of the process, any obstacles faced, and whether they would be willing to make a referral again in the future.	The pilot questionnaire has been sent to individuals who have made part 5 referrals between January and September 2026.
Staff confidence, awareness and understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities.	By repeating an internal audit of staff's awareness and understanding of safeguarding procedures, and measuring their confidence to identify and act on safeguarding concerns.	Annually
Confidence of staff to raise concerns and use Whistleblowing arrangements.	Through the Staff Voice Questionnaire, measuring staff confidence levels to raise concerns and awareness of the support and arrangements available. Results will be compared with the previous survey where possible.	Next round of staff voice
The confidence and ability of governors to fulfil their role as effective critical friends.	By repeating the governors' self-assessment questionnaire annually and comparing the results with the baseline collected before summer 2026. This will measure changes in governors' confidence in challenging, scrutinising and holding school leaders to account.	Annually

The effectiveness of school arrangements in relation to restrictive practices.	Through monthly monitoring arrangements by an internal group that reviews trends, incident data and the quality of records, including consideration of the voice of the child and the follow-up actions taken.	Monthly
Understanding and implementation of the Crisis Plan in schools.	Assess staff understanding through feedback at the end of training workshops, and then check the implementation of the arrangements through monitoring visits to schools.	Workshops in October 2026, with ongoing monitoring through school visits.

6.8 As many of the things that have been achieved so far have not been in place for a long time, they need to be implemented for some time before it can be measured whether they are really effective or not. As themes are scrutinised in the future we will be able to focus more on showing evidence of the impact over a period of time. This is what the Response Board has emphasised from the outset and this is what the Ministerial Assurance Group is likely to focus on over the next period as well.

6.9 In addition to the above measures, we have developed a brief, assisted by the Chair of the Response Board, to commission a series of Focus Groups between now and Christmas. This work will build on the approach used as part of the previous scrutiny investigation. This will include focus groups with a sample of:

- School Governors to assess their confidence to fulfil their role as critical friends and to understand their experience of the new support, training and arrangements.
- The Council's workforce to assess their confidence in safeguarding and raising concerns, and their views on the changes made to the existing arrangements.
- Elected Members to examine their understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, Whistleblowing and their confidence in the Council's arrangements.
- Inclusion Service staff in terms of their confidence in decision-making and responding in accordance with the Restrictive Practices Policy.
- Parents to understand their perceptions of safety, communication and the support available to children and families.
- Children and young people, building on work already undertaken through the Safeguarding in Schools Scrutiny Investigation.

6.10 The Focus Groups' conclusions will allow us to receive an honest and open view of our current situation, and will also help feed into the Chief Executive-led review of work culture.

7. How does the Response Board ensure progress?

7.1. The Response Board accepts and challenges **regular progress reports** on each of the work themes. This approach has enabled the Board to focus on specific areas in greater detail, monitor progress against actions, consider risks and barriers to delivery, and provide regular opportunities for Board members to further question, challenge and advise.

7.2. While significant progress has been made in delivering the actions committed to, the Board has recognised the need to strengthen the arrangements for measuring and evaluating the impact of the work. As a result, further work is underway to:

- develop impact measurement arrangements;
- use focus groups to gather stakeholder perspectives;
- develop criteria for the transfer of work to normal business arrangements;
- ensure that progress and supporting documents are publicly available.

7.3. The independent Chair of the Board, Professor Sally Holland, assesses progress by presenting **a quarterly report to Cabinet**. In her recent reports, she has noted that the Board's reporting and scrutiny arrangements have matured, providing a clearer picture of progress and enabling a higher level of challenge, assurance and oversight. However, she also stresses the need to strengthen impact and outcomes measurement in order to understand the difference that the changes make in practice.

7.4. The **Welsh Government Ministerial Assurance Board** provides a further layer of assurance and oversight. This two-way relationship enables the Response Board to share progress and learning, whilst also keeping track of relevant national developments and changes to ensure that Gwynedd's work continues to fit into the wider context.

7.5. In a Written Statement in March 2026, Lynne Neagle, former Cabinet Secretary for Education, acknowledged the positive and constructive collaboration between Cyngor Gwynedd and the Ministerial Assurance Group:

"I would like to place on record my thanks to Councillor Jeffreys and her team for their constructive co-operation and engagement throughout the work of the Assurance Group. Their willingness to consider challenges and show progress has been central to this process."

7.6. The arrangements of the Ministerial Assurance Group have continued under the new Government, with the first formal meeting between representatives of the Board and the Welsh Government taking place in July 2026. This gives confidence that the positive relationship and two-way assurance arrangements established to date continue to support supervision and learning at a national and local level.

8. What is the timescale for doing this?

8.1. The Response Board does not consider that the work will cease when individual actions have been completed.

8.2. While good progress has been made in delivering the actions set out in the Response Plan, the focus is now shifting towards ensuring that the changes are sustainably embedded in practice, influence organisational culture and lead to better outcomes for children and young people.

8.3. Work over the next period will focus on:

- Monitoring the impact of the delivery.
- Focus groups with stakeholders.
- Continuing to report publicly on progress.
- Completing the remaining activities within each theme.

9. What difficulties and challenges have they faced, and how have they overcome them? Are there barriers to delivery?

9.1. As already noted, significant progress has been made in delivering the Response Plan. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the work has not been straightforward. The broad nature of the plan, the size of the organisation, and the need to operate across a number of services and partners have meant that a number of practical challenges have arisen along the way.

9.2. One of the challenges was to turn some of the recommendations into practical arrangements that work in real situations. For example, when strengthening the voice of the child in safeguarding arrangements, there have been cases where parents did not wish their children to be interviewed, particularly where the child is a witness rather than the child who is at the centre of the concern.

9.3. The size and complexity of the Council has also been a factor. In an organisation with over 5,000 staff and a very wide range of services, ensuring that changes are consistently understood, implemented and incorporated is time-consuming. This is particularly true in relation to frontline staff who do not have regular access to computers or digital devices. In response to this, a dedicated officer has been

appointed to strengthen communication, support access to information and promote training opportunities.

9.4. Challenges have also arisen because some of the workflows are dependent on decisions or actions by other bodies. This includes elements that require regional or national change, such as Welsh Government guidance or action by other partners. Where the Council is unable to act fully on its own, we have tried to do as much as is reasonably within our control, including putting temporary arrangements in place until any national/regional change has been introduced whilst raising issues through the appropriate forums and continuing to press for progress.

9.5. Staff capacity and resources have also been a challenge. Implementing the recommendations of *Our Bravery Brought Justice*, together with the additional work-streams identified by the Council, has resulted in significant work for a number of services in addition to their usual responsibilities. This work was the priority and as a result, some activities have had to be prioritised at times, and additional capacity has had to be invested. The Council has already committed over £500,000 of an additional annual revenue budget to strengthen safeguarding and support this work.

9.6. In addition, some of the training packages or resources referred to in the recommendations were not readily available to be bought. It was therefore necessary to develop new content, adapt materials and ensure that they were relevant in the Gwynedd context. This has taken more time than expected in some areas, but it has also resulted in more bespoke and workforce-friendly materials.

9.7. While these are real challenges, they have not prevented the Response Plan from moving forward. Rather, they have influenced the way the work is scheduled, prioritised and delivered. Currently, there is nothing internal preventing the Council from completing the work under its control by the end of 2026. The main remaining risks relate to issues that are beyond the Council's direct control, and the Response Board will continue to monitor them, escalate them where necessary, and put mitigation arrangements in place where possible.

10. Future scrutiny arrangements

10.1. The Response Plan's work programme is a substantial one and therefore as we approach the completion of the individual actions the activity will be incorporated into normal business arrangements, and therefore in the future it is recommended to adopt a more thematic approach to scrutiny. Rather than presenting all the themes to each scrutiny committee, it is recommended:

- That each theme be allocated to the most relevant scrutiny committee.
- That all themes are subject to detailed scrutiny with a focus on ensuring that the new arrangements are successfully incorporated into day-to-day work and that there is no future slippage.

- That cross-cutting or strategic matters are reported to more than one committee as required.
- That these arrangements enable members to focus on the most relevant matters and to offer a more detailed challenge.

10.2. This approach would ensure that the governance arrangements of the Response Plan are both robust and effective. It would also enable the committees to spend more time scrutinising specific themes in detail, strengthening the challenge and assurance provided.

10.3. In line with the areas of scrutiny of the individual Committees, the following is recommended:

Theme	Committee
Theme 1: The Voice of the Child	Education and Economy Committee (Education Portfolio)
Theme 2: Managing allegations and concerns	Care Scrutiny Committee (Children and Safeguarding Portfolio)
Theme 3: Training and Policies	Education and Economy Committee (Corporate Services Portfolio)
Theme 4: School Governance	Education and Economy Committee (Education Portfolio)
Theme 5: Restrictive Practices	Education and Economy Committee (Education Portfolio)
Theme 6: Crisis Arrangements	Education and Economy Committee (Corporate Services Portfolio)

11. Consultation

11.1. The report has been prepared on the basis of discussions and preparatory work across the Leadership Team, Response Plan theme leaders and relevant officers. The work also reflects comments received from the scrutiny committees in January 2026.

11.2. The report will be presented to the Response Board for discussion at its next meeting. The Chair's most recent assessment of progress is set out in her latest report to Cabinet (**appendix 6**), with a further report due in November, providing an additional opportunity to reflect on progress.

11.3. Further work is underway to involve stakeholders through focus groups, building on the approach used as part of the previous scrutiny investigation.

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

The Five Ways of Working	How the Response Plan contributes
Involvement	Focus group work and the voice of the child work provide an opportunity for stakeholders, children and young people to contribute to the way progress is measured and understood.
Collaboration	The Response Board brings together relevant services and includes collaboration between Education, Social Services, Human Resources, Democracy and Corporate services as well as a number of external Agencies.
Prevention	The work focuses on preventing failures from happening again by strengthening safeguarding, training, recording, governance and arrangements for raising concerns.
Long-term	The plan has been amended to emphasise sustainable change and long-term support rather than just short-term steps.
Integration	The actions link to the Council's policies, training, school arrangements, governance work and wider assurance arrangements.

13. Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-Economic Duty

13.1. The Response Plan is directly concerned with safeguarding children and young people, ensuring their voices are heard, and improving access to information and support. As the Work Programme develops the Board will continue to consider the accessibility of information for children, young people, families and victims and address the impact on people who face disadvantage or barriers to accessing support.

14. Next Steps

Next Step	Description	Proposed timeframe
Develop impact measures	Continue to work with theme leaders to define how impact will be demonstrated in practice.	October 2026 onwards / to be confirmed by the Response Board
Hold focus groups	Use focus groups with stakeholders to test and challenge the progress and impact of the work.	October 2026 onwards / to be confirmed by the Response Board
Review thematic progress	Continue to submit theme-by-theme progress reports to the Response Board.	October 2026 onwards / to be confirmed by the Response Board

Arrange future scrutiny	Agree a thematic scrutiny programme in which each theme will be scrutinised at least once a year by the most relevant committee.	October 2026 onwards / to be confirmed by the Response Board
Continue to publish information	Ensure that accessible and public materials continue to be updated as work progresses.	October 2026 onwards / to be confirmed by the Response Board

APPENDICES

- **Appendix 1:** A response table to all the recommendations from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee, the Care Scrutiny Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee.
    - **Appendix 1a**: Trauma-informed and Children's Rights Work Programme
- **Appendix 2:** Thematic progress reports (February – July 2026)
- **Appendix 3:** New Response Plan website: Our Bravery Brought Justice: Cyngor Gwynedd's Response Plan
- **Appendix 4:** Infographic "What's changed?"
- **Appendix 5:** Response Plan for Children and Families: Response Plan
- **Appendix 6:** Quarterly Reports of the Chair of the Response Board
- **Appendix 7:** Cabinet Report - Commissioning Investigations
- **Appendix 8:** Our Bravery Brought Justice Progress against Recommendations

OTHER DOCUMENTS:

- **Cyngor Gwynedd's Response Plan:** Response Plan