

MEETING	Care Scrutiny Committee
DATE	11 April 2024
TITLE	Short Breaks Service (Derwen Integrated Team)
PURPOSE	To obtain assurance that suitable provision is available to all who need the service
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Cabinet Member	Councillor Elin Walker Jones

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The support service provides respite in several different ways, through the home care services, community services and the various groups. This respite can be from 2 hours a week up to overnight care.
- 1.2 The sessions focus on providing a short break to the families but also places a focus on developing the children's life and social skills.
- 1.3 We work closely with the Hafan y Sêr respite unit to ensure that the children have a positive introduction to the unit.
- 1.4 The waiting lists for services have increased as some recruitment problems persist, and we have also seen a substantial increase in referrals to the service recently.
- 1.5 Some examples of the short break provision are home care, community care, services for groups, Amser Ni which is a project for developing short break opportunities by requesting volunteers, overnight stays, groups for 16–25-year-olds, work with siblings and a buddy system, and family fun days.
- 1.6 Part of the work of the Derwen service also includes Social Workers who provide assessments within 42 working days. As part of this work there are social workers who look specifically at the aspect of short break foster carers. They also work with the Fostering Team in order to recruit foster carers to help with the Amser Ni work.

2.0 What short break provision is available in Gwynedd?

2.1 Amser Ni is a provision that covers Gwynedd, and it has five elements, namely volunteering, activities, Support service, overnight short break, and overnight residential break. Therefore, the intensity of support goes from the lowest tier, namely volunteering, through to the highest tier of support which is an overnight residential break.



2.2 Volunteers

2.3 Amser Ni is a joint project between Gwynedd and Anglesey to look at developing short break opportunities for disabled children and their families. The main elements of this scheme are:

- Providing volunteers as a buddy for the families
- Organising day trips
- Overnight stays
- 16–25 groups

The impact of the service:

- Children and young people have a wider range of activities and opportunities to participate in, in safe and supportive environments.
- Families, parents and carers have increased resilience and improved emotional well-being
- Relationships within the family are more stable.

2.4 Siblings / Buddy work

2.5 Because the recruitment of volunteers has been lacking, only one family are currently receiving the 'buddy' work. In this example the volunteer takes the brother of a disabled child to play basketball once a week – the volunteer has created a strong relationship with the brother and the parent. The parent reports that the provision has helped to decrease anxiety and has increased the brother's confidence.

2.6 Activities

2.7 Day Trips

2.8 Day trips are provided during school holidays to children over 12 years old, with 10 children attending these trips regularly. There have been day trips to Flip Out, the cinema, Glasfryn, SC2, and positive feedback has been received from the families.

2.9 Groups for 16-25 Year Olds

2.10 A Group jointly with Llwybrau Llesiant (*Well-being Pathways*) which places a focus on the transition to adult services – these are held during the school holidays.

2.11 Family fun days

2.12 Four family fun days were organised over the past year, and these were very successful with up to 20 families attending these events. The day provides an opportunity for the families to chat and discuss with each other and gives the children the opportunity to do activities in a safe environment.

2.13 Support Service

2.14 Groups Service

2.15 Various groups have been established across the county.

2.16 There are groups on Saturdays in Arfon and Dwyfor and up to 25 children attend every time. A play group session is arranged during the summer holidays in the three areas which provides a variety of activities.

2.17 Much collaborative work has taken place to create new opportunities in the county:

- Working with the Byw'n Iach team to create quiet play and swimming sessions for children with additional needs, which are provided in four centres across the county on a monthly basis.
- Collaboration with the youth team to ensure there are youth clubs available for children with additional needs.

2.18 Groups for 16-25 Year Olds

2.19 A joint Group with Llwybrau Llesiant (*Well-being Pathways*) which places a focus on the transition to adult services – these are held during the school holidays.

2.20 Overnight Short Break with the Family

2.21 Home Care

2.22 This includes an example of two support workers providing an overnight session in the child's home once a week to enable the family to have a night of sleep, and a case where a worker supports the child in the morning to enable the parent to go to work.

2.23 Community Care

- 2.24 The community-based service is usually provided after school or on weekends, to enable the families to spend time with the siblings, have time to do the weekly food shop or to have time to themselves. This short break is very precious to the families and the children, and the families are very grateful for the service.
- 2.25 Where a home situation is fragile, overnight care is provided to a child every six weeks.

2.26 Overnight Residential Break

2.27 Overnight Stays

2.28 Two stays a month have been organised for children over 14 years old in Rhos y Gwaliau, Bala.

2.29 Hafan y Sêr – a short break residential building

2.30 Hafan y Sêr provides short breaks for children who are already open to Derwen and who have learning and physical disabilities. It is a building in Penrhyndeudraeth to provide a short break for parents and families of children with intensive needs.

2.31 Hafan y Sêr now provides for 45 children, these are children who come for regular stays or who are in the process of familiarising themselves with the service through the induction plans.

2.32 The ages of the children who access Hafan y Sêr ranges from 8 to 18 years old. To provide an overview of the needs of the 45 children/young people who receive the service, 10 have physical disabilities/health needs, 29 have Autism and six have learning disabilities/other genetic conditions.

3.0 How much use is made of the provision?

3.1 There is a high demand for the Derwen Support Team service. 232 children are in receipt of a Support service, and 1,014 hours of support are provided weekly. The hours are used to take children to groups, or to go out for the day to give parents some respite. In addition, home care is provided to help families cope with their children's needs by providing some respite for the parents to sleep. The number that are on the waiting list is 25.

3.2 The other work provided by the Derwen Support team is through volunteers, organising day trips and implementing a buddy system. There are 39 children receiving this service, with 14 on the waiting list.

3.3 Please see below the numbers who have received a service from the Derwen Support Team over the past three years:

3.4

2021/2022	
Number of Children	159
New Referrals / Increase in Hours	72
Hours	59448

3.5

2022/2023	
Number of Children	162
New Referrals / Increase in Hours	93
Hours	64435

3.6

2023/2024	
Number of Children	232
New Referrals / Increase in Hours	103
Hours	70526

3.7 This data shows that both the demand for the service and the service provided have increased over the past three years. This is because the number of new referrals reaching the team has been greater than the number of young people transferring to adults' services. The number of referrals for young children with intensive needs has also increased.

3.8 The Hafan y Sêr service provides short breaks for five days/nights a week – it is open from 12pm Wednesday to 10am Monday morning for the short break provision. The children who receive the service come to stay depending on what assessed need is identified in their referrals. More often than not, the majority come to stay for two nights every six weeks. However, some come to stay monthly and for a period of three nights at a time if their needs/home situations are more complex. The service also works with the social workers in Derwen to be flexible to offer a higher provision during periods of stress in families' lives.

3.9 The new provision – since mid-January – means that Hafan y Sêr is open seven days a week to offer a placement to one child under Section 73(1) arrangements and it also allows more flexibility to be able to use the second bedroom within this part of the building to offer a service to families, depending on the needs that emerge as we move forward.

3.10 The number of children who receive a service in Hafan y Sêr as the support service from Derwen has increased over the past three years. There is a higher number of children in the 8-15 age-range who receive the Hafan y Sêr service. Please see the data below:-

3.11

Years	Numbers
21/22	34
22/23	38
23/24	45

3.12

Ages	Numbers
8-11 years old	20
12-15 years old	19
16-18 years old	6

3.13 There is currently a waiting list because capacity is full at present in terms of the number of children for whom Hafan y Sêr can offer a service. This stems from how many

children can be matched to stay together at the same time, and also the appropriate staffing level to meet those needs.

4.0 Does the provision meet the demand?

4.1 Support Service

4.2 Amser Ni has been hugely beneficial but there have been barriers along the way to make sure that the provision in place meets the demand. Recruiting volunteers has been a big problem over recent years, this is a national problem, where more people are trying to seek paid employment rather than volunteering. By continuing to advertise and search, the short breaks officer has created new connections recently and in doing so has been able to recruit three new volunteers. The fostering team also provides an element of Amser Ni. There are a small number of foster carers who take general placements who also provide Amser Ni placements. However, this changes over time and it is usually only one or two of the general households. The Fostering Team is discussing with Amser Ni how to liaise better and develop a broader provision.

4.3 Hafan y Sêr

4.4 The Hafan y Sêr provision meets the demand, and because of the provision that is in place it takes immense pressure off families who are coping with the intensive needs of their children when they want a short break, and therefore prevents children from having to enter care. The unit is now open for seven days a week. One child from Anglesey is benefiting from the provision and this creates an income for the Council and prevents a child from going into care.

4.5 Feedback from families is positive and they state their appreciation for the provision, and for the respite from their caring role.

4.6 The children who attend have the opportunity to gain confidence and have new experiences.

4.7 There are currently nine referrals on the waiting list. Hafan y Sêr works with Derwen regularly to determine the priorities for admitting individuals to the service, to ensure that we can target starting a service to the children/families who need it most.

4.8 Following every stay in Hafan y Sêr the parents/carers receive a written report on the stay.

4.9 The demand for the two services, namely the Derwen Support Team and Hafan y Sêr has increased despite there only being a small number on the waiting list for both services. Although there are waiting lists a service is offered to the families. For example, if a child is on the waiting list for Hafan y Sêr, the Derwen service makes sure that the parents are aware of this and offer more hours of support in the meantime. Furthermore, to help with the pressures on the Support service we discuss regularly with the parents/carers regarding the option of receiving direct payments. Therefore, by working closely as two teams we can meet the demand in Gwynedd. Feedback provided by parents/carers for both services also appreciate that the services are available. Please see below some of the comments that have been provided by parents/guardians who use the services:

4.10 Quote 1 – *“Thank you and the whole Derwen team for some fantastic trips this year, they are much appreciated.”*

4.11 Quote 2 – *“Having a link to you guys is always a comfort as I know there's always help there for her.”*

4.12 Quote 3: *"Lots of different activities with friendly approachable staff.... Lovely session thank you!"*

4.13 Quote 4 – *"Good fun, good range of Activities. Great team! Thank you."*

4.14 Quote 5 – *"Everyone is kind and welcoming and willing to help. Have enjoyed."*