

MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	17.10.24
TITLE OF REPORT	Early Years Transformation
REASON FOR SCRUTINY	The Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 – Tomorrow's Gwynedd
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1. Why does it need to be scrutinised?

Transforming education for children in their early years has been recognised as one of the key projects of the Council's Plan 2023-28.

Early years are key to children's social development, and the importance of this period has been seen especially during the pandemic. We want to transform this service and will work with the health service and the Mudiad Meithrin to ensure that all children in the county have the best possible start to their time in education.

The Council will deliver this project by working with the health service and the Mudiad Meithrin to transform the service to ensure that all children in the county have the best possible start to their time in education.

2. What exactly needs to be scrutinised?

- What are the steps planned to be taken to transform education for children in their early years?
- What are the timeframe and key milestones for the transformation of the service?
- How will the transformation of the early years' service be funded?

3. Summary and Key Issues

Work programme update

4. Background / Context

4.1 Transforming the Early Years is a Gwynedd Tomorrow priority in Gwynedd Council Plan 2023-28

4.2 The Early Years Unit has been working regionally since 2023 to transform the Early Years in collaboration with the Government. Disappointingly the Government stopped funding the project at the end of March 2024. Part of this work was to share good practice, collaborate on priorities such as Speech and Language and undertake an 'Early Intervention Foundation' self-assessment – an Early Years maturity matrix. Gwynedd's self-assessment was, primarily, Early Progress typical

of local areas who are committed to action and have started to develop their programme but have yet to see the benefits of their work.

4.3 During the next period the North Wales Regional Partnership Board will also focus on Early Years as a priority:

- An early years charter with agreed priorities and a shared language. Setting out our interpretation of national guidance and how we can best meet children's needs locally. Including a joint plan for how we will use funding.
- An early years workforce strategy, linked to the North Wales Workforce Board. To look at workforce planning, qualifications, skills, training, retention, and professional development.
- Communication plan to share our vision for early years, key messages and details of the support available.
- Improve information sharing between organisations.
- Work with Welsh Government to improve the stability and consistency of funding streams.

4.4 The Early Years Unit have put together a programme of work. Since the funding came to an end in March, we have lost the staff resource to drive the programme of work forward so operating on a slower pace with existing staff capacity within the Unit. The Unit is currently going through a staff restructuring process as well.

5. Consultation

5.1 A number of consultation opportunities have occurred to gather the views of families and stakeholders when looking at different areas to transform the Early Years

- **Nursery Education – Celyn report.** Within the report several factors that are important to Gwynedd families are accessibility, affordable costs and provision through the medium of Welsh
- **Language, Speech and Communication – Dr Ceryl Davies report** Within the report a number of recommendations are set out for the area such as establishing an access pathway, training staff and improving collaboration arrangements with Health.
- **Perinatal Support – Social Value Cymru report** Positive results identified from pilot in which the groups supported the well-being of families within their communities, but a greater range of support is needed including sensory sessions.

5.2 Comments and recommendations of the above reports have fed into the transformation work programme locally and regionally.

6. Impact on Equality, Welsh and Socio-Economic Duty

6.1 Impact assessments will feed and inform decision making in due course.

7. Next Steps

- Continue to work on the programme of work
- Hold discussions and seek decisions
- Consultation on the decisions
- Drafting an Early Years Strategy

Attachment

Early Years Transformation work plan