

CABINET CYNGOR GWYNEDD

A report for a meeting of the Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Date:	11 March 2025
Title of Item:	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Menna Trenholme
Contact Officer:	Marian Parry Hughes, Head of Children and Supporting Families Department

THE DECISION SOUGHT

To accept and note the information in the report.

THE REASONS WHY A DECISION IS NEEDED

To ensure effective performance management.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on what has happened in the Children and Family Support Department. This will include an outline of works against the promises made in the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan, which will include works from the end of 23/24 and so far in 2024-25; and an outline of where the Department is with their performance measures; and the latest in savings and cuts plans.
- 1.2 The purpose of Children and Supporting Family Service is to ensure that we do the best we can to put children, young people and the people of Gwynedd at the centre of our services. This will be measured through the Challenge and Support Performance regime. It is important to the Service that the voices and experiences of individuals who receive and use our services are heard to ensure the best experience for them.
- 1.3 The priority projects through the Council's Plan are moving forward, which are the Autism Plan and the Small Group Homes Scheme.

2 CYNGOR GWYNEDD PLAN PROJECTS

- 2.1 Below, we note the progress that has been made to date against the Department's priority projects. These priorities address the department's main risks. Overall, I feel that all projects are making progress against the pledges we have made in the Council Plan.
- 2.2 Small Group Homes Scheme

We want to improve the experiences of children who receive care and those with intensive and complex needs, who currently have to leave the county or Wales in order to access suitable provision. We will develop registered residential homes for small groups of up to two children, which will allow them to be cared for in Gwynedd, attend local schools, and take a complete part in the life of their communities.

We have now bought properties in Morfa Bychan (Dwyfor), Deiniolen (Arfon) and Edern (Llŷn).

A project group has been set up for the work and they meet monthly. The project group includes members from education, housing & property and health. Recruitment for the Golygfa'r Gest home (Morfa Bychan) has been completed. The post of manager, deputy manager and 6 resident employees, and casual workers have been filled. These workers have started work by receiving mandated training and shadowing shifts at Hafan y Sêr to gain in-house residential service experience within the Council. Care Inspectorate Wales' registration application for Golygfa'r Gest (Morfa Bychan) has been submitted as we expect a response shortly.

We will be placing the first child at Golygfa'r Gest (Morfa Bychan) in February, 2025.

We intend to commence tendering for work for the second and third properties in the upcoming weeks, in the hope of commencing work in month 1 of the next financial year. Recruitment for the second and third homes will commence from February to March, 2025. We are also continuing to search for a fourth property in Gwynedd. This will be to locate a specific child who currently lives in Hafan y Sêr. We have also had an offer received on a house in Farrar Road, Bangor, in December, 2024. This house is designed to support children / young people leaving care.

Autism Plan

Autistic children, young people and adults are struggling to get the specialist support they need. We will therefore improve provision and make it easier for individuals and their families to transition between different services. The team now offers an IAA (Information, Maintenance and Support) service. They provide unbiased and confidential information, advice and support to autistic individuals and their families to make informed choices about wellbeing; explore the options available and support them to access appropriate services. The knowledge and understanding of what was needed for this came following experience gained over the last 12 months by the team, and by working closely with SPOA/IAA employees to develop this in line with the autism code of practice. This is a priority for the government and senior Children's management have attended the Neurodivergence Improvement Programme - Information, Advice & In-person Assistance information day to start implementing this work.

The team receives a number of referrals from autistic adults, parents / carers of children / autistic young people, education, health, carers etc. Many of the referrals are handled through consultation with the referring employee and thereby developing knowledge, skills and their ability to deal with autistic individuals. The team's intention is not to do the work for other employees but to upskill them.

The team continues its consultative role and works collaboratively with professionals to provide advice and guidance. The team has developed a wealth of resources they can share as well as evidence-based or practice-based to support intervention. As part of the consultation offer, key workers can offer short-term, outcome-based direct support to

individuals and undertake 1-1 interventions. Progress and change are measured using the result of the result star.

The team continues to develop and have access to a wide range of training based on the work we provide. Cygnet edition 4 (2024), sensory integration training, diet/sensory circularity proves to be successful.

Work continues with Derwen to identify young people aged 14+ who are diagnosed with autism but will not meet the criteria for adult services. A social worker works collaboratively with Derwen employees to develop outcome-based pathway plans to increase independence to ensure needs are met but also focus on skills development, opportunities to socialise, upskill and provide information and education to parents to realistically prepare for when the individual turns 18.

The team continues to work on the Llwybrau Ni project, which provides social opportunities for young people, breaks for parents and carers of individuals diagnosed with autism, individuals awaiting assessment/diagnosis and individuals who will not meet the criteria for specialist services when they transition to adult age. The groups are proving to be successful. The team have developed their own autism training workshop supported by the developmental neuro service and co-produced it with the neuro diversity community. The 'Social work through a diverse neuro lens' training has been carried out twice. This training sits on the national autism training framework under 'autism enhanced training', therefore practitioners who assess needs and work directly with autistic individuals and their families are targeted to attend.

A Task and Finish Group on the Autism Scheme has been replaced as a result of a recommendation from the Care Scrutiny Committee. This work will be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee in April 2025.

3. PERFORMANCE AND MEASURES

- 3.1 I wish to draw your attention to the following matters, which are unrelated to the Priority Projects, but are being addressed by the department because they are affecting the performance of services and/or causing us concern.
- 3.2 Workforce Capacity - The workforce situation remains a matter of concern. Through the Workforce Planning and Gofalwn Cymru project we have started to implement targeted recruitment campaigns. 40 names were referred forward to the services through the SOS campaign during this period. There was also a highly successful recruitment drive in Porthmadog in early June 2024 which saw success in attracting resident workers for the Small Group Homes. We attracted 36 people to the event, and it is with pride we can note that all of the posts have now been filled.
- 3.3 Demand and Type of Support - The department continues to see that the nature of the cases being referred and supported demonstrates that the needs of children and families are complicating and intensifying, to the extent where a broad, comprehensive, and extremely specialist support and care package is needed. This can be seen for all services within the Children's Department. Demand for service is rising, with numbers open to teams at its highest. The Referral Team has received 1906 addresses / enquiries in quarter 1, which is 200 more than the same period last year. It is also noted that there is a significant increase in Section 5 Matters (allegations against individuals in positions of trust). The 16+ Team also

continues to report that demand for services is at its highest, with 210 cases being opened to them present. In addition, the demand for the Derwen service, especially the supporting element has increased. Concern was noted about this element and the high workload of staff. The workload is not sustainable or healthy in the long term.

- 3.4 In terms of the department's measures, I am generally happy with their performance. There are no measures that currently cause me any concern, but I will be working with the Head of Department through the usual performance challenge arrangements.

4. FINANCIAL SITUATION / SAVINGS

- 4.1 Since the previous financial review when an overspend of £3.2 million was reported it has now increased to £3.7 million; primarily as a result of an increase in the costs of out-of-county locations. There has been an increase in package complexities and an increase in the use of unregistered placements due to a lack of suitable placements to meet the needs of young people. As a result of the extraordinary overspending by the Department for Children and Families, the Chief Executive has commissioned work to clarify the detail of the picture in childcare, to gain a better understanding of the issues and a clear programme to respond. The work will be led by the Statutory Director of Social Services.

- 4.2 There are 2 savings plans in the department for 2024-25. The first for £7,960 relating to efficiencies in the Youth Justice Service. This has been realised. The second for £150,000 relating to the establishment of small group housing. 3 houses have now been purchased with the intention of one being operational before the end of the financial year.

5. Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

ii. Head of Finance Department:

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation of the Children and Supporting Families Department.

a. Views of the Local Member:

- i. Not a local matter.

b. Results of Any Consultation:

- i. None to note.
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