

MEETING	Care Scrutiny Committee
DATE	03.04.25
TITLE	Gwynedd Mental Health Service
REASON FOR SCRUTINY	Council Plan 2023-28 – A Caring Gwynedd
AUTHOR	Mannon Emyr Trappe
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr Dilwyn Morgan

1. Why does it need to be scrutinised?

At a meeting of the Committee on 22 June 2023, the members received an overview of the Gwynedd Mental Health Service's work and the plans in place to bring the integrated team with health to a close and create a new working model. The committee decided to request a progress report on the new working model in a year's time.

2. What exactly needs to be scrutinised?

- Does the new model provide a better service, and does it operate more efficiently?
- What are the views of service users about the new service model?
- How does the relationship with health work in the context of the new arrangements?
- What exactly is the new model?
- Is there scope within the structure to adapt and change – to improve?
- How many people receive a service annually?
- How many people are on the waiting list for a service?
- Are there some people who do not receive a service or are refused? If so, how many?

3. A Summary of the Key Matters

In June 2023, the Mental Health Service submitted a report to the Scrutiny Committee identifying the situation of the Mental Health Service in Gwynedd. The report was compiled by Dr Ceryl Davies, a Consultant from the University of Wales Bangor. The purpose of the report was to identify the Council's contribution to the service, to consider how we were fulfilling the requirements of the service, within the context of statutory responsibilities, and

to consider whether resources could be better allocated to enable the workforce to give sufficient attention to preventive work and support key well-being. The Committee Members requested that we report back on the findings of the review and on any recommendations for providing a suitable mental health service in the future.

4. Background / Context

The social policy framework in Wales outlines a long-term strategic vision that focuses on a system-wide approach to Health and Social Care services. Following Sustainable Social Services: An Action Framework (2011), the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 came into effect which focused on creating services that respond to the current and future needs of the population and community, through an ethos of prevention, well-being and multi-agency practice based on the individual's strengths.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SERVICE SINCE 1996

- i. The Mental Health Service was an integrated multidisciplinary service since 1996, with the Health Board (BCUHB) leading the Service. The Service operated in accordance with the Mental Health Measure 2010, which places a duty on local health boards and local authorities to ensure there is an appropriate service in place that focuses on the mental health needs of individuals.
- ii. The Together for Mental Health Strategy is a strategy produced by the Welsh Government to improve mental health and the provision available to support individuals across Wales.
- iii. The Integrated Mental Health Service offered a service and support to low-level cases and to more intensive cases.
- iv. Referrals were received from GPs and all referrals were scrutinised daily (Monday to Friday) and assessed to determine whether there was sufficient information to accept the referral (i.e. evidence of a mental illness or an impact on mental well-being). Referrals that did not reach the requirements for a service were referred back to the GP with an explanation, and offering alternative support options.
- v. The Measure required assessments to be conducted within 28 days, and urgent assessments within 48 hours, and required that crisis cases receive a response within 4 hours.
- vi. Social Workers were the main resource within the integrated mental health service, offering support to individuals to overcome or cope with their illness.
- vii. Since the Integrated Service was led by the Health Board, there was a strong focus on the medical model – i.e. diagnosis and medication. Our role as a local authority was to focus on the social elements and to also lead on the work under the Mental Health Act 1983.

A REPORT BY DR CERYL DAVIES, SOCIAL CARE ECONOMIST, SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SCIENCES, BANGOR UNIVERSITY (September 2022)

Dr Ceryl Davies was commissioned to assess the situation of the Integrated Health Service, and the findings of this Report were presented to the Care Scrutiny Committee on 22/06/2023.

The key finding from the work was an agreement that the integrated mental health model with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) was not sustainable and needed to be remodelled.

The conclusions of this report have already been discussed and highlighted at the Care Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22 June 2023.

REMODELLING THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

- i. To align with the social policy ethos of Wales, the Cyngor Gwynedd Adults Services have reviewed the current Social Work aspect of the Mental Health Service and remodelled the structure of the Service. This meant replacing the integrated service, continuing to coordinate and provide comprehensive support to the residents of Gwynedd with their mental health needs.
- ii. The newly reformed service means that Mental Health Social Workers, employed by Cyngor Gwynedd, provide appropriate mental health and social service within the community, focusing on what matters to the individual and on recovery for individuals with their mental health needs.
- iii. The service focuses on the four elements of the Social Services and Well-being Act, 2014:
 - voice and control for individuals, which puts the individual at the heart of care;
 - prevention and early intervention, preventative action to reduce deterioration and the need for Emergency care;
 - well-being, supporting individuals to manage their own well-being;
 - co-production, which encourages individuals to become more involved in planning and delivering services tailored to their need.
- iv. The Council's annual budget for the service is £5,197,300.

CYNGOR GWYNEDD MENTAL HEALTH SOCIAL SERVICE

Posts employed by Cyngor Gwynedd:

Post	Arfon	De Gwynedd
Area Lead	1	1
Senior Practitioner	1	1
Social Workers	6.5	6
Social Work Practitioners	-----	0.5
Support Workers	4.5	4.5
Administrator	1	

- The teams are split into the Arfon and South Gwynedd areas. The Arfon team are based in the Council's Main Offices in Caernarfon, while the South Gwynedd team are based in the Galw Gwynedd Site, Penrhyndeudraeth, with some of the South Gwynedd Team occasionally working from the Council's office in Dolgellau.
- A successful bid was made to employ 2 new senior practitioners to enable the service re-design to take place. This significant investment by the Council has been key to ensuring that the service is in a position to meet the needs of individuals in a timely manner.
- This structure will be monitored to ensure it is fit for purpose and to learn if there is any evidence to adapt the structure to meet the need.

- 9 of the Social Workers are also AMHPs under the Mental Health Act 1983, and 2 are currently training to gain the AMHP qualification. There are an additional 3 AMHPs working within other teams within the adults field.
- Attracting and keeping AMHP's has been a challenge therefore the Department has reviewed the salaries to ensure that there is recognition for the complex role and also to ensure that we are competitive with neighbouring counties

MENTAL HEALTH – THE CURRENT SITUATION

According to statistics, 1 in every 4 person experiences a mental health disorder in the UK every year, which can include anxiety or depression. Generally, the mental health of people in North Wales is slightly better than Wales as a whole, but a small increase in cases of general mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression, is expected between now and 2040. Whilst clinical mental health cases are expected to decrease. It is difficult to predict whether this decrease is because of a reduction in demand, or a reduction in the availability of acute mental health beds. Research also suggests that the numbers experiencing a mental health disorder are higher than the numbers receiving treatment – this may be because not everyone who experiences a mental health disorder seeks support.

In 2022-23, the National Survey included questions to assess people's mental well-being. The following figures compare the average scores for mental well-being per year. We saw an overall decrease in the scores between 2016-17 and 2022-23. The average score was 50.9 in 2016-17, compared with 48.2 in 2022-23. It shows that there is likely to be a decline in mental wellbeing and the need for support will increase because of this. It is also likely that the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on mental wellbeing and a study has shown that young people experience more anxiety since that period. (Kupcova, I., Danisovic, L., Klein, M. et al. *Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health, anxiety, and depression. BMC Psychol* 11, 108 (2023).)

50.9	2016-17
51.4	2018-19
48.9	2021-22
48.2	2022-23

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2016-17, 2018-19, 2021-22, 2022-23

Service caseload -	
Individuals open to the service	439
Number of referrals to the Service since May 2024	281
Number of s.117 cases open	233
Number of carers assessments	12
Nifer o asesiadau o dan y Ddeddf Iechyd Meddwl	133

There was a waiting list for assessment in De Gwynedd for up to 9 weeks at the end of 2024.

This was caused by staff sickness. There is currently no waiting list.

The above performance measures are reported to the quarterly performance scrutiny meeting. It is too early to identify any trends, but our performance measures will be reviewed to ensure that the data collected is meaningful (number of individuals referred to other agencies).

5. Consultation

Several meetings were held with Area Leaders, Social Workers and Mental Health Support Workers to discuss the integrated mental health service and to discuss the best way forward, in terms of the need to re-model, drawing attention to the main challenges and barriers highlighted in Dr Ceryl Davies's report. It became apparent that most staff agreed with the recommendation to remodel the service and were very keen to be involved in the process and to share experiences and any examples of good practice that could be incorporated into the new model.

A number of Workshops were held with staff, drawing up a clear programme of work, to ensure that the main procedures were given full consideration, and that staff had the opportunity to provide input.

The following were discussed:

- Dr Ceryl Davies's report – the research process, the key findings, risks and barriers, workstreams
- Front door and criteria for receiving a service
- Various documents e.g. the assessment document; risk assessment (process); referral form; support plan
- Processes and guidelines – Information Governance / Operating Guidance
- Training needs
- Communication plan
- Policies and procedures (e.g. agreement for information sharing/case review)
- Finance
- Using the operating System (WCCiS)

In addition to consulting with Cyngor Gwynedd staff, BCUHB Senior Managers were given frequent opportunities to provide input on the integrated service, but no response was received. The Council wrote to the Chair of the Health Board to state our intentions but there was no reply.

Since the new service was established in May 2024, there have been 3 meetings with the service to review the new arrangements. These meetings have given us the opportunity to scrutinise the working method and our documents to ensure we are operating in a way that is fit for purpose.

In line with the other services within the Department, the team now records on WCCiS (BCUHB continues to record on paper files). The recording procedure is much more secure and facilitates the Department's audit work.

Customer satisfaction:

We intend to send a questionnaire to individuals who have/ are receiving support from the Service. These findings will steer service development.

Staff satisfaction -

It is quite clear that the remodelling of the service has improved the staff's well-being. Here are some comments by members of the service –

"feel part of the Council"

"the person comes first instead of the process"

"I get to be a Social Worker"

"practice focuses on the strengths of the individual rather than what we are able to offer"

The Area Leaders and Senior Practitioners have attended the meetings of the Community Area Teams to ensure there is an understanding of the service and the criteria and to promote collaboration.

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

Have you involved residents / service users? If not, when and how do you intend to consult with them?

In May it will be one year since establishing the new service. We intend to send out a simple questionnaire to individuals receiving a service to scrutinise their views on the newly reformed service.

Have you considered collaboration?

There is a statutory duty on all local authorities to act in accordance with the Social Services and Well-being Act (2014). Good joint-working takes place with other local authorities across the region in terms of sharing good practice and information, and with the Health Board at a local level.

What has been done or will be done to prevent problems arising or worsening in the future?

We believe the Department has made an effort to respond to the challenges and is continuing to try to find practical solutions. We cannot predict with any certainty what will be the situation in future, but the number of referrals to the service is increasing and it is essential that we continue to work with our third-sector partners and the wider community to support individuals within their communities.

How have you considered the long term and what people's needs will be in years to come?

The changes to the Service have been introduced to ensure that the Council can fulfil its duties in the long term.

To ensure integration, have you considered the potential impact on other public bodies?

The decision to establish Mental Health Social Services went against the Senedd's desires to ensure integration. The decision was made to safeguard the Council's workforce and to ensure that we meet our statutory obligations. All local authorities across the region have

now established services separate to BCUHB. Nevertheless, close collaboration continues with the services locally.

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

The workforce strives to ensure that the active offer is made when assessing individuals and when engaging with their families. This will be noted on the 'What Matters' assessment.

8. Next Steps

We have made a request to BCUHB to attend their weekly clinical meetings in order to discuss cases and enable us to transfer cases rather than having to make a referral from one service to another.

Groups have been running in Arfon for a number of years and work is ongoing to establish 2 groups in De Gwynedd (Nefyn and Dolgellau). Mental wellbeing affects everyone and therefore these groups will be open to all who access adult services in Gwynedd.

We intend to send a questionnaire to service users to ask their views about the service and find out what can be done better.

9. Appendices

[Lles meddyliol \(Arolwg Cenedlaethol Cymru\): Ebrill 2022 i Mawrth 2023 | LLYW.CYMRU](#)
[Mental well-being \(National Survey for Wales\): April 2022 to March 2023 | GOV.WALES](#)