

Review of the inclusion provision in Gwynedd

**Caroline Rees Ltd.
December 2023**

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- The Local Authority has been brave in stepping forward to try and create centres to support the most vulnerable pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).
- Generally, the arrangement has been structured so that it is stronger than the previous programme namely, Pecyn 25.
- The principle of linking such provision with secondary schools has strong potential.
- In terms of what was seen during the review, the relationship between the staff and the young people in their care is robust and has the potential to resolve some of the pupils' difficulties. Some pupils and their parents testify that they have made very good progress when working with hub staff.
- In the cases where pupils have consistently attended, the hubs have managed to secure basic qualifications and progression for the pupil to a destination following their days in the hub.
- The staff succeed beyond what one would expect the conditions, resources and structures to permit.
- The quality assurance systems in place are insufficient.
- Following discussions with the headteachers, it appears that the schools vary considerably in the provision offered to try and restore pupils with SEBD.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The local authority needs to work with school leaders to co-produce an effective county-wide strategy of in-school and out-of-school provision that embraces key principles of clarity of purpose, ownership, quality assurance and progression
- Finding suitable locations for out-of-school provision
- To ensure that the strategy is implemented effectively, we recommend that the formal status of the Pupil Referral Unit is adopted for out-of-school provision for pupils with SEBD who would benefit from such provision.

Background

- During January/February 2020, Mrs Caroline Rees was commissioned to undertake a review of the Gwynedd/Anglesey Additional Learning Needs Strategy (ALN) and Inclusion. The review was conducted over a period of four weeks.
- A comprehensive report was provided, outlining the steps for further development and the outcome of one of the fields noted was the need to develop the provision for behaviour in year 9 and key stage 4, including a better model for Pecyn 25 (namely the alternative provision for learners who could not succeed in main stream education).

Following this work, the Inclusion service was totally reorganised to change the provision. This included:

- Remodelling the Inclusion Service staffing structure to include outreach support and to create one Specialist Resources Centre (Llechen Lân)
- Commissioning two Secondary Schools to provide Hubs for young people in years 9-11 with significant SEBD, with the focus within the Hubs to provide:
 - Pupils with a wider range of subjects
 - For pupils to be taught by qualified teachers

The aim of the revised/new provision was to:

- Improve the continuum of provision offered to children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Ensure an appropriate educational provision for learners with social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.
- Reduce the number of exclusions, especially permanent exclusions
- Reduce the number of children/young people who become known to the Children's Services or become NEET.

Estyn Inspection - June 2023

Estyn noted the following shortcomings:

- *the steps that should be followed at school or the interventions that should be put in place before applying for a pupil to access to the behaviour support hubs are not as clear.*

- *The status of these settings is unclear as they are not registered as pupil referral units, although that is how they operate.*
- *The social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils who attend the individual hubs vary. As a result, tailoring provision to meet the specific needs of individual pupils within these hubs is challenging.*
- *There is too much variation in the suitability of the accommodation and the range of learning resources in the hubs to provide specialist education that supports the well-being and behaviour of vulnerable pupils.*
- *Although a range of relevant officers are part of the initial arrangements for placing pupils in the hubs, there is insufficient contact between them and the hub managers to support their work and provide them with the necessary guidance.*
- *This includes inconsistency in monitoring, quality assurance and risk assessment arrangements.*
- *As a result, senior officers in Gwynedd do not have a strategic overview of the outcomes or the nature or quality of the provision at the hubs.*

(An excerpt of the Gwynedd Estyn report can be found in Appendix 2).

Estyn (June 2023) made three recommendations:

R1 Ensure that leaders act strategically on all aspects of their work and that they have suitable oversight and full consideration of risk regarding important aspects that have arisen during the inspection

R2 Improve arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and promoting pupils' attendance

R3 Strengthen the provision to respond to the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and ensure arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of that provision.

All these are relevant to this review. Although the second recommendation is relevant to attendance across the whole of Gwynedd, attendance in the centres is an area that causes concern.

Following the Estyn inspection, Caroline Rees Ltd. was commissioned to undertake a further review. This brief can be seen in appendix 1.

Nature of the review

The review included.

Team meetings with headteachers/deputy headteachers from the following schools:

- Ysgol Ardudwy – Aled Williams
- Ysgol Tywyn – David Thorp
- Ysgol Botwnnog – Aled Williams
- Ysgol Bro Idris – Jano Owen
- Ysgol Brynrefail – Arwyn Williams
- Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen – Dylan Davies
- Ysgol Eifionydd – Dewi Bowen
- Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle – Rhian Parry Jones
- Ysgol Glan y Mor – Guto Wyn
- Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen – Clive Thomas
- Ysgol Tryfan – Geraint Jones
- Ysgol y Moelwyn – Eleri Moss
- Ysgol Friars – Martin Williams

Meetings on Teams with staff responsible for the centres:

- Caren Ann Williams (Llechen Lân)
- Dyfrig Jones (Ysgol Tryfan)
- Barry Evans (Ysgol y Moelwyn)

and additional separate meetings with both Headteachers supervising the Hubs, Geraint Jones and Eleri Moss.

Teams meetings with LA officers

- Ffion Edwards Ellis (Senior ALN&I Manager)
- Ellen Rowlands, (Inclusion Manager)
- John Eifion Jones (Welfare and Inclusion Officer)

- Meinir Bolton (Senior Welfare Officer)
- Lora Glynwen Williams (Quality Officer)
- Non Eleri Samuel (ALN&I Quality Officer)
- Elenid Glyn (Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist)
- Dora Wendi Jones (Senior Counsellor)
- Gwyn Tudur (Assistant Head of Department: Secondary Schools)

Visits to the centres and Llechen Lân, including face-to-face meetings with staff

1. Moelwyn – Tŷ'r Ysgol
2. Porthmadog Football Club
3. Chapel in Bangor
4. Caernarfon Football Club
5. Llechen Lân

Talks with pupils, staff and parents and surveys

Scrutiny of documents, including:

- 2023 Estyn Report
- Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Strategy (summary)
- Memorandum of Understanding 'Inclusion Commission' Gwynedd Secondary Schools
- Management Board's Terms of Reference
- Reports to the Management Board
- Minutes of Management Board meetings 16/3/23 and 14/7/23
- Agenda of the Gwynedd Hubs Management Board 14/7/23 - virtual
- The Referral System to Canolfan Llechen Lân and Educational Hubs
- Development Plan for the Arfon Inclusion Hubs 2022-23 and 2023-24
- Inclusion Team Business Plan March 2022 - March 2023 and March 2023 - March 2024
- Hub pupils' timetables
- Monitoring / Management Board Spreadsheet
- Minutes of meeting with Ysgol y Moelwyn's Quality Officer
- Llechen Lân handbook for parents
- Key questions to consider before excluding a pupil
- Managed Moves Protocol (MMP)
- Examples of Risk Assessments
- General Information Booklet for Parents and Pupils - Moelwyn Hub

Findings and Recommendations

Strategic Planning for behaviour by the local authority

- In 2023, Estyn reported that a significant improvement had been made to the strategic planning of services for pupils with SEBD:

Over time, the strategic and operational processes of Gwynedd education services to respond to the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties have improved significantly. The vision of leaders to strengthen provision for these vulnerable pupils is now clear and suitable.

- One of the key changes was developing secondary hubs, closely linked with two secondary schools. The hubs at Ysgol Tryfan and Ysgol y Moelwyn opened in September 2021. Llechen Lân has been open since 2018. Originally there were three such centres - Tŷ Nantlle, Tŷ Cybi and Tŷ Moelwyn.
- Since September 2021, there has been only one centre namely Tŷ Nantlle.
- Although the hubs allow access from years 9 to 11, year 9 is seen as an exception. This is a weakness in the system that should demand attention. Year 9 is often a critical year in the learner's development.
- The County has a clear strategy for Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion. This explains the range of services available to support children with SEBD, including local authority teams and hubs. The County has a Memorandum of Understanding which is the basis to the Gwynedd Secondary Schools 'Inclusion Commission'.
- The Memorandum of Understanding sets out key roles and responsibilities, including:
 - How learners gain access to the provision
 - What is being provided
 - What will be the learner's registration status
 - Budget
 - Who has Responsibility for the quality and management of the provision
 - Information about the Management Board
- Despite the above, one of the main concerns raised from this review is the lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities.

Planning for Improvement

- During meetings with schools and local authority staff, they noted the following points:
- There is a lack of provision for pupils in year 9 - Llechen Lân is for years 5 to 8. The secondary centres are mainly for years 10 and 11. Year 9 pupils attend as an exception only, whilst it is recognised by educators that Year 9 is often a critical year in developing appropriate behaviour for learning.
- The secondary centres are not as effective as they should be.
- Although behaviour is discussed regularly in meetings with deputy headteachers or inclusion managers, headteachers rarely participate in strategic discussions with LA officers on behavioural provision or other initiatives.
- Several headteachers feel that they are told about decisions made by LA officers, but they are not involved in the discussions before the decisions are made.
- A significant number of headteachers feel that their opinions are not sought regularly to develop county-wide strategies which affect their schools and learners.
- There is a view amongst Headteachers that behaviour has become more challenging since the pandemic (this is also reflected outside Gwynedd).
- Many headteachers feel that it is time to have a county-wide conversation to introduce a comprehensive plan to improve behaviour and support those learners where their behaviour undermines their own education and the education of others.
- The LA has a series of development plans. One of these plans given to the review team is the Inclusion Team's Business Plan which states some of the areas where improvement is needed. However, this plan should be improved in the following ways:
 - In several cases, the actions are too broad e.g. 'Planning purposeful support for the County's most vulnerable pupils' and 'Continue to develop the KS3 (Y9) provision Programme underway'. This makes it difficult for officers to know what needs to be done. The actions need to be broken down into smaller steps.
 - Often, the target dates are not specific enough e.g. 'Ongoing.'
 - There is no evidence in this document to show that progress has been made against the 22/23 plan and that it has been monitored or evaluated. A column should be added where progress against each action is recorded and monitored.
 - This plan notes the steps to be achieved by the Inclusion Team, but it is unclear how the plan links with the plans of other teams.

- To ensure an improvement, a general development plan is required dealing with the SEBD field, which includes the required actions by a range of services and schools.

The LA reports that they have improved the monitoring processes compared to what was noted above.

Recommendations:

Establish a group to develop a clear strategy to support SEBD pupils, which includes senior school leaders and the LA officers.

Develop an ethos of co-production where school leaders and LA officers work together to ensure improvement, rather than the LA informing the schools about what will happen.

Addressing the gap in the provision for year 9 pupils.

Provision for pupils with SEBD in mainstream schools

- The ability of secondary mainstream schools across Gwynedd to satisfy the needs of SEBD pupils varies. The senior managers of some schools could describe a wide range of interventions and alternative curriculum options used to engage with and retain pupils. Others were less aware of the possibilities. These include curricular adjustments (half-day release), engaging with external providers, counselling support, developing settings on school sites to have a break and tranquillity. Referrals to the panel reflect this difference as schools are asked to provide evidence of what they have done in terms of interventions.
- There is a general feeling that the additional learning needs of some young people contribute significantly to their behavioural difficulties, but sometimes the schools focus on their behaviour more than the educational needs that contribute to their behavioural difficulties. It would be good to model the obvious link between Inclusion and ALN.
- The LA offers training to every school in, for example, the trauma-informed schools' scheme. However, every school does not take broad advantage of the offer. Although the local authority cannot force schools to agree to training, the interviews with the headteachers strongly suggest that there is a desire to have an agreed way forward in terms of behaviour, and it would be timely for the LA to take advantage of such a consensus.

- When school staff attend training, the information they receive is not always transferred effectively to other staff. Ideally, whole-school training should be undertaken. However, it is recognised that this is not always practical.
- School leaders and authority staff in general recognise that provision should be provided in the mainstream, every time this is possible. However, when an arrangement breaks down, it is sometimes necessary for a pupil to move to another school. The managed moves (MM) protocol clearly describes the steps to be taken. In 2023, Estyn reported:

The authority's 'managed moves' protocol and arrangements are appropriate and lead to positive outcomes for pupils in a majority of cases.

- However, every school does not follow the protocol. LA officers state that the LA is used to taking part in every MM. However, by now, officers state that headteachers are more likely to pick up the phone to another school to ask them to take a pupil.
- It is suggested, sometimes, that schools persuade parents to allow their child to move schools to avoid a permanent exclusion.
- The number of MM reported to the LA by schools is likely to be incorrect as schools do not always follow the agreed protocol. The local authority notes that they have raised this concern many times with the schools.
- The lack of correct data noted in the previous point means that it is difficult for the local authority to monitor patterns and the seriousness of the situation.
- Some schools take a high number of MM pupils. This places pressure on these schools.
- The provision across Gwynedd is mainly through the medium of Welsh, and pupils are expected to be completely bilingual. However, every pupil moving from Ysgol Friars to other schools or the Hubs do not have a sufficient grasp of the Welsh language to be able to participate fully in a Welsh-speaking atmosphere and therefore the hubs operate with a high percentage of the work in English.

Recommendations:

To tackle the variations between schools, there is a need to develop a system to share good practice in terms of managing inclusion.

The local authority needs to work with the headteachers to have ownership for any agreed way forward. This may mean an agreement in terms of strategy and a wide training programme for all the county's schools.

Working with the schools to ensure that the MM protocol is honoured fully by every school.

Impact of the strategy on behaviour/exclusions, attendance and those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Exclusions

- It is reported that the behaviour of most pupils is better in the hubs than in their previous settings. However, there are no formal systems in place to track behaviour and to note trends.
- It is usual for behaviour settings such as these centres to have an electronic recording system which allows staff to analyse data, note the tendencies and use the information to plan as well as to appraise the effectiveness of the provision and the interventions.
- Llechen Lân measures the progress of pupils in relation to their behaviour and social interaction by using the Boxall Profile and 6-week and 12-week reviews. However, they would also benefit from an electronic system as mentioned above.
- Similarly, there is no system in place to analyse or to show the general effectiveness of the provision e.g. the percentage of pupils who successfully return to school.
- The LA has produced useful guidelines for schools. including key questions to consider before excluding a pupil.
- The Inclusion Welfare Officer works with schools to ensure that consistent processes are adopted.
- The number of permanent exclusions from secondary schools in Gwynedd was significantly higher in 2022/23 than in previous years, as shown by the following table:

Year -	Secondary Permanent	Secondary Fixed Period
2017/18	4	282
2018/19	13	349
2019/20	13	410
2020/21	6	418
2021/22	8	504
2022/23	44	736

This is the case, despite the fact that one of the aims of the hub provision was to 'Reduce the number of exclusions, especially permanent exclusions'. **This is a subject that requires immediate significant attention by the authority and the schools.**

Recommendation:

Working urgently to review the significant and rapid increase in permanent exclusions from secondary schools and agree on a way forward.

Attendance

- There are examples where engagement and pupil attendance has improved significantly, but this is not true of all pupils.
- Generally, attendance at the hubs is low, although it should be acknowledged that many pupils come from very challenging backgrounds, and some have lost considerable periods of education prior to being placed in the hubs.
- There is no system to analyse the patterns in attendance or punctuality.
- In Bangor and Caernarfon, the attendance figures reported only represent the sessions that individual pupils are expected to attend, e.g. a pupil allocated 12 hours a week will be noted as 100% attendance if they attend those 12 hours. This gives a misleading impression to the management board.

Recommendations:

Develop systems to track the behaviour and attendance/punctuality of pupils in the hubs and Llechen Lân.

Use the data to note and evaluate trends and plan interventions.

Ensure that the attendance figures recorded and reported are correct, for example, if a pupil only has two days' provision every week, his attendance cannot be more than 40%.

Explain when registers should be closed during morning and afternoon sessions. The LA should monitor attendance.

Centres should record punctuality, as well as attendance, to note patterns and put patterns and strategies in place to improve punctuality.

Young people not in education, employment or training - NEET

From Careers Wales data, of year 11 destinations having left school, the figures are as follows.

Numbers and NEET %

2019

Gwynedd 25 (2.2%)

Wales 537 (1.8%)

2020

Gwynedd 14 (1.2%)

Wales 527 (1.7%)

2021

Gwynedd 18 (1.5%)

Wales 365 (1.1%)

2022

Gwynedd 23 (1.8%)

Wales 664 (2.1%)

- As there are a comparatively small number in the County, it is difficult to come to meaningful conclusions on what the data says. However, it can be seen that the Gwynedd figure is annually within the limits and fairly close to the Wales figures.
- When chatting with the young people in the hub, it became evident that some had managed to identify their target career, and they noted that it was the hub that had encouraged them. Without this encouragement, it is probable that these would be NEETs. According to the evidence submitted by the hubs, their pupils have managed to get educational progression, a job or training following their time in the hub. However, concern was expressed about 2023-24 pupils who appear to be more challenging, and their attendance is poorer.
- It is early to track hub pupils through their further education/career but it would be valuable for the hubs to try and retain such data.

Support for Secondary Schools

- Schools turn to a range of people to support the children in most need in terms of SEBD e.g. educational psychologists, Outreach team, social workers, counselling service, children services, welfare services, youth workers and charities.
- The services that were questioned have noted that they tend to work in isolation, without integration with other services.
- The headteachers state that not all schools are clear on to how to get hold of the different services, or how they can be used most effectively.
- Recently the Outreach team has been expanded to support secondary schools as well as primary schools. Reports are written following every visit. School staff appreciate the fact that they now have someone to talk to. However, there is no system in place to enable the team to analyse trends or to evaluate the value of the visits.
- Llechen Lân have recorded evidence (Boxall Profile) which indicates that secondary pupils who receive a provision from Llechen Lân generally make good progress in terms of behaviour during their comparatively short stay and return to the mainstream.
- Concern was expressed that children are returning to school following a period at Llechen Lân but that support is inconsistent once they return to their own school.
- The Llechen Lân Outreach work is more developed in the primary sector, and there are capacity challenges in terms of the secondary sector.
- Educational psychologists have provided trauma and attachment training to the schools. Calls for them to work in the hubs are rare, and the team would like to offer therapeutic interventions for hub pupils.

Recommendation:

In partnership with school leaders, the Local Authority should ensure that the clear map published from the graded responses to support SEBD pupils has been understood and received by every school. This includes the journey from school action, initial referral, professional learning for staff, direct engagement with the learner, curricular adjustments, external agencies activities etc.

LA Strategic Planning of the hubs provision

Status of the centres

- Because the hubs are managed by individual schools rather than the local authority, they have not registered as Pupil Referral Units (PRU). Consequently, they are not subject to full Estyn inspections or to protocols and guidelines received as the norm nationally across that sector. This in itself would not be a problem, if robust systems were in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the hubs. However, these systems have not been established.
- An Estyn inspection would probably have highlighted shortcomings of note, including:
 - the lack of teaching by qualified teachers
 - part-time provision for many of the pupils
 - low attendance
 - alternative curriculum and limited enrichment activities
 - safeguarding issues
- The potential advantages of linking the hubs with individual schools are substantial. They include:
 - enabling pupils, where relevant, to follow specialist courses at the school
 - allowing staff to provide a specialist input at the centre
 - providing access to pupils to facilities and resources that are not available in the hub itself
 - enabling centre staff to get access to mainstream training
 - allowing staff to be part of the schools' performance management system and other aspects on school life, in terms of support and career direction
- However, most of the centres are not on a school site. The one hub that is on the Ysgol y Moelwyn site at the time of this review was operating with only one pupil.

Recommendation: The hubs need to be registered as Pupil Referral Units to ensure that pupils receive the provision they require and that the hubs are managed and monitored in accordance with national expectations.

Funding the Hubs

- There is no cheap option to provide education for pupils outside mainstream schools, and residential provision can cost more than £250k a year per pupil.
- The memorandum of understanding sets out the arrangements to fund the hubs - £158k for each HUB for the 2023-2024 financial year (inflation of £11k from 22/23). The funding is delegated to the school's finance.
- Although the money is delegated to the school's budget, the LA should have responsibility for monitoring the hubs, and their budgets.
- As far as we can see, the LA does not monitor the use made of finance by the schools in their hubs.
- There is a lack of joint understanding regarding whether the funding is sufficient to provide high-quality education to the pupils in the hubs.
- The local authority has allocated funding for the hubs to the schools to develop them as required. Consequently, there is no evident consistency in the staffing structures. The head of the hub in Bangor/Caernarfon is employed as a deputy headteacher of a secondary school.
- An experienced senior manager of a secondary school could be expected to lead on the teaching and give examples of effective pedagogy to the support staff. This is not currently part of the hub head's role.
- Only a little is spent on alternative curriculum activities or on enrichment programmes which are essential for these pupils.
- The two schools who have taken responsibility for managing the hubs feel that the resource allocated by the LA is insufficient. However, authority officers take a different view on this matter. An evaluation should be undertaken on the exact nature of what the authority expects from the allocated budget.
- The colleges (and possibly the employers) are aware of the needs of these pupils, and they often expect a member of staff to attend the college with the pupil. This is only realistic as attendance is low in the hubs. Should attendance improve within the hubs, the Authority and the hubs will need to discuss how to staff access to the College, while also maintaining the teaching of groups back in the hub

Recommendations:

That the local authority and the two hub schools work together to evaluate the use and size of the finance provided to schools to sustain the hubs.

The appraisal of posts required to ensure the management, pedagogy and effective support for the pupils within the hubs.

Staffing

The three centres have very different staffing structures:

Y Moelwyn:

- 1 Inclusion Officer
- 2 assistants
- initial support from the Ysgol y Moelwyn head of well-being and inclusion

(at times, one member of staff works in Tŷ'r Ysgol at Ysgol y Moelwyn with only one pupil, as the rest are in Porthmadog).

Caernarfon and Bangor:

- Head of the Hub (deputy headteacher at Ysgol Tryfan)
 - 3 Senior Assistants in Bangor
 - 2 Senior Assistants in Caernarfon
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- To move on effectively, consistency in practice would be beneficial.
 - It should be recognised, although they are not qualified as teachers, the support staff are completely committed to their work and have developed very positive and trusting relationships with the pupils.
 - The job description for Senior Assistants in Arfon hubs includes the following roles and responsibilities:
 - Plan, prepare and present elements of the core subjects, wider curriculum together with therapeutic curriculum for individuals or groups.
 - Monitor, assess, record and report on the successes of these elements.
 - Thoroughly record progress and achievement and provide evidence of the range and level of progress and attainment.
 - Assess, record and report on pupils' progress.
 - The above is more appropriate to a teacher's job description. In addition, the Moelwyn Hub leader works to the same job description as the Senior Assistants in Tryfan, although the full time deputy headteacher of the secondary school leads the Tryfan Hub.
 - We have not seen the job description for the Arfon hub head.
 - In the case of Ysgol y Moelwyn, a senior teacher at the school was involved in the development of the hub, however, by now involvement in the hub has reduced.

Recommendations

Appraisal of the roles required to run the hubs and review the job descriptions of existing staff to ensure that salaries and responsibilities are in keeping with each other.

Create an appropriate staffing structure for each of the hubs, including the possibility of a general manager for the county.

Professional development for hub staff

- There is a lack of consistency in the training received by staff at the centres
- All the staff who spoke stated that they had received Management of Actual or Potential Aggression training (MAPA).
- Staff in Caernarfon feel that they have received a great deal of training, but also benefit from being two former teachers.
- Staff in Bangor say that overall the training they have received has been targeted to staff dealing with primary age pupils.
- Although training such as ELSA is offered to all staff at the centres, not all staff members take advantage of the opportunity.
- Very recently, quality officers organised ALN training for hub staff, and it was acknowledged that many of the pupils in the centres had learning needs as well as SEBD needs.
- Some of the support staff in Bangor reported that they were expected to mark pupils' work, but they had not been trained to do this. They are not aware of significant aspects such as assessment for learning.
- Not all members of staff in the hubs have received the appropriate level of recent safeguarding training.
- Apart from the Arfon hub head, who has visited the referral units across the north, staff have very few opportunities to visit other settings to observe good practice.
- It is noted that the Arfon hub head has represented the Authority on the PRU regional working group.

Recommendations:

Authority officers should work with the Hubs/schools to establish a professional learning programme.

This should include mandatory training (such as safeguarding as required to correspond to the needs of staff and pupils. A training programme would be expected to include aspects of learning and teaching, ALN, behaviour management, safeguarding, supporting pupils with emotional needs.

Develop induction training for new staff.

Ensure that there is consistency in the training provided to staff across all the hubs.

Provide opportunities for the staff of every centre to visit other settings to observe good practice.

Strengthen links and networks with national behaviour groups and Pupil Referral Units.

The Locations

- None of the locations are ideal, as shown in the tables below.
- School headteachers say that it their responsibility to find appropriate accommodation.

Tŷ'r Ysgol at Ysgol y Moelwyn

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Plenty of rooms and a huge potential</p> <p>The proximity to the school means that pupils can attend mainstream lessons where appropriate and teachers can come over to teach more specialist subjects – and give advice on the curriculum</p> <p>Work can be displayed on the walls as the building is not usually used by others</p>	<p>The proximity to the school means that hub pupils can get into trouble with pupils in the school</p> <p>A cold, hard, unattractive location down the stairs. Pupils' work is on the walls upstairs. Need substantial investment to improve the building and to achieve the desired purposes.</p>

Porthmadog Football Club

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Classroom, kitchen and a good-sized office. A door to other areas is locked when others are in the building.</p> <p>A warm, attractive location.</p> <p>Pupils can use some of the sports facilities.</p> <p>A volunteer in the Football club is very supportive to hub staff and pupils.</p>	<p>Only one room for the pupils. Staff feel that it is too close to the town and that makes it easy for pupils to disappear.</p> <p>Pupils' work cannot be exhibited on the walls.</p> <p>The equipment must be put away at the end of every session</p>

Bangor – Capel Berea Newydd

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>A modern building with plenty of space, with rooms of various sizes, including a kitchen.</p> <p>Chapel members are supportive and very sensitive e.g. when a window was broken</p>	<p>No outdoor areas for learners.</p> <p>The building is used by members of the public - pupils do not like this. e.g. <i>there is</i> when there is a funeral, a session must be cancelled</p> <p>The children's work cannot be displayed on the walls.</p> <p>Pupils and staff feel a lack of ownership</p> <p>The equipment must be put away at the end of each session.</p>

Caernarfon - Football Club

Strengths	Weaknesses
A fairly purposeful location.	One classroom only, with hard acoustics. Work cannot be displayed on the walls. The equipment must be put away.

- Suitable risk assessments have been completed for some of the sites used, including Capel Berea and the provision off the site for the pupils of Moelwyn hub. However, it does not appear that there is a risk assessment for Tŷ'r Ysgol at y Moelwyn.
- There are examples of suitable risk assessments for individual pupils.
- Some risk assessments are more suitable for mainstream pupils and are not specific enough for the hub provision. For example, for the Arfon hubs there are two assessments called 'Use of the school's mini bus' and 'Challenging behaviour' These are not specific enough for the circumstances or the nature of the hubs.

Recommendations:

The LA should prioritise and urgently secure appropriate accommodation that provides a suitable learning environment that is safe for every pupil. This could entail expenditure on the existing sites to overcome some of the difficulties.

The LA and the school hubs should ensure that there are suitable risk assessments for all the buildings used, including the outdoor areas.

The LA and the school hubs should ensure that there are suitable risk assessments for all the relevant aspects of hub life, which are specific to the needs of the pupils in question.

How to refer pupils to the centres and to Llechen Lân

- The Local Authority has formulated clear guidelines on the steps to be taken prior to making a referral. These are based on what a school should do prior to referring a pupil, except for times of emergency, these are appropriate. These steps can be found in Appendix 3.
- Notwithstanding the above, several headteachers state that they do not know how to procure a place for a pupil in one of the hubs. Others say, when pupils are refused, the school does not receive an explanation why.
- Membership of the panel who make decisions on the placements in the centres include Local Authority officers and the Headteachers of Moelwyn and Tryfan, but does not include other Headteachers. Many Local Authorities include a wider range on their relevant panels e.g. every secondary Headteacher will be there on a rota, to ensure that they all understand the procedure. In many Local Authorities who do this, the headteachers say that panel attendance makes them realise how thorough applications are considered. In addition, they see the variance between schools in terms of what they provide before making a referral.

Recommendations:

Meet with schools to discuss the existing access criteria to ensure that everyone has an agreed understanding.

Invite the headteachers or secondary senior managers to sit on panels on a rota, so that they get a better understanding of the processes.

Quality assurance

- There is some ambiguity about the responsibilities of the authority and the responsibilities of the schools in terms of protecting quality and monitoring standards in the hubs. Thus far, significant responsibility has been given to schools in terms of monitoring teaching quality practices and the quality of the settings. Point 6.6 of the Memorandum of Understanding states "As this is a provision commission the authority will have clear responsibility for quality, consistency and the management of the provision, jointly with the provider schools". Clear action is required on point 6.6
- Commissioning an independent review is a positive step.
- A Management Board was established to supervise the work of the hubs. There are clear terms of reference for the Management Board, including the requirement to meet every quarter.

(with additional meetings if required). However, it has only met once in March 2023 and once in July 2023. There have been no meetings since July.

- Overall, Board membership is appropriate. However, it would be useful to include secondary Headteachers except for Moelwyn and Tryfan (possibly on a rota), to ensure that schools across Gwynedd take ownership of such an important aspect of provision.
- Minutes of the Management Board 16/3/23 reflect the information provided in the reports by the centre leaders. There is no evidence of challenge from the Board.

Concerns are noted but without any clear actions, or action timetable nor officers to take responsibility. As a result, it is difficult to see how the improvements will be made.

- Draft minutes for the July meeting were produced in December. The reason for this delay is unclear. They are in draft form only, without any record of who was present, on what date. The minutes are not detailed enough to show what was discussed or what steps are required. There is no evidence from these minutes that the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed or any reference to them, as would be expected in management board meetings. The template does not make it easy to record the agreed actions or progress made against previous actions.
- The management board receives reports from the hubs. Although these provide some useful information, on the whole they are too positive, and they do not reflect concerns as those raised by Estyn or in this report.
- There are development plans that are relevant to the hubs, but they are inconsistent. In Arfon there is the Development Plan for the Arfon Inclusion Hubs. The plan does not note specifically enough what needs to be done by specific dates to ensure improvement. On the other hand, there is no specific development plan for the Moelwyn hub, however; very limited consideration is given to the hub in the school's development plan.
- The Arfon development plan has been RAG rated. Where actions are scored green, information should be recorded about exactly what has been done. When actions are rated amber or red, an analysis is required as to why these actions have not been completed.
- Since September 2023, the two County quality officers have been asked to support the hubs. This is a very positive step. However, their work has only just started. Sufficient time needs to be set aside for these members of staff to get to know the hubs well, understand their strengths and the areas for development as well as their ability to provide suitable input.
- The quality officers say that the two members of staff who manage the hubs welcome their contribution. They have noted that not many pupils have full-time provision; the current qualifications offered in the hubs are not suitable for every pupil; and many of the pupils an ALN as well as behavioural issues. In response to this, they have started to look at provision maps, discussed the qualifications of Agored Cymru and have established ALN training.

It would also be good for them to facilitate cross-departmental collaboration within the county.

Recommendations:

There is a need to review the purpose of the management board and formalise this in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding, ensuring that every member has a clear understanding of its purpose.

Ensure that reports to the management board highlight any concerns and that the board discusses these robustly, providing support and challenge.

Ensure that report templates are fully completed by the hubs.

Produce clear minutes which reflect the discussions that take place and the agreed actions.

Consideration should be given to inviting secondary headteachers (possibly on a rota basis) to attend Management Board meetings to promote ownership of inclusion services.

Create a full development plan for the hubs, which are separate to the schools' development plans, with obvious areas for improvement.

Make the roles and responsibilities of the hub schools and the LA clear in relation to the quality assurance of the centres.

Ensure that appropriate processes are in place, e.g., performance management/supervision, lesson observation, learning walks, scrutiny of pupils' work.

Develop systems for self-evaluation with quality officers to facilitate planning improvement which enables staff to note the areas for development and the strategies required to make the required improvements.

Collaboration between the Centres

- Although the two hub leaders meet or talk informally, thus far the contact between the two centres has been scarce, which means that there is not much sharing of good practice and benefiting from learning from each other.
- All in all, the two hub leaders were left to develop the hubs in their own way.
- The Memorandum of Understanding and the Terms of Reference for the Management Board describe an operational group that meets three times a term in the first year, and then to be reviewed in the subsequent years. There is no evidence that things have been happening as expected.

Recommendations:

The arrangements for the Operational Group need to be formalised

Quality Officers should work with the Hubs to establish methods to share good practice, co-planning and professional learning.

Partnership work

- There is a general feeling that the hub staff have been left to get on with matters with various support from partners.
- In Caernarfon, staff say that they have sought to engage with youth workers but have been told that there is insufficient capacity within the service to support them.
- The County has senior counsellor, with a team of 12. It appears that the involvement with the hubs is very scarce. The assistants say that they feel that they undertake the counsellor's role as well as teaching.
- There is little evidence that teams within the education directorate nor across the wider council work together to support the hubs.
- A number of those questioned referred to the fact that they felt that social workers should work with them more effectively to address the complex issues for young people. There are some more positive narratives, but generally it is mentioned that the high turnover of social worker staff makes collaboration more difficult.
- Although a very small number of hub pupils attend college courses, there is room to improve links with the college at a strategic level. However, very recently a very positive report about Coleg Menai engaging with a learner via the hub to support a clear progression path was very relevant for the young person.

Recommendation:

The local authority should take the opportunity to look at strengthening cohesion within the council and with other agencies (including Further Education) to support these pupils' education.

Other matters that became evident during the review

The review's main focus was to look at the hubs and support services at a strategic level. However, it would be beneficial for the Local Authority to consider the following matters, moving forward.

Safeguarding

- Conversations with pupils and information from the latest surveys for parents and pupils suggest that pupils feel safe in the hubs.
- Generally, the staff we spoke with knew what to do should the pupil make a disclosure or make an allegation against a member of staff. However, there are no safeguarding policies that are specific to the hubs and there is no information on the walls to show the identity of the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) and their deputy (where relevant).
- In the case of an allegations being made against the DSP/Headteacher, it is unclear exactly who staff or pupils should go to. The fact that the hubs are not on school sites means that contact phone numbers should be clearly exhibited.
- When visiting Ysgol y Moelwyn, we signed in at the school and received lanyards. There was safeguarding information on the paper inserted in the lanyard and we were requested to read its contents.
- When visiting other sites, we were not asked to sign in and we did not receive lanyards or safeguarding information.
- During the visits, no one asked for information about our DBS, although on one site a meeting took place with pupils without any member of staff present N.B. Both of us had the appropriate DBS.
- There were glass panels in the doors of all the buildings we visited. However, in Tŷ'r Ysgol, Ysgol y Moelwyn, 1:1 work occurs without any other adult or pupil in the building. The centre leader stated that he had been told that this was acceptable because of the proximity of Tŷ'r Ysgol to the school itself.
This is an important matter that causes concern.
- When staff members were asked whether they had received safeguarding training, everyone did not understand what this meant. Some mentioned that they had received this training in a previous post, but not while in their current post.

- It is easy for pupils to escape from each of the sites - this aspect of safeguarding has not been covered adequately in risk assessments.

Recommendations:

Produce a specific/bespoke safeguarding policy for each of the centres and every setting used.

Ensure that all hub staff have received the appropriate level of safeguarding training.

Ensure that visitors are asked to sign in and wear a lanyard in every setting.

Ensure that information regarding the identity of the designated safeguarding person in every location is clearly displayed (although posters cannot be displayed in certain settings).

Produce risk assessments which include guidelines on what to do when a pupil escapes.

One-to-one working with a child should not be undertaken without another adult present who can witness the safety of the child and the member of staff.

Learning and Teaching

- Every pupil has an individual timetable tailored for their optional curriculum.
- There is considerable variation in the number of teaching and learning hours offered to the pupils. Some receive 25 hours a week but some receive as little as 8 hours.
- In one of the hubs, whole mornings were set aside for one subject e.g. numeracy or literacy. It would be good to see more variety throughout the day, with shorter sessions.
- The opportunities to follow the full curriculum is narrow (partly due to the nature of the sites) and pupils lose out considerably on aspects such as practical science and physical education.
- In most cases, the curriculum is provided by staff who do not have teaching qualifications. Consequently, there is a heavy reliance on workbooks. Although the content overall was suitable, only a few of the 27 pupils are motivated by sitting at a desk for extended periods.

- There is a lack of opportunities for the pupils to undertake very important elements such as practical subjects and physical education.
- Differentiation to satisfy the needs of individual learners does not always happen. For example, pupils of different abilities within a class all work from one workbook, regardless of their literacy or numeracy levels.
- Only very few pupils attend lessons in the school hub where this is possible. However, this happens less often than what was hoped. This is partly due to the fact that pupils find it difficult to reintegrate to the school environment. Moving to hubs off the site also makes this more difficult.
- The intention was that pupils from Ysgol Tryfan and Ysgol y Moelwyn attend the hubs to offer lessons where relevant. This has happened in some cases, but it is not consistent across the centres. Moving from Tŷ'r Ysgol on the Moelwyn site to a football club means that it is more difficult for school staff to give direct input to the hub.
- Although arrangements had been made with the Military College, the further education college, and some work experience, only a small number of pupils in the hubs are given these opportunities, and the time set aside for these is often comparatively short.

Recommendations:

Ensure that more teaching work is undertaken by qualified teachers.

Ensure that assistants are used appropriately.

Develop a wider and relevant curriculum, more practical, offering differentiation and a wider range of experiences.

Parents' Opinion

In a survey of parents conducted at the centres in Bangor and Caernarfon, parents praise their experience of the hubs. The reasons for this include:

- smaller groups

- relaxed environment
- how the staff treat the young people
- child more comfortable and happier
- flexible hours
- very supportive staff
- kindness and understanding of the child's personal situation and circumstances
- helping the child with anger issues
- less conflict between learners

In talks with parents during the review, one person noted that the hub had transformed the young person's attitude and had created a sense of hope for a better future. A foster parent noted that the child's needs were so profound, neither a mainstream school nor a hub such as this could satisfy the child's needs, and the provision would need to be fully reviewed very soon.

Every parent questioned did express that hub staff had made a very significant contribution to help to restore the young people's situation and had created a deep trust.

Pupils' opinions

In a survey of pupils conducted at the centres in Bangor and Caernarfon, pupils also talk positively about their experiences:

- more support
- suitable timetable
- flexible timetable
- one-to-one support
- smaller groups
- quieter
- less conflict and patient staff
- less pressure to undertake work
- staff make life easier
- staff more pleasant to me
- no other children bother me
- they have not been excluded
- like cooking and going to the college
- like to do half-days
- come in at 10am because I have trouble waking up
- not too many subjects all at once

A group of pupils we talked with at the Bangor hub talked sensibly and maturely about their experiences. Each individual was keen for us to know that they felt that they were different people to those who were admitted to the centre at the start and they had matured significantly in a short term.

Appendix 1 - The Brief

Gwynedd Brief – Inclusion Provision

- Evaluate the Impact of the Hub provision (Provision for learners who are experiencing behaviour/emotional and social difficulties) within Gwynedd
- Evaluate the wider Inclusion provision map of the Secondary Schools in Gwynedd
- Evaluate the central service provision for Inclusion
- These will be part of the LAs response to the recent Estyn report

1. BACKGROUND

Aim of the study:

During January/February 2020, Mrs Caroline Rees was commissioned to carry out a review of the Gwynedd/ Môn Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Inclusion Strategy. The review took place over a period of 4 weeks.

A comprehensive report was provided outlining actions for further development and as a result one of the areas identified was the need to develop provision for behaviour in year 9 and key stage 4, including an improved model for Pecyn 25 (which was the alternative provision for learners who were not able to succeed within mainstream Education).

Following from this work, the Inclusion Service as a whole was reorganised to change the Inclusion provision. This included:

- Re-modelling the staffing structure of the Inclusion Service to include additional outreach support and 1 Specialist Resource Base (Llechen Lân)
- Commissioning two Secondary Schools to provide Hubs for young people in year 9-11 with significant emotional, behaviour and social needs, with a focus within the Hubs of providing:
 - Pupils to access a wider range of subjects
 - Pupils being taught by qualified teachers

The aim of the revised /new provision was to:

- Improve the continuum of provision offered to CaYP with social, emotional and or behaviour difficulties.
- Provide an appropriate educational provision for learners with social, emotional and/or behaviour difficulties.
- Reduce the number of exclusions especially permanent exclusions
- Reduce the number of children /Young People becoming known to Children's Services or becoming 'NEET'.

Management and Quality of delivery

- The ALN and Inclusion Management Board has strategic oversight over services provided centrally.
- The Hub Management Board has the strategic oversight over the commission for providing the Hubs. This Board meets every school term. The Management Board reports to the LA Quality Board.
 - The Hub Inclusion team meets every half term where the operational side is discussed.
 - Gwynedd Secondary Schools receive an annual Inclusion allocation in order to meet the needs of pupils. This is in addition to the ALN funding.

2. THE COMMISSION

1. To evaluate the use of Inclusion Funding by the LA's Secondary Schools, and its impact on inclusion (e.g. exclusions) and use of higher level services (e.g. referrals to other services), and recommendations for further development.
2. To evaluate the range of inclusion services provided by the ALN and Inclusion Service centrally, and provide recommendations in terms of further development.
3. To summarise the current Hub provision and the investment to date, and make recommendations for further development.
4. To evaluate how effectively the local authority assesses the benefits of the provision including outcomes for the:
 - Learners
 - The public sector (including the schools, the Education Authority, Children's services.)

The local community and society as a whole

- and make recommendations for improvements.

Approach

- Face to face visits (e.g. Hubs, Llechen Lân)
- Interviews with providers and stakeholders
- Exploring Year 11 destinations of pupils in the Hubs
- Evaluating referral processes
- Evaluating the curriculum offer
- Evaluating monitoring and quality assurance processes.

Appendix 2 - Paragraphs from the Estyn report

How effectively does the authority meet the needs of learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)? Over time, the strategic and operational processes of Gwynedd education services to respond to the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties have improved significantly. The vision of leaders to strengthen provision for these vulnerable pupils is now clear and suitable. Senior managers have re-organised the additional learning needs (ALN) and inclusion service appropriately. They have identified the need to provide more specifically for supporting vulnerable pupils and to identify relevant managers to lead different aspects of the service. This includes appointing an inclusion manager and increasing the role of ALN quality officers to support pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The authority has also increased capacity within the outreach behaviour support service to support mainstream schools with pupils from reception age up to Year 11. These changes contribute well to ensuring that the number of pupils who are in education other than at school (EOTAS) is low. The authority has a range of purposeful procedures to plan provision and review the progress of pupils with ALN. These include the ALN and inclusion panel, the profound panel, the review panel and the ALN and inclusion moderation forum. On the whole, the purpose and remit of many of these procedures, together with the access to services protocol, are clear to schools. However, the steps that should be followed at school or the interventions that should be put in place before applying for a pupil to access the behaviour support hubs are not as clear. Valuable information about pupils with ALN across the county is freely available to relevant stakeholders through a dedicated digital platform. This enables schools, experts, parents and pupils to play an active role in planning provision, monitoring and reporting on progress. The ALN and inclusion service provides appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers and learning assistants to support them to provide beneficial interventions for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This includes training on attachment and the effect of trauma on children and young people. A range of relevant resources and intervention programmes are provided for schools to support the well-being of pupils across the age range. For example, the education psychology service has prepared valuable resources, such as beneficial mindfulness resources, to try to have a positive influence on pupils' well-being. The authority has also invested significantly to ensure that Welsh-medium resources are available to schools, and this is a strong feature.

The authority's 'managed moves' protocol and arrangements are appropriate and lead to positive outcomes for pupils in a majority of cases. Arrangements for supporting pupils with serious medical needs are strong. Suitable support is provided for most pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs within mainstream schools. The local authority provides specific support to meet the social, emotional and behavioural needs of a few pupils in four alternative settings. The status of these settings is unclear as they are not registered as pupil referral units, although that is how they operate. The 'Llechen Lân' Centre in Penygroes is a short-term education setting for pupils in Years 5-8. Provision at Llechen Lân is purposeful and support for pupils when they return to their schools is very effective. This is because the specialist staff there share their expertise successfully with staff in the mainstream schools to strengthen their ability to support pupils with behavioural difficulties. As a result, pupils who have attended this resource re-engage successfully in their mother school in most cases. Since September 2021, the authority has improved its provision for older pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties by commissioning two secondary schools to run hubs in three areas across Gwynedd. There are now three alternative education hubs for Year 9-11 pupils in Bangor, Caernarfon and Blaenau Ffestiniog. Overall, pupils who attend the hubs are happy and engage positively with their learning. Staff at the hubs take pride in their work and in the provision offered. They commit themselves to the responsibilities with great purpose and goodwill to provide pupils with positive learning experiences. They foster a positive and supportive relationship with pupils and their parents and this is an excellent feature. They work creatively to try to provide curricular experiences that are of interest to pupils and work purposefully with a wide range of relevant external agencies. This includes Careers Wales officers, youth workers, school nurses and police officers to support pupils and plan carefully for the next steps in their life. Suitable provision is offered, under the guidance of the subject teachers at the commissioning schools, for pupils to continue with their examination courses in Welsh, English, mathematics and some elements of science and a few other subjects or areas. Nearly all pupils in Year 11 sit a GCSE or other suitable qualification in the core subjects and a very few other subjects.

The social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils who attend the individual hubs vary. As a result, tailoring provision to meet the specific needs of individual pupils within these hubs is challenging. Staff strive to create an appropriate supportive environment for learning and to support pupils to thrive emotionally at the hubs. However, there is too much variation in the suitability of the accommodation and the range of learning resources in the hubs to provide specialist education that supports the well-being and behaviour of vulnerable pupils. Although a range of relevant officers are part of the initial arrangements for placing pupils in the hubs, there is insufficient contact between them and the hub managers to support their work and provide them with the necessary guidance. This includes inconsistency in monitoring, quality assurance and risk assessment arrangements. As a result, senior officers in Gwynedd education services do not have a strategic overview of the outcomes or the nature or quality of provision at the hubs.

Appendix 3 - The Referral System to Canolfan Llechen Lân and Educational Hubs

- 1) The School identifies the individual
- 2) Whole-school intervention:
 - Internal Behaviour Support Procedures
 - Targeting individuals/groups by the School
 - School / Authority IDP
 - Boxall
 - Pastoral Plan
- 3) Considerations prior to deciding to refer:
 - What has already been offered?
 - Who has been supporting?
 - What are the difficulties?
 - Is a Centre/Hub the most beneficial location for the individual?
 - What can the Centre/Hub do differently to what has been offered already?
- 4) THE SCHOOL IDENTIFIES THE NEED FOR AN ALTERNATIVE LOCATION
- 5) A discussion with the Welfare Officer and the Inclusion Manager to agree on:
 - the application's suitability
 - to inform the parent
- 6) Review or adapt the child's Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- 7) Refer the IDP for the attention of the Moderation Panel
- 8) Moderation Panel assessing and discussing individual applications.
- 9) DECISION:
 - to approve
 - to refuse stating the reasons
- 10) Inclusion Manager to inform the schools of the decision
- 11) Llechen Lân/ Education Hub to create an individual provision map
- 12) Formal review of the child's provision every half term
- 13) Report on progress to be presented to the School
- 14) Monitor the entire provision.