

<b>MEETING</b>	Care Scrutiny Committee
<b>DATE</b>	12 June 2025
<b>TITLE</b>	Performance Report of the Care Cabinet Member
<b>REASON FOR SCRUTINY</b>	To present the performance of the Children and Supporting Families Department over the past year, ensuring that the people of Gwynedd receive the best care services.
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<b>CABINET MEMBER</b>	Councillor Menna Trenholme

## **1. Why it needs scrutiny?**

To ensure that Committee Members are satisfied that I, as the Cabinet Member for Care, have a grasp on performance matters within the Department.

## **2. Background / Context**

### **2.1 Background / Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to update you on what has been achieved in the field that I am responsible for as the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families. This includes outlining the latest with the pledges in the Council Plan; the Department's day-to-day work; as well as the latest in terms of savings and cuts schemes.

We are implementing the Council Plan for 2023-28, and I herein report on progress to the end of March 2025, acknowledging that it is still early days in the context of some of the new pledges in the document since April last year. Nevertheless, all matters have been subject of discussion and have been scrutinised by myself at a performance challenge meeting, and I am satisfied with the Department's performance.

### **2.2 Rationale and justification**

#### **Performance of Projects in the Council Plan**

The Children and Supporting Families Department has two projects in the Council Plan, Autism Plan and developing a residential provision for looked after children in small group homes plan.

The first plan, Autism Plan, is thriving. The training programme for front-line staff continues with the aim of being a local authority which understands and is aware of autism. Hand in hand with this, groups such as 'Paned a Sgwrs' for parents and carers and a Neuro club for young people are successful and the intention is to look at expanding and training other workers to facilitate and run educational and support programmes and groups. Collaboration with the Education Department, internal and external staff and

engagement with the third sector also continues. There is no waiting list for the Autism team at present, but we anticipate that this will not last long due to high demand for the service. We are confident that there are no concerns as a result of this plan, and that work is underway to develop and promote opportunities for individuals with autism. It is important to note that funding for this scheme will end in 2027 and this poses a long-term risk. We will need to consider how to ensure the continued service of this valuable resource for the future.

The developing a residential provision in a small group for looked after children plan has developed significantly over the past year. Staff were appointed to the first home in Morfa Bychan and two children were welcomed to the placement. Two additional properties were also purchased, and preparation work commenced to get it to a registration standard. We are still waiting for an official registration for the first home; however we are not concerned as we are having ongoing contact with Care Inspectorate Wales and the registration should be completed very soon.

### **The Department's day-to-day work**

There are currently 280 looked after children here in Gwynedd. Some positive news that came over the last year is that 6% of children have left care and returned home. Another positive percentage that should be highlighted is the number of case conferences where the child's voice/opinion (5+ years) was heard. That percentage was 97%, which is a factor to be praised. Something else that is to be praised is the fact that 100% of the young people who are care leavers have a personal advisor.

On the other hand, there is a need to note a concern in the number of referrals received by the referrals team. We note that this has been the busiest year for the team since its establishment. As a result, the team feels the pressure considering the number of referrals and the complexity of the cases. The Derwen Service also feels the pressure, with over 500 cases open to them. A high number of cases and staff shortages creates concerns and high work pressure. It must also be noted that the Youth Justice Service currently manages 149 cases, this is a further increase of 17.3% since September 2024. We see a clear pattern that the demand on the Children and Supporting Families Department is increasing and thus the pressure on our staff. For the first time ever, the number of referrals to our Department has almost reached 8,000, which is an increase of 5%.

It must be emphasised that we have acknowledged this increasing work pressure on our workforce. During the last few months, we have submitted a financial bid to appoint many staff members to overcome the problem and reduce pressure. We have advertised three social worker posts and four social practitioner posts. With time, we hope that these additions will bring some release to our conscientious workforce.

### **External Auditors Reports (if relevant)**

There are no external auditors reports to note currently or concern arising from the risk register as many have reduced in terms of impact and chance.

## **3. Consultation**

The report has been created based on the information and content of the latest meeting to challenge and support the performance of the Children and Supporting Families Department with the Director, the Senior Operational Officer and myself present at this meeting.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1:** Progress reports for project milestones in the Council Plan

**Appendix 2:** The Department's Performance Measures