

CYNGOR GWYNEDD - Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Title of Item:	Gwynedd and Anglesey ALN and Inclusion Agreement
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Dewi Jones, Cabinet Member for Education
Relevant officer:	Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education Department)
Date of meeting:	14.10.25

1. Decision sought

The following decisions are sought:

- 1.1 To commission the Head of Education Department to plan to establish a new Additional Learning Needs Service by September 2026, to meet the needs of Gwynedd pupils in the future and consequently revoke the historic collaboration arrangement with the Isle of Anglesey Council.

2. The reason why the Cabinet needs to make the decision

- 2.1 The increasing pressures and increase in the complexities of Additional Learning Needs in the county means that we need to remodel the current service so that we can provide services which are fit-for-purpose to meet the needs of the county's pupils. Cabinet support is required to change the provision, starting by redesigning the specialist support services provided to pupils in mainstream schools. As a first step, the Department has already reviewed the Inclusion provision, and the Cabinet resolved to establish new Inclusion Units. This report deals with the second step in the required changes to ensure that we can cope with the substantial increase in the demand for ALN support since the Covid period.

3. Introduction and Rationale

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 The Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service has been providing services jointly for Cyngor Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey Council since 2017. When the Service was established in 2017, a permanent saving of around £800k was made. During the years since the COVID period, the pressures on these work areas have increased substantially, with an increase also seen in the complexities of the cases facing the specialist Teams from day-to-day. Consequently, the councils' strategic direction has

followed different paths in specific fields, in response to the needs of pupils in both areas.

3.2 What has led us to this point?

3.2.1 Ensuring the best support and provision for children with Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion is one of the Education Department's priorities. The demand for additional learning provision has intensified, and we are seeing an increase in challenging behaviour and in the complexity of Additional Learning Needs in mainstream schools.

3.2.2 The need to manage many staff, to plan strategically for two authorities, monitor integration budgets separately, report against different progress measures, provide progress reports at different times, undertake two separate processes for Estyn inspection processes, and in different formats, places substantial pressure on the Officers who have a management role.

3.2.3 The Service is split into two main elements, namely:

- a) Additional Learning Needs - input for learners with Needs, e.g. with Communication and Interaction, Sensory Impairment or physical and medical needs, specific needs with literacy and numeracy skills development.
- b) Inclusion and Welfare - input for social, emotional and behavioural needs, input for learners with English and Welsh as an additional language, and assistance to improve attendance, access to counselling.
- c) The Educational Psychologists and ALN&I Quality Team work across both main elements.

3.2.4 The Cabinet has already approved substantial modifications to the inclusion provision (Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet, April 2025; Appendix 1), and this change has already been made to the Gwynedd provision. This is in response to the increase in the inclusion field. However, no decision was made at the time on how to finance the increase in provision on a permanent basis, with advance notice that a permanent revenue bid is likely to fund the new-look provision. The revenue bid has been submitted and will be considered.

3.2.5 The ALN fields are also seeing an increase in the intensity of needs, and the need for support services, and this part of the service is also under increasing pressure, particularly since COVID times. This situation was presented to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in April 2025 (Appendix 2).

- 3.2.6 An increase has been seen in special setting applications as the needs intensify. However, mapping work shows that this is not suitable, with the strain on resources in the mainstream being a key reason for the increase in demand. As in 3.2.5, this was discussed at the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee, in April 2025.
- 3.2.7 To give you an idea of the increase in this area, see the table in Appendix 3 which shows the split in terms of the type of ALN cases where the pupil has an Individual Development Plan. Between 2022 and 2024 alone, an astounding increase of 37% was seen - our existing procedure cannot cope with the increase, and we need to take urgent action to be able to continue to support pupils, their parents and schools.
- 3.2.8 The role of the specialist teams in the ALN service is to collaborate with and support Schools to be able to provide an education for pupils with ALN and consequently enable them to continue in mainstream education in their local school, therefore there is no necessity to attend a Special School. The team includes Educational Psychologists, Specialist Teachers, Quality Officers, Specialist Assistants, Counsellors and Education Welfare Officers.
- 3.2.9 The services they provide are greatly appreciated by the schools as well as by the pupils' parents. Without the input of these teams, it would be impossible for mainstream schools to cope with the complexity of pupils' needs, leading to hindering pupil development and an increase in the demand for places in special schools. The performance data of these teams provides evidence that customer satisfaction is high but that there is a demand for more services. This also shows that the service provided leads to a direct increase in the development of ALN pupils.

3.3 What has already been done and what else needs to be achieved?

- 3.3.1 The Anglesey and Gwynedd Inclusion provision is now very different, since Anglesey restructured the secondary inclusion provision in 2022. In Gwynedd, the Cabinet has approved an Inclusion provision for Gwynedd needs (Appendix 1).
- 3.3.2 The fact that we need to be able to redesign our ALN services in Gwynedd also, as well as the change that has already happened in the Inclusion field, means that the historical procedure of providing joint Services with the Isle of Anglesey Council is no longer viable. This is particularly the case on the managerial level, with many pupils requiring support and the Authorities' strategic direction veering to different directions in some areas. In line with what has been noted in the current agreement with the Isle of Anglesey Council, Cyngor Gwynedd has issued notice of proposal to revisit the current agreement.

- 3.3.3 We have undertaken modelling work to look at the financial impact of establishing the new ALN Service in Gwynedd. To increase the provision, there are no doubts that it would lead to increased costs, but that would be relevant whether we continue to follow the historical model jointly with Anglesey or not. The cost becomes clearer as the new model is agreed in its final form, but initial modelling work suggests a higher cost of approximately £200,000 to amend the ALN Service.
- 3.3.4 The Cabinet will need to consider this when looking at all other bids during the autumn, but to a vast degree, the higher cost is inevitable if we are going to be able to provide the support required for Gwynedd ALN pupils.
- 3.3.5 It is likely that there will be a further increase in the number of pupils requiring support, and as a result, further work will be needed (Step 3) to look at the support in the mainstream schools themselves. This will be challenging, bearing in mind the current complexity of our schools system. Before this, we need to improve our support arrangements within the Department.
- 3.3.6 Any changes to employment arrangements for members of the Team would require following the usual Human Resources procedures and TUPE requirements where necessary.

3.4 Equality Act 2010

The Council is subject to public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including Welsh public sector duties). In accordance with these legal duties when making decisions, Councils must pay due regard to the need (1) to eliminate unlawful discrimination (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) encourage good relations based on the protected characteristics and pay due attention to the socio-economic duty under Section 1 of the Act. An impact assessment will be prepared as a part of this process.

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

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 involves improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The act places a well-being duty on public bodies which is aimed at delivering the seven well-being goals, namely a prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal Wales with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language which is globally responsible. The Strategy has been prepared by paying attention to these requirements and in accordance with the 5 ways of working.

3.6 What principles will need to be considered when establishing the new model?

- Consult in full with Isle of Anglesey Council Officers, and with Service staff
- A model that strengthens the response to Gwynedd needs
- A model that reduces any unnecessary management tiers
- A model that considers the possibility of continuing to collaborate with scarcer elements / more specific skills within the service
- A model that provides best value for money for Gwynedd

4. Next Steps and Timetable

October 2025	Leadership Team discussion regarding the principles and the Cabinet's decision to commission a new model
October 2025	Further consultation with Isle of Anglesey Council Officers
November 2025 - January 2026	Consultation with staff regarding potential Models
January - February 2026	Establish the final model
March - July 2026	Restructuring process
September 2026	New model in progress

5. Observations of the Statutory Officers

5.1 Chief Finance Officer

I am satisfied with the accuracy of the financial information contained in the report.

Finance officers continue to work with the service as the new model develops. We will continue to assist the Education Department over the next year in identifying opportunities to fund the cost increases so that any permanent bid commitment for the 2026/27 budget can be avoided or reduced.

5.2 Monitoring Officer

The decision sought is based on the termination of the current partnership with Ynys Môn for the provision of the service. I note from the report that engagement with Anglesey Council officers is one of the key principles of the process. However, winding up a cooperative arrangement like this also requires giving attention to and addressing contractual matters, resources, information management and human resources that can be relevant to achieving the change. The Department should ensure as part of this work that the project plan includes steps around these aspects that may need to be addressed from the outset to ensure that the change in the model takes place within a clear and appropriate framework.

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Cabinet Member April 2025 (Inclusion Model item)

Appendix 2 - Scrutiny Report April 2025 (ALN in Mainstream and Special Schools item)

Appendix 3 - ALN Data