QUARTERLY REPORT TO CABINET:
RESPONSE PLAN PROGRAMME BOARD

PROFESSOR SALLY HOLLAND: CHAIR OF THE RESPONSE BOARD

DATE: 10th November 2026

Introduction

Since my last report to Cabinet in July 2026, the Response Plan Programme Board has continued to oversee the Council's response to the recommendations arising from the Child Practice Review, *Our Bravery Brought Justice*, and the wider Response Plan.

This report summarises the key developments and progress made during the last quarter.

Current Position

This quarter marks one year since the publication of *Our Bravery Brought Justice*. During that period, substantial activity has been undertaken across the Response Plan themes, with a continued focus on addressing the recommendations arising from the Child Practice Review.

The Board's work continues to be structured around the seven themes of the Response Plan:

1. Voice of the Child and Supporting Victims
2. Managing Allegations and Concerns About Adults Working with Children
3. Training and Policies
4. School Governance
5. Restrictive Practices
6. Crisis Planning and Crisis Response
7. Supporting Ysgol Friars

Detailed progress reports are presented to the Board by theme leads, highlighting achievements, priorities, risks and challenges, dependencies and resource implications.

Work Programme

A significant proportion of the planned activity has now been completed, with 43 of the 55 actions across the seven themes achieved. Whilst this represents an important milestone, Board members have consistently emphasised that the completion of actions should be viewed as a means to achieving lasting improvement rather than an end in itself. As a result, increasing attention is being given to understanding the impact of changes, how learning is being

embedded, whether organisational culture is evolving, and the extent to which improvements are being experienced in practice by children, young people, staff and wider stakeholders.

Outcome Measures

During the quarter, a detailed presentation on the development of impact measures across the Response Plan was shared. The Board welcomed the work undertaken to move beyond monitoring the completion of actions and towards measuring the impact of changes.

Following discussion, the Board agreed the proposed suite of impact measures across the seven themes of the Response Plan. These measures are intended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of whether improvements are making a meaningful difference in practice, organisational culture and outcomes for children and young people.

The Board was clear that no single measure can provide assurance in isolation. Instead, assurance will be drawn from a range of evidence sources, including:

- questionnaires and surveys of children, young people, staff and governors;
- audit and quality assurance activity;
- focus groups and stakeholder engagement activity;
- analysis of feedback from victims, survivors and service users;
- independent scrutiny findings;
- safeguarding and voice of the child performance information; and
- secondary analysis of School Health Research Network (SHRN) data.

The development of annual Children's Voice surveys, staff confidence measures, governor self-assessment arrangements and a wider range of qualitative and quantitative indicators will help establish a clearer evidence base against which progress can be monitored and evaluated over time.

On the 22nd October 2026 the latest data from the Schools Health Research Network (SHRN) were released, showing secondary school students' responses to a range of health and wellbeing questions in surveys administered in 2025. These are publicly available at a local authority and Wales level, with schools receiving their own confidential report. As far as I am aware, every secondary school in Gwynedd participates.

These latest data provide a snapshot of children and young people's views (years 7-16) and an opportunity for Gwynedd to compare its children's perspectives with the national average. It is one of the measures that may be used to look at the impact of new policies and training, including the Children's Voice strategy and restrictive practices programme of work.

In the 2025 data, Gwynedd pupils report experiences and perceptions around the Welsh average for a range of measures including their trust in teachers and feeling able to talk to them,

and a sense of belonging to their school. They also are around average in some elements of participation in school life. While they report an above average general satisfaction with life, they are also more likely to report having truanted than the Welsh average. They are below the Welsh average for support in school.

There is therefore no particular trend of Cyngor Gwynedd services consistently being experienced by its pupils as more or less supportive than the Welsh average, but some of these results will warrant a closer look by the education directorate and individual school governing bodies alongside their school council. They also set a helpful baseline and trends can be analysed over time, using these biennial datsets.

Children's Voice Strategy

Since the last quarterly report, the Voice of the Child Strategy has been adopted by Cabinet.

It has been encouraging to see children and young people involved throughout the development of this work, helping to shape both the approach and the priorities taken forward. The focus must now be on embedding a culture in which children's voices are routinely sought, listened to and acted upon across all Council services. This includes ensuring that participation is not viewed as a standalone activity, but as a core component of decision-making, service development and continuous improvement.

As Chair, I have consistently sought assurance that the Council is hearing from a broad and representative range of children and young people, particularly those whose voices may not always be captured through established participation mechanisms. I was therefore pleased to note that, following a challenging recruitment process, the Council has now been able to appoint an additional Engagement and Participation Officer. This additional capacity should help strengthen engagement with groups such as young carers, disabled children, care-experienced children and others who may face barriers to participation. It should also help ensure that participation activity is not overly reliant on a relatively small number of young people who are already actively engaged through existing forums and structures.

Restrictive Practices

The Board has also received an update on the progress made under the Restrictive Practices theme, including the findings of the independent review commissioned by the Council. Whilst this work was initially prompted by concerns relating to the use of video recording, it has since developed into a broader programme of work focused on policy, practice, governance and oversight.

I was encouraged to note the strengthened governance arrangements now being put in place. These include a cross-departmental officer group comprising representatives from Additional Learning Needs, Inclusion, Health and Safety and Safeguarding services. This should provide a

more robust mechanism for oversight, enabling trends, concerns and areas requiring additional support to be identified and addressed at an earlier stage.

Alongside revised guidance and reporting arrangements, these developments should help strengthen consistency of practice and provide greater assurance that restrictive practices are being appropriately monitored and scrutinised.

Safeguarding Review / National Developments

A number of developments have continued at both a national and regional level in relation to safeguarding governance, policy and practice. Of particular interest are the developments relating to Part 5 safeguarding arrangements and, more recently, the announcement of new national oversight and scrutiny arrangements.

Whilst details are still emerging, these developments have the potential to strengthen safeguarding assurance and promote greater consistency of approach across Wales. It will be important to understand how local authorities, regional safeguarding boards and existing assurance arrangements interact with these evolving structures, and how learning, challenge and oversight can be shared effectively across the different levels of governance.

There may be valuable opportunities for the Board to learn from, and contribute to, these developments as national arrangements become more established.

Scrutiny and Assurance

Cyngor Gwynedd Scrutiny Committees

During the autumn, progress against the Response Plan was also considered by the Council's scrutiny arrangements, including the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee, the Governance and Audit Committee and the Care Scrutiny Committee. This provided an important opportunity for elected members to review progress, ask questions and provide challenge on behalf of the communities they represent.

Given that this quarter marks one year since the publication of *Our Bravery Brought Justice*, it was an opportunity for members to reflect on the progress made to date, the challenges that remain and the priorities for the next phase of the programme.

As the programme increasingly moves from implementation towards assurance and impact, effective internal scrutiny arrangements will become ever more important.

Welsh Government Assurance Group

As previously reported, the Welsh Government established a Ministerial Assurance Group following the publication of *Our Bravery Brought Justice*. At the time of my last report to

Cabinet, there was some uncertainty regarding the future role and arrangements of the Group following the Senedd election. Since then, the Group has met on two occasions, including a hybrid meeting held in Cardiff providing a valuable opportunity to engage directly with Welsh Government officials and Ministers. I am not a member of this group but attended the Cardiff meeitng by invitation and was able to share with the Cabinet minister for Education and officials my reflections on progress made, enablers and challenges.

Discussions have been constructive and have enabled members to reflect on progress made locally, alongside wider national developments relating to safeguarding. The Group has also reviewed and agreed revised Terms of Reference, providing greater clarity regarding its role, remit and future operation.

Welsh Government representatives have continued to provide updates on national safeguarding developments, including reviews of safeguarding governance arrangements and school governance. The Board will continue to monitor these developments and consider any implications for local policy, practice and assurance arrangements.

Reporting Arrangements

Given the maturity of the programme and the increasing emphasis on assurance and impact measurement, the Board has considered its future reporting arrangements. Subject to Cabinet's agreement, this will be the final quarterly report, with future reports being presented on a termly basis.

This will align more closely with the Board's meeting cycle and the timescales required to assess meaningful progress against outcome measures.

Next Steps

As the Board moves into the next quarter, it will:

1. Continue to oversee delivery of the remaining actions within the Response Plan and monitor progress across all seven themes.
2. Review the implementation of the agreed impact measures and consider emerging evidence regarding the effectiveness of changes introduced across the programme.
3. Continue to strengthen assurance arrangements by drawing on a range of evidence sources, including audits, surveys, stakeholder engagement, focus groups and qualitative feedback from children, young people, staff and governors.
4. Consider the implications of emerging national and regional safeguarding developments, including changes relating to Part 5 safeguarding arrangements and new national oversight arrangements.

5. Keep under review the Board's future role and reporting arrangements as the programme moves increasingly from implementation towards assurance, impact and long-term sustainability.

Closing Remarks

The Board has now reached a stage where much of the original implementation work has been completed or embedded within normal service arrangements. Increasingly, the Board's focus is shifting towards assurance, impact and sustainability. The development and agreement of a comprehensive suite of outcome measures marks an important milestone in this transition, providing a stronger basis on which to assess whether tangible improvements are being experienced by children, young people, staff and communities.

Professor Sally Holland
Chair of the Response Plan Programme Board
27th October 2026.