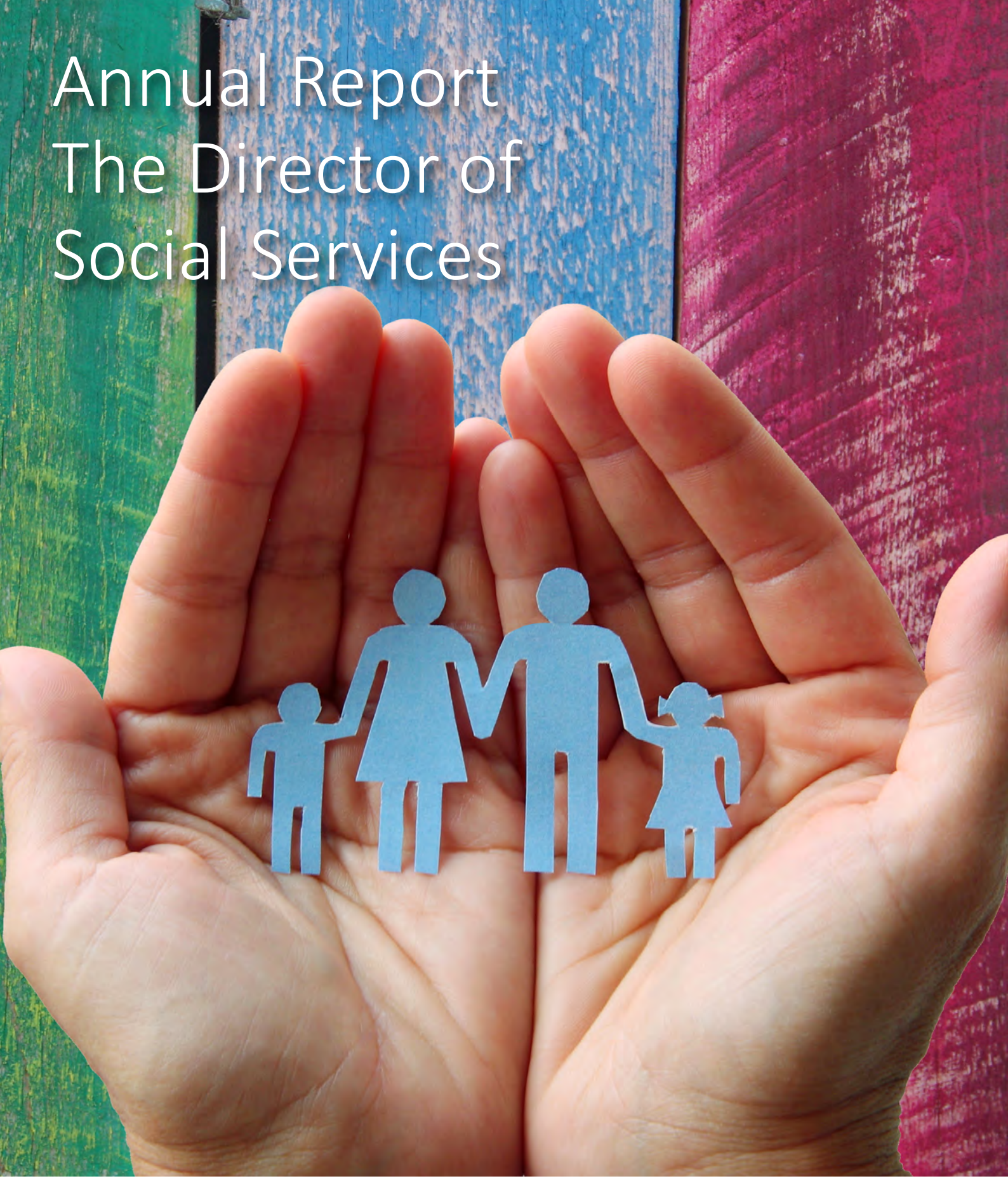
Annual Report The Director of Social Services



2020/21

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Introduction

At the end of every financial year, every Statutory Director of Social Services is required to prepare and publish a report regarding the social services duties within the local authority over the previous year. Therefore, the purpose of this annual report is to evaluate the performance of the local authority in relation to achieving social services' duties and draw attention to any lessons that have been learnt or improvements that need to be introduced. The report should also set objectives for the year to come in relation to promoting the well-being of people and carers who need care and support.

This report has been set out in a specific order, as we need to report on how we as a Council have achieved against six quality standards of well-being as noted within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The form of the report is now a requirement, and every local authority is required to measure the performance of their social services by using the relevant indicators and performance measures against the quality standards. In order to draw-up this report, I obtained observations and support from focus groups, and I thank everyone for their contributions. After you have read the report, I am very eager to hear from you if you have any comments on the content, or regarding how to draw up services for the future:

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Contents

1. Foreword by the Director 4

2. How are people supporting us to draw up our services 6

3. Promoting and improving the well-being of those we are assisting 9

4. How we do our work 31

5. 2021/22 Priorities 37

6. Further Information and Key Documents 38

APPENDIX 1: Information about the Quality Standards as noted in the Social Services and Well-being Act (2014) 39

APPENDIX 2: Case Studies 42

APPENDIX 3: Measures and Data 45

1. Foreword by the Director

I am very proud to present my annual report as Statutory Director of Social Services for the 2020/21 year. Obviously, this year has been a very different year for all as we have grappled with the Covid-19 pandemic, and this crisis has affected our way of working in order to ensure the health, safety and well-being of the people of Gwynedd.

As a result, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to each and every one of the county's care workers who have gone above and beyond to provide the best possible care for our residents. It is true to say that our workers have shown heroic strength as they worked tirelessly against the impacts of Covid-19, and I extend my genuine appreciation to them, whether they are Council, external agency or third sector employees. I have heard many stories about workers who have gone the extra mile, not once, but continuously, and what I have heard has been truly inspirational. Of course, we need to bear in mind that these workers have often been working from home, rather than from the office, and this in itself places additional pressure on them as they lose that informal support from colleagues.

I am glad to say that our performance this year has been positive, despite the huge challenges and strain that has been on our staff to safeguard the residents of the county during the global pandemic. However, as we focus on coping with the Covid-19 crisis, some of our previous priorities have slipped somewhat or have been put to one side for the time being. As a result, my report this year will focus on our response to the pandemic and on how we have continued to maintain and provide our essential services and develop and provide new services.

The county's care homes have been under huge strain, and they have coped excellently, considering the situation. In addition, providing domiciliary care was very challenging, and we are incredibly grateful to those families who supported their relatives throughout this difficult period, to enable us to cope with the crisis.

I am also very grateful to our Foster Carers for caring so well for our children under difficult circumstances without the usual face-to-face support. Likewise, the unpaid carers of the county have had to cope with incredibly challenging situations and I have acknowledged the contribution of each of them over the year.

As well as direct care work, I also recognise the priceless contribution of the Council's departments that do not normally receive recognition from me in my annual report. During the year, I have witnessed the contribution of other departments to social care work, where a number of workers across the Council showed their willingness to support the care agenda by relocating to work in unfamiliar fields or to work beyond the requirements of their usual posts. I sincerely thank each and every one of them.

I am eager to thank one individual specifically this year, namely the Chief Executive, Mr Dilwyn Williams. Dilwyn is retiring in April 2021 and I cannot thank him enough for his leadership and support during his time Chief Executive. Without a doubt, he has been really supportive of me as Director, and he has also taken a particular interest in the care and social services field, where he would attend Safeguarding and Corporate Parent meetings regularly. His support to the field, and to me as Director, has been priceless and I thank him so much, and I wish him a well-deserved and very happy retirement.

Obviously, it was not possible for us to project the year we've just had. We have had to learn and adapt on our feet, and we have certainly learnt many valuable lessons for the future. I am glad to be able to say that we have maintained all of our essential services during the year, and I believe that we have responded to the crisis very effectively, considering the circumstances.

We are thinking pro-actively for the future, and have been holding a campaign to attract more staff to the care field, in particular to ensure that we have sufficient capacity in the current situation, and we also intend to build on our Community Resilience arrangements to empower our communities to support residents to cope, to thrive, to be safe and to be healthy.

We have lost a number of the county's residents to this cruel disease over the year, and on behalf of myself and the Council's staff, I wish to extend my condolences to each of you as individuals and families who have suffered a bereavement. I really hope that this difficult time will ease soon and that we can return to the normality that all of us now greatly appreciate. I am certain that this year has given us an opportunity to learn what matters to us, and this is also what is behind all work in this field.

With that, I wish to present this report, which attempts to provide a fair overview of the performance of Gwynedd Social Services during the 2020/21 year.

Morwena Edwards
Corporate Director and Statutory Director of Social Services

2. How are people supporting us to draw up our services

The Council is fully committed to putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do, ensuring that we listen to 'what matters' to the residents. This corresponds to the principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, of placing individuals at the core of their care, and giving them a voice and control to reach the outcomes that lead to well-being.

Furthermore, the way we now work within Social Services departments focuses on ensuring that the voice, input and what matters to individuals form individual and community services on an ongoing basis, and we move to ensure that this happens regularly, in the short-term and long-term, for the well-being of the county's people.

To this end, I am of the opinion that learning and development is key if we wish to improve our performance and achieve what matters to the people of Gwynedd. Hearing the views of our service users about the quality of our services is very important to us if we are to continually improve, and the complaints procedure is a key part of this. We have robust arrangements in place to ensure that we respond to, resolve and learn from any complaint received. The aim is to respond to every complaint with fairness, impartiality and respect so that the individual is confident that his/her complaint will be handled professionally and positively.

The Covid-19 crisis has thrown us into a situation where we have had to adapt our way of working, and of course, this has taught us many new lessons, which will be useful for us to provide a better service for our residents in the future. At the same time, a lot of good feedback was received about our work this year; for example, it is obvious that the Covid Support Team has been very valuable to the residents of the county and this has meant that we have turned our sights to drawing up a similar service that will serve the public in the long-term.

As well as our priorities to review our provisions regularly, to ensure that we put the needs of the public first, we also have a few statutory exercises where we have to ask the public for their views on specific matters. For example, our **Population Needs Assessment** also listens to the views of people in order to improve our understanding of the population, as well as how it could change over the years to come, in order to help us provide better public services.

In 2020/21, around 10,000 responses were received to the Council's public consultation such as the DementiaGo Questionnaire, Arts on Prescription Plan Questionnaire, etc. As a Council, we appreciate hearing the views of people to such consultations so that we are able to fine-tune and adapt our work according to the public's requirements and needs.

Similarly, Gwynedd Council has a **Citizens Panel** to ensure representation from a cross-section of Gwynedd residents, and that their voice is central as the Council plans, provides and reviews local services for the future. This year, around 700 people were members of this Panel.

We also consider that the views of children are all important to us, and a looked after child is a member of the Council's Corporate Parent Panel, where Panel members have an opportunity to hear the views and about the experiences of a looked after child. All of this helps to draw up and adapt the provision for looked after children.

Of course, internet use is now an integral part of everyone's lives as we grapple with the side-effects of Covid-19, therefore, the use of the Council's social media accounts, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, has become increasingly important and key in order to share information and receive feedback amongst the county's residents. Over the past year, we have seen increased use, with 35,239 followers on these platforms.

A general increase was also seen in the use of the Council's on-line services, and in the number of self-service requests being presented. Between 1 April and 31 March, 11,869 new accounts were opened.

Of course, it must be borne in mind that the views of the individual about what matters to him/her is a central and key part of the way we seek to provide services within the Social Services field. We will continue to build on what individuals are telling us in terms of how we can improve our provisions on a local and county level, so that we are able to secure the best support, interventions and services for the county's residents in the future.

Improve the system

- Collect measures
- Share findings
- Learn and improve

Identify what matters

- Purpose
- Operating principles
- Value steps

Achieve what matters

- Joint planning
- Community involvement
- Personal strengths

Remove barriers

- Plan and prioritise
- Refer upwards when needed
- Get the right help

Identify barriers

- What are the waste steps?
- Why can't we meet the demand?
- What are the complex and less complex barriers?

Understand, learn, and reflect

- What is the nature of the demand?
- What expertise is needed?
- What are the numbers, frequency, gaps, opportunities?

ThinkPad

3. Promoting and improving the well-being of those we are assisting

In this chapter, I will be evaluating our progress during 2020/21 against the six quality standards noted by the Government in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

In addition, I will provide an outline of what we intend to do in 2021/22.

QUALITY STANDARD 1

Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the personal well-being of all of us in some way or another. As the pandemic struck and the first lockdown was introduced, the **Covid Support Team** was established to support the residents of Gwynedd to receive the support they needed to cope with the challenges of the crisis. Among the Team's main responsibilities were:

- Taking calls and e-mail messages from the public, relating to Covid-19 matters, and providing information to them
- Identifying the most appropriate assistance and support for the residents who contacted them
- Contacting everyone who was shielding and offering support, and raising their awareness of the support available in the form of Welsh Government food parcels
- Escalating any concerns to the relevant teams within the Council
- Identifying what mattered to the residents who came into contact, and identifying a solution
- Contacting external organisations and bodies on behalf of the residents, and acting as a point of contact within the organisation/body and the resident, where appropriate

Between April and August 2020, 5,080 residents contacted the Team, with 4,781 of those being people who were shielding. After the work of the Team ended, an engagement exercise was held with a sample of residents, and the main conclusions were that these residents had appreciated the contact, the support and the information they had received. Here is some of the feedback received from members of the public:

“Thank you so very much for phoning to check up on things and for even thinking of these extra links that may help. I really appreciate your time sending them to me. I am very grateful for all you (and everyone else on the team that are involved) are doing to help the rest of us during this difficult time.”

"The food boxes and medication deliveries have been excellent when we haven't been able to leave the house since the end of February. The calls to check we're ok and whether we need anything have been fantastic."

From the feedback, a lot was learnt about the value of this type of service for the residents of Gwynedd. In simple terms, because of the fact that members of the public were able to speak with one point of contact without any obstructions relating to thresholds or eligibility, thus removing bureaucracy, the Team managed to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything it did. An example of this can be seen in Case Study 1 in Appendix 2 of this Report (page 42). The establishment of the Covid Support Team was certainly a very positive step for the residents of Gwynedd, particularly some of the most vulnerable residents. An assessment of the work is in the pipeline so that we can evaluate whether a similar model to this is needed for the future.

Many local community groups were established to respond to the crisis, and as a result, it was learnt that residents preferred to receive support on a local and community level. We have continued to support this community network by diverting support from the Regeneration Teams, Family Support Teams and Adults Teams, and there is a need to ensure that these groups are supported by us to continue offering support in their communities beyond the crisis, and there is room for us as a Council to look at establishing more permanent and stable teams to support people's well-being in the same way, on a more long-term basis, in the future.

The **Test, Trace and Protect Service** was established in May and came into operation on 1 June. The service now employs 103 workers. The purpose of this service is to lead the county out of the pandemic by improving health surveillance in the community, contact tracing and supporting people to self-isolate where needed. Click **here** to take a look at what the staff are doing to protect public health.

The Welsh Government Scheme, '**A Healthier Wales**', sets out a long-term vision for the entire health and social care system in the future, focusing on health and well-being and preventing ill-health. To achieve this vision, we are working to transform the way our health and care services are being provided in the community, and a number of projects are in progress to achieve this.

During the year, work progressed on the **Programme to Transform Community Health and Care** in Gwynedd and Anglesey to improve integration and collaboration across these fields. The aim of the Programme is to help people live their lives as they wish, and ensure that we collaborate to provide services and support that responds to what matters to the vulnerable people in the area.

The work of establishing the **Community Resources Teams**, which include staff from health, care, the third sector and the independent sector, is at the core of this. These local teams have regular contact as a team on a sub-area level; they share information and resources, collaborate to understand the situation locally and address any obstructions.

Other elements of the programme include projects that facilitate the procedure for **Hospital Discharges**, a project to **Share Information** across agencies, and the project to **Re-design Care Services** in the county.

Although the timetable for this work has slipped somewhat because of the Covid-19 crisis, we are now pressing on with the plans. Our vision of moving the domiciliary care services towards a model that is based on localities, and commissioning based on outcomes for individuals and social value will continue, with the aim of conducting a tendering process for specific areas this year.

The **Information, Advice and Assistance Service** supports older people in the county, and a detailed work programme is being implemented to ensure better collaboration with the Health Board and creating a single local contact point. During the year, the percentage of adults who received advice and support from the service who did not get in touch again for six months was 54%.

Likewise, the **Gwynedd Family Hub** was established so that information, advice and assistance can be received on matters such as childcare, fostering, adoption, young carers, etc., and that this is all available in one place. Within the Hub, anyone can report a concern that a child is being abused, and we respond to these reports immediately to ensure the welfare and safety of our children and young people.

QUALITY STANDARD 2

Working with people and partners to safeguard and promote the physical and mental health and emotional well-being of people

We are responsible for ensuring that everyone protects their health and well-being and adopts a healthy lifestyle, accepting care and preventative and pro-active support when needed. Gwynedd Council seeks to support communities in many ways to achieve solutions of a preventative nature, which increase local care options, and also lead to ensuring that our communities are strong and resilient. To do so, we have mapped the services and groups that currently exist in communities in order to identify gaps, and contact individuals who need support with services, as well as promote community enterprises.

This year, we have been working tirelessly to safeguard people against Covid-19. Very much work has been happening within the Council and in collaboration with external agencies to ensure that the residents of Gwynedd keep as safe as possible during this crisis.

Community Resilience was a large part of the Council's workflow during the year, which is work to empower communities and individuals with local resources and expertise to enable them to help themselves and others in emergencies. Because of Covid-19, additional arrangements were put in place to respond to the crisis and seek to maintain and support the well-being of Gwynedd residents.

The Council has also been working hard alongside the Health Board to promote and support the **vaccination campaign**. By the end of the year, around 50,000 people had received the first dose. We have collaborated continuously with the Health Board, Public Health Wales, Welsh Government and care providers during the year to ensure that the Covid-19 situation is under control and that we pull together to fight together to ensure the least possible impact on the people of Gwynedd.

Within the Council Plan, **Supporting People's Well-being** has been identified as an improvement priority. We have identified that some residents need more support to cope with the challenges of life, and we are investing, providing and planning a number of services and interventions to support people to face and seek to overcome their problems.

As part of the efforts to support people's well-being, the **Supporting People Board** has worked on identifying obstructions and improving our understanding of how our services are currently provided through a number of various work streams. The intention of this is to enable the people of Gwynedd to look after their own well-being and live the life they wish. Some of the work streams include **Financial and Food Poverty, Carers, Homelessness, Digital Competency and Well-being**.

The **Gwynedd and Anglesey Well-being Plan** notes how the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board will undertake its work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Collaboration is undertaken with key partners to drive the required changes to integrate health and care in our communities, giving attention to a broad range of fields such as Adults, Children, Learning Disabilities, Mental Health and Community Transformation. In addition, the Board has a role in the work of revitalising our communities following the side-effects of the pandemic.

The Public Services Board has been carrying out research on matters such a financial poverty and unemployment amongst young people. The Board will continue to undertake research as a part of their assessment of well-being, where there will be an opportunity to hear from Gwynedd communities about what matters to them. The assessment will improve our understanding of our communities' needs, looking at challenges and opportunities for the future.

The **Health and Well-being Learning Partnership** met more regularly during the pandemic to discuss how to promote people's well-being by promoting Public Health Wales' Five Ways to Well-being. The **Looking after Myself** booklet has been central to the work and, alongside this, a **Facebook page** was established which shared the broad range of health and well-being information and events in Gwynedd.

A creative fortnight was held on-line, called **Well-being for Me**, between 18-31 January, with the aim of supporting the mental well-being of the individuals who were taking part. The event was free for anyone over 18 years of age. All activities during the fortnight were based on the 'Five Ways to Well-being' and included creative activities, videos, conversations, ideas, inspiration, a sense of supporting each other and a booklet to guide each individual through the period.

The **Well-being Pathways Team** provides a broad range of services and activities that respond to the needs of individuals with learning disabilities in Gwynedd. During the lockdowns, the team has managed to continue with sessions to promote the well-being of individuals - physically, emotionally and socially. Virtual sessions were provided, such as yoga, dance, quiz and a disco, as well as a Makaton Choir - a video of the choir can be

viewed **here**. Other activities were also held, such as walking groups in the community and confidential 'Blwch Siarad' discussion sessions in collaboration with Mind. During the year, 134 individuals had received support or had joined the sessions.

In addition, the team has assisted individuals to be in a situation to be able to help in on-line sessions by providing equipment and training for individuals and their families. The team has also developed a **website** and a presence on social media to encourage individuals to participate and ensure that information is available for all.

Various organisations were brought together to establish **Gwynedd Carers Network**, where work was in progress during the year to support unpaid carers during the pandemic. The '**Looking After Someone**' booklet was prepared to support carers. Click **here** to see a video that shows the events that have been held during the year:

An **On-line Carers Festival** was held in August for a period of three weeks, with the aim of providing information, supporting the well-being of carers and having fun. In parallel, the **Carers' Rights Day** was held, which was an on-line campaign to raise awareness of carers' rights.

As well as arranging events and campaigns such as the above, the **Unpaid Carers Support Team** has collaborated with Welsh Government and the North Wales Regional Partnership Board to create an **ID card and App for Young Carers**. Following a consultation with the Action For Children service, namely the agency commissioned by Gwynedd and Anglesey and the County's young carers, this led to the co-production of ideas to create an App to accompany the more traditional ID and wristband methods. As a result, the young carers of Gwynedd and Anglesey came together with other young carer projects in the North to create a suitable image for this exciting development, so in the region, Gwynedd and Anglesey will share the same look as the brand of other counties, and will use the same traditional ID card as the rest of the region. Click **here** to watch a video that shows how the App will work.

As Welsh Government has been eager to see Local Authorities trialling various methods, Gwynedd and Anglesey will trial the App and collaborate with the Education Department and four secondary schools initially to see how it works practically in schools and will share any lessons learnt from the pilot with the rest of the region. The initiative was launched across the North on National Young Carers' Day on 16 March 2021.

The **Learning Disabilities Service** has two work-streams that are a priority at present, namely, the Accommodation project and Work Opportunities project. There is a lack of suitable accommodation for

disabled individuals across the county, and we have started to work with Housing Associations and the Council's Housing and Property Department to address this need. Providing training opportunities and work experiences for individuals with Learning Disabilities is also a priority, and this will enable disabled individuals to learn and participate in society. As a part of this work, a Community Hub is being developed in Dolfeurig, Dolgellau and a 'Meals on Wheels' Service is being implemented in the area of Y Ffôr, Pwllheli, in cooperation with Agoriad.

The Service has managed to provide day and respite opportunities in some priority situations and has provided bespoke services by using our community hubs flexibly in order to adhere to Covid-19 regulations. In addition, since September, the Learning Disabilities service has started to use a new respite unit in Pwllheli, to provide an overnight respite service for disabled individuals, which helps carers with the substantial pressure on them.

Jointly with the Health Board and the Isle of Anglesey Council, we have established a Multi-agency Project Board to establish an **Autism Plan**. The intention of this Plan, that will be introduced during 2021-22, will be to respond to assessments and support requests for support relating to autism. The Plan will comply with the new Code of Practice for Autism Services that will come into force in April 2021.

The **Derwen Team**, namely the Disabled Children's Integrated Team, is a partnership between Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and Gwynedd Council's Social Services Department. The team works to provide specialist support for children with a developmental impairment or delay, disabled children and ill children. The team managed to maintain the service during the Covid-19 crisis, where collaboration took place with the families and children and young people to provide them with the necessary support. Since the beginning of the crisis, there were many examples of the need to adapt and change care and support plans quickly, and the support service has managed to meet each new plan in a timely way.

The team is continuing to collaborate closely with other services such as the Housing and Property Department, the Education Department, the Health Board and many charities, in order to provide an effective and creative service for the children and their families. For example, collaboration took place with other agencies to provide many suitable houses to meet the needs of ill/disabled children.

Despite the fact that it was not possible to hold face-to-face social activities this year, and that there is a need to suspend some services temporarily as a result of the crisis, we have managed to adapt our way of working with people and partners to safeguard and promote the physical and mental health and emotional well-being of people through virtual events and activities, ensuring that we are also continuing with developments where it is possible to do so.

QUALITY STANDARD 3

Safeguarding and protecting people from abuse, neglect or harm

We take our responsibility to safeguard people seriously. The Council is playing an active part in the **North Wales Children Safeguarding Board**, **North Wales Adults Safeguarding Board**, **North Wales Safer Communities Board (as well as sub-groups within the field) and the Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership** and ensure that matters raised at the meetings of these groups have received due attention to ensure the safety of the county's residents. As a Corporate Director, I also have specific responsibilities in the safeguarding field.

We also have arrangements in progress internally to ensure the safety of the residents of Gwynedd, and **Care Inspectorate Wales** carry our regular inspections of our work to ensure that it is of the best quality. This year, we had a quality inspection by the Inspectorate in January, in order to see how well our social services continue to help and support adults and children, focusing on safety and well-being.

In the feedback we received from the Inspectorate after the inspection, it was noted that we had kept in good contact with people during the pandemic to offer support, that our staff are able to cope with their caseloads and that they obviously understood the circumstances of the people with whom they work and their communities well. The feedback was very positive, and I am very proud of our staff's hard work and commitment to ensure this.

Within the Council, we have the **Strategic Safeguarding Panel** that is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Dilwyn Morgan. The aim of this Panel is to ensure that appropriate arrangements and procedures are in place at a corporate level across the Council to ensure the safety of children, young people and adults. Since 2017/18 the Panel is also responsible for an overview of wider safeguarding issues across Gwynedd, such as Community Safety.

The **Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership** is a group of organisations that collaborate to consider how to address crime and disorder, reduce re-offending, substance misuse and anti-social behaviour. More information about the work of the Partnership, as well as the Community Safety Local Plan, can be found **here**. The membership includes us as a Council, the Police, Probation service, the Fire and Rescue service and

the Health Board. The Council is represented by the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, Councillor Dafydd Meurig, as well as the Corporate Director, Morwena Edwards.

The **Domestic Abuse** field is a priority for us in the coming year, and we encourage all Council members and staff to complete training in the field. Domestic abuse has been particularly challenging this year because of Covid-19 and the instruction for everyone to stay at home during the lockdown periods. This year, we did not see any increase in the number of domestic abuse cases reported, and therefore, this raises the question as to whether victims are too frightened to report their situation and that they are living in situations of risk. We are continuing to collaborate with the relevant organisations and attempting to raise awareness of reporting domestic abuse, seeking to put different methods in practice so that individuals can contact safely. There will be a need to continue working conscientiously on this agenda.

The **Emrallt Team** was established this year, in the aim of reducing the number of harmful sexual behaviour cases being referred to statutory services following an incident of abuse, by means of a number of timely and appropriate interventions. In order to meet our aim, we have invested substantially in awareness raising events and access to preventative and specialist training packages by Brook, the NSPCC and AIM.

This year, the **Gwynedd Council Modern Slavery Statement 2020/21** was published. In addition, the Safeguarding Strategic Panel adopted actions in the field of Modern Slavery during the year to ensure that we have purposeful arrangements in play, namely, setting guidelines and pathways to refer concerns/cases on Gwynedd Council's website, establish a single point of contact, publish a specific annual statement on how the Council avoids Modern Slavery within business activity and supply chains, and staff training.

We are a Corporate Parent to looked after children in Gwynedd, where we implement direct responsibility to ensure that appropriate and suitable services are available for them. The Corporate Parent Panel is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families, Councillor Dilwyn Morgan. Usually, children come into our care under very difficult circumstances, and we are as ambitious for these children as anyone would be for their own child.

At the end of March 2021, 281 children were in the Council's care, and 71% of these received care in a foster placement, with 35% of those foster carers either friends or family members, and 18% of looked after children were placed with their parents, and therefore remained at home.

Due to the restrictions of the pandemic, care plan reviews were conducted virtually this year, which has brought new challenges to practice and officers' ability to see children face-to-face and develop the working relationship. Care Inspectorate Wales praised this field following its inspection of our work in January 2021, stating that all statutory reviews and visits were being done in a timely way, and that the reviews reflected the views of the children, the carers and their parents, with good narratives relating to well-being.

Because of Covid-19, a number of agencies have re-located staff or made decisions to protect the well-being of staff and avoid contact with the public. This has led to a reduction in referrals at times, and a reduction in the contact by a number of agencies with children and families. This has proven challenging in all fields, including its impact on our work to protect children and support looked after children.

In addition, emergency arrangements had to be introduced to sustain the statutory registrations duty on the **Gwynedd Child Protection Register** as it was not possible to meet at a face-to-face conference. We succeeded to hold Protection Conferences virtually, including other agencies and parents. Obviously, this has influenced the effectiveness of the protection process and the nature of our ability to co-discuss and ensure a voice for all.

In 2020/21, 389 child protection 'conferences' were held. The percentage of the case conferences where it was considered that the risk assessments were high quality was 97% and was consistent with the recent years. This consistently high performance shows the impact of our investment in practice to ensure good decisions that protect the rights of children and their families.

QUALITY STANDARD 4

Encouraging and providing support for people to learn and contribute in society

The majority of the activities that have taken place this year have been conducted virtually because of the pandemic. This in itself has posed new challenges, but we acknowledge the importance of assisting people to gain skills and encourage them to support each other within our communities.

The Council has prioritised the **Gap in Children and Young People's Well-being and Attainment**, as there is concern that some children and young people could be left behind in terms of their educational attainment; and some of them needed additional help to close that gap as well as support with their welfare.

Because of the impacts of Covid-19, during 2021/22, we will focus on understanding the impacts of lockdown on the welfare of young children, and we will review our arrangements and provisions to ensure the best start for children aged 0-5 years and their families. In addition, we will focus our efforts on the 5-16 year old group by supporting the schools to implement the **Accelerating Learning Programme** with funding from the Welsh Government. This will allow us to respond to the impact of the lockdown period on the welfare and attainment of specific groups of learners.

Beyond school, we also realise that the 16-24 year old age group has been disproportionately affected by the crisis than any other age group. There are more referrals for well-being, mental health and homelessness assistance among this age group. Therefore, hand in hand with the increase in the number of young people not in employment, education or training, there is an intention to give specific attention to this field in order to mitigate against any side-effects, ensuring that our young people have support and appropriate provision to enable them to thrive.

During the year, the **Youth Service** has adapted how it reaches young people, with the majority of the work moving on-line. The service has provided socialising activities, learning sessions, training and it has offered personal support around three main themes, in accordance with what young people said that mattered to them; i.e. well-being, learning new skills and preparing themselves for the working world and to live independently. The craft, quiz, fitness challenge, cookery and Chatting Session were the most popular among young people.

The Youth Service has continued to keep in contact with young people aged 16 years of age and older who are not in education, employment or training to support them and help them re-engage when they will be ready to do so. The service also continues to respond to the social and personal challenges of young people, such as challenging behaviours, well-being and self-image, as well as barriers to re-engage with education and employment. For the year to come, priority will be given to the fields of health and well-being, youth homelessness, and supporting young people in the bridging period between 16-24 years.

Gwynedd Council has a unique **Bridging the Generations** project, which seeks to create new links between children and people of all ages, in the hope that this will increase respect and understanding between generations and lead to stronger communities. This year, the Bridging the Generations Week was held between 8 and 14 March across Britain, and Gwynedd Council held various activities during the week.

Despite this year's lockdown restrictions, much good work has taken place to promote collaboration between children, young people and adults of all ages, but particularly with older people. The main project was the Pen-Pals Scheme, where over 120 letters were sent. There was good collaboration with the Youth Service to create unique gifts for the residents of Plas Gwilym in Penygroes, and collaboration also happened with a number of organisations to provide over 120 Christmas Boxes by children for the older people of Gwynedd who were alone this year.

Further projects are in the pipeline for the year to come, such as the flower and plant planting scheme, where children will be able to decorate the pot and plant the seeds, and then presenting them to local care homes and to individuals who live alone, as well as friendship benches, which is a scheme to install benches in Gwynedd communities where anyone can sit to extend a welcome to others to join them on the bench for a chat.

The North Wales Cooperative evaluated the Bridging the Generations project in November this year, and it was concluded that the project performed well and had been able to respond flexibly to the challenges of the pandemic. Click **here** to see the work that has been in progress during the year.

The **Mentro Gyda'n Gilydd** project is a new resource that has been created in the form of video shorts to help show vulnerable residents and those living with dementia the main changes made to services in Gwynedd following the pandemic.

The **DementiaGo** team received special recognition in the Welsh Care Awards this year, where they were one of three organisations to be selected in the 'working with and listening to people living with dementia' category. Here is a **video clip** that shows their work.

The aim of DementiaGo is to support people affected by dementia through exercise to promote a rich quality of life. During the pandemic, the team has made regular phone calls to their members (around 3,000 calls during the year), produced a fortnightly newsletter to share information and encourage people to participate in activities to raise people's spirits and provide a sense of belonging and arranged on-line classes such as 'Sport Memories' as well as special events such as a Christmas quiz and party. Click **here** to have a taster of one particular on-line event, namely a session with Dawns i Bawb.

Here is some feedback from one service user:

'Thank you very much to the team for the Zoom exercise classes. They are perfect for Mum (and me too!). She is starting to get used to them and remembering that they are happening, and she is starting to know people and realise that they are not a one-off, but that they are on each week - and that they are so much fun. She loves hearing Welsh being spoken - she's Welsh herself, but she never had the chance to learn the language when she was young. She looks forward to the classes when she sees me setting up the computer. The classes are good motivation.'

Their **new website** was launched, under the new name **Gwynedd Dementia Actif**, in January 2021.

Digital Inclusion is an increasingly important element in this day and age. The Council intends to put a Digital Learning Strategy in place as one of its priorities, as there is a risk of providing a sub-standard quality of education for the children of Gwynedd as a result of a failure to maximise the opportunities offered by digital learning. The aim of the strategy is to give the best digital provision to support our learners and teachers to foster a range of skills to use technology confidently, creatively and critically.

During the pandemic, support was received from a number of agencies and organisations to ensure that the county's most vulnerable people had internet access. Between the months of April and June, the North Wales Regional Partnership Board allocated a number of iPads to our residential homes, as well as 15 iPads to our communities. The main intention in doing so was to enable family and friends to keep in contact virtually, particularly those who had to shield.

In addition, more money was allocated in February this year in order to extend the digital offer to other devices such as Echo Dot, smart plugs and smart bulbs. In doing so, the hope is to overcome loneliness and give individuals the ability to manage their wishes by voice alone (e.g. ask the Echo Dot to play songs or switch off the light), which is particularly important to those with mobility difficulties.

Dawns i Bawb has also purchased digital tablets to give to residents in residential homes in Gwynedd. No WiFi connection will be required to access the resources on the tablets, as the dance videos have already been recorded and downloaded onto the tablets. In the future, it is intended to look to develop the content of the digital tablets with dance sessions, as well as poems, pictures, excerpts of dramas, etc., with a particular focus on health and well-being.

In collaboration with **Y Dref Werdd** community enterprise, which works for the well-being of the environment and the local community in Bro Ffestiniog, Gwynedd Dementia Actif received 10 digital tablets to share with their members across Gwynedd. See Case Study 2 in Appendix 2 for further details. To date, four tablets have been handed to members who already had an internet connection, which meant that a total of seven people received support on how to use them and how to join regular on-line activities. The team will use the other six tablets to support people who do not currently have internet access.

QUALITY STANDARD 5

Providing support for people so that they can develop safely and maintain healthy relationships in the home, with families and on a personal level

One of the Council's main priorities is to ensure that the children and young people of the county **enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives**, as well as achieving what matters to people. Of course, achieving this ambition has been very challenging this year as the lockdown periods have prevented people from seeing their family and friends, and this has affected the ability of many individuals and families from developing and sustaining healthy relationships.

Reviewing our arrangements and ways of working is ongoing work to ensure that we make timely and correct decisions, that our interventions are fit for purpose, and that the experience of each child and his/her family with the department is the best that it can be. For the year to come, we will complete Ffordd Gwynedd work, by working across the services of the Children and Supporting Families Department and jointly with the Education Department to understand what matters to Gwynedd families, to agree on principles, and ways to improve what we do and how we work in order to provide the required support.

We believe that offering **early intervention** is key in order to help children and their families to thrive and reduce the need for more intensive services. We have a number of services providing early intervention, whether early on in the child's life so that they receive the support they need to thrive; or early on when a challenge or concern first emerges and before the situation deteriorates; and we will intervene in this way by working with the whole family.

The **Social Work Teams** in the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department are offering support and intensive intervention to children and their families. Social workers see children and their families regularly and keep in touch with them, remaining alert to issues of risk to children and young people. We ensure that there are resources available to support them and that their needs are clear to us. Then, plans are put in place to respond to their needs. At times, we will refer on to teams that offer more specialist interventions, such as the services in the Trobwynt Team.

Families First in Gwynedd offers support to families, subject to their needs. During the last year, we have continued to develop our interventions to allow us to respond to the needs of families in the most effective way, and trial pilot schemes by Barnardo's and Y Bont relating to managing conflict among families and supporting the well-being of children. We have also continued to offer support to parents in order to develop parenting and healthy relationship skills. With additional funding this year, we are able to collaborate with Home Start Cymru to develop a short project to provide support to fathers over the phone.

The **Team Around the Family** intervenes early when problems become apparent within families, but this happens on a voluntary basis and with the family's consent. We will help by responding to needs and providing appropriate services. We received 361 referrals to the Families First scheme in Gwynedd in 2020/21, with 227 of these referrals being offered further support by the Team Around the Family and other services commissioned through the scheme.

If a number of matters require attention within the family, the family can receive more intensive support from a Team Around the Family Coordinator, who will bring everyone together to create an integrated plan. During the year, 61 families received support from a Team Around the Family Coordinator, with a high percentage of families noting that there had been a positive difference in their lives after receiving intervention.

This is what one parent had to say:

'Thanks for the help with parenting - things have improved a lot with my daughter - we don't fall out as much, and we can do fun things such as cooking...My daughter seems much happier at school and at home.'

The **Early Years Service** provides support for children under 4 years of age and their families by supporting nursery education provisions, developing the childcare and play sector and providing parenting packs to help families bring up healthy, happy and safe children.

We also provide more intensive packages of support in specific areas of Gwynedd through the **Flying Start** programme. The programme supports families with raising children and parenting, children's language and speech development, and health and care support, through multi-agency teams from education, health and care.

During the year, we have been working on one of our priorities, namely a **Keeping Families Together** in the hope of starting to implement it in the year to come. The Strategy includes different levels of advice and

information, to more specialist and intensive interventions. Sometimes, difficult decisions will need to be made, and when we need to care for a child, we will seek to secure suitable placements, and support for the child and his/her family.

The function of the **Fostering Team** is to ensure that we have plenty of foster parents to meet the needs of children who are unable to live at home. The Team assess and support foster carers so that they can provide children who come into our care with the necessary support, which is a high priority for the Department. We are aware that children who are in stable situations get the best opportunity to test those boundaries that are crucial for good development. This lays the foundation for achieving the best outcomes for them.

We are very fortunate of our **Foster Carers** here in the Council, and this year, we have been striving to recruit more carers. Over a fortnight, a digital campaign was held, which included a video by famous individuals and Council officers. Following the campaign, 16 enquiries were received. Click **here** to watch a video that shows one couple's experience as foster carers.

Because of the pandemic, a helpline was established for foster carers so that someone was available during weekends to respond to any enquiries they had during the period. Social media was also used to share information and as a mode for carers to share experiences.

The **Trobwynt Service** was established to work intensively with the families at the edge of care. The service supports families with a range of specialist support, in a co-ordinated and timely way, and this year, the team worked with 212 children. We will act based on the outcomes of the multi-agency work that has been developed in 2020/21 to target young parents who are at a higher risk of meeting the care threshold with their parenting skills.

The **Edge of Care Team** offers intensive support packages aimed at keeping children stable in their homes. This year, work was carried out with 166 children, where 88 of these cases were new cases. During the year, we managed to continue to keep in regular contact with these children over the phone, via on-line platforms such as Zoom and via home visits.

The **Reflect** project offers specialist support to parents who have children in the care system on a permanent basis. This year, support was provided to nine parents. During the coming year, the hope is to develop support for the mother in relation to her final contact with her child(ren).

QUALITY STANDARD 6

Working with people and supporting them to achieve better economic welfare, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

Offering support on matters relating to money, employment, accommodation and support to obtain easy access to services has never been so important, considering the current climate. One of our main priorities is ensuring sufficient bespoke housing of quality to address the needs of a changing population. In December 2020, approval was given to our **Housing Action Plan** (2020/21 to 2026/27), which is a programme of over 30 specific plans for a £77 million investment to realise the ambition of our Housing Strategy to *"ensure that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable home of a high standard, that is affordable and improves their quality of life".*

These schemes will aim to fulfil the following objectives:

- No one is homeless in Gwynedd
- Social housing available to all who need one
- Everyone's home in Gwynedd is affordable to them
- Gwynedd Housing are environmentally friendly
- Homes having a positive influence on the health and well-being of the people of Gwynedd

Watch **this video** where Councillor Craig ab Iago, Gwynedd Council Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, explains more about the housing projects we have in the pipeline:

During 2021/22, we will begin to implement these plans in order to increase the opportunities for local people to have suitable homes within their communities.

The **Homelessness Service** provides advice and assistance to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The team is discharging the Council's statutory duty to meet the requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Their work includes:

- helping to prevent homelessness before it occurs
- assessing the accommodation and support needs of individuals and families who are threatened with homelessness
- helping to find somewhere else to live when an individual or family are facing homelessness
- providing temporary accommodation in emergency cases, and securing accommodation for those in priority need.

Since 2015/16, the Homelessness Service has seen an annual increase in the number of individuals who are presenting themselves as homeless. Before Covid-19, we had seen an increase of 35% in the number who present themselves homeless or at threat of becoming homeless over 5 years. The demand remains higher than ever with 945 individuals receiving a service in 2020/21. As a result of the statutory requirement on us to ensure that individuals did not sleep on the street during the pandemic, additional funding was received from a new Welsh Government fund, to secure accommodation for everyone referred to us.

The service provides many temporary accommodations until a permanent property is available for homeless people, including two hostels in the Council's ownership, and 100 properties leased by private owners and Housing Associations. Accommodation was provided for 419 families/individuals in 2020/21. The number of homeless people have consistenly increased for some years, and there is increasing pressure on the Service to deal with the need to home people at short notice.

Since many homeless people are also vulnerable, support is provided to ensure that individuals can maintain their tenancy and avoid becoming homeless again. Support is provided on a number of issues such as claiming benefits, support for the maintenance of accommodation, understanding rights and responsibilities, and applying for grants for furnishing a property.

There are a number of projects within the Housing Action Plan that will lead to additional units to address homelessness in Gwynedd. We hope to be able to commence the development work early in the year, which

will lead to an additional 44 Supported Units for homeless people. We also have a project in the pipeline to refurbish the former Natwest bank in Castle Square, Caernarfon, jointly with GISDA, in order to provide 5 flats for homeless young people, as well as a training flat. This work is expected to be completed in March 2022.

We have introduced a new **Housing Allocation Policy** which has been operational since the summer. This policy prioritises local people, and replaces the former points system of housing allocation. The new system means that applications for social housing are put into one of four 'bands' depending on their housing needs and their connection with Gwynedd.

In 2021/22 we will need to secure effective arrangements for the implementation of the new allocation policy, and establish a system to monitor that this policy is implemented throughout the County to ensure the best opportunities for the people of Gwynedd.

Since 2016, Gwynedd has contributed to the UK Government's **Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement programme**. The Council committed to welcome and provide a house for up to 40 individuals who had been forced to flee war-stricken Syria. We have now fulfilled our promise as a Council and take pride in the fact that we have helped eight families to settle in Gwynedd.

As a result of this programme's success, the Council has now committed to welcome up to 20 of the most vulnerable refugees identified by the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as part of the Worldwide Refugee programme over the next three years.

The Council has continued with a programme to invest and modernise our **residential homes** in order to improve the quality of bespoke resources to meet the needs of service users. During the year, work to create a new Dementia Unit was completed and this provision was retained as a back-up resource during the pandemic. Alongside this, investment programmes to the value of £500k have continued in Cefn Rodyn, Dolgellau, where we will maximise the quality of resources and create a new bariatric provision, and we are also creating a Dementia Unit within the Hafod Mawddach home. We hope that these resources will assist to meet the various needs of the people of Gwynedd, and promote independence and dignity.

Our **Adaptations Unit** is responsible for promoting the independence and well-being of Gwynedd residents by providing timely and high-standard adaptations to the homes of children and adults with physical impairments. Around £1.3m a year is invested on schemes such as creating accessible bathrooms, installing ramps outside the house, building extensions etc. Around 30 of these are referrals received from hospitals so as to enable patients to return home.

During the year, 132 houses were adapted for individuals with physical impairments. We have also continued to offer install and service **Telecare** equipment in the homes of some of our most vulnerable people around the county during the lockdown.

One of the Council's priorities is to encourage **More Gwynedd residents to play a full part in the world of work**. A substantial number of residents are unable to fulfil their full potential as they are underemployed or excluded from employment. Being outside the world of work leads to reducing residents' wealth and increasing the demand for public resources, and preventing this is a key part of the anti-poverty agenda. There are direct benefits from being in work in terms of increasing earnings, but there are also wider benefits in terms of health, children's life opportunities and pride in communities.

The Council has established an **Unemployment Taskforce** to address the increase in unemployment levels in the county, as a result of the pandemic. We have been working with employers, especially within the tourism industry, to ensure that more Gwynedd residents benefit from the employment opportunities available, and support the residents of Gwynedd to foster the digital skills required to access work. We are also working on an exciting and innovative project entitled Kickstart, jointly with the Dolan organisation and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, to offer a period of work and training for unemployed young people in Gwynedd, and offer an opportunity for local businesses to receive help at no cost as they reopen and recover.

During the year, we have supported over 200 individuals with their **employability skills**, with over 50 of these having successfully found work. In future, we will continue with the above plans and develop further plans such as close collaboration with our partners across North Wales and with the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions, to improve the coordination of our services.

In the challenging context of unemployment, as well as underemployment and restrictions on people's ability to work, the need for **financial, debt and access to benefits advisory services** has been more important than ever. We have been collaborating with our partners at the Citizens Advice Bureau and Housing Associations and other charities, to promote the local financial advice services, campaigns to maximise income, and co-administering vouchers to help with fuel costs and food costs in an emergency. As part of this, a leaflet was provided with each Council Tax bill distributed to all households in the county in March in order to raise awareness of the advisory and support services available.

As an Authority, we have also been administrating **direct payments** for free school meals for families, as well as payments for residents who are losing income due to the need for them to self-isolate. We have continued

to work with the food banks and community feeding schemes to develop an infrastructure across the county's communities to ensure access to healthy and cheap food, and to food in an emergency, which will also address the issue of reducing food waste.

We have also prioritised training and employment opportunities for adults with learning disabilities. **The Work Opportunities Project Group** was established this year to lead on this work. In addition, as part of the development of our community hubs across Gwynedd, training and work opportunities will be an integral part of these hubs, for example, there will be training opportunities in Cegin Arfon, Galwch Acw in Caernarfon, etc. The Well-being Pathways Team will also focus on running accredited courses to facilitate and promote individuals with learning disabilities to be ready for the world of work.

We are working alongside the Health Board to support individuals with mental health difficulties in order to promote recovery and assist them to live independently. We also offer assessment and support for mental health carers. The **ICAN project** was developed this year to offer support to individuals in the community, close to home. As part of the project, community centres were opened, for example, a centre was opened in Pwllheli soon before the pandemic struck. Unfortunately, because of Covid-19, all of the centres had to be shut. In response to this, ICAN provided support to individuals virtually and over the phone and individuals were able to make direct contact to receive support.

Gwynedd Council has been prominent in terms of ensuring that services for residents are available through the medium of Welsh as we operate through the medium of Welsh internally. It is continual work to **Promote the use of the Welsh language** within the Council's Services, and we are aware that we need to continue to maintain our staff's language skills.

In future, we will contribute to a work programme that will draw together the Council's Adults, Health and Well-being Department, the Health Board and Anglesey Council to establish working arrangements in a bilingual situation for the Community Resources Teams, namely the teams that will provide care and support for the people who need it.

4. How we do our work

The Welsh Language and delivering against the requirements of the 'More than Just Words' Framework

We have committed in full to Welsh Government's **'More than Just Words' Framework**, which places expectations on local councils and health boards to provide services through the medium of Welsh. I am the national lead on the More than Just Words agenda on behalf of the Wales Directors of Social Services. I also chair the North Wales More than Just Words Forum, and as a Council, we participate in full at this Forum. The forum provides opportunities to share ideas and collaborate with the Health Service, councils and other organisations.

The Council has a robust recruitment policy which has existed for many years. Council staff are required to be able to communicate effectively in Welsh and English to an appropriate standard and in order to be able to fulfil their duties in full in line with the Council's language policy. Each post has been assessed in terms of language needs and the language skill is included in the recruitment process. If the person appointed does not meet the language designations of the post, the line manager contacts the Welsh Language Learning and Development Officer within the Council to arrange an appropriate timetable. In order to meet the needs of the people of Gwynedd, the person is expected to meet the post's language designations within the timetable set. The individual is given full support to achieve this.

We are very confident in the departments' ability to provide their services through the medium of Welsh. To date, 730 of staff in the Social Services departments have completed an assessment to ensure that they meet the language requirements that are appropriate to their post, and from these staff, 99% of them are able to speak Welsh, whether fluently or on a basic level.

There are more opportunities available than ever before to learn or develop Welsh in the new digital climate, and during the year, the Council has supported 27 members of staff from the Adults, Health and Well-being and Children and Supporting Families Departments. Providing on-line lessons and resources are advantageous for a number of reasons, including:

- no need to travel to learning locations, and so:
    - there is no need to release more time than the lesson length for the individual

- learners across Gwynedd can attend lessons, regardless of where they live or work

- more lessons can be held on the same time (the availability of teaching rooms have restricted us previously)

- advantage can be taken of the support and assistance of individuals from locations across Gwynedd, in terms of tutors, colleagues (via our Cyfeillion Cymraeg Scheme) and internal officers and tutors

- more flexibility in some cases in terms of time and content

For the small percentage who are unable to speak Welsh within the care workforce, there is evidence of the culture change with purposeful plans being put in place to learn Welsh, and the managers and senior managers taking more ownership and driving the agenda forward, e.g. two Area Managers have acknowledged that there is a responsibility on them and home managers to support the learners once they have returned to the workplace. See Case Study 3 in Appendix 2 of this Report (page 44) to learn more about this.

Our workforce and how we support their professional role

Social care in Gwynedd is provided by a broad range of agencies from the statutory services, private sector, and the third sector, and staffing the field is one of the greatest challenges of our social services. The challenges are particularly prominent in the domiciliary care field, and this is of increasing concern to me as Director as we are unable to provide care packages in some situations as a result of staff shortages.

We have an effective and committed workforce, and this has been especially evident during the Covid-19 emergency. However, we must ensure that we have sufficient workers with the necessary skills to cope with the increasing need that is likely to arise in the future, and this need has been prioritised in the 2018-23 Council Plan.

We have been striving to try to better understand the challenges that exists across the field, and in response to this a work programme was developed in an attempt to address some of the concerns. The work of establishing a new home care provision system will have a positive impact on elements such as the wages of front line staff in the private sector, duration of work contracts and career pathways in the field.

To coincide with this work, a **campaign** was held this year to increase the size of the care workforce in the Adults field in order to respond to workforce shortages to ensure service continuity. The **#SOSGalwGofalwyr** campaign was established in an attempt to recruit over 100 new staff members, both part-time and full-time.

Very often, our officers need a chat or consolation after visiting difficult cases in the field, and this could be done quite easily in a relatively informal way in an office environment. Our officers have not been able to work in our offices during the year, and therefore, offering such support when working from home has been more difficult, but we have managed to provide an office resource that coincides with the Covid-19 regulations so that those staff can come to the office when they need to do so, in order to receive the support they need.

Covid-19 gave an opportunity for some members of staff from Social Services to redeploy to the new Covid Support Teams. A large number of staff from other Council Departments were redeployed to the Social Care field also; whether they worked in the PPE field; Track, Trace and Protect Team or in care homes.

We are also very eager to plan succession in order to ensure that we have the correct workers with the correct skills for now and the future. For example, we have a Trainee Scheme that runs annually for social workers. In addition, we are proud to be able to offer apprenticeships in many fields this year, including learning disabilities, adult care and childcare. Here is a video to explain more.

Unfortunately, at the beginning of the crisis, the placements for social work students had to be suspended. However, as the situation stabilised and as we got used to working virtually, detailed discussions were held between Bangor University and Gwynedd Council to plan to recommence placements. This will have to include consideration and investment in virtual methods of working (laptops etc.) and on-line training. I am very satisfied with the collaboration that took place during the year between us as a Council and the University, and I am also incredibly proud of the students for being so prepared to offer support during this difficult time.

Our financial resources

Like everything else this year, Covid-19 has had a substantial financial impact on the Council, with the implications of that involving additional costs, loss of income and slippage in our savings scheme as the Council has prioritised protecting the health and lives of the people of Gwynedd in response to the crisis. Welsh Government established a hardship fund towards compensating for the costs and income losses of Local Government.

Of course, the care field has faced substantial pressure this year, and as a result, overspending occurred in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and in the Children and Supporting Families Department. Although we attempted to continue with our financial savings schemes, we needed to respond to the crisis at the same time. Of course, we are giving due attention to the financial situation to ensure that we budget suitably to meet the demand, but we are also ensuring that we act as effective as possible.

The additional pressure on budgets on the care field has been acknowledged with additional permanent funds to the value of over £2.7 million allocated to the care field for the 2021/22 budget.

Working in partnership

A core part of our work is working in local and regional partnerships with partners such as the Health Board, the Police and the third sector. Throughout the report, I refer to various pieces of work that are often implemented in partnership with other agencies. I am very proud of the relationship we have with our partners locally, where constructive collaboration takes place along with open discussions on any differing opinions in an attempt to ensure that we reach agreement on the best way of working for our population.

Of course, we saw more collaboration than ever before during the crisis in order to ensure public safety. A large number of local businesses in the area were collaborated with, which went the extra mile to support our communities through efforts such as providing hot meals for residents, assisting with collecting and delivering prescriptions to people who had to shield, contributions to the food bank, etc.

Joint work was also undertaken with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, Gwynedd social housing providers, voluntary sectors such as Mantell Gwynedd and Age Cymru, to put emergency arrangements in place to respond to the pandemic. For example, partnership work was carried out with Adra, a housing provider in Gwynedd, to distribute around 1,000 items of PPE, as well as supporting Gwynedd food banks. Also, 23 Health Board services were moved from Betsi Cadwaladr Buildings into the Council's buildings. Collaboration efforts took place with the Health Board on establishing Ysbyty Enfys in Bangor and on the Vaccination Programme.

A number of groups and voluntary organisations were established during the year as well, and collaboration was undertaken with a number of these to create a map of the services available in each area of the county:

https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1cVj6cth01MifwHTEbqObs9IMw8BKrXtz&ll=52.97441139028482%2C-4.2539057576171935&z=11

We managed to continue to provide essential services during the crisis, and we worked closely with partners to support efforts. The main thing that has been highlighted during the crisis is the importance of close collaboration between us as partners in the future.

The **North Wales Regional Partnership Board** has now been operational for some years. Both the Cabinet Member for Adults, Councillor Dafydd Meurig, and I are members of this Board. We as partners also meet as an Integrated Care and Health Group in order to ensure that we agree on the way forward on a more local level. This group is also accountable to the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board, which strengthens the local accountability. I am also an associate member on Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board. My role in this respect relates to advising and providing feedback to the Health Board on matters relating to the social care field, and although I do not have a voting role on the Board, I consider it to be a valuable time investment in terms of trying to give a care steer to these discussions.

The Third Sector Liaison Group, which provides an overview of the field and encourages and drives effective collaboration between statutory organisations and the third sector, is also important in the context of care. During the year, good collaboration took place to share information and resources during the crisis, and it is a good method to arrange presentations from various members of the Group so that others learn about the work happening in other parts of the county. The Liaison Group will ensure that opportunities to improve services for the population are discussed and agreed, and it is likely that the Covid-19 crisis will have had a positive impact on the way we collaborate to support our communities. Keeping hold of that will be essential.

Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability

It is important for me to draw your attention to Part 8 of the Act, which notes the requirements imposed on me as the Statutory Director of Social Services. Gwynedd Council Cabinet has approved the **'Director's Protocol'**. This is a document that outlines how we will ensure that we address the legislative requirements. This protocol ensures robust governance arrangements along with strong lines of accountability.

The Council has robust governance arrangements in place to support the effective management of social services. As well as submitting reports to scrutiny committees, we also have a robust departmental performance challenging structure in place. We also hold regular meetings with the Inspectorate to ensure that our procedures are sound. The Scrutiny Committees has made a substantial contribution again this year in scrutinising particular fields and offering us important perspectives in order to continually improve.

Again this year, the Cabinet has shown its commitment to support the Council's care services, and to investing financially in these services to realise the plans in the pipeline. The Council has appointed two Cabinet Members for the fields within Social Services, namely Councillor Dafydd Meurig for the fields of Adults, Health and Well-being, and Councillor Dilwyn Morgan for the fields of Children and Supporting Families. We are also very proud to have Councillor Craig ab Iago, as Cabinet Member for Housing, who has been a great help with the broader care agenda.

5. 2021/22 Priorities

Here are the main priorities of Social Services for the 2021/22 year. More details about them can be obtained in the Council's **Improvement Priorities**:

- Help people who need support to live their lives as they wish
- Ensure suitable care provision and sustainable well-being for the future
- Improve the quality of our care provision across the county
- Re-design our well-being care services
- The workforce and recruitment in the care field
- Ensure that we keep families together
- Ensure an appropriate provision for children with complex needs in order to keep them in our communities
- Ensure that families and children with autism have access to the support they need to thrive
- Support people's well-being

6. Further Information and Key Documents

Well-being and Population Documents

Gwynedd Well-being Assessment

Gwynedd and Anglesey Well-being Plan

Assessment of the North Wales Population Needs

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

A Healthier Wales

Gwynedd Policies

Council Plan

The Council's Performance Report

Training Information

Language Policy

Listening, responding, improving

Access to further information

Dewis Cymru

Concerns about an individual

If you are aware of an individual who is at risk of abuse or who is being abused, it is very important that you inform the Council or the police.

If the individual is in imminent danger, call the police on 999. Unless it is an immediate risk, call Social Services as soon as possible to share your concerns.

Child:

01766 772577 • **01248 353551** (outside working hours) • **cyfeiriadauplant@gwynedd.llyw.cymru**

Adult:

01766 772577 • **01248 353551** (outside working hours))

APPENDIX 1: Information about the Quality Standards as noted in the Social Services and Well-being Act (2014)

Quality Standard 1: Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

In order to achieve this, local authorities should:

- ensure access to clear and comprehensible information, advice and assistance to support people to maintain their well-being and make informed decisions
- work with individuals, their carers and partner organisations, to support and maintain the independence of individuals without the need for care and support
- complete well-being assessments in a timely manner
- ensure that decisions respect individual circumstances across the entire range of needs and that they give due attention to the United Nations' conventions and principles for children, older people and disabled people
- ensure that people are treated with dignity and respect
- enable people to have control over the planning and provision of care
- promote a healthy lifestyle and support them
- enable access to services and activities that maintain mental health and emotional well-being
- encourage and empower people to control their own health and well-being, to be active and benefit from care and proactive preventative support
- arrange independent advocacy where needed or refer to other types of advocacy to enable people to overcome obstacles to participation when reviewing and meeting needs
- arrange contact names and share relevant information with partners in order to allow for the smooth transfer of care and support across the services
- facilitate multi-disciplinary care and support plans
- put arrangements in place for assessing needs and deciding on eligibility
- explain challenges as well as achievements
- measure the impact of the care and support, and support to carers, on people's lives and well-being outcomes
- ensure that people are aware of the arrangements for paying and charging for care.

Quality Standard 2: Working with people and partners to safeguard and promote the physical and mental health and emotional well-being of people

In order to achieve this, local authorities should:

- promote and support a healthy lifestyle
- support access services to maintain mental health and emotional well-being
- encourage and empower people to control their own health and well-being, to be active and benefit from care and proactive preventative support

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Quality Standard 3: Safeguarding and protecting people from abuse, neglect or harm

In order to achieve this, local authorities should:

- respond effectively to changing circumstances and regularly review the achievements of individuals' well-being outcomes
- provide care and support to meet the assessed needs to protect people from abuse or neglect or other harm
- develop protective procedures for those who put their own safety at risk to prevent abuse and neglect.
- manage risk in a way that empowers people to feel in control which is in accordance with safeguarding needs
- work in partnership in order to investigate allegations of abuse or neglect in order to ensure that people are protected from harm
- advocacy in relation to safeguarding

Quality Standard 4: Encouraging and providing support for people to learn and contribute in society

In order to achieve this, local authorities should:

- provide support for people to do the things that matter to them
- assist people to gain the educational skills and achievements they need to participate in the things that matter to them
- encourage people to be active members in the community and support each other to reduce social isolation.

Quality Standard 5: Providing support for people so that they can develop safely and maintain healthy relationships in the home, with families and on a personal level

In order to achieve this, local authorities should:

- provide support for people to maintain relationships that are of importance to them, in accordance with the safeguarding needs
- assist people to acknowledge unsafe relationships and to safeguard themselves from abuse and neglect
- where appropriate, give consideration to the views of families, carers and other personal relationships when assessing care and support needs

Quality Standard 6: Working with people and supporting them to achieve better economic welfare, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

In order to achieve this, local authorities should:

- provide support for people to contribute as active citizens, both economically and socially
- provide support for people to acquire meaningful work and retain that work
- provide support for people to receive financial advice and support and assistance with benefits and grants
- provide access to services through the medium of Welsh and other languages of choice
- provide support for people to acquire accommodation which meet their needs and to facilitate their independent living

APPENDIX 2: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Covid Support Team

Mr X contacted the Team as he was concerned about his mother who had received a shielding letter. He arranged and paid for private care for his mother, but he was concerned that her health and memory were deteriorating. He was not sure how his mother was, as he was unable to travel to see her - his car was broken and there was no way of fixing it or travelling on public transport at the time.

A member of the Covid Support Team kept in regular contact with Mr X.

His PIP benefit had been stopped but he was not sure what would happen to him now. Therefore, it became apparent that Mr X had his own health problems because of that benefit, but he was not concerned about his own health and he was satisfied with the support from the doctor and hospital specialist.

Mr X lived with his son. He had some concern about his son as his attention and time was spent worrying about his parent at the moment. He was unsure how his son was coping. The dog was company to his son.

Mr X was ill during lockdown and he was unable to go out. He needed help to get groceries and nobody was taking the dog for a walk.

What did we do?

- Kept in regular contact.
- Brought in the Adults Team for a care and support assessment, and a package has been offered to him through the Social Workers.
- Brought in the Children's Team in to help with parenting and a request for a Family Coordinator as many services were involved in their lives by now.
- CAB took his PIP appeal on, and was making other benefit applications in the meantime.
- A volunteer took the dog for a walk.
- A Local Group delivered food.

Outcome

- Mr X is now happy that his income is being addressed and that support is available to his mother by the Adults Team and that he is having support from the Family Support Officer.
- Community support has ended as he is now able to do more for himself.

Case Study 2: DementiaGo

Mr and Mrs Jones live in the Arfon area in Gwynedd. Mr Jones has dementia, and Mrs Jones is his main carer. For two years, Mr and Mrs Jones have been keen members of the DementiaGo class in Byw'n Iach Arfon. Mr Jones also enjoyed the Walking Football sessions, and he attended six cultural and artistic sessions at the Slate Museum in Llanberis.

Because of Covid-19, all face-to-face activities were suspended, and the only contact they had with the Gwynedd Dementia Actif team was regular weekly telephone calls. During some of these contact calls, the trainer started to do light exercises on WhatsApp video calls as Mr and Mrs Jones felt that their physical health had deteriorated as a result of not attending the classes.

Mr and Mrs Jones did not attend the on-line classes because they did not have a digital device to do so and they did not have the confidence or digital knowledge to join. In September, Mr and Mrs Jones completed the Gwynedd Dementia Actif Questionnaire based on the 'Next Steps'. They said that they would be interested in participating in on-line classes but that they would need support to do so.

In October, Gwynedd Dementia Active managed to access a number of Tablets by the local Y Dref Werdd project. In November, a member of the Gwynedd Dementia Actif team sent the tablet to Mr and Mrs Jones's home. The tablet was already set-up with a new Google e-mail address and the Zoom app ready to use. They also received a set of simple instructions that were devised to help them at the start.

The team established a Zoom exercise meeting, where they were able to talk them through the process and ensure that everything worked properly and that they felt confident using the tablet. Since then, Mr and Mrs Jones have joined the on-line exercise classes, as well as the Sport Memories meetings.

Feedback from Mrs Jones:

"My husband loved going to the exercise classes at the leisure centre. He wanted us to go early so that he could sit in the café and have a cuppa before going to the class. It was important for him to have that social contact and see people. Therefore, since the classes ended because of COVID-19, he has missed them greatly and I believe that his fitness and strength have deteriorated and that he's lost all motivation.

We have been receiving excellent support from the team, the telephone calls and the attention we've been having from the coach has been excellent. She's even got my husband to exercise on one occasion via a WhatsApp video call. He thinks the world of her and knows when to expect her phone call."

Case Study 3: Welsh in the Workplace

For years, it was a challenge to find a stable and effective arrangement for a service manager in the Children and Supporting Families Department. Because of the nature of his work, time was scarce, and attending a regular course, such as a weekly course or releasing time for an intensive course, was impossible. It was no easy task to find a tutor who would be able to visit the workplace to hold 1:1 sessions for him either.

Now, thanks to the new opportunities that have arisen as a result of the pandemic, he receives weekly 1:1 lessons with a tutor and he is making excellent progress. The fact that the course can be tailored to his needs is very beneficial and means that he can use what he learns in his day-to-day work, and the flexibility of the meeting time suits his timetable perfectly.

He is receiving high praise from his tutor, in respect of his commitment to learning Welsh and his general progress. "He is now putting complete sentences together in Welsh and uses different patterns, he is extending his vocabulary and to top it all, he now provides a short report to the Management Team twice a week in Welsh - WAW!"

It is nice to note that his managers and colleagues can see progress in his work as well, for example, the Head of Department does not send bilingual e-mails to the Management Team any more, and she even receives some e-mails back in Welsh. The Head of Department said: *"He now contributes to the Management Team through the medium of Welsh for some weeks - and today, he did that so naturally so that he uses our day-to-day vocabulary rather than formal vocabulary".*

APPENDIX 3: Measures and Data

	Measure/Data	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Comments
1	**Number of users of adults services who receive direct payments**	**142**	**132**	**159**	
2	**Percentage of older people and people with physical or sensory disabilities who have reported that they have achieved what matters to them, either in full or in part.**		**96%**	**94%**	The figure has deteriorated this year as a result of Covid-19, and that for a number of reasons, including services being restricted or prevented temporarily, number of people shielding and unable to go out, social activities suspended temporarily, and waiting lists for care.
3	**Percentage of people with learning disabilities who have reported that they have achieved what matters to them, either in full or in part.**		**99%**	**100%**	
4	**The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 or over**	**5.23**	**3.8**	**not available**	Due to Covid-19, this measure was not recorded regularly this year.
5	**Percentage of the adult safeguarding referrals completed during the year, where the risk has been controlled**	**91.50%**	**93.50%**	**92.07%**	It is not possible to manage risk in each safeguarding case as the individual must decide whether or not to accept the support or intervention in the first place.
6	**Of the adult safeguarding referrals completed during the year, the percentage where the danger has been**	**93.10%**	**100%**	**98.0%**	The data is not reported accurately on our current forms, therefore we are in the process of updating the report forms in order to simplify them.

	controlled (except for those who have refused intervention)				
7	**The percentage of safeguarding enquiries completed within seven working days.**	**90.3%**	**95.1%**	**93.2%**	
8	**The number of people who received support from the Homelessness Unit**	**768**	**745**	**945**	As a result of the statutory requirement on us to ensure that individuals did not sleep on the street during the pandemic, additional funding was received from a new Welsh Government fund, to secure accommodation for everyone referred to us.
	Measure/Data	**2018/19**	**2019/20**	**2020/21 Up to the end of Quarter 3**	**Comments**
9	**The percentage of looked after children at 31 March who have had three or more placements during the year**	**5.9%**	**8%**	**2%**	The number of children who have moved is low because of the COVID-19 circumstances.
10	**The percentage of looked after children on 31 March, with experience of moving school once or more during their period or periods of receiving care and if that move was not because of transition arrangements in the 12 months up to 31 March**	**16.70%**	**14.20%**	**9%**	Schools have been closed because of COVID-19 so the figure is low for 2020/21.
11	**Percentage of reviews of looked after children held within the statutory timetable during the year**	**85%**	**84%**	**86%**	

12	**The percentage of child protection reviews to be held within the statutory timetable during the year**	**94%**	**80%**	**90%**	
13	**The percentage of statutory visits with looked after children that were supposed to be held during the year that were held in accordance with the regulations**	**93%**	**90%**	**89%**	
14	**The percentage of eligible, relevant and previously relevant children that have been allocated a personal advisor**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	
15	**Percentage of case conferences where the voice/views of the child were heard (except children under 5 years old)**	**99%**	**94%**	**85%**	
16	**The rate of children who were discussed in supervision, where significant harm had been considered (and the answer recorded)**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	
17	**Percentage of risk assessments submitted to a Case Conference which were considered as exhibiting quality in decision making**	**99%**	**99%**	**97%**	
18	**Percentage of assessments completed for children within the statutory timescales**	**87%**	**86%**	**74%**	Referrals Team assessments only.
19	**Percentage of children being assisted to continue living with the family**	**63%**	**61%**	**79%**	2020/21 local measure

20	**Percentage of children who returned home during the year**	**5.80%**	**8%**	**10%**	
21	**Total number of looked after children as of 31 March**	**253**	**291**	**281**	