Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services 2021-22

Introduction

At the end of every financial year, every Statutory Director of Social Services is required to provide and publish a report regarding the duties of social services 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 drawing 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, namely:

- **Quality Standard 1**: Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve
- **Quality Standard 2**: Working with people and partners to safeguard and promote the physical and mental health and emotional well-being of people
- **Quality Standard 3**: Safeguarding and protecting people from abuse, neglect or harm
- **Quality Standard 4**: Encourage and provide support for people to learn and contribute in society
- **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
- **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

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. 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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Foreword by the Director

I am very proud to present my annual report as Statutory Director of Social Services for the 2021/22 year. I wish to begin by sincerely thanking each one of you who played your part in order to keep Gwynedd and beyond safe and healthy this year. As we start to emerge out of the Covid-19 restrictions and return to some kind of normality, it is fair to say that the importance of the care and health sector has been highlighted more than ever over the past two years as we grapple with the side-effects of the pandemic.

As you can see from this report, the performance of Gwynedd's Social Services is again good on the whole this year. Being able to declare this during a year that has been so challenging is a complete pleasure, and reflects the commitment and resilience of our care and social work staff here in Gwynedd. It is obvious from the performance reported here that managers and staff have made a heroic effort to be able to cope with the demands that have been on them during the year. As highlighted in the report, we have also experienced substantial challenges, and certainly we have key matters that require our attention on a local, regional and national level.

Our workers and care providers have faced huge challenges throughout the period in question, including the recruitment and retention of front-line staff, financial sustainability, paying a fair wage to workers and ensuring suitable placements for the county's residents. These matters contribute to the challenge of continuing to provide care, and seeking to ensure the best care for the people of Gwynedd is a priority for me as a Statutory Director, and to the Council as a whole. As a result, we are working hard, jointly with our key partners, to seek to ensure that appropriate services are available locally, in line with our population needs assessments. This is the case about the children and adults fields alike.

One example of the steps we are taking in an attempt to overcome the challenge of finding care placements for our residents is that we are investigating the option of stepping in to provide nursing care as an internal provider in partnership with the Health Board. We are considering taking this innovative step, the first of its kind in Wales, so that we can be much more certain of a stable and sufficient market for our residents.

In terms of the financial challenge faced by the Council, I am very grateful to Welsh Government for offering a better financial settlement to us this year, as well as offer a Real Living Wage for our care staff. Nevertheless, the years to come are likely to be less favourable financially in terms of the settlement, and so, despite the fact that we have received a better settlement this year, the sustainability of a few decisions beyond this year have been challenging.

As I have outlined above, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the staff who work in the field. However, we have substantial recruitment problems in a number of fields, including some specialist fields, and we will need to seek to respond to this soon in order to avoid future problems. Of course, work is in progress to respond to the problems we have; however, and regrettably, there is no simple answer to some of these issues.

I am also really appreciative of our Foster Carers for caring so well for our children, and that 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 acknowledge the contribution of each of them over the year.

I have general concern about the current financial climate, and the hardship that people are facing. Consequently, we have established Supporting People arrangements which is a priority in the Council Plan. We intend to push the boundaries in order to assist and support people as much as we can.

One issue that has saddened me greatly is the situation in Ukraine. As a county, we are very eager to support the country's refugees, and we have established specific work streams to ensure that the refugees arrive and settle in Gwynedd as easily as possible. As a Council, we stand united with Ukraine.

I wish to take this opportunity to state that I will be leaving my post in the Council this summer. It is a bitter-sweet feeling since I have enjoyed my time with Gwynedd Council immensely, and have had huge satisfaction from my post as Director over the past 10 years. There are a number of achievements that I will look back at with a sense of pride, but unfortunately, a few challenges remain. Nevertheless, I'm confident that the plans we have in place will address these challenges. I wish the best to the new Director and they will certainly be able to be rest easy at the beginning of their journey that there are firm foundations here in Gwynedd for future development and improvement.

Thank you to you all, staff, managers, members and partners for your support to this all-important work field, and for the support you showed me as Director. With that, I wish to present this report which seeks to provide a fair overview of the performance of Gwynedd Social Services during the 2021/22 year.

Morwena Edwards

Corporate Director and
Statutory Director of Social Services

An Overview of the Performance of Social Services

Once again this year, despite the challenges we have faced as a result of Covid-19, I am very happy with the performance of Social Services overall. The Services have been divided into two Departments within the Council, namely the Children and Supporting Families Department; and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department.

In terms of our arrangements, the performance of both Departments are continuously monitored via our monthly Performance Challenging, looking at specific measures to investigate whether we have achieved what matters for our residents. As Director, I will attend these sessions with the relevant Cabinet Members and performance reports from both Departments will be submitted to the Cabinet on a regular basis. With the priority matters, that will often be raised as a part of the Council's risk register arrangements, the work programmes to respond to these priorities are also being monitored, and progress reports will also be submitted for the attention of the Care Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet. I wish to thank those members who have undertaken the important role of supporting this process over the year.

This chapter therefore seeks to provide an overview of the performance of both Departments during the year, focusing on what was achieved against our Improvement Priorities.

CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

Marian Parry Hughes, Head of Children and Supporting Families Department said:

"The performance of the Children and Supporting Families Department has been consistent throughout the year, and we have managed to sustain our main services and responsibilities safely, despite the challenges that have faced the workforce during the period. We saw the impacts of working under COVID arrangements increasingly emerge over the past year, with a number of front-line staff leaving their jobs. We have faced a challenging period with a lack of staff in the service, but despite that, we managed to ensure that no case was without a worker and that waiting lists did not exist. This means that a number of changes have had to happen in the service to ensure that we meet our statutory responsibilities and that children and families are central and a priority for everything we are responsible for delivering. The fact that we have been able to meet our responsibilities both consistently and promptly is a testament to the commitment of our workers and managers who are happy to go the extra mile to ensure that children and young people in Gwynedd are safe and accept the services they need whilst sustaining quality services and practice at the same time.

Progress against the Priorities for 2021/22 in the Children and Supporting Families Department:

Supporting People's Well-being

The majority of our efforts during the year have continued to support residents and communities to deal with the crisis or the economic and social side-effects. However, we have also managed to make progress in our priorities as communities and services move gradually towards recovery.

We have drawn together services from across the Council to shape the Supporting People Programme and to date, we have focused our efforts on supporting people who face homelessness, who are carers, who face poverty and exclusion. the resilience of communities. We have cooperated with partners to support the well-being of children, young people and people of all ages, with supporting communities to maintain and support their residents, and to build on the resilience of communities.

The work of supporting residents facing homelessness is proceeding under the Housing Action Plan, however, during the year the arrangements across our services saw collaboration with the Mental Health Service and the Youth Service to get to grips with the challenges of youth homelessness and mental health needs.

The work of supporting unpaid carers has proceeded via the Carers Action Plan, and the collaboration across services and with our partners has seen new respite opportunities being developed, training and support programmes for carers of all ages, together with better arrangements by us to identify and offer assessments to carers.

Our work in responding to poverty challenges has continued throughout the year. The need for financial, debt and access to benefits advisory services and urgent energy and food vouchers has been more important than ever. We have been collaborating with our partners at the Citizens Advice Bureau and Housing Associations together with other charities, to promote local financial advice services, campaigns to maximise income, and jointly administering vouchers to help with fuel costs and food costs in an emergency.

We have worked with a large number of partners, and several services across the Council have been taking steps to tackle digital exclusion amongst residents. There are various schemes in care homes, schools and in communities by volunteers to improve the skills of people to go on-line to get access to services, to keep in contact and to be part of activities for their benefit and friendship.

We have continued to collaborate with a very broad network of community groups and food banks on emergency food provision, feeding schemes, meals on wheels enterprises, food growing schemes, community gardens, allotments, food clubs and learn to cook sessions. This infrastructure across the county supports residents to have access to healthy, affordable food, and food in an emergency; it encourages volunteering and participation and getting to grips with reducing food waste.

During the year, we have also established a Covid Hub in one area of Gwynedd, and from what we learnt there we now support a network of 9 Supporting People Hubs in communities throughout the county. We have collaborated with the Health Board, third sector partners and 9 community groups to develop these arrangements. All the hubs will facilitate the access of residents to services, but also offer a varied menu of activities and local clubs to people; they continue to offer access to Covid-19 tests, food vouchers, energy and digital packages as required. We hope to develop this collaboration model and have hubs to support people in communities during 2022-23.

The work on reviewing our arrangements around our front doors has not moved forward during 2021-22 due to the increasing and continuous demand on our social services, housing and benefits teams.
The long-term nature of this plan when seeking to tackle poverty, complex social challenges, and working across numerous services, means that we are continuing on a journey to achieve the plan's objectives.

In future, we will continue to focus our efforts to support vulnerable groups of people with poverty, caring and accommodation challenges; develop our arrangements to support communities and build the resilience of communities jointly with our partners; and look to improve our front door arrangements so that residents have easier, timely and local access to our services.

A Strategy for Keeping Families Together

We have adopted a 'Strategy for Keeping Families Together' and monitor the impact and results of implementing that strategy with our families. Some impact of this strategy can already be seen, such as the reduction that has been during the year on the number of children that come into care. In reviewing the strategy regularly we have identified that we face staffing challenges and this is a threat to our ability to realise this strategy. We have commissioned an external consultant to identify the factors that cause a risk to the plan's success. The work will look at the recruitment issues of professional workers amongst other workforce matters to ensure that we have the capacity, the skills and qualified workers to assess and identify risks to implement the strategy in its entirety for the benefit of children and families in Gwynedd.

During the year, the "Effective Child Protection" Programme has continued to support our workers to reflect on their practice and their way of working via a programme of training, developing skills and through the support of our practice mentor. The changes to our practice means that we can better support families to safeguard children by focusing on collaboration and avoiding situations of conflict with families.

We have recommenced our Children's department and Education Department Ffordd Gwynedd intervention, and have held a high number of reviews with individuals who have received a service, schools and other agencies. We have agreed on action principles and have identified several ways to improve our arrangements. In 2022, we will act on the amendments and the principles, as well as equipping staff in both Departments to be efficient when providing a service.

Securing a local, appropriate specialist provision for children with complex needs

We have been able to train staff so that they can offer suitable support to children with complex needs via a training programme to workers from the world of education, social services and health. This specialist training programme has included PACT (Autism), Nurture (Parenting), Family Links, that equip our workforce to provide interventions and specialist support.

Although the pandemic had an impact on our ability to move forward as quickly as we would have wished with the Regional Transformation Programme, we have however cooperated with partners to establish a Multi-agency Team. We will evaluate this model during 2022, and will move forward to integrate the model into local arrangements that are linked with our Strategy for Keeping Families Together.

We have not managed to move forward with our work to complete the feasibility studies and options for local residential provision for children with complex needs. We will resume this work during 2022.

We have continued with the work of increasing and expanding the number and types of foster placements in the county by cooperating in the 'Foster Wales' campaign. 'Foster Wales' was launched in September, this includes a new web page for the foster Service as well as a national recruitment campaign.

Ensure that families and children with autism have access to the support they need.

Jointly with our partners we have adopted an Autism Plan for Gwynedd including establishing a Partnership Board to take an overview of the plan together with securing Resources to appoint an Autism Coordinator to lead on the plan. In 2022 we will move forward to raise awareness and train workers in the field of autism, together with engaging with the third sector to try and develop a range of preventative provisions.

ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING DEPARTMENT

Aled Davies, Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department said:

"There is no denying that the past year has been very challenging. In some ways, it was a greater challenge for us than the previous 12 months, with the performance on a few key measure, our ability to provide services and achieve what matters to the residents of the County will be affected by an increased demand, recruitment challenges and of course, the impacts of the Covid crisis. Dealing with the impact of vacant posts and staff absences are very difficult at times. Through it all, the care workforce responded heroically, worked long hours and supported each other under difficult circumstances. A similar response was also seen by our providers and key partners, and collectively this enabled us to continue with the key care services. By now, the majority of services include face-to-face services that have reopened with a number in different forms, which reflect the adaptations made and lessons learnt in the context of the Covid crisis.

It was a difficult time, but also a time that provided opportunities to adapt and improve services for the future. Our aim will be to continue along this journey and use the experience and the opportunities that arise to transform adult care services in Gwynedd. After we unwound following the pressures of the past two years, with our partners, I am confidence that we can achieve the improvements to assist the most vulnerable adults in Gwynedd to live their lives as they wish. A great deal has already been done, and a great deal is yet to be achieved, but we are moving in the right direction."

Progress against the Priorities for 2021/22 in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department

A Suitable and Sustainable Care Provision for the Future

The work of trying to understand the 'actual cost of care' is progressing and this will continue during 2022/23. While we have agreed on residential and nursing fees for 2022/23 in line with the region, we will continue to look at the situation over the next months to look at the possibility of paying specific residential and nursing fees for Gwynedd that reflect the actual cost of care. Jointly with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board work has also commenced on an Open Book Accounting process, namely a method whereby a contractor gives a transparent picture of their costs to justify their fees. This process will be followed by some specific providers that raise fees above their standard fees.

During 2021/22 work has been undertaken on a number of the Council's homes to make them more suitable in the future, including Cefn Rodyn in Dolgellau, Tan y Marian in Pwllheli and Hafod Mawddach in Barmouth. This work will enable us to offer more bespoke care to persons with intensive physical needs and to persons with dementia for example.

We hope to obtain a resource from the new Welsh Government 'Regional Integration Fund', in order to coordinate and proceed with all the suitable care provision work including re-modelling residential care homes to include dementia beds, day care provision etc., during 2022/23. This work-stream will also include continuing to proceed with the work of developing the Penrhos site in Pen Llŷn. During 2021/22 the Department jointly with the Health Board has commissioned specialist legal guidance by an external company to look into the possibility of developing an internal nursing provision in Penrhos to get to grips with the lack of specialist beds currently in Gwynedd.

Unfortunately, due to staffing issues, we have not been able to open the bespoke Dementia Unit that has been completed in Llan Ffestiniog. It is hoped that recruitment work during 2022/23 will get to grips with this problem early in the year.

While the work of developing Extra Care Housing in Pwllheli is going ahead as expected, there is a slippage to report in terms of trying to seek opportunities for similar developments in other parts of the county. In our 2021/22 Plan we will prioritise the Dolgellau area and Meirionnydd, however, currently we have not been able to find a suitable location in the area.

Redesigning our Care Services

The work of equipping the integrated teams has continued during 2021/22. The system of sharing information across the agencies has received attention, as well as to establish a procedure where any health or care enquiry reaches one point within the areas, to simplify matters for Gwynedd residents. The work of developing the integrated teams will continue during 2022/23.

In 2021/22, we have been able to appoint a specialist manual handling team to strengthen the Occupational Therapy Service. By now we have appointed four permanent positions and one temporary position. We have also appointed two Occupational Therapy trainees which will mean we can develop the required future workforce.

The work of re-designing the Home Care Service has continued via new contracts in each area, and during 2021/22 there has been close cooperation to prepare providers and Gwynedd residents for this change. The tender package went out in April 2022, and the contracts will be awarded during the summer 2022 and the process of implementing the new model will be live after that.

Although there has been some delay with developing the plans for Canolfan Dolfeurig in Dolgellau due to planning difficulties regarding flooding risk, the work is proceeding and soon in 2022/23 an amended time-scale will be in place, and we can go out to consultation and update Gwynedd residents.

We have also managed to re-open the Mental Health Hub in Pwllheli. For the younger cohort, we have recently set up well-being hubs for people up to the age of 25 in Caernarfon and Blaenau Ffestiniog. The service will be provided by Gisda and will give emotional and practical support to individuals. During 2022/23 a Community Resilience project will be launched to develop the hubs across the County, and to bring all the available support together in the local areas.

The Workforce and Recruitment within the Care Field

During 2021/22 recruitment to the sector has remained challenging throughout the country, however, progress was made against the improvement priority during this difficult period.

A Marketing and Development of Care Careers Officer was appointed to focus on the coordination of recruitment elements in Gwynedd as well as other work-streams. Cooperation with WeCare Wales has continued, and purposeful events have taken place in areas where recruitment is a specific issue. One example is an event in Maesgeirchen when 6 staff members were appointed to Plas Hedd care home. It is intended to learn from this and build upon the experience across the County during 2022/23.

We are developing a relationship with Coleg Llandrillo Menai to provide opportunities for students, but also to attract persons into the field in the future.

The registration process for care staff has continued during 2021/22 and this will continue throughout 2022/23, to raise the status of jobs within the sector and develop staff to ensure future resilience in the field.

Fostering talent is important for the Department in areas where there is likely to be a future shortage, and having Social Work and Occupational Therapy trainees is an important way of ensuring sufficient future capacity. The financial bid to establish a Care Career Pathway Plan (i.e. fund new trainees and upskilling existing service staff) was unsuccessful and therefore it was not possible to proceed with this work-stream as effectively as we would have hoped. Two professional leading and management trainees have commenced on the Cynllun Yfory scheme during 2021/22, to foster talent to lead the Department in the future.

After considering the current Risk Register and the progress against the above priorities, the following priorities have been proposed for Social Services for the 2022/23 year.

More details about them can be obtained in the Council's Improvement Priorities:

- Supporting people's well-being
- Helping people who need support to live their lives as they wish
- Ensuring a suitable care provision and sustainable well-being for the future
- Improving the quality of our care provision across the county
- Re-designing our care services
- The workforce and recruitment in the care field
- Ensuring that we keep families together
- Securing a local, appropriate specialist provision for children with complex needs
- Ensuring that families and children with autism have access to the support they need to thrive

How are people supporting us to draw up our services

The Council is fully committed to put 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 work within Social Services departments focus 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.

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. We also publish the Annual Complaints Report in order to provide an overview of the complaints we received during the year, as well as the steps taken to resolve them. This year's Report will be submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee early in 2022.

The Covid-19 crisis has challenged us to the extreme, in the sense that we have had to adapt quickly to situations, change our way of working and coping with working under the ongoing strain of the virus. We have learnt many lessons from the pandemic, and are very eager to act on these lessons for the future. Due to the emergence of the new way of working, we will review our processes and procedures continuously, and will ensure that the user's voice is included.

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. This year, we have been preparing the North Wales Population Needs Assessment 2022-2027 jointly with other agencies in the North, published in April 2022. We are also drawing up a Gwynedd Population Needs Assessment that will be published in the autumn 2022. The regional and local Population Needs Assessment provide an overview of the population needs, shows us what the care and support needs of today's population and the future population will be, and it will assist us to make decisions on planning and service provision. The Assessment considers:

- The care and support needs of the population
- The support needs of carers
- To what extent are these needs being met
- The range and level of services required in order to meet the identified care and support needs
- The range and level of preventative services required

We engage with, and consider, the following themes/groups:

- Children and Young People
- Older People
- Health, Physical Disabilities and Sensory Impairments
- Learning Disabilities (Children and Adults)
- Autism
- Mental Health
- Carers

The assessment is being steered by the requirements noted in the code of practice for the Population Needs Assessments and has given due attention to the other duties and policies that are having a substantial impact on the listed groups. Every chapter includes an assessment of:

- The Welsh Language (the 'active offer')
- Equality and Human Rights
- Socio-economic considerations
- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Safeguarding considerations
- Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence
- Social Value

The key matters and themes noted are based on staff consultation and feedback, partner organisations, Public Health Wales and Local Health Board colleagues, service users and the public, to note the strategic needs for care and support. This includes information from previous commissioning strategies and assessments of needs.

The Gwynedd and Anglesey Well-being Plan notes how the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board will accomplish 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, addressing a broad range of fields such as Adults, Children, Learning Disabilities, Mental Health and Community Transformation.

The Board has a role in the work of revitalising our communities following the side-effects of the pandemic. Matters that have increasingly affected our communities such as financial poverty, unemployment amongst young people, the second home and over-tourism situation. Over the past few months, the Board has been carrying out research and has consulted on well-being assessments per area. We will use the information that the people and communities of Gwynedd have said matters to them to draw-up the next Well-being Plan will be published in May 2023. These assessments will also improve our understanding of our communities' needs, looking at challenges and opportunities for the future.

In 2020/21, around 8,000 responses were received to the Council's public consultation such as Ardal Ni 2035, Fair Services for All, 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.

Likewise, Gwynedd Council has a Citizens' Panel in order to ensure representation from a cross-section of Gwynedd residents, and that their voice are central as the Council plans, provide and review local services for the future. This year, around 800 people were members of this Panel.

We also consider that the views of children are all important to use, and a child in care 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. However, we are in the process of reviewing the Panel's arrangements as we need to ensure that looked after children can continue to attend and contribute to the Panel easily and in the best way for them.

We are also seeking the views of the Llwybrau Llesiant group, where individuals with Learning Disabilities steer the team's activities and meeting to draw-up a programme of on-line and face-to-face activities with the support of the team.

Of course, the use of the web and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have become increasingly important and key to share information and receive feedback amongst the county's residents during the pandemic. Over the past year, we have seen an increase in the number of people who are engaging with our pages on social media, with 37,784 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, 14,080 new accounts were opened.

This year, the Children and Supporting Families Department has strengthened its response to applications that reach the front door, and additional resources have been established to ensure a timely response to requests for information, advice, assessment and fit for purpose considerations. The numbers who contact for Information, Advice or Support continue to increase, with 7,136 people making contact during the year. This is almost a 17% increase compared with the same period last year.

Of course, there is a need to bear 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. Our performance management arrangements are based on measures that measure and monitor this, and we will continue to build on what individuals tell us in terms of how we can improve our provisions on local and county level so that we are able to secure the best support, interventions and services for the county's residents for the future.

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

In this chapter, I will be evaluating our progress during 2021/22 against the six quality standards noted by the Government in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

In addition, I will provide a rough idea of what we intend to do in 2022/23.

QUALITY STANDARD 1: *Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve*

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to affect the personal well-being of each of us in one way or another during the year, and it has been a very challenging and busy period for the **Test, Trace and Protect Service** , particularly around the end of 2021 with the highest number of Covid-19 cases faced by the county since the beginning of the pandemic, as well as the uncertainty surrounding the Omicron variant.

However, the Service managed to collaborate effectively with residents and organisations in order to keep Gwynedd as safe as possible by breaking the chain of transmission and supporting people who were facing the challenge of isolating.

Unfortunately, but understandably, the work on the **Programme to Transform Community Health and Care** in Gwynedd has slowed down during the year, as colleagues in the Health Board faced the huge challenge of responding to the pandemic and sustain an extended testing and vaccination programmes.

Nevertheless, the Adults teams have pressed on with plans to realise changes on the **Social Work** element, in preparation for the next period when more attention can be given to the integration agenda. During the year, reviews of key fields were undertaken including the Information, Advice and Assistance service, the process for recording information in the WCCIS system and the arrangements for closing cases. It is intended to proceed to act following these reviews.

Also, during the year, a key step was taken to abolish the **Brokerage team** and ensure close collaboration between domiciliary care provided and the Adults teams in localities. This means that decisions can be made locally about the best use of scarce resources, and that a strong work relationship can thrive. This is a part of a broader programme to establish a new domiciliary care model in the county.

Another important development is the work in progress to strengthen the support offered by **Occupational Therapy** that is available for people, and the use of equipment. This includes revisiting our telecare service and the role that technology could play in the lives of Gwynedd's residents. This, alongside plans to support community development, will assist us with the aim of reducing reliance on statutory, costly services.

One success seen during the year in terms of collaboration with the Health Board was the announcement on the **Information Sharing Agreement**, which enables staff from many professions to share information about people who are in hospital and/or people who receive community support. In addition, a simple system was developed which was trialled, in order to facilitate the communication between hospitals and the community resources teams, with the aim of reducing the length of people's stay in hospital when they are there unnecessarily.

As we look forwards to 2022/23, we will continue with the work of **establishing a domiciliary care model** in the county and facilitate the process for people to leave hospital. More information is available about this model here. We will also prioritise the development of options for a new front door model for health and care and develop our Information, Advice and Support further.

We have been collaborating with **Dewis Cymru** in order to simplify the way that people in the county are able to discover information or advice about their well-being. The purpose of this website is to list any service that is available that could benefit people's well-being in order to ensure that they receive the support they need to lead a good life.

Of course, we have been very eager to **support refugees** who have fled their homes due to war, including refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine. In August, in response to the horrific situation in Afghanistan, Gwynedd Council offered a home for individuals who had fled the country. We also collaborated closely with the Pobl i Bobl movement which helps people in crisis by providing assistance and personal support, regardless of their race, religion or location.

We have work streams in progress to support refugees who arrive from Ukraine in order to provide support with matters such as education for the children, referrals to health services, work and benefits, emergency accommodation, community integration, childcare and money.

The Housing and Property Department is leading on establishing a Welcome Centre for refugees who are fleeing from Ukraine to Gwynedd, and collaborating with our partners across the north to support up to 80 individuals in the Welcome Centre. We collaborate with private landlords, housing associations, businesses and volunteers to ensure that refugees receive every support as they establish themselves in the county. Here is what Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, Gwynedd Council Leader said:

"Our wish is to take every possible opportunity to help humanity in crisis, and this is what we are doing here, in the hope of being able to offer a better life to refugees in need whilst their motherland are under such circumstances."

Llun: Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru

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 seeking to ensure that everyone protects their health and well-being and adopt a healthy lifestyle, whilst accepting care and preventative and proactive 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.

As already outlined, this year we have continued with our efforts to protect people against Covid-19. Very much work has been happening within the Council and when collaborating with external agencies to ensure that the residents of Gwynedd keep as safe as possible during this crisis.

The Council has continued, jointly with the Health Board, to promote and support the **vaccination campaign**. By March 2022, 71,138 people aged over 18 years had received three doses of the vaccine, which equates to 70% of the population of that age. 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. This work will continue in 2022/2023 as a part of the National Vaccination Programme.

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

As part of the efforts to support people's well-being, the **Supporting People Programme** has worked on identifying obstructions and improving our understanding of how our services are currently provided by means of a number of various work streams. This is intended to enable the people of Gwynedd to look after their own well-being and cope with life's challenges so that they are able to thrive, be safe and be healthy. Some of the work streams include a response to **Financial and Food Poverty, Support for Carers, Homelessness, Digital Inclusion and Promoting Well-being**. We will also focus our efforts on working across services and with our partners on interventions to promote the well-being of children, young people and people of all ages; and how we can support the resilience of communities.

Over the last 12 months we have also modified and recovered a number of the programmes that get to grips with supporting people who are facing poverty, such as Sure Start, 30 hours Childcare Offer, housing benefit, discretionary housing payments, council tax reduction provision, free school breakfast and lunch, pupils' learning grant and other grants to schools, employability programmes such as Communities for Work and the Young People's Engagement and Development Framework, and fuel poverty programmes such as Warm Wales.

The Council has supported **food banks** in the county with food supplies and capital and revenue grants towards the running costs; we have also drawn resources from many national grants as well as support 20 Community Food Schemes throughout the county over the past 12 months. The schemes involve growing and providing food and meals, reducing food waste and developing cooking skills.

A number of the food schemes have stated their wish to be part of a county network to be able to share resources, support each other and look at opportunities for collaboration. A number of the schemes have stated their wish to work closer with some of the Council's services to refer residents that come to them to the support they need, especially housing, mental health, care, benefits and income, work, debts, substance misuse.

The **cost of fuel** costs to keep homes warm have increased significantly, and this has an impact on the income of Gwynedd residents, pushing many families into poverty or further into poverty. The Council is collaborating with the Welsh Government on how we improve the condition of houses in order to install the low carbon measures that will in turn lead to reducing fuel poverty. We are collaborating with the private sector on an Eco scheme to extend the number of houses that are receiving support measures. We are also looking at expanding the scheme to encompass whole areas as a result of Arbed am Byth. The Council's partners include Nyth, Warm Wales, and community groups such as Ynni Twrog and Dref Werdd to develop low carbon schemes to respond to the fuel poverty challenge.

We have been able to ensure that **free period products** are available to the residents of Gwynedd in the toilets of ten libraries in the county in order to address fuel poverty and to raise awareness of the environmental benefits of the products that can be reused. Anyone who needs period products can help themselves. Campaigns were also held to offer reusable period products to residents, and this has proven very popular, therefore, we will continue with these campaigns in 2022/23.

In 2022/23, the Supporting People Programme will:

- Jointly appoint an Inclusion and Tackling Poverty Coordinator and Officer with our partners
- Establish a Food Poverty Network
- Support residents with urgent food supplies and financial advice
- Expand the local support for residents to apply for benefits and obtain access to financial advice.
- Establish campaigns to promote local benefits, particularly in order to target low-income households and families through the schools
- Revive our arrangements for planning and collaborating across partners such as the Financial Inclusion Group, Well-being Group and Digital Inclusion Group.

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 to share a broad range of information and health and well-being events in Gwynedd.

On 10-16 May, we held the **Mental Health Awareness Week**, which is a week that shares messages and key information about mental health and the assistance and support services available. Messages about the 5 Ways to Well-being were promoted on the Council's social media pages and a specific day of the week was designated for each of the five themes of the 5 Ways to Well-being. Particular attention was given to men's mental health and a video of men from all walks of life saying "Dw i'n barod i siarad, wyt ti?", was created.

A series of free events were held for the children and young people of Gwynedd via **Winter of Well-being**, which was a Welsh Government funded initiative. The activities included an arts club, dance workshops, circus classes, sporting activities, science workshops, a gardening club and much more.

The **Llwybrau Llesiant Team** provides a broad range of information, services and activities that respond to the needs of individuals with learning disabilities, their families and their carers in Gwynedd. During the pandemic, the team has continued to hold a weekly series of sessions and activities to promote the well-being of the individuals - physically, emotionally and socially. For example, an afternoon tea was held for the older adults of Bangor, a bingo night at the Empire and a trip to the cinema at Cell B in Blaenau Ffestiniog. In addition, the Gardening Club has enjoyed contributing to the development of the Community Garden at Canolfan Byw'n Iach, Caernarfon. We are also collaborating closely with other agencies in order to hold information sessions to strengthen the opportunities to improve well-being, e.g. Annual Health Check Champions with Conwy Connect, Sexuality and Relationships sessions with Sparc 2 and Love2MeetU, and we are collaborating closely with Gig Buddies to provide opportunities to create relationships and hold social events.

In addition, the team has assisted individuals to use the Insight app, which offers opportunities to participate in on-line group sessions with other individuals across Wales. This has involved providing digital equipment and training to individuals and their families, with the support of Gyda'n Gilydd North Wales. The team also continues to act as an important contact point for sharing information with individuals, families, carers and other organisations about the opportunities available to them on our website and via our social media in order to encourage individuals to take part and ensure that information is available to all.

The members of the Well-being Team are also working with individuals on a 1:1 level in order to work towards our personal well-being goals. This could include a range of activities such as searching for jobs, training, public transport, support during appointments, etc.

The **Gwynedd Carers Network** has worked to bring agencies and unpaid carers together to share information and ideas by determining a specific theme for each meeting, e.g. caring for a person with dementia, caring for a person with mental health problems. These meetings were enriched with unpaid carers sharing their experiences in order to encourage the agencies who were present to consider how to develop their services.

On **Carers' Rights Day** we held an on-line campaign to raise awareness of carers' rights. During **Carers Week**, we held a campaign in pharmacies to raise awareness of unpaid carers and the support available to them. A business card was produced to be included with every repeat prescription package, and the feedback we received notes that this information has led to some making contact with Carers Outreach. With the increased pressure on unpaid carers as a result of the pandemic, we were glad to be able to make full use of a respite grant for unpaid carers. With the grant, various project were funded, including employing a member of staff to support unpaid carers who were connected to patients on the Hergest ward (as well as unpaid carers for people with mental health problems in the community), and we funded Eryri Cydweithredol to provide a sitting service or "going for a walk" service for individuals to enable their unpaid carers to have some respite.

The project with **Young Carers** is going from strength to strength today. Welsh Government's ambition was to secure an ID Card for Young Carers, and we have achieved this ambition by creating and providing the "AiDi" card and app for the Young Carers in Gwynedd and Anglesey.

On **National Young Carers Day**, an event was held in Storiel, Bangor, to celebrate this work and celebrate the contributions of the young carers themselves. Young carers from the secondary schools who had been trialling the app were in attendance.

With additional funding we received from Welsh Government to support this work, we have commissioned the **Ynys Blastig (*Plastic Island*)** project to create creative educational resources (through methods such as animation) to raise the awareness of learners, teachers and professionals of the implications of being young carers and how this can affect their lives. Also, Cread Cyf. is developing a short film that was created in order to introduce the app by creating a documentary film portraying a day in the life of a young carer.

In September 2021, a grant of £25,000 was received as a part of the launch of **Ageing Population** in order to develop an age-friendly plan. A decision was made to spend this grant by offering small grants to community organisations and groups across Gwynedd. The activities offered by these groups vary from weekly activities offering a cuppa, a chat and activities for older people in the area, to fitness activities and Christmas/St David's Day lunches. Watch a video of one incident held by Yr Orsaf in Penygroes over the Christmas period here.

In accordance with the grant conditions, we also proceeded to hear the views of Gwynedd's older people about the support they need when restarting their social lives after Covid-19, and this feedback will play a key part as we develop support and a network to try and address loneliness, isolation and the challenges facing older people across Gwynedd.

The **Learning Disabilities Service** has managed to provide day and respite opportunities for individuals in priority situations this year. By making the best and most creative use of our hubs and respite provisions at the Sŵn y Môr unit, Pwllheli and Brookfield in Bangor, we have managed to reintroduce individuals to day opportunities and offer respite stays also. We have done this by reassessing and collaborating closely with the providers and families, whilst ensuring that we adhere to Covid-19 restrictions.

The respite provision has been a very important resource in order to deal with a number of emergency situations. By offering a carers' grant from Welsh Government, we have rented an accessible bungalow from Antur Waunfawr, which has increased our respite/short break provision for carers. As a result, a number of individuals and families have benefited from this provision. As the restrictions ease, we anticipate that we will collaborate to prioritise increasing the capacity within our respite provision and day opportunities in order to extend the number of days that can be offered, and to meet the needs of individuals who are about to turn 18, leave school and transfer to our service.

Meeting the **accommodation and support** needs of individuals with learning disabilities continues to be a high priority. We are planning ahead for the need, and we have identified that 75 individuals will need supported accommodation within the next 5 years. We categorise within priority groups and are seeing progress in terms of identifying and finding settings. During the year, I collaborated closely with housing associations and the Council's Housing and Property Department, in order to address these needs. We need a range of supported accommodation models, with an emphasis on planning or altering some properties to ensure that they are accessible, suitable and purposeful. In addition, collaboration with our key partners and the Health Board is essential in an attempt to identify specialist accommodation for individuals with complex and profound needs and the older population within the learning disabilities field.

Over the past 6 months, we have identified settings for 14 individuals, which includes identifying and introducing individuals to supported housing vacancies that are suitable for their needs, as well as planning with the alteration of accommodation and working closely with the Commissioning Unit to identify providers through the tendering process.

Offering **suitable training opportunities as well as work experience and opportunities** continues to be a priority within the Learning Disabilities Service. We are collaborating to provide opportunities for individuals within our hubs to develop skills, gain experience and qualifications that support individuals to reach their potential, whether this was done through a voluntary or paid work opportunity.

Cwrs a Sgwrs is a joint project between the Learning Disabilities Service and Agoriad Cyf. The intention of the project is to provide nutritious meals for the individuals in the Dwyfor and Eifionydd areas, and offer work opportunities for individuals with a learning disability at the same time as they prepare, cater and distribute the meals.

During the first two months of the project, around 30 meals per week were provided to individuals in the areas of Pwllheli, Y Ffôr and Porthmadog catchment areas. Two individuals were working in the kitchen, with another two individuals playing a key part in delivering the meals. Cwrs a Sgwrs has extended further, and has collaborated with Antur Aelhaearn, to provide around 50 meals a week to the Llanaelhaearn and Trefor lunch club. This allows us to offer an extra day's work to individuals as a part of the project, and gain additional profit that we can invest to extend the initiative further around the county. During 2022/23, we intend to extend the project further again, by extending it to two days a week and offer extra work to two individuals, and collaborate with Popty Prysur to supply cakes to sell in Caffi Agoriad in Pen-y-Pass and Holyhead.

Over recent years, a substantial increase has been seen in the numbers of children receiving a diagnosis of **autism** in the county. Consequently, it is anticipated that there will be a substantial increase in the demand for services in the years to come, and therefore we have established an **Autism Plan** for 2021-23 in order to provide the context to develop a strategic direction to improve outcomes for people with autism and their carers.

Following successful financial bids to develop and act on **Gwynedd and Anglesey's Autism Plan**, we are now in a situation to move on to plan to establish the team and advertise for a coordinator and two social workers. In line with the Code of Practice, one of the priorities is to ensure training and raise awareness of autism for the workforce.

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. During the year, the team has continued to provide services to support children and young people as well as their families, and collaborate closely with services and charities as needed, in order to ensure that the voices and needs of disabled children are heard.

During 2022/23, Derwen will look at how feedback is received and collected by the service users, as well as look at developing the questionnaire used. In addition, the service will assess the effectiveness of the services provided.

Gwynedd Council is responsible for ensuring the safety of the people of the county, and we take this responsibility 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 as Corporate Director, I also have specific responsibilities in the safeguarding field.

We have arrangements in place 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, the Inspectorate held an annual meeting with me as Statutory Director of Social Services in order to review our processes and procedures, as well as any other main work streams we have in progress. In November, Care Inspectorate Wales published a letter summarising the findings of our Assurance Inspection.

Gwynedd Council has a **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. You can see the Panel's Annual Report for 2021/22 here.

Adults' Safeguarding Matters

The number of **safeguarding reports** that have reached us during the last financial year has stabilised to 469, compared with 558 safeguarding reports during the previous year. It is likely that the figure has stabilised this year since last year's high figure was mainly due to the fact that professional workers did not have the same access to see individuals face-to-face during lockdown periods and that there had been over-reporting because it was not possible to set the same measures to safeguard adults.

Our ability to **respond to safeguarding concerns within the statutory timetable of 7 days** is lower than what we would expect, compared with the previous years, which is an average of 88.3% compared with 93.2% in 2020/21. One of the main barriers in terms of being able to respond promptly is that officers are waiting to receive information back from employees, and currently there is some slowness with those cases that have a connection with hospitals specifically. Nevertheless, a decision is made within 5 working days on average. Safeguarding measures will be put in place at the vast majority of cases before a report is submitted.

A deterioration was also seen in the **number of cases where the risk is controlled**. There were 84.4% of cases where the risk is controlled in 2021/22, compared with 98% in the previous year. This performance was checked by the Senior Management Team, and it was noted that the main reason for this is that the closing report is filled-in incorrectly. In response to this, a new data collection form was introduced on 1 April 2022, which is much simpler and the questions cannot be misinterpreted. We will scrutinise the data over the next months to ensure that the new form will reflect the work that is being achieved to safeguard Gwynedd's adults.

Safeguarding meetings have been held virtually since the pandemic began. This has been a huge success in an Authority with such a vast geographical area. We can see that meetings happen much more promptly and the attendance of our partners is much better at meetings. Meeting in this manner ensures better representation that leads to more meaningful discussions.

32 cases were considered under **a.5, Professional Concerns** during 2021/22. Frustration continues about the lack of guidance for this work stream. A national Task Group is working to address this and the hope is that the guidance will be published during the summer.

We have an effective working relationship with our partners within the Health Board and the Police, and discussions about cases take place in a very timely way. We are acting to ensure that good and ongoing practice exists in terms of sharing information in order to assess the risks and ensure that there are robust safeguarding plans in place.

A **Vulnerable Adults Risk Management (VARM)** forum was established in Gwynedd within the last year. It is an effective forum to discuss individuals that would not meet the criteria for safeguarding but that they are vulnerable individuals in society. The VARM is a multi-agency forum that is led by the Police in order to reduce the demand on front-line services by ensuring that individuals receive appropriate and suitable support.

The Adults Department has established a **Vulnerable Adults Forum** in order to discuss individuals who could have dual needs. The forum ensures that individuals do not go missing within the services and that they receive suitable and timely support.

We were successful with a bid to Welsh Government to secure a grant to address our waiting list for **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Arrangements**. The money has been used to employ Best Interests Assessors within the unit and to buy-in services from Reed Consultancy to carry out assessments on our behalf. A vast number of DoLS assessments continue to be carried out virtually, but face-to-face visits occur when the restrictions allow.

Children's Safeguarding Matters

The **Emrallt Team** is a new advisory service in Gwynedd which focuses on identifying and responding early to children and young people who display harmful and problematic sexual behaviour. The Team's work includes improving workers' skills, providing resources and interventions for all professionals and, mainly, promoting a multi-agency attitude in a field that is considered to be complex and sensitive at times.

Despite Covid-19, the Emrallt Team has continued to provide a service over the past year. Contacts have continued across all agencies, and work has focused on specific fields such as abuse within the family, additional learning needs and fostering/residential placements. We offer advice and consultations to professionals who vary from social workers, teachers, school nurses, school assistants, parents and foster carers.

In 2021, our main objective was to give a pack of training to staff in order to promote the importance of establishing a 'common language' between professionals and giving them the necessary equipment so that they feel confident when assessing healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviours. This will also assist them to adopt a consistent and appropriate response to every child and young person. Gwynedd is working in partnership with Brook, the AIM Project and the NSPCC, and the team has been trained to present training such as the 'Brook traffic light' across all sectors. To date, 671 Gwynedd professionals have attended one or more training events.

At present, the team has a training schedule in place for 2022, which includes Developing an Understanding of Harmful Sexual Behaviour, On-line Training, consent and healthy relationships, the under 12 AIM assessment model and AIM 3 and the NSPCC Foster Carers' 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 2022, 273 children were in the Council's care, and 66% of these received care in a foster placement, with 36% of those foster carers either friends or family members, and 23% of looked after children were placed with their parents, and therefore remained at home.

With the continuation of pandemic restrictions, our **statutory reviews** for Looked After Children have continued virtually during the year gone by. Although children and families are getting used to the new arrangements, there are many examples where the virtual arrangements proved to be a barrier to fully including children and families in reviews. There are other examples where the technology has created opportunities for families to join; where this had not been as easy in the past.

During the year, we have undertaken consultative work with young people in order to seek to discover what facilitates and prevents their participation. The aim is to use the information from the exercise to fine-tune some of the working arrangements. In the future, it is possible that the priority will be to focus on seeing children face-to-face and for reviews to be conducted either face-to-face or virtually, as needed.

At the start of the first lockdown, we saw some dwindling in the visibility of agencies in direct work with families. As the pandemic's restrictions ease, agencies have been able to become an increasing part of the care and support and child protection arrangements again. Things are yet to reach pre-pandemic levels. Time will tell to what extend this can be re-established and for us to again see the vast network of services and agencies who provide care for families.

The emergency arrangements in terms of maintaining the statutory duty for **Child Protection** have continued, with temporary arrangements to hold Protection Conferences virtually. As with Statutory Reviews, there are advantages to some families and disadvantages to others. The hope is that initial Child Protection Conferences will be held face-to-face as one of the main fields to return to the normal post-pandemic process. We will be able to see whether continuing to hold some Review Conferences virtually will be more practical for agencies in the future. Our work on innovation in the child protection field has continued during the year, and the Effective Child Protection project has been evaluated and the results are very promising. The intention is to disseminate the model to some of the other Local Authorities in North Wales.

During 2021/22, 302 child protection conferences were held. The percentage of the case conferences where it was considered that the high quality risk assessments were 99% and were 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.

The **Gwynedd and Anglesey Youth Justice Service** has achieved positive results during the year. The service benefits greatly from a close connection and partnership working with the Gwynedd and Anglesey Substance Misuse Team, which is 'Be di'r Sgôr'. However, the performance of Education, Training and Employment shows signs of being detrimentally affected by Covid-19, with disruption in schools and restricted employment and training opportunities leading to poor attendance figures. Consequently, the Service is working with a number of secondary schools in our area to address disengagement and attendance matters, and Education, Training and Employment will be a main focus for the Youth Justice Service's Management Board when it complies with its Youth Justice Plan in 2022-23.

Community Safety Matters

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 2021/22, can be found here.

In September 2021, Gwynedd Council established the **Protective Security Preparedness Group**. The purpose of the Group is to work with organisations in order to provide effective and efficient protective security arrangements in Gwynedd. This will be achieved by:

- providing an integrated security treatment, which correspond with the national standards and guidelines, to identify and provide proportionate actions to keep communities safe in Gwynedd
- improve and support the willingness to safeguard and protect in accessible public areas in Gwynedd.

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. Unfortunately, this year we saw an increase in the number of domestic crimes in Gwynedd, and the Regional Fragility and Exploitation Board is reporting that specialist domestic abuse providers have seen a 35-40% increase in referrals. There is good co-operation between the Council and relevant Organisations and that efforts to raise awareness to report domestic abuse continues.

QUALITY STANDARD 4: *Encouraging and providing support for people to learn and contribute in society*

The work of **supporting the well-being of children and young people** over the past year has continued to focus on the response to challenges and the side-effects of the pandemic. The **Youth Service** has adapted how it reaches young people, with the majority of the provision moving on-line. The service has provided socialising activities, learning and training sessions, and 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, cookery and Chatting Session were the most popular among young people. The service has also collaborated with 35 partners in order to hold its first Well-being Festival for the young people of the county.

A cross-agency group has met for the first time in two years to discuss what matters to Gwynedd's young people as they emerge from the pandemic, focusing on the support they need at this point in their lives. The Group will focus on ensuring that support is available for young people to attend an educational institution, employment or training, thereby reducing the numbers who are not in education, employment or training.

The Youth Service has also continued to keep in contact with young people aged 16 years and over who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in order to support them with social and personal challenges, such as challenging behaviours, well-being and self-image, as well as barriers to re-engaging with education and employment. A number of young people have benefited from the FRIENDS Arts for Well-being and Resilience over the past year. 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.

Consequently, a grant was secured by Welsh Government to establish a new **homelessness project** that will focus on continuing to strengthen the systems to identify problems early, ensure appropriate support pathways, and develop and provide training for support workers/staff so that they can develop an awareness of homelessness amongst youths and understand how to effectively support young people to prevent homelessness.

Gwynedd Council has a unique **Bridging the Generations** project that creates new connections between children and young people of all ages, which increases respect and understanding between the generations and lead to stronger communities across Gwynedd. You can watch a video of the project in progress between the children of Ysgol Llanllechid and Plas Ogwen Home here. The Bridging the Generations week will be held internationally for the first time this year, during April. Gwynedd Council will lead this week on behalf of Wales, ensuring that attention is given to the innovative work that is happening here. We will arrange local events during the week as well as holding on-line events to share good practice.

Over the past year, we have had an opportunity to hold many outdoor projects, in collaboration with a number of different partnerships in the county. We collaborated with the Youth Service on a project to breathe new life to the garden of Plas Maesincla - you can read more about this project here. Time was also spent in the Arfon Community Garden and we hope to be able to conduct more projects that bring people of all ages together when the weather allows. In addition, we worked with a number of schools to plant flowers and distribute them to the older people in the area in the summer term. We were also eager to carry out various outdoor projects, including an "Ice Cream Afternoon" where children from a local school went to the garden of a local home to enjoy Glasu ice cream together. This project will be held again in 2022-23.

We continued with the **pen-pals** project this year, with almost 140 partners writing back and forth to each other - you can see one story here. As the restrictions ease, it will be possible for some of the pen-pal partners to meet in a celebration at the start of 2022/23.

We continued with the **friendship benches** across Gwynedd in partnership with Llwybrau Llesiant in the hope to reduce isolation. You can read more about the Caernarfon bench here. We are working with LleChi and Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig and another six benches in Porthmadog, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Cwm y Glo and Tywyn, in the hope that they will be completed by March. We have created one sensory friendship bench with children from Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen and Veteran's Shed Bethesda, which will be introduced to the Plas Ogwen care home.

We established the **Bridging the Generations podcast** in 2021, in order to discuss some of the projects and subjects relating to the field, and the podcasts can be listened to by following this link here. More can be learnt about Bridging the Generations work by following our social media on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Early during the first lockdown, it became apparent that many people needed **digital support** in Gwynedd. As a result, devices were allocated to individuals in the community, and by using a handbook and on-line training, support staff were trained so that they could train older individuals to use the devices confidently. With many feeling lonely and isolated, the devices offered a way of keeping in contact with the world by joining on-line services and contacting families. For example, one woman from the Bangor area who had family in Spain, to be able to make a weekly video call to her family.

We also collaborate with the Citizens Online charity on the **Digital Gwynedd** programme to provide one-to-one support so that residents foster skills to go on-line. Gwynedd Council has also allocated devices such as iPads to the county's care homes in order to enable the most vulnerable people in the county to keep in contact with their families. In 2022/23, it is intended to go around Gwynedd care homes to offer support with the devices and provide other items such as Alexas, Samsung tablets etc. We have also purchased Activity Boards to all residential homes, and the feedback has been excellent to date, and residents enjoy this immensely.

As we continue to support members **Dementia Actif Gwynedd** held on-line classes and regular telephone calls during the pandemic, a few groups met face-to-face in the outdoors in May. During this period, Gardening Clubs were held in Byw'n Iach facilities in Pwllheli, Porthmadog and Caernarfon, and a Walking Club was established in Tywyn. In September, the 3 gardening club came together for a Garden Party on the Dwyfor site to celebrate a successful growing season and the joy of reconnecting.

The Dementia Active team collaborated with the Dawns i Bawb dance company to create a very special performance to the music of Swan Lake. The aim of the performance was to celebrate the work done to keep in contact and support members during the pandemic and it included clips of on-line sessions as well as staff performing in local areas in Gwynedd. The performance was launched during Dementia Action Week (The Alzheimer's Society) and the film received excellent reviews nationwide. You can watch the video here.

One family carer said:

"Although my mother's short-term memory difficulties prevent her from remembering that she participated in the dance, she was there in the moment. That moment was a very special time, and I know that it filled her with happy and encouraging feelings that lasted more than her memory. We are very grateful that she had the opportunity to take part."

In response to feedback about the extreme challenges faced by members of the family who were caring for someone with dementia during the pandemic, the **Virtual Support Group** was established. The group meets every fortnight and offers an opportunity for carers to come together in a safe and open environment to share experiences. The session also includes Tai Chi Movements for their well-being and it is an opportunity to invite guest speakers.

To celebrate **National Boccia Day** on 27 September, Dementia Actif arranged a Boccia Target competition where players from all different classes could compete against each other as a team of 3. Every team had an opportunity to throw three balls at the target and the total scores were calculated. 24 teams from community classes and 8 teams from Gwynedd Council residential homes took part.

The Gwynedd Dementia Actif team contributed to a new website that is being launched for, and by, people with dementia and carers. The Living with Dementia Toolkit website, produced by the University of Exeter and Innovations in Dementia, is full of ideas, suggestions and films to give hope to people to live with dementia.

At the start of 2022, three new sessions were launched, with the aim of encouraging older people to come together to socialise and take part in a physical activity for the benefit of their well-being. The sessions are open to all and are inclusive to people who are affected by dementia and other health conditions. The full programme of activities and more information are available on the website here.

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 ambitions is to ensure that the 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 challenging this year as a result of the ongoing side-effects of Covid-19 and the pressures that have been on our services during this period.

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 essential in order to assist children and their families to thrive and to reduce the need for more intense 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.

Families First in Gwynedd offers support to families based on their needs. The Council's internal providers, such as Plas Pawb, Gwynedd and Anglesey Youth Justice Service, along with external providers such as Y Bont and Barnardo's to provide support services to Gwynedd families. Referrals with be received through the referral and assessment framework of the Referrals Team. During the year, the Programme has continued to develop interventions in order to enable an effective response to the needs of families in the most effective way.

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 have received 578 referrals to the Families First scheme in Gwynedd in 2021/22, with 398 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. Of the families that received support from a Team Around the Family Coordinator, 70% noted that the support had enabled them to make a positive change to their life. Regrettably, a higher number of families have disengaged with the service over the last two years since some services were not available face-to-face. It is hoped that post-Covid service recovery will improve the situation.

This is what one parent had to say:

"The support has been exceptional. We had expected to be judged and that we would be under pressure, but we have been treated with respect. I feel that I have been supported and that the Team Around the Family worker has listened to us. We have moved forward slowly and I have not felt under pressure to do the courses that I participated in. The help we were offered was useful and relevant and we still use the tips that we have picked up."

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.

This year, the Flying Start team has been offering group sessions and training, both virtually and face-to-face, as well as sharing relevant resources with families such as slow cookers, with a recipe book and access to videos that were produced especially for them. The videos can be seen here. In addition, pamper packs were shared in order to give parents who felt low a boost; sensory/emotions packs to help children control their feelings; ecological personal hygiene packs to mothers; nappy packs for new mothers; and game and play resources packs for families.

In addition to this, the Early Development Team continued to support Flying Start families by holding sessions in a number of different ways, including face-to-face, outside and over the phone, in the form of 1:1 and small groups, and they have shared a large number of resources (books, craft and developmental packs), to support children. In the year to come, Flying Start will collaborate with Welsh Government to extend its areas across Gwynedd.

During the year, we have been working on one of our priorities, namely a **Keeping Families Together Strategy.** 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.

This year, Gwynedd Council became a part of a new national network called Foster Wales, as **Fostering** teams across the country combined their efforts and expertise to substantially increase the number and diversity of local authority foster carers. Click here to watch a video of some of our foster carers here in Gwynedd. Councillor Dilwyn Morgan said:

"Anyone who fosters with the Foster Wales team in their Local Authority does that in the knowledge that wherever their fostering future takes them, we will be by their side every step of the way with all the expertise, advice and purposeful training needed to support their fostering journey."

Similarly, the **Adoption** team has supported a new campaign launched by the Wales National Adoption Service in the hope of encouraging more people to adopt those children who are waiting the longest, and also took part in National Adoption Week (18-23 October).

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 218 children. Within the Trobwynt Service, there are four specific teams, i.e. the Edge of Care Team (intense intervention), Integrated Family Support Service, Reflect and Ymlaen.

This year, the **Edge of Care Team** worked with 148 children and their families, with 75 children new to the service. 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 12 women.

The **Integrated Family Support Service** worked with 33 children, with 12 of these new to the service. This service offers specialist intervention for parents who misuse alcohol and substances as well as their children who are on the edge of care or where it is intended for them to return safely to the care of their parents.

The **Ymlaen** team reassesses the situation of families in order to investigate whether the care order can be fully revoked, or obtain a lesser order. The team has worked with 37 children this year. As a result of this work, 16 children left care.

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*

One of the main priorities is to ensure that sufficient purposeful and quality houses are available to meet the needs of a changing population. We are now working to achieve the aims of our **Housing Action Plan** (2020/21 - 2026/27), which was approved in December 2020 and includes over 30 specific plans for an initial investment of £77 million to realise the ambition of our Housing Strategy, namely "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 is available to all who require this
- Everyone's home in Gwynedd is affordable to them
- Gwynedd's Housing is environmentally friendly
- Homes having a positive influence on the health and well-being of the people of Gwynedd

There are a number of plans that will increase opportunities for local people to have suitable homes within their communities already in progress and a few are about to be completed.

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 becoming homeless
- providing temporary accommodation in emergency cases, and securing accommodation for those in priority need.

The pressure on the Homelessness Service has never been higher. In the 2021/22 financial year, an increase of 47% was seen, compared with the number of presentations in 2018/19.

This huge increase can be explained as a result of the Welsh Government's statutory expectations on every Local Authority in Wales over the pandemic period to house every individual presenting themselves as homeless, to ensure that individuals did not sleep on the street. However, it is expected for this increase to continue from 2022/23 onwards as a result of the Government's decision to make this requirement permanent.

The Service provides a number of temporary accommodations until permanent properties are available to homeless people, including two Council-owned hostels and 98 properties leased by private owners and Housing Associations. Accommodation was provided to 558 families/individuals in 2021/22.

An important part of the Homelessness Service is to prevent homelessness before it occurs. During the year, the team managed to prevent 35.9% cases of homelessness, which meant that 105 individuals had been able to continue living in their homes.

Since many homeless people are 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. A few developments, such as Tŷ Adferiad, Porthmadog (6 units providing the first accommodation of its kind in Gwynedd for homeless women), and the Pods for the homeless in Caernarfon (4 units that make use of innovative energy technology) has, or is about to be completed. The following developments are currently in progress, and they will be completed at different times over the next year:

Project	**Number of units**	**Description**
35 College Road, Bangor	3	Develop a property that has been empty for many years to be 3 units that will support homeless individuals and a range of tenancy support needs.
137 High Street, Bangor	12	This development, jointly with Adra and North Wales Housing, will provide supported accommodation for individuals to maintain permanent tenancies in the future.
Accommodation in Pwllheli	2	This development will support homeless individuals to maintain permanent tenancies in the future.
Glan Wnion, Dolgellau	5	This development will make use of the former Ysgol Glan Wnion site in Dolgellau, and offer supported accommodation to homeless individuals with their tenancies in order to teach them the relevant skills so that they can sustain tenancies in the future.
Lle Da, Caernarfon	4	Develop the former Natwest/Gisda building to support homeless youths
Total:	**26**	

The current **Housing Allocation Policy** was introduced in October 2020. This policy includes giving priority to local people, and moves from a points system for the allocation of social housing, to a process of placing applications in one of four bands, subject to the housing need and whether there is a connection to Gwynedd. A review of the policy was commissioned following a year of implementation to ensure that the original aims identified for the policy had been realised. During 2022/23, we will continue to monitor the implementation of the policy to ensure that it offers the best opportunities for the people of Gwynedd.

Since 2016, Gwynedd has contributed to the UK Government's **Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement scheme**, and we take pride in the fact that we were able to assist 8 families to settle in Gwynedd thus far as a result of this scheme. By now, the **Refugee Support Unit** is at the forefront of supporting Ukrainian refugees who have had to flee following the recent conflict, and we are collaborating closely with internal departments and external services to support individuals who are arriving in Gwynedd seeking refuge.

Our **Housing Alterations Unit** is responsible for promoting the independence and well-being of Gwynedd residents by providing timely and quality adaptations to the homes of children and adults with physical disabilities. In 2021/22, 142 houses were adapted for individuals with physical disabilities Around £1.3m a year is invested on schemes such as creating accessible bathrooms, installing ramps outside the house, building extensions etc. Last year, 9 of there were referrals received from hospitals in order to enable patients to return home. We have also funded around 700 minor adaptations this year, such as the installation of handrails, mobile ramps and other small adaptations.

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, and we have sought to offer alternative equipment to meet more complex needs, e.g. epilepsy, dementia, etc. There is work to be done in 2022/23 to reconsider the Telecare Service as a whole, and facilitate the process of transferring the telecare equipment of Gwynedd residents from analogue equipment to digital equipment, before BT switches off the analogue network completely in 2025.

One of the Council's priorities is to encourage **More Gwynedd residents to play a full part in the world of work**. The local labour market has changed substantially since businesses fully reopened following the lockdown periods, with a large number of businesses finding it hard to fill jobs. We have been working regularly with employers, especially within the tourism industry and the care field, 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 have established the Gwynedd Jobs Noticeboard on Facebook to help businesses reach as many people as possible as they recruit. During the year, a number of virtual job fairs were held and, more recently, as Covid-19 restrictions eased, face-to-face job fairs.

During the year, we have supported around 300 individuals with their **employability skills**, with over 200 of these having successfully found work. We have just secured funding for Welsh Government's new programme, Young Person's Guarantee, where we will be able to pour more resources into supporting 16-24 year old young people to continue in education, or into work. In addition, we have received good news from Welsh Government regarding a new three-year funding period. In future, we will continue with the above plans and collaborate closely with our local partners across North Wales and with others who work in this field in Gwynedd in order to improve the coordination of our services.

In the challenging context of the restrictions on people's ability to work and the economic side-effects of the pandemic, the need for f**inancial, debt and access to benefits advisory services and urgent energy and food vouchers** has been more important than ever. We have been collaborating with our partners at the Citizens Advice Bureau and Housing Associations together with other charities, to promote local financial advice services, campaigns to maximise income, and jointly administering vouchers to help with fuel costs and food costs in an emergency.

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 collaborate with a very broad network of community groups and food banks on emergency food provision, feeding schemes, meals on wheels enterprises, food growing schemes, community gardens, allotments, food clubs and learn to cook sessions. This infrastructure across the county supports residents to have access to healthy, affordable food, and food in an emergency; it encourages volunteering and participation and getting to grips with reducing food waste.

We are working alongside the Health Board to support individuals with **mental health** activities in order to promote their recovery and support them to live independently. We also offer assessment and support for mental health carers. The **Community Mental Health Hub** was reopened in Pwllheli at the beginning of June, after it had to close as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. The service provided includes sharing information and referring individuals for support, as well as offer well-being activities such as walking, drawing groups, etc. The face-to-face services are by appointment only for the time being, to ensure the safety of the individuals, and the option of virtual support continues. We are looking at options to develop further hubs across the county. The aim of developing Community Mental Health Hubs across Gwynedd is to improve the availability, awareness of, and links with the third sector and other holistic support and well-being services in the community. GPs can refer to the hubs and the hubs can refer to the Mental Health Service. The hubs are intended to support individuals with mental health needs and help sustain recovery. Hubs have opened in Pwllheli, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Caernarfon, with satellite locations across the County.

In 2021, the Service received on average 4,679 referrals, which equates to 390 referrals per month on average. Most of these referrals are assessed before a decision is made on how to assist the individual. It is very difficult to measure the demand, but 1 in every 4 of us suffer from some form of mental health during our lives; and with a growing population, the demand for services are unavoidable. It is not possible to guess the severity or nature of the support required in advance.

Currently, around 60 individuals are waiting to obtain a case manager. The waiting lists derive from sickness and vacant posts within the Health Board. Staffing gaps are having an inevitable impact on the performance of the service and on average, around 60% of individuals have received an assessment within the expected 28 days under the Mental Health Measure 2012.

The Adults, Health and Well-being Department has commissioned a consultant to lead on a project that will scrutinise the resources within the primary provision. At present, the Council does not have any members of staff involved in the primary service. We intend to review our contribution to the service and see if we can allocate resources to focus on preventative work and support well-being.

Although it is not possible to quantify the likely increase in demand for specialist mental health support due to the pandemic, it is almost certain that we will see an increase, that may be long-term. We will see the impact for years to come and the service will need to be built upon and adapted to cope with that. It is a concern that everyone does not have a face-to-face appointment with their GP. Research shows that individuals are far more likely to present a physical problem to their GP in the first place and share any concerns about their mental health on the way out of the surgery.

How we do our work

In this chapter, I provide an overview of how we implement our arrangements within Social Services, and note how the matters dealt with are at the core of our work in terms of safe governance, whilst ensuring at the same time that the needs of Gwynedd residents are addressed.

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

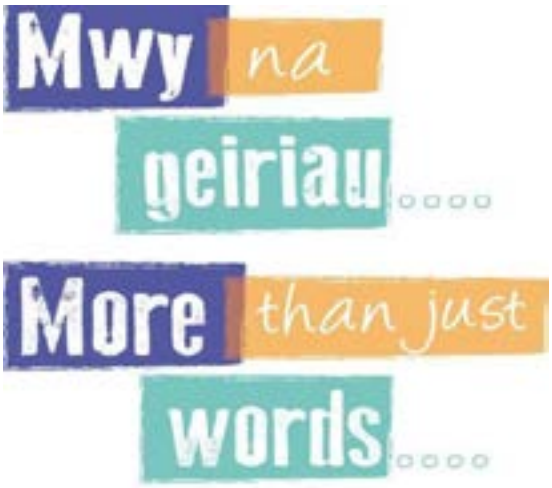
We are very confident in the departments' ability to provide their services through the medium of Welsh. 99% of the staff in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department speak Welsh, whether fluently or at a basic level, and 100% of staff in the Children and Supporting Families Department. The work of collecting assessments continues and full support is available so that staff can ensure that they reach the language designations of their post.

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 24 members of staff from the Adults, Health and Well-being and Children and Supporting Families Departments. These courses vary from on-line community courses to self-study courses, Cymraeg Gwaith courses, commission courses and face-to-face courses recently, from Entry level to Refresher level.

The variety of different courses that are available are very beneficial and in order to ensure that as many members of staff as possible can take advantage of the opportunity to learn and develop their language skills, at times that are convenient and suit their working hours.

An Entry level course was commissioned with Dysgu Cymraeg Gogledd Orllewin in September 2021, for a group of Community Care staff and some members of the group now follow an on-line community course. Among the feedback received from staff who have attended language training over the past year, it was noted:

"I really enjoyed the training. I believe that the training courses are important to ensure that the Welsh language thrives."



One members of staff who is to be applauded for her praiseworthy work to learn Welsh is Keneuoe Morgan, Deputy Manager of Hafod Mawddach Residential Home. Keneuoe is originally from Lesotho. She moved to Bala in 1997 and started working for Gwynedd Council, where she took advantage of the opportunity to learn Welsh at the University of Aberystwyth, and mastered the language in 2000.

Promoting people's rights and being person-centred and what matters to them is an essential part of Keneuoe's role. By communicating with residents in the language of their choice, Keneuoe can foster a relationship with them and support them, which helps them maintain their well-being. Recently, she was nominated for a Social Care Wales award for her efforts to learn Welsh. You can see a video of Keneuoe speaking about her experience of learning Welsh here.

Congratulations to Stephen Wood, our Youth Justice Service Manager, for his efforts to learn Welsh during the year. As a result of his hard work, he won the Dafydd Orwig Memorial Award this year for his recognition to learn and use the Welsh language at work every day. His manager, Marian Parry Hughes, says: "His perseverance and determination to develop his use of the language has been a pleasure to see. I'm extremely proud that he has won the award thi year, he's so deserving of it and I know that it will be a key step for him in his journey towards learning the language. Congratulations." You can watch a video of the Awards Ceremony here.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate everyone who has made an effort to learn Welsh and develop their skills in the language, I genuinely appreciate your efforts to ensure that our residents receive care in the language of their choice.

Welsh Government's More than Just Words strategy is all important to us in Gwynedd Council to ensure that the Active Offer is being offered to everyone who receives care services. I chair the North Wales More than Just Words Forum, which meets four times a year to share good practices and develop the field, and I have, again this year, become a member of the More than Just Words Task and Finish Group under the guidance of Welsh Government, in the hope of having a national influence on the field. This year, again, a More than Just Words Group was established within the Council to look in more detail at our work programme and seek to identify ways of improving our Active Offer.

Our workforce and how we support their professional role

Social care in Gwynedd is provided by a vast mix of statutory services, private agencies and the third sector, and the recent years have introduced challenges in the context of staff recruitment and retention, particularly on the front-line. The challenges are specifically obvious in the field of domiciliary care, and this is increasingly concerning to me as Director as we strive to provide the best possible care to the county's residents.

We have an effective and committed workforce, and this has been highlighted particularly during the Covid-19 crisis. 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.

It was a challenging year in terms of staff recruitment and retention, and the shortages have led to an inability to satisfy the demand for Domiciliary Care within a number of our communities. Though the actions agreed to in the Council's Plan are moving ahead as expected, problems with recruiting new staff and retaining experienced staff across the care field continue. The difficulties arise from:

- Difficulties recruiting new staff to the field
- Experienced staff leaving other jobs within the health and care field and to other sectors
- High staff sickness absences
- The impacts of self-isolation
- The workforce is tired with the Covid crisis continuing.
- Unpaid carers burning out

The lack of Social Workers in the Children Department has also been a concern, which has led to the implementation of temporary arrangements to deal with this shortage by redeploying workers to the Social Work teams on occasions.

We have further built upon our #SOSDare2Care campaign this year in an attempt to increase the size of the care workforce in the Adults field in order to respond to the lack of workforce in order to ensure service continuity. The work that has been in progress during the year including more varied use of social media and virtual recruitment events, as well as some face-to-face from March 2022 onwards. In addition, we have created a new Care Marketing Officer post in November 2021 with the aim of supporting recruitment to the field. For example, the Officer will collaborate closely with Coleg Llandrillo Menai to ensure work experiences and opportunities for students as well as College staff who have contracts for 39 weeks a year.

Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, Gwynedd Council, said:

"Ensuring that there is enough staff in the care field is a challenge that is facing services across the country. As a Council, we are very proud of our committed staff who provide quality care for people in care homes and in the community and I know that their work is doing a real difference to people's lives every day."

To support our recruitment efforts, we have appointed three Social Work trainees, and two Occupational Therapy trainees as a part of the Corporate Trainees Scheme, and we have extended the Camu i Waith scheme (jointly with the Health Board) by offering work placements in residential homes as well as placements in health organisations.

In order to support our new Social Workers and Occupational Therapists, we have a first three years in practice scheme, which ensures that the workers have an individual development plan, meetings to monitor the scheme over the first year, and specific workshops and a mentor to support. Additional sessions were held during the year to support workers and the challenge of coming into the workplace during the Covid-19 period.

We have also supported our workers to complete qualifications during the year, including Social Work Practitioners to gain a Practitioner qualification through the Open University, and the AMHP programme at the University of Chester. We have also continued with the responsibilities of our partnership with Bangor University in relation to the MA Social Work Course, with matters relating to recruitment, interviewing, preparing practice placements, chairing assessment meetings and work to ensure the quality of reviews and development.

Our financial resources

As Director, I am very proud of the financial support that the Council provides to the social services field. Every year, the Council considers the pressures on the field and seeks to ensure that every field receives every support, despite the fact that the Government's financial settlements are not always enough to meet the need. I can see this year that we have been able to keep within budget in both Departments, but in order to do this, considerable investment has happened by funding bids and abolishing or slipping savings schemes.

The additional pressure on budgets in the care field has been acknowledged, with additional permanent funds allocated into the 2022/23 fund, which is worth £581k in the Children's field and over £3.5 million for the Adults field, which includes a provision towards the standard residential and nursing fees, which ensures that the workers of our external providers in the care field receives a real living wage.

This year, we have continued to receive revenue funding via the Integrated Care Fund, however, in 2022/23 and beyond, this Fund will be exchanged for the Regional Integration Fund. It is hoped that this change will involve better integration in the region by working closely with our partners and working towards the same aims. In 2022/23, we will also receive funding via the Supported Housing Fund, which will be four-year capital funding in order to invest in houses to support people with care needs to live independently in the community, and to provide care in the community placements so that people with care, support and recovery needs can return to live independently or maintain their existing independence.

Again in 2021/22, Covid-19 has had a substantial financial impact on the Council, with the implications of that resulting in additional costs, income losses and a slippage in our savings programme. Welsh Government established a Hardship Fund to compensate for costs and income losses for Local Authorities, with over £4 million claimed by ourselves for the care field during 2021/22, with £2.4m of this claimed on behalf of our external providers in the care field.

Working in partnership

A core part of our work is to work in partnership locally, regionally and nationally with our partners, such as the Health Board, the Police, Welsh Government, Housing Associations, other local authorities and the third sector. This report regularly draws attention to different pieces of work that are implemented in partnership with other agencies, and we are very proud of being able to collaborate with them. We have a healthy and strong relationship with our partners locally, where constructive collaboration happens as well as open discussions on any differing opinions, to seek to ensure that we agree on the best way of working for our population.

During my annual meeting with the Care Inspectorate Wales, it was noted that there is good evidence of our partnership work, with specific emphasis on the North Wales Regional Partnership Board, which has now been operational for some years. I, and the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, Councillor Dafydd Meurig, are members of this Board.

We as partners meet as an Integrated Care and Health Group 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. This function 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 role with a vote, I consider it a valuable investment of time in terms of seeking to provide the perspective of care in 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 this will be essential.

We take advantage of every opportunity to voice our opinion in consultations by Welsh Government in order to influence any decision made nationally. For example, we spent a lot of time considering our response as a Council to the White Paper on Re-balancing Care and Support, and the result of this consultation can be seen in the Written Statement published by Welsh Government.

Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability

I wish to refer you to the Director Protocol document, which outlines how I will ensure that we meet the legislative requirements. This protocol ensures robust governance arrangements as well as strong lines of accountability. A part of the Protocol that is in place is that I, as Director and Heads of Department, ensure accountability by meeting as a Statutory Team every two months. As well as dealing with and discussing any urgent work matters and national policy matters, we utilise the new "Governance Cycle" system. The intention of the system is for me as Director to ask both Heads of Department to note any barriers or concern or, indeed, any positive statement for every element within the cycle.

Then, as Director, I will be able to have a monthly overview of the matters causing concern or that are likely to pose problems in the future. As Director, it is essential that I receive this assurance. I wish to thank the Council's internal IT Unit for their support in creating the system.

The Council has robust governance arrangements in place to support the effective management of social services. As well as submitting reports to scrutiny committees, the Cabinet and the Full Council, we also have an established departmental performance challenge structure as the one referred to in Chapter 2. 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.

Further Information and Key Documents

Well-being and Population Documents:

Gwynedd Well-being Assessment

Gwynedd and Anglesey Well-being Plan

North Wales Population Needs Assessment

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

Listen, respond, improve

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 immediate risk, call the police on 999. Unless it is an immediate risk, call Social Services as soon as possible to share our 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 an individual 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 healthy lifestyles
- 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

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
- providing 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

APPENDIX 2: Performance Measures

	Measure/Data	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Comments
1	Number of users of adults services who receive direct payments	142	132	159	179	
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%	97%	The figure has increased over the past year for a number of reasons such as services that had been stopped temporarily due to Covid-19 restarting gradually, social activities recommencing and the 'shielding' restrictions coming to an end.
3	Percentage of people with learning disabilities who have reported that they have achieved what matters, either in full or in part.		99%	100%	98%	
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	not available	Due to Covid-19, this measure was not recorded regularly.
5	% of the adult protection referrals completed during the year, where the risk has been controlled	91.50%	93.50%	92.07%	79.7%	The main reason for the deterioration in this measure is because the closing report is being filled-in incorrectly. In response to this, a new data collection form was introduced on 1 April 2022, which is much easier to fill in.
6	Of the % of the adult protection referrals completed during the year, the percentage where the danger has been controlled (except for those who have refused intervention)	93.10%	100%	98.0%	84.4%	Again, the data is not being reported accurately on our current forms. The new data collection form introduced on 1 April 2022 addresses this and ensures that we report on data correctly.

	Measure/Data	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Comments
7	The percentage of safeguarding enquiries completed within seven working days.	90.3%	95.1%	93.2%	88.3%	Our ability to respond to safeguarding concerns within the statutory 7 day schedule, is lower than what we would expect compared with previous years. One of the main barriers in terms of being able to respond promptly is that officers are waiting to receive information back from employees, and currently there is some slowness with those cases that have a connection with hospitals specifically. Nevertheless, a decision is made within 5 working days on average. Safeguarding measures will be put in place at the vast majority of cases before a report is submitted.
8	Number of people who received support from the Homelessness Unit	768	745	945	1,126	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.
9	The percentage of looked after children at 31 March who have had three or more placements during the year	5.9%	8%	2%	3%	Children are stable in their placements, leading to fewer placements breaking down.
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%	10%	Children are stable in their placements, leading to fewer cases of moving schools.
11	Percentage of reviews of looked after children held within the statutory timetable during the year	85%	84%	86%	87%	The performance is good in virtual reviews, despite the difficulties that had derived from staff sickness during Covid-19.

	Measure/Data	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Comments
12	The percentage of child protection reviews to be held within the statutory timetable during the year	94%	80%	90%	78%	The performance has deteriorated during the year as various factors such as vacant jobs, staff sickness and work pressures lead to delays in inquiries and difficulties when attempting to arrange and hold conferences.
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%	89%	Risk assessments/Covid-19 has meant that some viisits were undertaken late.
14	The percentage of eligible, relevant and previously relevant children that have been allocated a personal advisor	100%	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%	91%	Given the obstacles that were created as conferences were being held virtually, the performance is good.
16	The rate of children who were discussed in supervision, where significant harm had been considered (and the answer recorded)	100%	100%	100%	100%	Robust arrangements have been established across the Department in order to assess and identify the risk. The performance is still good in this area in terms of screening for concerns of significant harm by using Risk 1.
17	Percentage of risk assessments submitted to a Case Conference which were considered as exhibiting quality in decision making	99%	99%	97%	99%	

	Measure/Data	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Comments
18	Percentage of assessments completed for children within the statutory timescales	87%	86%	80%	80%	There is an increase in the number of referrals, meaning that more assessments are being undertaken. The figure includes TAF assessments where the assessment does not need to be completed within statutory timescales.
19	Percentage of children being assisted to continue living with the family	63%	61%	78%	82%	
20	Percentage of children who returned home from care during the year	5.80%	8%	6%	9%	As part of our Keeping Families Together Strategy, we now have a specific post within the Department which focuses on bringing children out of care.
21	Number of looked after children on 31 March	253	291	281	273	Our Keeping Families Together Strategy means that more children leave care.