



Children and Supporting Families Department



Our purpose is to ensure that children and young people are protected from harm; experience stability in their lives and receive the best opportunities for their health and well-being.

There are several teams within our service and we work within three tiers of need.

1. **Early Intervention**
2. **Care and support, safeguarding, and care needs**
3. **Specialist Teams**

In Gwynedd, we believe that every child and young person should be given the opportunity to reach their full potential. We recognise that children develop best when they are supported to grow and succeed within their families and communities. We also recognise that providing early intervention is critical in helping children and their families to thrive and to reduce the need for more intensive services.

Supporting families to thrive goes beyond the services of our department alone, and consequently we intend to do further work across all the Council's preventative services in order to improve our ability to respond to the needs of Gwynedd residents, in a co-ordinated, integrated and efficient manner.

Supporting People's Well-being

Improvement Priority 3



Some residents require more support to deal with life's challenges, and the Council invests, provides and plans a number of services and interventions aimed at supporting people with various issues such as: difficulties with parenting and raising a family, securing and keeping a home, maintaining healthy relationships, dealing with substance and alcohol misuse, violence, offending and its effects, living a healthy and active lifestyle, insufficient income and lack of work, not staying in education, a lack of qualifications and basic skills, caring, ageing, loneliness and a lack of social connections.

We have drawn together services from across the Council to shape the Supporting People Programme and to date, we have focused our efforts on mapping, identifying obstacles and improving our understanding of how our services are provided at present. We are compiling a clearer picture of our residents' experiences in terms of facing and being supported to deal with their needs. The residents of Gwynedd have told us that they wish to have easy access to the support they need, at a time and through means that are suitable to them.

This work helps us to review and consider the efficiency of our current arrangements, in order to ensure that we are making the best use of the resources we have to meet needs early on, joint-plan appropriate services and interventions in order to **"Support People's Well-being"**.

During the next period of the Council Plan, we will:

- undertake further work to understand the experiences and needs of particular groups of residents; and undertake work to understand needs in particular communities and areas.
- respond to the Welsh Government's funding alignment scheme so as to make the best use of their grants and preventative programmes for the residents of Gwynedd,
- build on the 'Children First' programme in the Maesgeirchen area by trialling new approaches among partners to help create more integrated services in the early years and to reduce the amount of adverse childhood experiences in childhood, foster strength of character in our children and young people and improve life outcomes for our children and young people.

Early Intervention

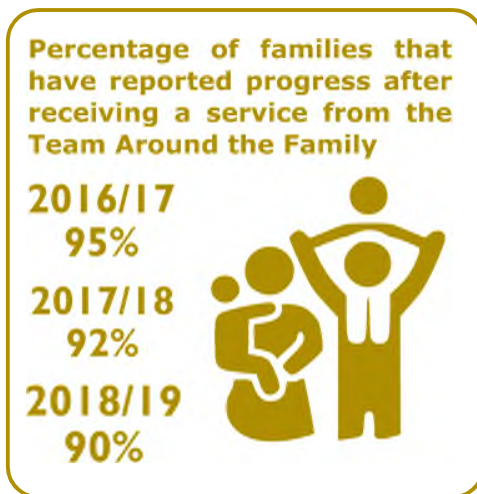
The offering of early intervention is essential in helping children and their families to thrive and to reduce the need for more intensive services. We have a number of services providing early intervention, whether early on in the child's life so that they receive the support they need to thrive; or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

The Early Years Service

Our purpose is to make a positive difference to the life opportunities of children under four years of age by supporting nursery education provisions, developing the childcare and play sector, and providing parenting packages to help families raise healthy, happy and secure children.

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





Team Around the Family

Our purpose is to intervene early when problems within families become apparent, but this intervention happens voluntarily with the family's consent. We will help by responding to needs and providing appropriate services.

We received 144 referrals to the Team Around the Family in 2018/19 and a high percentage of families noted that there was a positive difference in their lives following the intervention.

The Youth Service

Having the opportunity to socialise, take part in activities and continue to learn and develop new skills outside school is very important to the county's young people. Supporting young people to build resilience to be able to deal with any future challenges is very important for the Youth Service. Young people have told us that they want our support to help them look after their health and well-being, to help them develop and learn skills, and to help them be a part of their communities.

Care and support, safeguarding, and care needs

Most children and young people in Gwynedd live happy, safe lives and enjoy opportunities to learn and play. At times, however, some children and their families will need more formal advice and assistance.

The Council is responsible for leading, investigating and managing the county's child safeguarding interventions. We work closely with schools, the Police, the Health Board, doctors, health visitors etc to fulfil this statutory responsibility. The responsibility for safeguarding children is one of the Council's most important responsibilities.

The **Information, Advice and Support Service** maintains high standards in responding promptly to referrals that may be safeguarding referrals, and to referrals for care and support. In order to safeguard children and young people we respond to referrals without delay. When those referrals include concerns about allegations of abuse, we must investigate those allegations in accordance with the Child Protection Guidelines. We will make a decision on each case within twenty four hours in order to determine the best way to proceed.

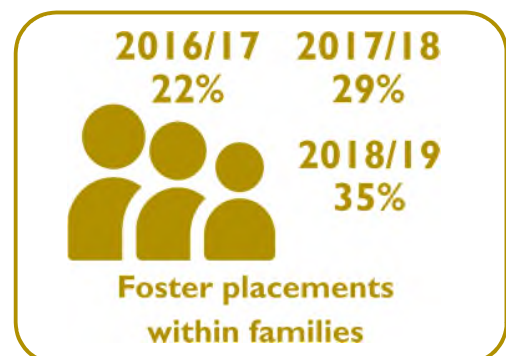
The **Social Work Teams** offer intensive support and intervention to children and their families. Social workers see children and their families regularly and keep in touch with them, remaining alert to issues of risk to children and young people. We ensure that there are resources available to support them and that their needs are clear to us. Plans are then put in place to respond to their needs. At times, we will refer on to teams that offer more specialist interventions, such as the services in the Crisis Team.



We conduct child protection investigations; and at times, certain families require highly intensive support and we need to bring children who are in danger into the Council's care.

Children usually come into our care under extremely difficult circumstances, and we are as ambitious for these children as anyone would be for his/her own child.

To ensure that children and young people experience stability, we support children to live at home with support where this is possible. Emphasis is also placed on trying to place a child with members of his/her extended family or friends of the family. Where this is not possible, the child will be placed with registered foster carers or, at times, some children and young people will require specialist residential units to meet specific needs.



The role of the **Fostering Team** is to ensure that we have enough foster parents to meet the needs of children who cannot live at home. We assess and support foster carers so that they can provide children who come into our care with the necessary support, which is a high priority for the department. We are aware that children who are in stable situations get the best opportunity to test those boundaries that are crucial for good development. This lays the foundation for achieving the best outcomes for them.

While a child is in the Council's care, it is our responsibility to provide a clear care plan for him/her which is reviewed regularly in order to ensure that the right decisions are made for the benefit of the child and that there are no delays in the plan.

Pathway Plan agreed for looked-after children



2016/17	100%
2017/18	99%
2018/19	97%

The **Post-16 Team** supports young people who either need to be safeguarded or who need care and support, and this includes care leavers up to 25 years old. The workers see the young people regularly and encourage them to maintain good contact with their families and develop their skills to live independently. The 'When I'm Ready' Scheme gives young people who are not ready to leave their foster placement on their 18th birthday the option to stay on until they are ready to do so.

The Specialist Teams

The purpose of the **Crisis Services** is to reduce needs by offering a range of intensive interventions and support to children who are on the edge of care, who have just come into care, or to safely return children home from care. By working closely and co-producing care plans with the children and their families, the physical and mental health needs and the emotional well-being needs of the children and their families are met.

Percentage of cases where the factors that were evident before the team's intervention were reduced



2016/17	79%
2017/18	70%
2018/19	79%

As part of these interventions the **Edge of Care Team** offers intensive support packages aimed at keeping children stable in their homes. The **Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS)** offers specialist intervention to families where alcohol and substance misuse by the parents and carers is a risk factor to the children. Because of the intensive nature of the intervention, the service is prioritised for families where the risk to children is high. The **Reflect** project offers specialist support to parents whose children are in the care system permanently. Also, **Crisis** offers a specialist service that focuses on discharging care orders where intensive work has already been completed, and consequently offers a way out of care for children and their families.

The **Derwen Team** provides a service for disabled and ill children and young people and their families. We provide support for young, disabled people to help their inclusion in community activities and life, and to increase their skills so they become more independent. We provide periods of respite care for a great number of families through a support service. It is a multidisciplinary team that works in partnership with the Health Board. We have social workers, nurses and psychologists working in the team, and because of the wide range of complex needs, our workers need to possess expert skills to respond to the needs of the children and their families.



The purpose of the **Youth Justice Service** is to work intensively with children and young people who have offended, to prevent them re-offending. We offer a wide range of specialist interventions and work with the whole family in order to find solutions to help prevent the children and young people from re-offending. We also work on a preventative basis with children and young people to prevent them from offending in the first place. We do this in partnership with schools and within the individuals' communities. We are a multi-agency team and we work in partnership with the Police, the Health Board, Careers Wales, North Wales Housing and others.

How we ensure the quality of safeguarding

In order to provide assurance to the Council that our safeguarding arrangements are robust, we have a **Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit** that focuses on different aspects of this important area of work. We implement the statutory duties to review cases of Looked After Children, and provide guidance on child protection, and chair case conferences and strategy meetings where allegations have been made about professionals.

We conduct child protection conferences in partnership with the families and other workers. Intervening with a family to safeguard the child can be very difficult for them. They often do not welcome this support, and very often only cooperate through enforcement. Our aim is to ensure that the child's voice is more prominent in these discussions and that families are involved more effectively in their safeguarding plan.

Independent Reviewing Officers monitor the care plans of every looked after child and young person. They ensure that the care plans have given appropriate weight and consideration to the wishes and feelings of the child, and that the child fully understands his/her situation bearing in mind the child's age and comprehension. The Independent Reviewing Officers give assurance to the Council that the interests of the child are safeguarded throughout their time in care. They listen to children, make sure they are happy with their plans, ensure their opinion is heard and that their plans are followed, and that they are sufficiently empowered to take action if the plans are not followed.



The department's day to day work contributes towards the following Gwynedd Well-being Objectives by ensuring that residents can:

Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives

Live in a natural Welsh society

Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.